Names and Naming as a Literary-Theological Strategy in the Book of Revelation

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, a comprehensive theo-onomastic analysis of the biblical book of Revelation is conducted, focusing on the role of names and naming as a fundamental literary-theological strategy in articulating the cosmic conflict theme within the text. In Revelation, naming extends beyond mere identification; it reveals the intrinsic nature and narrative function of the characters. In this study, a "name" encompasses proper nouns, epithets, titles, and participial phrases that frequently substitute for proper nouns, as exemplified in the book of Revelation (e.g., 17:5; 19:11, 13, 16). This study categorises the principal actors in the book into two primary groups: good and evil. Their names are either prescribed or ascribed. Good characters possess the autonomy to prescribe their own names and the ability to self-prescribe, thereby articulating a self-determined identity, whereas evil entities, led by Satan, are assigned names by the narrator's authority. The theo-onomastic methodology employs a four-tiered analytical framework that examines (a) the types of names used, (b) the naming techniques employed in their introduction, (c) the literary–theological profiles that emerge from these practices, and (d) the function of these characters within the broader cosmic conflict.

By systematically identifying distinguishing characteristics and naming patterns, the categorised names are interpreted in relation to the cosmic battle between good and evil. The synthesis of these findings results in a coherent model that explains how naming strategies position characters as heroes or villains. Ultimately, it is concluded that Revelation deliberately employs names and naming techniques to define character functions and roles, thereby reinforcing the text's underlying framework of the cosmic conflict between God and Satan. God, as the Seated One on the throne, is the principal protagonist around whom the cosmic conflict revolves. He fights and wins through the lamb's sacrifice and victory. Satan, on the other hand, is the prime antagonist, whose ultimate defeat is prefigured in his names and their revelation.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Antonomasia: A figure of speech that replaces a proper name with an epithet, official address, or other indirect description, or one that applies a famous, adequate name to a person alleged to share some quality associated with it.

Denotation: The range of potential referents of a word or other lexical expression.

Epithet: An adjective or adjectival phrase used to describe a defining characteristic or attribute of an individual or object.

Name: A designation as a noun or nominal phrase that refers to or describes an object or entity.

Reference: The act of picking out an individual referent in a context of utterance defined with speech, signing/writing, or gestures

Sense: The network of semantic relations in which lexical words and more complex expressions participate, such as synonymy and antonymy, is defined.

Theo-onomastics: A study of names and naming patterns in biblical texts to reveal their theological value in understanding the text.

Title: Identifying an appellation in the form of an address that signifies the status or function of a person or entity.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAP ..... Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere
AUSS ..... Andrews University Seminary Studies
BAR ..... Biblical Archaeology Review
BDAG A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature
BDF..... A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature
BI. ..... Biblical Interpretation
BN ..... Biblische Notizen
BThSt ..... Biblisch-Theologische Studien
CBQ ..... The Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBR ..... Currents in Biblical Research
CR: BS ..... Currents in Research: Biblical Studies
CTJ ..... Calvin Theological Journal
HTR ..... Harvard Theological Review
IEJ ..... Israel Exploration Journal
Int ..... Interpretation
ITQ ..... Irish Theological Quarterly
JATS ..... Journal of the Adventist Theological Society
JBQ ..... Jewish Bible Quarterly
JETS ..... Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JJS ..... Journal of Jewish Studies
Jpn. ..... Psychol. Res. Japanese Psychological Research
JSJ ..... Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods
JSNTSup ..... Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT ..... Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup ..... Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LaLi ..... Language and Linguistics
LBS ..... Linguistic Biblical Studies
LNTS ..... Library of New Testament Studies
LOS ..... Literary Onomastics Studies
NAMES ..... *Names: A Journal of Onomastics*
Neot ..... Neotestamentica
NJAS ..... Nordic Journal of African Studies
NovTSup ..... Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTS ..... New Testament Studies
Onomastica Canadiana ..... Journal of the Canadian Society for the Study of Names / Revue de la Société Canadienne d'Onomastique
PRSt ..... Perspectives in Religious Studies
Rev. Contemp. Philos ..... Review of Contemporary Philosophy
RevExp ..... Review and Expositor
RHSS ..... Research on Humanities and Social Sciences
RSR ..... Religious Studies Review
SA ..... *Sociological Analysis*
SBLSP ..... Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SQ ..... Shane Quarterly
Stud. Teol.-Hist. Śl. Opol. ..... Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego

TDNT ..... Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TynBul ..... Tyndale Bulletin
UCLAHJ ..... UCLA Historical Journal
WBC ..... Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT ..... Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW ..... Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The book of Revelation is full of names and naming; however, the role of names and naming patterns in theological themes, such as cosmic conflict[1] has not received sufficient attention.[2]

[1] The concept that the book of Revelation presents a struggle between good and evil has received much attention in Johannine Apocalyptic studies. Scholars in this field use different terminologies to depict this struggle, of which the primary ones are given below. Some call it ***a Combat Myth*** to portray the literary and rhetorical effect the theme emits, especially when it is compared to its ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman mythologies. Such proponents take more of an imperialist view of the struggle to posit that John used such perceived constructs in his quest to persuade his readers/listeners to act in a certain way. For extension discussion on this view, see Edward T. Palmer, "Why Is John's Apocalypse so Bloody? John's Use and Subversion of Combat Myths in Revelation 19:11–20:10," *TynBul.* 74 (2023): 143–59, https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.88890; Bartosz Trębacz, "Apokaliptyczny Smok. Symbolika i Jej Znaczenie (Ap 12: 2–7)," *Stud. Teol.-Hist. Śl. Opol* 39.1 (2019): 49–61; Debra Scoggins Ballentine, *The Conflict Myth and the Biblical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1; András Dávid Pataki, "A Non-Combat Myth in Revelation 12," *NTS* 57.2 (2011): 258–72; J. W. van Henten, "Dragon Myth and Imperial Ideology in Revelation 12–13," in *The Reality of the Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L Barr, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 39 (Atlanta, GA: SBLSymS, 2006), 181–203; Steven J. Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *JBL* 123.2 (2004): 281–313, https://doi.org/10.2307/3267946; Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 2; Barbara Wootten Snyder, "Combat Myth in the Apocalypse: The Liturgy of the Day of the Lord and the Dedication of the Heavenly Temple" (Ph.D., Graduate Theological Union and University of California, 1991); David Edward Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John," *BR* 28 (1983): 5–26; Joseph Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins*, 1st ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1959), 1–11, https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.8085318. Others who see the struggle between God and Satan as being more cosmic than Roman or not as a mere rhetorical construct call it a ***'Cosmic Conflict'.*** Within this strand, some like Grabner and Tonstad further argue for the cosmic conflict theme as a theological fabric essential for proper appreciation of the apocalypse's message. It is a portrayal of a spiritual reality of a controversy between God and Satan. See Sigve K. Tonstad, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 32, 174–216; Steven Grabiner, "The Cosmic Conflict: Revelation's Undercurrent," *JATS* 26.1 (2015): 38–58; Steven Grabiner, *Revelation's Hymns: Commentary on the Cosmic Conflict* (London: T&T Clark, 2015). Again, there others who like Abir view the cosmic conflict as a philosophical template of the crisis that was limited to the seven churches but have moral lessons for the present generation of the Christians. See Peter Antonysamy Abir, *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church: An Exegetico-Theological Study of Revelation 12, 7–12*, European University Studies 23 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), 10–12. Then again there a few like Boyd who prefer to call the conflict motif ***'Spiritual Warfare.'*** Proponents of this argue that Bible writers view the physical presence of evil in the presence of a good God as a metaphor for a spiritual battle. Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 1997), 9–22, 238–93. Semantically, in this study, the terms cosmic conflict, fight, and war are used to refer to the duel between God and Satan and their allies, as described in the book of Revelation. Per this dissertation, the conflict is a reality that continues beyond the readers of the book from the first century onward, finding application throughout the age of the church, culminating at the eschaton.

[2] The significance of names and naming in biblical traditions has been emphasised previously by others, such as Hans Bietenhard, "Ὄνομα," TDNT 5:242. What is lacking is their significance to the biblical books' themes and theology, especially those of Revelation. This researcher is inspired by an article written by De Villiers in which he discusses John's portrayal of evil by the names given to it in different forms. See Pieter G. R. de Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," *Neot* 34, no. 1 (2000): 57–85;

The book is full of names and naming; however, the role of names and naming patterns in theological theme of the cosmic conflict has not received enough attention. The actions and roles of both divine and malevolent figures are fundamentally intertwined with this theme, underscoring the necessity of foregrounding it in the examination of names within this dissertation.

In this study, I examine the author's use of names and naming as a literary-theological strategy that propels the cosmic conflict theme embedded in the apocalypse.

This chapter provides a concise overview of the literary genre and its context, emphasising the importance of understanding the genre and context to avoid inaccurate interpretations when studying books.

Revelation is an apocalyptic work that uses elements echoing the Old Testament[3], Second Temple Jewish literature, and Greco-Roman conventions to convey its message through symbols, parallelism, chiasms, and oracles.[4] However, the book seems to set itself apart from other apocalypses by explicitly describing itself in three genres: an Ἀποκάλυψις (1.1), a προφητείας (Rev. 1:3, 19:10, 22:7, 10, 18, 19), and an 'epistle' (Rev 1:4 to 3:22). Richard Bauckham rightly claims that the book reaches the highest point of his visionary

Pamela Thimmes, "Women Reading Women in the Apocalypse: Reading Scenario 1, the Letter To Thyatira (Rev. 2.18-29)," *CBR* 2.1 (2003): 128–44, https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X0300200107.

[3] The Book of Revelation demonstrates extensive intertextuality with the Old Testament, drawing thematic, symbolic, and linguistic parallels. Key references include the plagues of Egypt (Exodus), throne visions (Dan. 7:9–10, Ezek. 1:26–28, Rev. 4–5), and Babylon's destruction (Is. 47, Jer. 50–51, Ezek. 26–28; Rev. 17–18). Revelation's depiction of the New Jerusalem echoes promised land and temple imagery (Ezek. 40–48, Is. 65–66), and its titles for Jesus connect to Old Testament prophecy (Is. 22:22; Reve 3:7). Other notable links are the Passover lamb (Exod 12:3–7) and dragon imagery (Ps 74:13–14; Rev 12), emphasising Revelation's reliance on Old Testament frameworks for eschatological themes in spite of direct quotations from it.

[4] Christian P. Sanchez, "Blood Purification and the Temple in Revelation," *ZNW* 114.2 (2023): 246–63, https://doi.org/10.1515/znw-2023–0014; Justin Jeffcoat Schedtler, "Mother of Gods, Mother of Harlots: The Image of the Mother Goddess Behind the Depiction of the 'Whore of Babylon' in Revelation 17," *NovTest* 59.1 (2017): 52–70; Philip A. Harland, "Honouring the Emperor or Assailing the Beast: Participation in Civic Life Among Associations (Jewish, Christian and Other) in Asia Minor and the Apocalypse of John," *JSNT* 22.77 (2000): 99–121.

experiences when understood as a prophecy revealed through a letter.[5] He argues that the book is a complex and deliberate endeavour involving deep contemplation and writing, intended to create a highly literary work. Its purpose is not simply to replicate the experience but to convey the significance of the revelation he received.[6] Thus, the author was conscious and mindful of the writing.

Thus, the book serves as an account of the seer's visionary encounter, offering specific details describing the topics and individuals mentioned in the vision. The complex literary framework of Revelation has fascinated Bible scholars and students, who have employed several approaches such as historical-critical and current rhetorical methodologies to evaluate its many aspects.

The book of Revelation's symbolic language has long been observed by scholars. In an array of scholarship, its apocalyptic character is usually cited as the reason for its high level of imagery.[7] Revelation's symbolic style makes it natural for its frequent use of names and naming of either concepts or persons, with ὄνομα occurring approximately 35 times.[8] Proper

[5] This description of the book is the general consensus among scholars, although the term epistle is not stated in the book itself; see Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation: The Greek Text*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977), xciv, http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/13418588., David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5: Volume 52a* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), lxxi–lxxvii. And for an extensive discussion on the three categories, especially the epistolary nature, see Martin Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung Als Brief: Studien Zu Ihrem Literarischen, Historischen Und Theologischen* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 73–74. See also Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1–17. As in the words of Aune, "Remarkably, John did not resort to the traditional apocalyptic device of pseudonymity, characteristic of all other Jewish and Christian apocalypses. in order to attract attention and claim authority for his composition." See David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 65–96. See also "The Book of Revelation: A Different Kind of 'Apocalyptic' Text," *Larry Hurtado's Blog*, 3 May 2016, https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2016/05/03/the-book-of-revelation-a-different-kind-of-apocalyptic-text/. ; Bernard McGinn and Stephen J. Stein, *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism.*, ed. John J. Collins, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000).

[6] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 3–4. It is important to mention that to read the book strictly as a letter equally poses issues because the book itself, at some points, defies the conventions of an apocalypse in its antecedent Jewish Tradition.

[7] G. Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek: As Used in the Apocalypse of St. John : A Study in Bilingualism*, NovTSup v. 27 (Leiden: Brill, 1971); Laurențiu Florentin Moț, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities in the Book of Revelation: A Greek Hypothesis*, LBS, Volume 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2015); David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic," *Neot* 40.1 (2006): 1–33. For further discussion on this subject, see John J. Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy : On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 2015).

[8] This is illustrated in Table 2 below.

names are also prominent in this book. Examples of such include ὁ θεὸς, πατήρ, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Ἰωάννης (1:1,), Ἀσία(1:4), Πάτμος (1:9), Ἔφεσος, Νικολαϊτῶν, Σμύρνα (2:1, 6, 8); Σατανᾶς, Ἰεζάβελ, Πέργαμος, Ἀντιπᾶς, Βαλὰκ (2:12, 13, 14, 20, 24), Φιλαδέλφεια, Λαοδίκεια (3:7,14), Ἰερουσαλήμ (22:1). There are other instances in which descriptive phrases replace proper names, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Example of Name Substitutes in the Book of Revelation

Passage	Text	Translation
2:1	ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ	The one who holds the seven stars in His right hand
2:8,12	ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν·, ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν·	The first and the last Who was dead and has come to life. The one who has the two-edged sword:
3:14	ὁ Ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ·	The Amen The faithful and true witness The beginning of God's creation
4:9–10; 5:1,7,13; 6:16; 7:15	τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων	The One who sits on the throne, The one living forever and ever
14:7; 10:6	τῷ ποιήσαντι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν	The Maker of heaven and earth

Where name substitution is adopted, the new names indicate the depth of the author's intent, either to conceal or to reveal the nature of the characters and their ultimate impact on the message of the book. Thus, Revelation reveals "names already written, names to be written, names spoken, names not spoken, names that should not be spoken and names that one longs to speak!"[9] For example, in Rev. 2:17, a new name that no one knows is written on a white stone is mentioned. Similarly, in Rev. 3:12, believers in Philadelphia are promised

[9] Edith M Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming: The Rhetoric of Specificity and Mystery in the Apocalypse," in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others: Essays in Honour of Stephen G. Wilson*, ed. Zeba A. Crook (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2007), 164.

that the names of God, His City, and the narrator's new name will be written on them. These are illustrations of the fundamental significance of "names" and naming in the book of Revelation.[10]

It is not surprising that scholars have been preoccupied with the complex literary character of the book. It is understandable that scholars have devoted considerable attention to the intricate literary nature of the book. Multiple dimensions of its development have been examined through a range of scholarly approaches, including the analysis of sources, form-critical studies, theological interpretations, and the application of contemporary literary methodologies.[11]

Table 2: List of ὄνομά Uses in the Book of Revelation

Passage	Emphasis on Names	Translation
2:3	καὶ ὑπομονὴν ἔχεις, καὶ ἐβάστασας διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου, καὶ οὐ κεκοπίακες.	And you have endured and laboured because of my name and have not grown weary
2:13	Οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ Σατανᾶ, καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου	I know your Works, your dwelling, where the throne of Satan is but you hold fast my name
2:17	ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον	On his forehead a new name is written
3:1	Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα, ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῇς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ	I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead
3:4	ἀλλὰ ἔχεις ὀλίγα ὀνόματα ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἃ οὐκ ἐμόλυναν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν	But you have few names in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes

[10] David E. Aune, "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3," *NTS* 36 (1990): 190.

[11] Herms has traced and summarised the history of methodologies employed in the interpretation of the book of Revelation from the late 19th century to the Middle of the 20th Century. He categorises scholarship during the period into three: source criticism, commentaries, and literary-narrative criticism. For further discussion, see Ronald Herms, *An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World: The Narrative Function of Universal Language in the Book of Revelation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 5–49.

3:5	a. καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς, b. καὶ ὁμολογήσω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρός	a. And I will not blot your name out of the book of life b. But I will confess his name in the presence of the father
3:8	καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὸ ὄνομά μου.	And you have not denied my name
3:12	a. καὶ γράψω ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου b. καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου c. καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν.	a. And I will write on him the name of my God and b. the name of the city of my God and c. my new name
6:8	καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ ὄνομα αὐτῷ ὁ Θάνατος	And the name of the one who sat on it was death
8:11	καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀστέρος λέγεται· ὁ Ἄψινθος.	And the name of the star is Wormwood
9:11	a. ἔχουσιν ἐπ᾽ αὐτῶν βασιλέα τὸν ἄγγελον τῆς ἀβύσσου· ὄνομα αὐτῷ b. Ἑβραϊστὶ Ἀβαδδών, καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἑλληνικῇ ὄνομα ἔχει Ἀπολλύων.	a. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon b. But his Greek Name is Apollyon
11:13	καὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῷ σεισμῷ ὀνόματα ἀνθρώπων χιλιάδες ἑπτά	And in the earthquake, seven thousand names of men perished
11:18	καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου	And the Saints and those who fear your name
13:1	καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὀνόματα βλασφημίας.	And on his head were blasphemous names
13:6	βλασφημῆσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ	blaspheming his name
13:8	καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, οὗ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς	And all dwellers on the earth worshipped him, he whose name is not written in the book of life.
13:17	a. καὶ ἵνα μή τις δύνηται ἀγοράσαι ἢ πωλῆσαι εἰ μὴ ὁ ἔχων τὸ χάραγμα, b. τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θηρίου ἢ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ.	a. And that no one may buy or sell except b. the one who has the mark or the mark or the name of the beast c. or the number of his name
14:1	a. καὶ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἑκατὸν τεσσεράκοντα τέσσαρες χιλιάδες ἔχουσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ	a. And with him one hundred and forty-

	b. καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένον ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν.	four thousand who had his name b. and the name of his father written on their foreheads
14:11	καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, οἱ προσκυνοῦντες τὸ θηρίον καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἴ τις λαμβάνει τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ.	And they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name
15:2	καὶ ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ ἑστῶτας ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν ὑαλίνην,	And those who have victory over the beast, over his image and his mark and his name standing on the sea of glass
15:4	τίς οὐ μὴ φοβηθῇ, κύριε, καὶ δοξάσει τὸ ὄνομά σου, ὅτι μόνος ὅσιος;	Who shall not fear, O Lord, and not glorify your name, for you are holy?
16:9	καὶ ἐβλασφήμησαν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἔχοντος τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τὰς πληγὰς ταύτας,	And blasphemed the name of God the one who has authority over these plagues.
17:3	καὶ εἶδον γυναῖκα καθημένην ἐπὶ θηρίον κόκκινον, γέμοντα ὀνόματα βλασφημίας	And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, having names of blasphemy.
17:5	καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῆς ὄνομα γεγραμμένον, μυστήριον	And upon her forehead was written a name: mystery
17:8	καὶ θαυμασθήσονται οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὧν οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον τῆς ζωῆς	And the dwellers on earth will wonder, whose names are not written in the book of life
19:12	ἔχων ὄνομα γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ αὐτός,	He has a name written that no one knew except himself
19:13	καὶ κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ.	He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his name; the Word of God
19:16	καὶ ἔχει ἐπὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν μηρὸν αὐτοῦ ὄνομα γεγραμμένον· Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων.	And he had a garment and upon his thigh a name written; King of Kings and Lord of Lords

21:12	καὶ ὀνόματα ἐπιγεγραμμένα ἅ ἐστιν τῶν δώδεκα φυλῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ·	And names written are the twelve tribes of Israel
21:14	καὶ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῶν δώδεκα ὀνόματα τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων τοῦ ἀρνίου.	And upon them, twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb
22:4	καὶ ὄψονται τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν	And they shall see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads

While scholars have extensively studied the presence of numbers and the repetition of symbols in the Old Testament in Revelation, the exploration of names, naming, and non-naming has received little scholarly attention. Names can either expose or hide the characters' true nature, and a meticulous analysis of this pattern may provide valuable insights into the study of the book. Revelation is not only replete with names and titles but also emphasises the rewards and reprimands for upholding and blaspheming names. Individuals who endure hardship in the ὄνομα of the lamb are assured of receiving recompense, as stated in Rev. 2:3, 13, 3:5, and 3:8. Moreover, names and marks on the forehead serve as a feature that distinguishes between those who are redeemed and those who are condemned (Rev. 3:4, 12; 13:1, 6, 17; 14:1, 11). Names and naming were essential, as John carefully described the entities in his vision.

1. 2 Summary

This chapter surveyed some of areas often studied in Revelation, with emphasis placed on the centrality of names and naming conventions within it. The frequent use of names and titles underscores the importance of these elements in conveying deeper theological messages.

The survey of the use of names in Revelation has highlights patterns that inform both the narrative and the text's thematic development. The brief survey revealed that names in Revelation are not mere identifiers but are imbued with possible profound theological implications, often reflecting the cosmic conflict central to the book's message.

A thorough examination of names and naming patterns in Revelation yields invaluable insights into the theological themes. Demonstrating the interplay between names and the text's overarching narrative provides a foundation for subsequent analyses of the role and function of names in Revelation, as well as their connection to the theme of cosmic conflict.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review examines the research and academic discussions on names and their theological significance in the Bible in general and the book of Revelation in particular. This includes significant studies and theoretical frameworks from the Old and New Testaments. Scholars examine names and naming in the Old Testament for two main purposes. First, much academic research has focused on Old Testament names rather than New Testament ones. This extensive scholarship provides a foundation for understanding the cultural and theological significance of names in the biblical narratives. Second, the book of Revelation uses images and themes from the Old Testament to support its teachings. One can gain deeper insights into the names used in Revelation and their connections to earlier scriptures by examining the Old Testament itself. This method helps form a more complete understanding of the text's heritage and aids in the interpretation of its themes and messages.[12] This analysis identifies gaps and patterns in the current literature and offers context for the present dissertation.

[12] The notion that the Old Testament serves as the foundational material for the Book of Revelation is widely accepted among scholars because of the many echoes of the OT found therein. For example, Beale asserts that Revelation's symbolism and themes are rooted in Old Testament prophecies, especially those of Daniel and Ezekiel, making its imagery more relatable to its audience (G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 230. For Bauckham, Revelation's apocalyptic narrative is connected to Old Testament prophecy, highlighting themes of judgment, upheaval, and restoration while assuming readers know these traditions (Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4–12). See also Frederick David Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective*, 1st ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 154–58; David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 109–10; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Translation. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 108; Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 74; Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,17–19,10*, vol. 376 of *European University Studies* 23 (New York , NY: Peter Lang, 1989), 119–22; G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 13–59; David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*

2.2. Onomastics in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word שֵׁם refers to names of things and persons in the Old Testament, which can connote identity, reputation, fame, and authority. Naming presumably originated with God, who named light day and darkness night in Genesis 1:5. Names have different interpretations across cultures, with Western societies primarily using them to identify individuals. At the same time, Ghanaian thought places a solid connection between names and one's soul and the ability to evoke ancestral spirits.[13] Ancient Near Eastern writers believed that names and naming maintained order in social strata, embodying the essence of the bearer and indicating the authority of the giver.[14] In the Old Testament, mothers typically give names, but fathers also name their children.[15] Renaming was necessary for special events, and names were sometimes concealed until they were ready to be revealed to showcase the authority of the one who gave the name over the *namee*.[16] Scholarship focusing on Hebrew names can be divided into two main areas: 1) researching personal names in ancient Israel and the ANE to authenticate Israel's religious history, and 2) studying occurrences in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomic History.[17]

(Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2009), 148–49; J. Daniel Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 29–32; G. K. Beale, "The Purpose of Symbolism in the Book of Revelation," *CTJ* 41 (2006): 53–66.

[13] For an extensive discussion, see Kofi Agyekum, "The Sociolinguist of Akan Personal Names," *NJAS* 15.2 (2006): 206–35.

[14] Nicholaus Benjamin Pumphrey, "Name and Power: The Concept of Secret Names in the Ancient Near East." (M A Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 2009), 7.

[15] Cf Gen 4:25; 25:25-26; 35:18; 1 Chr 4:9. See Edward J. Bridge, "A Mother's Influence: Mothers Naming Children in the Hebrew Bible," *VT* 64.3 (2014): 389–400.

[16] For this reason, David Barr emphasises that the practice of reusing names in the Old Testament did not emerge until the later stages of Jewish history, particularly during the Second Temple period. This era, marked by significant religious and cultural developments, saw a notable shift in naming conventions, reflecting the evolving identity and traditions of the Jewish people. For an in-depth discussion, see David L Barr, "Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse," *RSR.* 14.4 (1988): 340–44; Hans Bietenhard, "Ὄνομα," *TDNT* 5:253; Kandy Queen-Sutherland, "Naming the Enemy: Esther and the Prophets," *PRSt* 35.2 (2008): 183.

[17] Timothy P. Seymour, "Personal Names and Name Giving in the Ancient Near East," *UCLAHJ* 4.0 (1983), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3dg0m1cj; Jeaneane D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study*, JSOTSup 49 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988); Francis I. Andersen and Richard S. Hess, *Names in the Study of Biblical History: David, Yhwh Names, and the Role of Personal Names*, Buried History Monograph; 2 (Melbourne: Australian Institute of Archaeology, 2007).

Mandelkern, Gray, and Noth made substantial contributions to the study of Old Testament onomastics, providing a foundation upon which subsequent scholars, such as Jeaneane Fowler, have built.[18] Fowler classified biblical names into five main periods: the pre-monarchy, united monarchy, divided monarchy, exile and post-exile epochs. Her study revealed the unique frequency of the name of Yahweh as the root of most personal names in Israel, revealing "monotheism" in the Hebrews' name choices. Fowler also studied pre-Hellenistic Israelite names by comparing the linguistic structures of biblical, extra-biblical, theophoric, and non-theophoric names. Scott Layton studied the archaic features of Canaanite personal names in the Bible. Simultaneously, Hess and Anderson explored the importance of names in authorship and the composition of the Bible.[19] Rainer Albertz studied the predictive and epigraphic tendencies inherent in Hebrew personal names. Mitka Golub collected 799 theophoric and other names from 66 geographical sites to examine their prevalence in Israel and Transjordan during the Iron Age.[20]

The second body of scholarship on name studies in the Old Testament focuses on the name Yahweh in Deuteronomic literature, revealing how Israel's theological conception of God's presence in his temple and among his people developed.[21] This aspect is known as "Name Theology", and proponents argue that the name Yahweh represents an abstraction of

[18] The two studies were conducted with the assumption that Hebrew names functioned beyond mere identification because they carried intrinsic ideas and motives. See George Buchanan George Buchanan Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names* (London: A. and C. Black, 1896), http://archive.org/details/studiesinhebrew01graygoog; Martin Noth, *Die Israelitischen Personennamen Im Rahmen Der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2010).

[19] Richard S. Hess, "Issues in the Study of Personal Names in the Hebrew Bible," *CR:BS* 6 (1998): 169; Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1–11* (Indiana, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993).

[20] See Solomon Mandelkern and Sven Herner, *Veteris Testamenti concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (Lund: Ohlsson, 1909); Rainer Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion: Religionsinterner Pluralismus in Israel u. Babylon*, Aufl. ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1978), 49–77; Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names*, 59–76.; Scott C. Layton, *Archaic Features of Canaanite Personal Names in the Hebrew Bible*, 1st ed. (Atlanta, GA: Brill, 1990). Francis I. Andersen and Richard S. Hess, *Names in the Study of Biblical History: David, Yhwh Names, and the Role of Personal Names*, Buried History Monograph; 2 (Melbourne: Australian Institute of Archaeology, 2007), 1–14.

[21] Elizabeth Keck, "The Glory of Yahweh, Name Theology, and Ezekiel's Understanding of Divine Presence" (PhD Thesis, Boston College, 2011), 10.

Yahweh, denying his actual presence on Earth. Noth argued that the Temple in Deuteronomistic thought was a demythologised place separated from Yahweh's presence, and the use of Yahweh's name removed his real presence from the Temple.[22] Gerhard von Rad popularised this concept in his study on Deuteronomy, arguing that Deuteronomy was a refined book that sought to re-sift and purify Israel's complex faith theologically.[23] Deuteronomic name theology compensated for the absence of the Ark cult in the northern kingdom with, a spiritualised and sublimated conception of God associated with the Ark.[24]

From the brief survey above, it appears that although onomastics has been featured in some scholarship on the Old Testament, there is no coordinated methodology for studying names. Most studies have focused on the etymology of names rather than their theological significance. Hence, the aim of this research is to offer a methodological framework for the literary and theological study of names that is relevant not only to New Testament and apocalyptic studies but also makes a considerable contribution to name studies in the book of Revelation.[25] Further exploration of the occurrence of names and naming in Second Temple Judaism will shed more light on this task.

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[22] M Noth, *Die Israelitischen Personennamen Im Rahmen Der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung.* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1928), 94–95.

[23] Gerhard Von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, trans. David Stalker (London: SCM, 1956), 37.

[24] See Fritz Dumermuth, "Zur Deuteronomischen Kulttheologie Und Ihren Voraussetzungen," *ZATW/ZAW* 70.1 (2009): 59–98; Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 199. See also Sandra L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: Leshakken Shemo Sham in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 1st ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).; Bernhard Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Berlin: Grote, 1881); Benno Jacob, *Im Namen Gottes: Eine Sprachliche Und Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung Zum Alten Und Neuen Testament* (Berlin: Nabu, 1902).; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, 1st ed. (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982), 42, 46–47, 51; Tryggve Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*, trans. Frederick H. Cryer (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 2005), 122, 145; Máire Byrne, "The Importance of Divine Designations in Old Testament Theology," *ITQ* 74.3 (2009): 334–349.

[25] If the assertion that the author of Revelation probably thought in Hebrew but wrote in Greek is anything to go by, then the reverse can also be argued, that the study of the naming patterns in the book can help in the study of names in the Old Testament. For arguments on the Semitic lineage of the apocalypse, see R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 1:cxliii, http://archive.org/details/acriticalandexeg01charuoft; John Philip McMurdo Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Pr, 1979), 16–17; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia PA: John Knox, 1984), 47; Steven Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax: 52*, 1st edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

2.3. Names and Naming in Second Temple Judaism

The relevance of the literature on Second Temple Judaism (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Apocrypha) to understanding the New Testament and the book of Revelation has long been considered essential, and consequently, numerous comparative studies have been conducted on the subject.[26] Most arguments about the connection between Second Temple literature and the book of Revelation tend to concentrate on specific issues, such as eschatology, messianism, biblical interpretation, or figures, while neglecting the crucial field of onomastics.

Jonathan Kaplan argued that divine onomastics asserts divine supremacy in Hellenistic and Roman Jewish literature, particularly in prayers and prayer-related compositions.[27] Thus, ancient Jews deeply valued names, especially divine names and epithets, in prayer. For example, Josephus asserts that Moses asked God for his name so that he could invoke God during sacrifice (*Ant*. 2:275). In Jubilees, Isaac compels his sons to take an oath to fear and worship God because "… there is no oath which is greater than it by the name glorious and honoured and great and splendid and wonderful and mighty, which created the heavens and the earth and all things together" (*Jub*.36:7).[28]

Among the Second Temple Judaism materials, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide the most transparent window through which one can glean names and naming strategies of the period.

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[26] Ben C. Blackwell et al., eds., *Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019); Mark D. Mathews, *Riches, Poverty, and the Faithful: Perspectives on Wealth in the Second Temple Period and the Apocalypse of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Edith M. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and The Shepherd of Hermas* (London: T&T Clark, 2018); Richard Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 39; Loren T Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, vol. 2 of *WUNT* 70 (Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 1995).

[27] Jonathan Kaplan, "God (Names and Epithets- Rabbinic Judaism)," in *Encyclopedia of Bible and Its Reception*, ed. Dale C. Jr. . Allison et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 347–49.

[28] Robert H. Charles, *The Apocrypha, and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (England: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2:67, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31158009488676.

The Essenes, a Jewish sect associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls, emphasises the importance of divine names, particularly during worship in which the leader praises and blesses God daily, eulogising him with the epithetical name "my righteousness" (*1QS 10:11–12*).

Regarding the names mentioned in Revelation, there is substantial scholarly endorsement for examining names in the Dead Sea Scrolls as a foundation for understanding Revelation.[29] Steve Moyise identified notable similarities between the book of Revelation and the manuscripts with respect to naming in the Qumran caves. He found six similarities in the following areas: 1) metaphorically identifying objects or characters, 2) employing catchwords, 3) utilising abbreviations, 4) applying the attributes of one subject to another, 5) rectifying one text using another, and 6) employing creative reinterpretation of Hebrew roots.[30]

Scholars' support for analysing the Dead Sea Scrolls alongside the book of Revelation does not remove the differences in opinions about the difficulty that such a venture can bring. Loren L. Johns, for example, notes the possible difficulties that must be resolved, especially when the symbolism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Revelation is considered. One significant problem is that the two sets of documents cast images with different orientations. For example, whereas Qumran's images are *floral* (plant-based), Revelation uses *fauna*

[29] Herbert Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament* (Mohr Seibeck, 1966), 307–26. See J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 1st ed., Anchor Bible 38 (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1975) , which contains about 200 reference that echo the Dead Sea Scrolls. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*.; David E. Aune, "Qumran and the Book of Revelation," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. Vanderkam (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 1998), 622–48.; George Wesley Buchanan, *The Book of Revelation: Its Introduction and Prophecy* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2005); James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance For Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity*, Reprint. (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2004), 326–78.

[30] Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, JSNTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 106–7. Also refer to Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Eschatological Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1989).

(animistic).[31] Notwithstanding, research on comparative analyses of the two studies has progressed considerably in recent years.

Naming as a rhetorical strategy is common in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the book of Revelation although the two materials do not use many proper names.[32] The Scrolls seldom identify the community members with their proper names but instead use a naming strategy to characterise those within and outside the community. Some of the names are pseudonymous with both positive and negative connotations, for example "Sons of Light (1QM 1:1); the Sons of Righteous [ness] (10; 1QS 3:13); Righteous Teacher (CD 1:5–11); "The Poor Ones" (1QH 3:3; 4Q171 3:10; 1QS 1:1;1QHab 12:4; 1QpMic); "Furious Young Lion" (4QpHos 22, 8:108); "Smooth things Seekers" (4Q169 2:2–19); The Kittim (1QpHab 2:12,14); "The Wicked Priest" (1QpHab 8:8); "The Man of Lies" (CD 20:15); Sons of Darkness (1QM 1:1; 1QS 1:10); The City of Blood (4Q169); The Mistress of Seduction (4Q169 2:5).

One aspect of Qumran and NT Apocalyptic research that still needs attention is the comparison of their use of names and naming as a literary and theological tool that conveys the message of the book to the readers/hearers.[33] While there are limited proper names in both texts, the use of other forms of naming to classify characters as either associated with excellent or negative virtues is prevalent in both.[34] An Example of this is the identification of

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[31] Loren L. Johns, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocalypse of John," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 256–58.

[32] Proper names are seldom used in the Dead Sea Scrolls; one ostracon has been found to contain specific names such as Jonathan and Hananiah (4Q448). There are other specific names, but these seem to be people who were outside the Qumran community. Examples include "Antiochus" (4QpNah frags. 3–4, 1.3), "[Deme]trius" (4Q169 frags. 3–4 1.2); "Balakros" (4Q243 frag. 21 line 2). For extensive discussions see Frank Moore Cross and Esther Eshel, "The Missing Link: Does a New Inscription Establish a Connection between Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls?," *BAR* 24.2 (1998): 48–53, 69; Geza Vermes, "The So-Called King Jonathan Fragment(4Q448)," *JJS* 44 (1993): 294–300; Esther Eshel, Hanan Eshel, and Ada Yardeni, "A Qumran Composition Containing Part of Ps. 154 and Prayer for Welfare of King Jonathan and His Kingdom," *IEJ* 42.3/4 (1992): 199–229.

[33] Michael Owen Wise, Martin G. Abegg, and Edward M. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 399.

[34] Ibid. 271.

who King Jonathan was in the Qumran writings of 4Q448. The character and nature of this king are only known through accolades in prayer for his well-being. In the prayer, he is described in titular and epithetical phrases like "father", "holy", and kingdom as can be found in the Revelation too.[35] Based on the designations, two identities have been suggested as fitting the name King Jonathan. First, Esther Eshel and Hana Eshel, who first posited that the name is referring to Alexander Jannaeus, one of the Hasmonean rulers, said by Flavius Josephus as having virtually obliterated the Maccabean ideals.[36] However, Geza Vermes objects to this identification and argues that it refers to Jonathan Maccabaeus, the last ruler of the Maccabean dynasty.[37]

In summary, the shared similarities between the Qumran and Revelation communities provide a basis for comparing the names used by their respective authors. As succinctly expressed by Johns, "… naming was one way to create and maintain a way of looking at the world, a symbolic universe, a way of defining reality and maintaining appropriate boundaries" in the two communities.[38]

2.4. New Testament Onomastics

In NT studies, naming as a literary tool has not been as thoroughly researched as in Old Testament studies. Published research in this regard centres on Christological name theology. A survey by Wilhelm Heitmüller on the use of the phrase ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ

[35] This is based on the translation by Esther, Hanan, and Ada. See Eshel, Eshel, and Yardeni, "A Qumran Composition Containing Part of Ps. 154 and Prayer for Welfare of King Jonathan and His Kingdom," 201.

[36] William Whiston, *Josephus - The Complete Works* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 390. This is the position of most Qumran scholars. Eshel, Eshel, and Yardeni, "A Qumran Composition Containing Part of Ps. 154 and Prayer for Welfare of King Jonathan and His Kingdom"; Wise, Abegg, and Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 399.

[37] Geza Vermes, "The So-Called King Jonathan Fragment (4Q448)," *JJS* 44 (1993): 294–300.

[38] Johns, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocalypse of John," 272–73.; Geza Vermes, "The So-Called King Jonathan Fragment (4Q448)," *JJS* 44 (1993): 294–300. Vermes Geza, trans., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls In English*, Revised. (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 56.

Χριστοῦ in the NT ignited interest in studying names in the NT generally.[39] He theorised that the use of the name had its roots in Jewish hypostasis, in which the name God was invoked for healing, exorcism, and protection. This foundational work has renewed interest in Christology. In line with this development, the shared names, titles, and the concept of God and Jesus being worshipped together have been the subject of most research that has led to New Testament name theology.[40]

Michael Harris has recently explored New Testament books to ascertain the relationship between their name theology patterns and those of the Old Testament and concluded that the names of Jesus play different roles in the NT.[41] He grouped the uses in three thematic areas: soteriology (i.e. believing/calling on the name of Jesus/God for Salvation), worship (i.e. giving praise and worship to the name), and concealment (i.e. keeping the real identity of God/Jesus as a mystery). For example, he finds that the Gospel of John and Revelation have the greatest content of concealed names.[42] The difference, however, is that in John, "… the name is not hidden in the present world, but is revealed and is an active source of power for initiating and preserving salvation."[43] In Revelation,

[39] Wilhelm Heitmüller, *Im Namen Jesu: Eine sprach-und religionsgeschichtlich Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament, speziell zur altchristliche Taufe* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903), 154–155.

[40] For the purposes of this study, advanced Christological arguments cannot be given space here. See the following for details: Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity: A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before The Council of Nicaea*, trans. John A. Baker, 1st ed. (London: Westminster, 1977); Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Essays on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (London: Authentic Media, 2013); and James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* (London: SPCK, 2011). Although other NT books in which ὄνομά is frequently used are also focal points of research, the Christology of John has attracted more research. Broadhead's book on the use of titles in naming Jesus in the book of Mark is one worth reading. He argues that each of the titles in the book was intentionally crafted to reveal Jesus progressively (Edwin K. Broadhead, *Naming Jesus: Titular Christology in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNTSup 175 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). Also refer to Brian C. Small, *The Characterization of Jesus in the Book of Hebrews, BI.* 128 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

[41] Michael Harris, "Christological Name Theology in Three Second Century Communities" (PhD Thesis, Marquette University, 2013), 123.

[42] John 14:13, 14; 15:16; 16:23, 24, 26.

[43] Harris, "Christological Name Theology in Three Second Century Communities," 118.

"believers possess the name" as a guarantor of their salvation.[44] His study and conclusions are informative for the current exploration, but their narrow focus on the Christological aspect of the names appears to inadequately justify Revelation's use of names.

Joshua Coutts has analysed the divine names in the Gospel of John to explore the similarities and differences in how the gospel writers frequently use the names of God the Father.[45] According to Coutts, there are three schools of thought about this: 1) John is influenced by the Hellenistic/Jewish magical practice of invoking the power in the name of a deity; 2) John follows rabbinical exegesis concerning name concepts prevalent in the Targum, and 3) John is dependent on the text of Isaiah in the style of naming the divine in his gospel. The second branch of research on the applications of ὄνομα in John focuses on instances in which the name is mentioned and examines its significance and purpose within the given context. Coutts concludes that.

> [ὄνομα] is a formal term which gains theological relevance in its respective context. Within the Fourth Gospel, it has its function. It portrays not *the* mode, but rather *a* mode among many, by which the Gospel of John makes accessible for its readers the event of the self-communication of God in the person and work of his Revealer, Jesus Christ, and its significance for the salvation of humanity.[46]

A critical analysis of how names are used in the NT can be productive in terms of interpretation and comprehension.

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[44] Ibid. 123.

[45] Joshua Coutts, "'My Father's Name': A Survey of Research on the Use of *Onoma* with Respect to the Father in the Fourth Gospel," *CBR* 15, no. 2 (2017): 248–260.

[46] Franz Georg Untergassmair, *Im Namen Jesu. Der Namensbegriff im Johannesevangelium: eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Studie zu den johanneischen Namensaussagen* (Stuttgart, Germany: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974), 187. as cited in Coutts, "'My Father's Name,'" 254.

2.5. Names and Naming in the Book of Revelation

According to Royalty, Revelation attempts to persuade listeners and readers of its theological message.[47] Hence, it is more performative than referential in terms of diction.[48] For most of the book, the drama, symbolism, and characterisation of the actors are crucial in conveying its message. Consequently, these characteristics and messages can only become more apparent through names.

The views on "names" in Revelation are diverse. For scholars such as Aune, names in the book serve two purposes for the author: 1) as a metonym (for example, Rev.2:3; 3:8, 12; 14:1, 11) and 2) as a designation for a group of people (Rev. 3:1,4; 13:8; 17:8) and characters (Rev. 13:6,17; 17:5).[49] What is lacking is a specific proposal that addresses the issue of names as strategic elements in the development. For Adela Yarbro Collins, names in Revelation are the vehicles the author uses to vilify his opponents and to define the early Christian community.[50] Based on this observation, Collins concludes that John relied on 'name-calling' to solve the social tension between Christians of Asia Minor and Jews who had become a thorn in the flesh of the former. A similar view of the role of names is held by Tina Pippin, with a slight divergence in that she argues that designations such as *Jezebel*, *the*

[47] Robert M. Royalty Jr., "The Rhetoric of Revelation," in *SBLSP*, 36 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 601.

[48] For a recent discussion on the context of the audience of Revelation, their literary levels and the performative patterns, see Kayle B. De Waal, *An Aural-Performance Analysis of Revelation 1 and 11* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2015).

[49] These labels, except the first, are my assessment of his comments based on Aune's comments, which are scattered throughout the three volumes. The types of usage will be given in detail later in this work. See David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), 146, 184, 219, 223; David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 804.

[50] For Collins, names such as Ἰουδαῖος, Synagogue of Satan, Jezebel and Balaam were all used to vilify the Jews and classify them as outsiders in the commonwealth of believers. For an extended discussion on this, see Adela Yarbro Collins, "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation," *HTR* 79, no. 1–3 (1986): 308–320. This view is also shared by David L Barr, "Towards an Ethical Reading of the Apocalypse: Reflections on John's Use of Power, Violence, and Misogyny," in *SBLSP* 36 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 372; David L Barr, "The Apocalypse As a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis," *Int* 38 (1984).

woman clothed in scarlet, and her designation as a *whore*, reveal John's bias against women. Thus, such a strategy is a symbolic characterisation that fuels oppression against women.[51] It can be argued that the women Pippin cites in her argument are not the only ones in Revelation. There are other female images, such as the woman with a child (Rev. 12, described as virtuous) and the Holy City described as the bride (Rev.21:2), both of which are characterised positively in the book. Name-calling was not a practice in Asia Minor; hence, Collins' and Pippin's assertions seem more speculative than factual.

The scholarship discussed above contributes significantly to the broader discussion of the role of names in Revelation. What remains is to look beyond the socio-gender rhetoric of names in John's thought process. However, other scholars have observed the integral role of naming in the theology and message of the book.

G. K. Beale identifies four levels of communication in Revelation.[52] The first level is linguistic: the communication that emanates from the text is read and heard by the audience. The next is the academic level, which includes John's visionary experiences and narrations. The third is the referential level, which aids readers in identifying the objects described in the book. The fourth communicative strand is the symbolic level, which indicates the connotations and denotations of the historical referents represented by several symbols in Revelation. Above all communicative levels, the inability of the two groups to exist independently is evident. Names in the form of descriptive titles connect all levels, a point Beale does not emphasise. For example, John's concealment of the identity of the voice that spoke to him from 1:12 to 3:22, especially where he introduces *God* and *Jesus Christ* (Rev.

[51] Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville: KY John Knox, 1992), 105. This view is held by other feminist scholars such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998).

[52] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 257–58.

1:1, 5) as the original authors of his epistle, undoubtedly forms part of his intentional communicative strategy. In this research, the effects of using names and naming as a literary-theological strategy in the book of Revelation.

Beale correctly argues for the critical use of names in Revelation in his two-page discussion on the *new name* that has been promised to overcomers in Rev. 2:17 and the secret name of the white horse rider in 19:12. He observes that to know a name in Revelation "does not connote mere cognitive knowledge but experiential access to the character and power that the name represents so that those who know Christ's name share in his character and end-time power … "[53] He adds, "To be given a new name was an indication of a new status. Moreover, when God's name is applied to a place in the OT, it often indicates that his presence is there. When someone gave a name to another person or thing, it meant they possessed that person or thing."[54] By inference, in instances where descriptive phrases replace personal names, the nature and quality of the entity are the primary concern. This fact adds to the images of God, Jesus, and the dragon portrayed by the author.

Although Beale does not devote any more space to a discussion of names in the rest of his commentary, his remarks provide impetus for the current research on names and naming as a literary-theological tool used by the author of Revelation.

Edith Humphrey has argued for naming as a deliberate strategy used by John. She investigates the function of naming (and not-naming) of the Christophany in Rev. 1:10 –20, the double-throne visions in 4:1–11 and 5:1–14 and the woman-city imagery of Babylon in 17:1–13, 18:1:8.[55] She observes that John introduces his readers/hearers to the principal authors (Jesus and God) behind his vision and the subsequent text he is producing. However,

[53] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 257–58.

[54]Ibid. 254. Beale relies on Bietenhard, "Ὄνομα," 5:253–58, in his treatment of names in the Bible.

[55]Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming," 170.

in 1:10–20, John conceals and reveals them with other means of identification instead of repeating their proper names. Thus, according to Humphrey, the Seer, 'hears a great voice' (1:10) that identifies itself as the '*Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and the last' (1:11). From there through to the epistles to the seven churches, "what is named and not named, and the manner of naming is the major means of establishing the dynamic of revealing while concealing" the identity of Jesus in that pericope.[56]

Although Humphrey's article is a valued resource, it does not capture the theological relevance of Rev. 1–3 to the double-throne scenes in chapters 4 and 5, where Jesus shares the same level of worship as the Ancient of Days does. Could it be that the author, deeply engrossed in Hebrew thought, intended to continue the Jewish high reverence for the name of God, a status accorded to the exalted Jesus at the time of writing? Additionally, the theological reasoning behind his use of antonomasia and eponyms is the direct application of proper names. Humphrey's examination of the naming method in Revelation 17:1–13 and 18:1–8 makes a significant and helpful addition to the overall naming structure of John's narrative. In these chapters, Babylon, the symbol of evil, is named, but its identity is not disclosed, possibly to tame or contain its powers under the dominion of Christ.[57] Her article invites further extensive analysis of the function of *names* and *naming* strategies in the theological scheme of Revelation.

In his narrative commentary on Revelation, James Resseguie identifies the name as the foremost "verbal thread… [that] signifies and changes in status or a new character, and the metaphor used to describe the problem in the Sardian Church."[58] Although his observation is valid and essential, it constricts the substantial role of names and naming in

[56] Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming," 170.

[57] Ibid. 173–74.

[58] James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 25, 96.

Revelation. John records not only a promise to give new names to those who keep their faith in the face of coercion from the devil and his agents, but he also uses names to reveal or conceal both good and evil characters. For example, the beast from the sea blasphemes God's name because it bears the name of blasphemy on its head (Rev.13:1, 6).

Leonard L. Thompson also notes the complexity of John's use of the word *name* in the letter to Sardis (3: 1): "at one point (it) represents external, superficial reality … whereas later he declares that he will not blot out the *name* of the one who conquers" (3:5). Although he classifies such usage as a pun, this research argues that the names for John mean much more than a mere literary strategy.[59]

Furthermore, Jesus has a name that no one knows. It is later revealed as the "Word of God, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (19:12–13, 16). Such descriptions apparently could not be related to a change in status, but rather to the nature and function of the entities described in John's naming strategy. The names in Revelation are intentionally crafted to reveal the nature and role of the characters.[60]

De Villiers examines the use of names and the identification of malevolent entities in the book of Revelation.[61] Through discourse analysis, he investigates the description and name of the dragon in Revelation 20:1–3. This analysis highlights the literary skill of the author of Revelation and asserts that the narrative concerning the binding of the devil in chapters 19–21 effectively demonstrates the impotence and ultimate destruction of the dragon, depicted as the embodiment of evil. De Villiers supports his argument with a

[59] Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 49.

[60] Christopher C. Rowland, "The Book of Revelation, Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: Hebrews-Revelation*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 12 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998), 589; Witherington, *Revelation*, 273; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Revised. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 400.

[61] Pieter G. R. de Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," *Neot* 34.1 (2000): 57–85.

structural analysis of the dragon's appearances in chapters 12, 13, and 20, noting that the author skilfully employs textual markers, such as verbs and paired phrases, to portray the dragon's weakness. He correctly identifies Satan as the principal figure of evil or as the "prime evil".

De Villiers' work is an excellent starting point for studying the concepts of good and evil and how John portrays them. While he concentrated on identifying the prime evil in Revelation, this dissertation expands the scope to include names that identify good and evil characters in Revelation.

Bauckham asserts that "John was not playing a literary game [instead] he buried in the literary composition of his work theological significance which few readers have subsequently unearthed … "[62] The central thesis of this research is to show that John did not aim to create a literary aesthetic work meant to astonish and encourage his audience to solely appreciate literary rhetoric. Instead, he intended to offer a theological compendium on the nature and role of good and evil in the daily life of the church and the Christian, using names and naming concepts.

The analysis indicates that while John appears to have been familiar with pre-existing literature from the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and the New Testament, his naming conventions exhibit minimal direct influence from the latter. This is evidenced by the absence of explicit quotations from such literature, suggesting that his onomastic strategies were shaped by other theological and literary priorities.[63]

Revelation was composed within an apocalyptic community, that has been characterised by Bauckham as the culmination of Judeo-Christian prophecy. Consequently, this study emphasises how the naming patterns in Revelation reflect the theological and

[62] Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 33.

[63] R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), cxliii.

cultural influences of the Old Testament, Judeo-Christian traditions, and Greco-Roman thought. This necessitates a thematic and theological exploration of how the author's methods of naming align with or diverge from the period's Hebraic-Hellenistic cultural context.

The fact that the main characters in Revelation are identified through sobriquets, titles, and descriptive appellations makes exploring an author's naming strategy essential. In other words, although John sets out to reveal the status and nature of the cosmic controversy between God and Satan, he presents the actor's figurative style in plain language. Hence, there is a need to take a closer look at them to unpack the themes throughout the text. Therefore, the relevance of the above review can be seen from the dividends that analytical attention to the various names and titles of both good and evil entities yields concerning the nature of the cosmic conflict. This study aims to provide insight into John's theological views on the roles of good and evil in the war theme.

2.6. Summary

Names in the Old Testament often reflect a monotheistic perspective, with numerous personal names derived from the name "Yahweh." An examination of the Dead Sea Scrolls further highlights the importance of divine names and epithets in prayers and devotion.

Christological appellations are significant in the New Testament, particularly in elucidating the divine nature of Jesus and his salvific role. In the book of Revelation, names and titles are strategically employed to disclose the nature and function of the principal characters within the cosmic struggle between good and evil.

There is a notable gap in scholarly research on the theological significance of names in the book of Revelation. This gap necessitates a comprehensive examination of the text's onomastic structure to enhance the understanding of its message. This study aims to address this gap by analysing the naming patterns in Revelation and their contribution to the book's literary and theological framework.

CHAPTER 3

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND ITS METHOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out a methodological framework for analysing the names and naming practices of virtuous and malevolent figures within the cosmic conflict narrative in the book of Revelation. It delineates the research objectives, theoretical foundations guiding the methodological approach, and the systematic procedures required for its implementation.

3.2. Purpose of Study

This study examines the use of titles, epithets, and participial descriptors as names in Revelation to identify good and evil characters in the book and how this naming style enhances the literary-theological framework of its cosmic conflict theme.[64] The use of names, naming strategies, and their literary and theological relevance have not received as much attention as other themes in Revelation, such as Lamb Christology, the throne motif, and eschatology. This gap suggests that important aspects of this first-century text remain insufficiently explored in current scholarship.

Names are essential elements of narratives that mark their plots, portrayals, and perspectives. Literary names convey emotional ties and ideologically related themes. This study differs from literary onomastics in general and theonymy[65] in particular, that study of

[64] It should be noted that what constitutes a name in this research is taken in a broader sense to include epithets, titles, and participial descriptors. This is because most of the actors, especially those involved in the cosmic battle, do not have proper names, yet they are meant to be identified. In such instances, any character study in the book cannot be done through the conventional onomastic studies framework. Also this research limits itself to the study of divine names and evil characters not good humans.

[65] This is a branch of Onomastics that studies the etymology, history, and use of proper names of deities. See P. H. Matthews, "Theonym," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford

the relationship between characters and their names in fiction, where names serve as metaphors for their bearers and give characters an identity.[66] In this study, the theological significance of the names of good and evil characters in the book of Revelation is examined to address a gap in scholarly research on apocalyptic naming.[67] Thus, this study forms a foundational element in attracting academic attention to onomastics in Revelation, demonstrating the book's formation of meaning, "*Sinnbildung.*"[68]

3.3. Methodology

This section describes the methodological approach for analysing the literary-theological function and role of names in the book of Revelation. The study uses a library research method termed "Theo-onomastics" which investigates the patterns and importance of names and naming in a biblical text. This methodology combines biblical-theological enquiries, systematic theology, and literary onomastics.

University Press, 2014), https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780199675128.001.0001/acref-9780199675128-e-3413; Tlegenova Gulden Bakytkazyevna, Rysbergen Kyzdarkhan Kurmashkyzy, and Zhanabekova Aiman Abdildaevna, "Representativeness of Mythonyms and Theonyms in Language Corpora," *IJSCL* 12.1 (2024): 374–95, https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2024.2017262.3288.

[66] Adelina Iliescu, "Names and Naming in Literary Works," *Rev. Contemp. Philos.* 14 (2015): 144–49.

[67] Currently, there is only one journal article and one book chapter devoted to this topic. See: Pieter G. R. De Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," *Neot* 34.1 (2000): 57–85; Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming."; Johns, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocalypse of John." Besides these, the subject is discussed in portions of other articles and commentaries; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920). Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John*. Aune, "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3)," 190.

[68] Michael Labahn, "The Dangerous Loser: The Narrative and Rhetorical Function of the Devil as Character in the Book of Revelation," in *Evil and the Devil*, ed. Erkki Koskenniemi and Ida Fröhlich, Library of New Testament Studies 481 (London: T & T Clark, 2013), 159.

3.3.1. Theoretical Foundation

In the study of names John Stuart Mill is credited with drawing a distinction between common and proper names,[69] Charles Peirce argued that names derive their integral meanings from numerous associations.[70] Grant Smith extended this proposition, suggesting that names in literature elicit symbolic and thematically significant interpretations.[71] Analysing names in literary texts, especially in genres such as prose, drama, poetry, and apocalyptic literature, is crucial for understanding the overall meaning of the text.

Thus, when used in a text, the most famous names might have various semantics and purposes that can only be uncovered through research. While names are used in written and spoken works, their usage cannot be taken for granted, especially in genres such as prose, drama, poetry, and apocalyptic literature. Iliescu stated, "Every name offered in a literary text may be positioned with a semantic aim, accompanying the overall formation of a creative Literary work."[72] Undoubtedly, analysing it can affect the comprehension of the text. As László Tóth explains below,

> …names are important elements of human languages and may be connected to every field of human activity (history, culture, religion, and arts). Naturally, names play significant roles in literary texts. Since in these texts reality and fiction mingle, the differences and similarities between the real world of the reader and the world of the texts are important in the reception process.[73]

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[69] Grant W. Smith, "Theoretical Foundations of Literary Onomastics," in *Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, ed. Carole Hough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 295.

[70] Charles Sanders Peirce, *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic by Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. James Hoopes (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

[71] Grant W. Smith, "Theoretical Foundations of Literary Onomastics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 308. Nyström discuses three level of meaning that can be found in a name as follows: categorial meaning, associative meaning, emotive meaning. See Staffan Nyström, "Names and Meaning," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2016), 40–50.

[72] Iliescu, "Names and Naming in Literary Works," 148.

[73] László Tóth, "Theory and Methodology in Literary Onomastics: Proper Names in István Szilágyi's Novels (in Particular in Hollóidő /Time of Ravens/)." (PhD Thesis, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2014), 2, https://docplayer.net/47882287.

Kyallo Wamitila has argued in support of the same view.

> In reading creative works, we tend to identify characters basically by the names given to them. In this basic premise, some recourse to their names and sometimes identify them in metaphorical terms or as speaking names. Names play a very central and vital role in any reading exercise and so would certainly the names given to characters be essential to us. These linguistic or semiotic signs play a crucial role in the overall linguistic structure or significance of a literary text. Decoding the names becomes a meaningful critical engagement as it helps the reader … decipher the text names.[74]

Considering these affirmations and the numerous introspective comments on names and naming, it is evident that exploring the function of names in interpreting and identifying a particular story is essential. Thus, a character's name in a literary work may not be sufficient to identify him or her as a mere signifier.[75]

Names are key narrative components that shape the plots, portrayals, and standpoints. Authors and readers often use these as discursive strategies to gain a deeper understanding of a character's essence.[76] The linguistic onomastic process of creating names is crucial for understanding the linguistic structures of literary texts. Proper names can be extracted from various classes and types of words, with certain classes having more reliable characteristics.

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[74] Kayallo Wamitila, "What's in a Name: Towards Literary Onomastics in Kiswahili Literature," *AAP* 60 (1999): 35.

[75] Thomas Docherty, *Reading (Absent) Character: Towards a Theory of Characterization in Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 119; Joel Weinsheimer, "Theory of Character: Emma," *Poetics Today* 1.1/2 (1979): 187.

[76] Onomastics is the study of names and naming conventions, including various sub-disciplines that go beyond personal and geographical names. **Anthroponymy** studies personal names, while **toponymy** focuses on place names. Emerging fields are continually expanding name studies to encompass broader linguistic, cultural, and epistemological frameworks. Additional areas are **zoonymy**, which examines proper names assigned to animals; astronomical nomenclature, which investigates the names of celestial bodies; and **cosmonymy**, which includes names designated for zones and structural divisions of the universe. **Theonymy** provides an analysis of the names of deities, offering insights into religious and mythological traditions across different cultures. See, *Macquarie Dictionary* 2, s.v. "Onomastics." 1051. It is noteworthy that the word in the adjective in legal studies stands for "… a signature that is written in a different handwriting from that of the document to which it is attached." See R. W. Burchfield, "Onomastic," *Oxford English Dictionary* X:820. This goes to support the fact that names are not the only identifying feature of a person. Literary onomaturgy is differentiated from literary onomastics for their separate emphasis in the field of research. Whereas the latter focuses on names in the contexts of a narrative, the former emphasises "on ensembles of names that share common features in their construction, over and beyond the texts in which the individual names appear." For further discussion on the two, see Christopher L. Robinson, "Onomaturgy vs. Onomastics: An Introduction to the Namecraft of Ursula K. Le Guin," *NAMES* 59.3 (2011): 129.

In interpreting fiction, readers rely on the names attributed to the characters, often diagnosing them as metaphorical or speaking names.

Names are intricate tapestries of interpretative threads that can hold significant evocative power. They consist of connotative attributes that represent a full emotional connection generated through ideologically associated thematic ingredients and speech figures. Paradigmatic representations and forms are instrumental in providing semantic identities through naming.

In her book on cognitive grammar, Ellen van Wolde discusses how language, primarily descriptive nouns, fits into cognitive analysis.[77] She argued that all nouns/descriptors have cognitive profiles that create perceptual or contextual meanings. The profiles were classified into two categories: nominal and rotational. Nominal types occur when a noun designates an entity as a unit, something, or a thing that aids readers or hearers in perceiving it as a single idea or meaning. Proper nouns belong to this group.

Relational profiles, on the other hand, are designations that create interconnectivity between the conceived entities. This profile type stems from the grammatical parts of speech, such as verbs, prepositions, adjectives, participles, and adverbs. Van Wolde further splits relational profiles into two categories: temporal and atemporal. A temporal profile describes the processual relations that express an action or event. The classes of prepositions, adjectives, conjunctions, adverbs, particles, and participles correspond to the atemporal profiles. They do not represent a sequence of states but rather a relationship in a single image.

Thus, the name is the most influential profile factor because it overrides the generic content of the schematic type so that, in the minds of its users, the named gate relates to a

[77] E. J. van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Indiana, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 104–29.

unique instance rather than the conceptual content of the city's entry structure.[78] Although Van Wolde supports her hypothesis with examples primarily from the Old Testament, the observations are relevant to this study, particularly for a book like Revelation, written in Greek by an author whose thought process was influenced by Hebrew.[79]

Naming aspects are instrumental in the complexity and appeal of fiction because they enable us to perceive the name as part of the text's language. Despite their denotative nature, names are not automatically free of ideology, as they play a crucial role in establishing how we judge and act. Literary names should be adopted as patterns that indicate how many referential elements can be produced through usage within a limited habitat.

Names in literary works have significant semantic, pragmatic, connotative, and symbolic value that should be understood in terms of the structure of the work. They act as primary tools for creating a textual background.[80] Names can be used as literary signifiers, and their operational function can be estimated in line with the broader creativity of literary texts.

Proper names can be differentiated through lexical recognition and are primarily handled by a word identification system. They may also possess prefabricated accounts and identities associated with them, which can significantly influence how a place, individual, or thing is perceived as a referential channel between narrative and creativity.

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[78] Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context*, 123.

[79] Steve Thompson has succinctly argued that for the author of the Apocalypse, "the Greek language was little more than a membrane, stretched tightly over a Semitic framework, showing many essential contours from beneath." Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, 52:108. Moreover, the Book of Revelation was greatly influenced by the language of the Old Testament prophets, specifically biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, rather than the dialects spoken in first-century Hebrew and Aramaic (ibid. pp. 1, 34, 56–57, 107). For contrasting views on this position, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Rhetoricity of Revelation and the Politics of Interpretation," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L Barr, SBLSynS 39 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006), 243–70, and Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 167.

[80] Tatit Hariyanti and Dwi Nurhayati, "Pearl in Hawthorne's the Scarlet Letter: A Socio-Religious Perspective," *AWEJ* 1.1 (2017): 65–78.

The semantic attributes of names in literary works are markers of deliberate symbolism and have specific connotations. When writers name their characters, they create clear boundaries and defined spaces for them. Thus, names help perceive unstructured texts as one entity, allowing us to identify their links and understand them differently than if they had been isolated or unidentified.

These names construct knowledge, enabling us to determine and classify correspondences and discrepancies, which is an essential first step in understanding an intricate space. The significance of names lies in the symbolism they convey and the narratives they create, representing characters and places, illustrating qualities, and encapsulating stories.[81]

Onomastics emerged as a discipline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[82] With its roots in linguistics, onomastics has typically been influenced by historical and etymological approaches that explore name origins, derivations, and development over time, as well as scholarship that seeks to define names and establish a coherent theory of naming.

In onomastics, names are divided into proper and standard categories. Usually, names are conceived as proper nouns, words, or phrases that create an "individual designation by which a particular person or thing is known, referred to, or addressed."[83] A 'common name' is a term used to refer to plants or animals in the native language of their environment, whereas a 'personal name' is a designation given to a person, such as a first or family name.

[81] Alvarez-Altman traces the initial use of the term *Onomastics* to the 1600s and adds however that it was not fully analysed until 1895–1900. See Grace Alvarez-Altman, "Literary Onomastics Typology: Analytic Guidelines to Literary Onomastic Studies," *LOS* 8 (1981): 219–30. This origins dates back even to the time of Greek and Latin Philosophers. See also Alfons Wouters and Pierre Swiggers, "Noun (Ónoma), Ancient Theories Of," *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*.; David Sedley, "Plato's Cratylus," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2018. (Stanford: Stanford University, 2018).

[82] An introduction to the development of literary onomastics is offered in the introductory chapter in Star Medzerian Vanguri (ed), *Rhetorics of Names and Naming* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 2.

[83] S.v. "Oxford English Dictionary Online."

A more technical term concerning unique objects in a designation space is 'identifier.'[84] Wittgenstein observes the pivotal role of names in the philosophy of human language generally. He states, "… the individual words in language name objects —sentences are combinations of such names."[85] In summary, names are indispensable for making any meaning out of human language. Literary onomastics develops when researchers analyse names in literary works. In such cases, the study focuses on the search for a connection between "characters and their names" and "the purpose of the name is to mimic its bearer, just as a metaphor replicates its referent."[86] In this instance, Grace Alvarez-Altman, who established the guidelines for literary onomastics as a scientific study, recognised six approaches and three functions typically applied in literary works.[87] Her categories are informative; however, she neglects to include religion as a practice and process, probably because of her exclusive focus on fictional literature. Thus, this study attempts to add to the existing categories that will permit a deeper investigation of biblical naming.

Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristarchus, the Stoics, and the Alexandrians understood ὄνομα not as merely individualising an object in the two pure forms of proper or common, but also as identifying names regarding adjectives, pronouns, participles, and infinitival verb forms, especially in the works of Philo.[88] Thus, early Greek philosophers such as Philo seem to have hinted at naming that transcends modern categories. William Bright

[84] Byrne, "The Importance of Divine Designations in Old Testament Theology," 336.

[85] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Pearson, 1973), 2e.

[86] Iliescu, "Names and Naming in Literary Works," 144.

[87] She gleans from the works of literary scholars such as Allen Walker, George Sommer, and J. B. Rudnyckyj to list the techniques as follows: Polyanthropy, Synecdoche, Evocative, Symbolism, Alienation and Encantatory. She further elaborates the functions as: "Redende Namen," Relevance to form in poetry and relevance to ontology and cosmology. For definitions of the techniques and functions, see Alvarez-Altman, "Literary Onomastics Typology: Analytic Guidelines to Literary Onomastic Studies."

[88] Examples of the works of Philo include *Crat.* 414a–b, 416a, 417e, 421c, 424a; *Men.* 87b-c; *PhD.* 71b; *Leg.* 895c; *Ti.* 50a. For extensive ancient debate on what the Greek and Latin name could mean, see Wouters and Swiggers, "Noun (Ónoma), Ancient Theories"

suggests that a reader from a different context may interpret a text based on standards that were never present in the text's original world.[89]

Furthermore, not all cultures, especially ancient ones, follow modern naming conventions.[90] It is interesting to note that some cultures and religions require the names of deities to be replaced with either an adjective or a descriptive phrase in reverence for their pious nature.[91] Biblical culture is no exception. In both the Old Testament and NT, as a safeguard against offending the third commandment, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain'(Exod. 20:7)",[92] Rabbinic authorities thought God's revealed name was so holy that it needed to be substituted with the title usually rendered Lord (אֲדֹנָי in Hebrew and κύριος in Greek).[93]

This practice of glossing over God's name became ingrained in the Jewish tradition. A closer look at New Testament Greek grammar reveals that the fluidity with which NT writers use articles in Greek can turn any part of speech into a noun.[94] The argument becomes

[89] William Bright, "What IS a Name? Reflection on Onomastics," *LaLi* 4.4 (2003): 670.

[90] This view is supported in the discussions of ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristarchus and the Alexandrians about the true meaning of ὄνομά. To them, the word could technically be understood not only as individualising an object in the basic forms of proper or common nouns but also adjectives, pronouns, participles, and infinitival verb forms, especially in the works of Philo. See A. P. Cohen, "Naming," *The Encyclopaedia of Language and Linguistics* 5:2674.

[91] Bright cites China and India as examples of such unconventional use of and definition of names. Biblical cultures are also classic examples. See Bright, "What IS a Name? Reflection on Onomastics," 672–73.

[92] Exodus 20:7 (NASB). The Hebrew verb for "take" is the bane of scholarly argument whether it means to "mention or "to bear the name of God." See Jeanette Mathews, "The Third Commandment: Lifting the LORD's Name," *RevExp* 113.4 (2016): 467–77. Thomas R Elßner, "Das Dekalogische Namensmißbrauch-Verbot (Ex 20,7/Dtn 5,11)," *BN* 114 (2002): 61–70.

[93] This notion resulted in what is known today as the Hebrew Tetragrammaton. Current debates centre on when the Tetragrammaton might have emerged in the OT, and the importance of the two names Yahweh and Elohim. For extensive discussion, see S Edward Tesh, "The Emergence and the Nature of the Tetragrammaton," *SQ* 9.4 (1948): 181–93; N. A. Dahl and Alan F. Segal, "Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God," *JSJ* 9.1 (1978): 1–28; Koog-Pyoung Hong, "The Euphemism for the Ineffable Name of God and Its Early Evidence in Chronicles," *JSOT* 37.4 (2013): 473–84.

[94] Rosén's observation that the article in Greek "has the power of according to nominal status to any expression to which it is appended..." has been extensively discussed by Wallace. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 207–91. According to him, the use of the article in Greek falls into three categories: to conceptualise, identify and definitize. See the following references for further discussion on the subject: Haim B. Rosén, *Early Greek Grammar and Thought in Heraclitus: The Emergence of the Article*, Proceedings; v. 7, No. 2 (Jerusalem:

more forceful as we consider the writing context of Revelation, in which John was instructed to "Write the things which you have seen…' (Rev. 1:19). The transcription of visuals invariably meant a description, even for objects with proper names.

The book of Revelation uses the term ὄνομα to refer to various semantic fields, including a) the name of Christ as a reason to persevere (2:3, 13; 3:8, 12; 11:18; 13:6); b) a significant designation that believers must show loyalty to and acknowledge their belonging to (2:17, 3:5, 13:8, 14:1, 11, 17:8, 22:4); c) naming objects and things (21:12, 14); and d) defining the nature and function of a character or person (3:1, 4; 8:11; 9:11; 11:11; 11:13; 13:17; 15:2, 4; 16:9; 17:5; 19:13, 16).[95] The third and fourth meanings of names are the most relevant to this study's objectives. Resseguie sums up the import of a name from the book of Revelation in his comment on Revelation 13:17.

> The number of the Beast is identical with its name, and to receive a name is to take on the characteristics represented by that name. Those who are stamped with the name of the beast exhibits the character of the character traits of humanity striving to be like God, while those who are stamped with Christ's name renounce self-deifying traits and, instead, give allegiance to the one true deity [96]

The central focus of this study is to determine the author's reasoning for the transition from direct naming to descriptive terminology. Consequently, the application of ὄνομα in this study diverges from traditional literary onomastics by encompassing both proper/common names and descriptive phrases/titles. This expansive view of names is firmly rooted in the

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Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1988), 27, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000922958. In his book on the Greek Article, Ronald D. Peters presents a grammar of the Greek article and relative pronoun, categorised as ὁ-items, which was formulated using the principles of Systemic-Functional Linguistics. This categorisation stands in contrast to previous grammars, which have categorically associated the article with the demonstrative pronoun. Thus, the present work represents a significant paradigm shift in the study of the Greek article. Unlike previous approaches that have too often yielded internally inconsistent and contradictory rules of usage, this approach results in a description of the article's function that is uniform across all occurrences. Simultaneously simple and robust, this grammar promises to pay significant dividends for exegetes and translators of the Greek New Testament. See Ronald D. Peters, *The Greek Article: A Functional Grammar of ὁ-Items in the Greek New Testament with Special Emphasis on the Greek Article*, vol. 9 of *Linguistic Biblical Studies*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Boston, MA: Brill, 2014).

[95] Gulaker makes a similar observation. See Cato Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man: A Narrative Analysis of the Function of Satan in the Book of Revelation*, LNTS 638 (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 154.

[96] Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 191.

book of Revelation. A typical example of this is Revelation 17:5, where the names written on the forehead of the woman who sat on the scarlet beast are described as *μυστήριον, Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς*. Similarly, the names of the person sitting on the white horse in Revelation 19:11, 13, 16 are given as πιστὸς καλούμενος καὶ ἀληθινός, ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ, Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ κύριος κυρίων, which serve as descriptors rather than as proper names.[97] Additionally, the concept of *ὀνόματα βλασφημίας* (Rev. 13:1; 17) illustrates that a name can be considered blasphemous based on its connotations. These instances suggest that what constitutes a name in the book of Revelation is more flexible and fluid, extending beyond conventional names and identification.

Christian teaching on divine names focuses on the invisible God, who is essentially numinous and intelligible.[98] This is because God's brilliance transcends the limitations of creation. The invisible God manifests himself in creatures through visible works and his self-interpreting words. These modes of development involve two modes of divine naming: the "threefold way" of Pseudo-Dionysius, which names God from his creature effects and honours him as the transcendent pattern and source of every creaturely perfection, and the self-revealing word, which communicates the name of the triune Lord and manifests his character and purpose to his creatures.[99]

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[97] Despite the varied views on the exact identity to which these descriptions refer, there is scholarly agreement that these are names. See Koester, *Revelation*, 755; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 953–55; Pierre Prigent and Wendy Pradels, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 542; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (London: SPCK, 2005), 490–91; Klaus Wengst, "The Devil in the Book of Revelation," in *The Problem of Evil and Its Symbols in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow, Yair Hoffman, and Yair Hoffman Rabbi (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 183, 195, Thomas R. Schreiner, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 646.

[98] Michael Allen, *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (A&C Black, 2009); Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: The Doctrine of God: 1* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 49–147; Andrea D. Saner, *"Too Much to Grasp": Exodus 3:13–15 and the Reality of God*, 1st ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015).

[99] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Dionysius the Areopagite On the Divine Names: And, The Mystical Theology / [Translated and Introduced] by C.E. Rolt.*, trans. C. E. Rolt, Translations of Christian Literature. Series I, Greek Texts (London: SPCK, 1920).

The primary grammatical function of naming consists of three paradigmatic acts: a) *identifying*[100] an object; b) *predicating* or making a statement about an object;[101] and c) *evaluating* things or making judgments about them, which can be either complimentary or condemnatory.

These paradigmatic acts of naming are executed in different ways by different people. An object may be identified using definite descriptions, proper names, and various indicators such as personal pronouns, deictic terms, "this" and "that", and adverbs of place, time, and verbal tenses. Moreover, things are predicated through attributes, actions, or even changes. Finally, objects are evaluated through various hierarchies of values, distinguishing objects across categories or an object's status.[102]

A noteworthy observation is that each of these instances, be it acts of identification, predication, or evaluation, connotes judgement about an object's *relation to* and *distinction from* a larger category or family in which it is an instance or a member. Spaemann puts it this way: "…nothing can be identified except as a such and such, which is to say, by a description that accommodates it alongside other things."[103] That is, when a person reveals the name of another and its nature, whether prescriptive or ascriptive, they are making a statement about it. This has implications for understanding naming in the book of Revelation.

Character-naming is a crucial aspect of written literature, particularly in tales, poetry, drama, and apocalyptic genres, where authors choose names based on age,

[100] Ricoeur also calls this "individualisation", an upgrade from Strawson's term "individuals." See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 26–30; P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, University Paperbacks (London: Routledge, 1959), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203221303.

[101] Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 97, 111, 144,172,203.

[102] Paul J. Griffiths, *Intellectual: Appetite a Theological Grammar* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 23–28; Robert Spaemann and Oliver O'Donovan, *Persons: The Difference between `Someone' and `Something'*, 1st Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5–15.

[103] Spaemann and O'Donovan, *Persons*, 124.

ethnicity, and genre.[104] Characterisation theories outline the parameters for character depictions, primarily in fictional narratives.[105] Despite the infrequent use of proper noun designations for good and evil actors, Revelation, through other forms of nomenclature, helps us understand key concepts in its text, especially the cosmic conflict theme.[106] John's narrative only includes personal descriptions of characters, with introductions by elders, Jesus, or God himself (Rev. 1:8, 11,13–18; 5:5–6).

However, the characterisation in the book of Revelation can be distinguished by its theocentric nature, in which God fulfils a multifaceted role. He is both the subject and object of representation and characterisation, as well as the plot's creator and agent. He is the means to achieve the book's goal and the artistic and rational foundation for the entire narrative.[107] Thus God is simultaneously the author, primary character, and addresser of the universe.[108] Each part is essential to acknowledging God's centrality in the text.[109]

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[104] Ayodele Adebayo Allagbé, "Character Naming and Authorial Attitudes in African Literature," *RHSS* 6.4 (2016): 20.

[105] Three dimensions of characterisation that are often discussed include narratorial control, the presentation of self or other, and the explicitness or implicitness of the textual cue. See Jonathan Culpeper and Carolina Fernandez-Quintanilla, "Fictional Characterisation," in *Pragmatics of Fiction*, ed. Miriam A. Locher and Andreas H. Jucker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 93–128.; Docherty, *Reading (Absent) Character*; James Phelan and John Frow, "Reading Characters Rhetorically," *Narrative* 30.2 (2022): 255–67; Johan F. Hoorn and Elly A. Konijn, "Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters: An Integrative Account1," *Jpn. Psychol. Res.* 45.4 (2003): 250–68.

[106] Though this researcher does not subscribe to the idea that the book or a part of it is fictional, it is worth noting that those who take that position have made some laudable propositions in that area. For an extensive discussion and comparative study of the Book of Revelation's characterisation and fiction, see Carol J Rotz and J A Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne: Towards a Theory of Theocentric Characterisation According to the Apocalypse of John," *Neot* 33.1 (1999): 91–111; David Frankfurter, "The Fiction of the Seven Letters in the Apocalypse: Representing Heavenly Authority in the Shadow of Paul," *HTR* 117.1 (2024): 79–98; Tina Pippin, "Mapping the End: On Monsters and Maps in the Book of Revelation," *Int* 74.2 (2020): 183–96, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964319896311; Roger Sneed, "Revelation as Reality: Star Trek Deep Space Nine's 'Far Beyond the Stars' and Black Prophetic Visions," *Int*78.3 (2024): 231–41, https://doi.org/10.1177/00209643241244454.

[107]Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 153. For discussion of the super-addressee, see M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 1st ed., University of Texas Press Slavic Series 8 (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), 126.

[108] This observation is consistent with Rev. 1:1, where God is identified as the supreme author of the book.

[109] Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne," 92.

As Assmann rightly observed, this is especially true for names of deities:

> Name' refers not only to proper names such as Osiris and Amun but denotes everything that may be said and told about a deity in epithets, titles, pedigrees, genealogies, myths-in short, its entire linguistic representation.[110]

The etymology of names is not discussed in this work. Rather, the focus is on the connotative/denotative theological imports that the names carry in the selected passages.[111] This is because in a book like Revelation, the meaning of names such as Jezebel, Nicolaitans and Balaam does not lie in their etymological inference but in their connotative/symbolic meaning that might have been attached to them in early Jewish writings. For example, when John describes some members of the church at Thyatira following the teachings of Jezebel (Rev. 2: 20–22), he alludes to the attitudes/concepts this name evokes.[112] He presents the attitudes and behaviour of Asian minority referents (Pergamum and Thyatira). He compares them to the characters in the Old Testament through the historical reception of the name Jezebel. This pattern fits nicely into the overall purpose of this research, which is to explore the contextual imports of the names of good and evil characters and their impact on

[110] Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism*, 1st ed. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 10.

[111] The issue with studying biblical names etymologically is that the reader must consider the first time a name was used and check the root words from which the name evolved, thereby leading an interpreter to wander from the contextual usage of the name in a specific given text. Hess, an advocate of etymological study of names discusses other aspects of naming that can be studied in the OT, such as names that exude either a givers' aspiration or experience. These are known as theophoric names. See Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1–11*.

[112] Some commentators on John's naming of Jezebel here, consider it as a referent for an opponent of John who existed in churches. Others see it as a forecast of the later struggle between Babylon and the Lamb. In all these, two aspects of semantics of names are deduced with the former argument representing a consideration of the name Jezebel as serving a referential role and the latter rely on the sense and denotative function of the name. This paper takes the stance of a sensual denotative approach. Consult the following for detailed arguments for the two positions: Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 130; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, 218.; Leslie N. Pollard, "The Function of Loipos in the Letter to Thyatira," *AUSS* 46 (2008): 45–64; Kayle B. De Waal, *Ancient Words Present Hope* (Warburton: Signs, 2015), 56–58.; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 218.; Koester, *Revelation*, 305–8.

understanding the nature and implications of the struggle between the two main entities: God and Satan.[113]

Examining the literary theological function of names in the biblical world further supports this study's position. In Western culture, names serve two primary purposes: 1) to distinguish one entity from another, and 2) to establish an affiliation with a family, community, or lineage.[114] Certain functions are contingent on the prevalent cultural usage in these areas. Linguists frequently presume that names have only referential meanings and no connotative meanings, but the significance of a particular name is determined by its context and family.[115]

Although this is true, it is not the case for all cultures. In Hebrew culture, for example, a name may also represent a characteristic that is important to the named entity.[116] Ancient Semitic culture, which included old Israel, had a conceptual framework in which 'names and reality were interrelated. For example, the root meaning of a given Hebrew word is often apparent in the word, regardless of how it is inflected. Therefore, in many cases, proper Israelite names were fully comprehensible to the Israelites. For example, in Dan 1:7, the name דניאל in Hebrew means 'God is My Judge.'

Consequently, the change in Daniel's name (to Belteshazzar) would have indicated a significant change in the belief system of Daniel, especially since the new name was equally theophoric in reverence to Bel instead of El (the presumptive reference to Yahweh in the Hebrews' theological ethos). Furthermore, in the ancient world, a name was not merely a convenient collocation of sounds by which a person, place or thing could be identified; rather,

[113] Onomastics scholars attest to this way of studying names. See Nyström, "Names and Meaning," 40–44; Mettinger, *In Search of God*.

[114] Byrne, "The Importance of Divine Designations in Old Testament Theology," 338.

[115] Richard Coates, "A Concise Theory of Meaningfulness in Literary Naming within the Framework of The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood," *JLO* 4 (2015): 31–34; Richard Coates, "Linguistic Aspects of Literary Name Origination," *Onoma* 53 (2018): 11–31, https://doi.org/10.34158/ONOMA.53/2018/2.

[116] Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 6.

a name expressed something of the very essence of that which was being named.'[117] Pronouncing a name on the property of an entity carries legal and ritualistic weight.[118] Thus, two conclusions can be drawn. First, studies of names in biblical texts, akin to strategies in literary onomastics, diverge in their outlook on how names are featured. This lends credence to the new method (Theo-onomastics) proposed in this study to supplement literary onomastics as an umbrella discipline.

The book of Revelation contains many names. However, in this study the concentration on names in the narrative relating to the development of the cosmic conflict between good and evil. Given the extensive number of names present in the book of Revelation, this study has necessarily adopted a selective approach, focusing on those names most pertinent to the research objectives in order to maintain analytical depth and rigour within the scope of a PhD dissertation. This researcher believes that a literary-theological analysis of names or nominal labels in the book of Revelation will help unearth the artistic and theological value inherent in them.[119] In this regard, Wamitila observes, "In analysing names as expressions of experience, attitudes, and senses, one is engaged in a linguistic analysis with social, political and ideological considerations predominating at various points. It is, therefore, possible to explore the names of some of the characters through linguistic analysis."[120]

The methodological framework for this research is exegetical and builds on two main analytical models: biblical-theological enquiry and literary onomastics. Biblical theological

[117]Karla G. Bohmbach, "Names and Naming," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 944.

[118] Kurt Galling cited in Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 10.

[119] De Villiers supports in this respect as he references Aune's position that a study of names as they appear in Revelation will yield useful insights into the text's literary nature and the author's creative prowess. See De Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," 65; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 696.

[120] Wamitila, "What's in a Name," 36.

enquiry involves the intentional pursuit of divine knowledge through scripture.[121] The aim is to understand the theological significance of names and titles in the biblical narrative. Moreover, literary onomastics involves the study of names as linguistic signs and discusses their frequency, etymology, puns, hybrid words, word games, and lexical associations.[122] This approach aids in recognising how naming practices convey the moral characteristics of individuals within the text, providing insights into the author's intended meaning.[123]

Furthermore, the exegetical approach adopted in this study is intra-textual analysis, using names and titles within the specific context of the book of Revelation.[124] Consequently, this method allows for a detailed exploration of how names function to convey theological and moral insights within the narrative itself.

The above studies combine to form the current methodology, theo-onomastics, used in this study. We now examine this methodology in detail.

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[121] Terry Robertson, "Academic Writing and Theological Inquiry," *AUSS* 45.1 (2007): 131–42.

[122] Iliescu, "Names and Naming in Literary Works;" Tatyana Hramova, "What's in Literary Onomastics?" *Onomastica Canadiana* 91.1 (2009): art. 1, pp. 11–22; Iraida Gerus-Tarnawecky, "Literary Onomastics," *Names* 16.4 (1968): 312–24, https://doi.org/10.1179/nam.1968.16.4.312.

[123] Thus, authorial intentions in describing the characters is eventually reflected in the themes discussed in the text These authorial motives have been succinctly argued by Robert H. Stein, who indicates that an author of a text controls its meaning rather than the text itself which cannot feel or think. In his vocabulary of author-centred hermeneutics, he defines meaning as "the paradigm or principle that the author consciously willed to convey by the shareable symbols he or she used." It from such paradigms that lessons can be drawn. For an extensive discussion, see Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of An Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," *JETS* 44.3 (2001): 451–66.

[124] The focus of this analysis is on the role and function of naming patterns related to characters involved in the cosmic war as depicted in Revelation. Another common approach to this topic is known as "Intertextuality," which examines names like Satan or the Lamb through the context of earlier textual traditions. For discussions on the two approaches, see Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York , NY: Routledge, 2000); Stefan Alkier, "Intertextualitat - Annaherung an ein Texttheoretishes Paradigma," in *Heiligkeit und Herrschaft: Intertextuelle Studien zu Heiligkeitsvorstellungen und zu Psalm 110*, ed. Dieter Sänger, 1st ed., BThSt 55 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); D. Jeffrey Bingham, *Intertextuality in the Second Century*, The Bible in Ancient Christianity, 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Jessica Mason, *Intertextuality in Practice*, vol. 33 of *Linguistic Approaches to Literature* (Amsterdamfun: John Benjamins, 2019); Jon Hesk, "Intratext and Irony in Aristophanes," in *Intratextuality: Greek and Roman Textual Relations*, ed. Alison Sharrock and Helen Morales, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); David Konstan, "Praise and Flattery in the Latin Epic: A Case of Intratextuality," in *Intratextuality and Latin Literature*, ed. S. J. Harrison, Stavros A. Frangoulidis, and Theodore D. Papanghelis, Trends in Classics. Supplementary Volumes; Volume 69 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 341–52, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110611021.

3.3.2. Theo-Onomastics as an Analytical Approach used in this Study

The approach to an analysis of the book of Revelation can take several methodological paths, particularly regarding names and their significance. One might delve into the etymological roots of names such as Jezebel, Nicolaitans, and Antipas to understand their linguistic and cultural contexts. Alternatively, a more focused examination of key figures, such as Jesus Christ, could be employed to highlight the development of identity and role. While this approach can yield valuable insights into the thematic and theological dimensions of the text, theo-onomastics, as the methodology adopted in this study, deviates from etymological approaches.

Theo-onomastics, a new term coined to represent the methodological approach in the current research is the study of the literary and theological nature, role, and function of names (including proper names, titles, epithets, and participial phrases) and their relevance to the messages in biblical texts.[125]

While several scholars have utilised literary onomastics in the analysis and interpretation of biblical texts, there has been limited attention given to the theological

[125] This term is coined to suit the objectives of this research, but it is not entirely new, since divine designation in the OT has long been studied as *Name Theology,* especially in Deuteronomy. This study began with Von Rad, who first argued that the physical presence of God has been replaced with a range of attributes that include the ark, the angel of the Lord, the face of the Lord, the glory of God, and the name of God in Deuteronomy. See Gerhard Von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, trans. David Stalker (London: SCM, 1959), 33–44. See also Byrne, "The Importance of Divine Designations in Old Testament Theology"; Ouro, "Divine Presence Theology versus Name Theology in Deuteronomy"; Sandra L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: Leshakken Shemo Sham in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 1st ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *A Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axiom* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1983); Mettinger, *In Search of God*. Other specific branches in the study of names have been developed—for example, cognitive onomastics (Olena Karpenko, "Cognitive Onomastics," in *Names and Their Environment* (presented at the International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2016) 4:69–74); Comparative literary Onomastics (Karina Dalen-Oskam, "'Vergleichende Literarische Onomastik," in *Namenforschung Morgen: Ideen, Perspektiven, Visionen.*, ed. Andrea Brendler and Silvio Brendler (Hamburg: Baar, 2005), 183–91); Socio-onomastics and applied onomastics.

implications of names and descriptive titles, particularly in relation to their interpretive significance for the book of Revelation.[126]

Theo-onomastics combines an author's use of names (onomastics) and descriptive titles (antonomasia) to portray theological insights in a written text. This integration aids in recognising how names and naming practices convey the moral characteristics of good and evil characters in the book. Consequently, ὄνομα is used in this study to signify all designations: proper/common name or title used by an author to individualise or identify a character in a written text.[127] In this study, a name is defined as a noun or phrase that refers to an object or entity.[128] Names are essential elements in literary works, but their prevalence can

[126] See for example Aaron Demsky, "New Hebrew Names in the Second Period: A By-Product of Biblical Exegesis," in *Names and Their Environment* (presented at the International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 2016) 3:44–51; Surls, "Making Sense of the Divine Name in the Book of Exodus"; Queen-Sutherland, "Naming the Enemy."

[127] There are examples in the NT where *onoma* is used to mean more than a proper name. Semantically it can mean a title/ reputation or a person (Mark 16:14; Acts 1: 15; 18:15; Rev 3:1; 3:4; 11:13). See Bietenhard, "Ὄνομα."; *Thayer's Grk-Eng Lex: Coded With Strong Concordance Numbers*, s.v. "Ὄνομα"; Walter Bauer et al., "Ὄνομα," *BDAG*.

[128] Most scholars agree that in Greek Grammar, the use of a noun in the nominative case goes far beyond its simpler treatment in English. For example, in his exegetical grammar book, Daniel B. Wallace, argues that the nominative case, beyond being the subject, can be used to express emotions/emphasis (in the case of pendent nominative e.g. Rev 3:12 ὁ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στῦλον (cf. Luke 12:10, John 1:12; 18:11 and Acts 7:40) and to reference/introduce objects (Rev 1:1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Matt 1:1, Mark 1:1, Rom 1:1, 7). Moulton describes it as a name-case that has "certain tendency to be residuary legatee of case-relations" other cases do not have. Thus, in biblical Greek, any part of speech can be turned into a nominative and thereby leaving more headroom for what constitutes a name. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 38–58; James Hope Moulton, *Prolegomena*, 3rd ed., 22 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark-1976, 1976), 1 of A Grammar of New Testament Greek:69–71, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015013489102; LE P. F. -M. Abel, *Grammaire du Grec Biblique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1927), 165–67, http://archive.org/details/AbelGrammaireGrecBiblique; H. E. Dana and Julius Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York , NY: Macmillan, 1927), 68–71, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015011268029; Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *BDF*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 79–83; Robert W. Funk, *A Beginning-Intermediate Grammar of Hellenistic Greek*, 2nd ed., SBLSBS 2 (Missoula, MT: SBL, 1973), 395–404; Ludwig Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik: das Griechisch des Neuen Testaments im Zusammenhang mit der Volkssprache*, 2., erw. Aufl., HNT 1 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1925), 118–19; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1923), 456–61; Max Zerwick, *Biblical Greek; Illustrated by Examples*, English ed., adapted from the fourth Latin ed. by Joseph Smith., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici 114 (Rome: Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963), 9–11.

lead to misconceptions regarding their suitability for study.[129] Therefore, it is necessary to discuss what constitutes a name and what it signifies beyond mere identification.[130]

3.3.3. Determining the Theo-onomastic Importance of Names in Revelation

The Theo-onomastic significance of names in the book of Revelation can be discerned by means of a series of specific steps: (a) identifying the type of name; (b) analysing the method by which the name is revealed, referred to as the naming technique; and (c) constructing a literary-theological profile based on the first two steps. This profile can represent a protagonist or antagonist and assess the character's role in the theme of cosmic conflict.

3.3.3.1. Step 1: Types of Names

This is the first step in the theo-onomastic analysis framework. Theo-Onomastics categorises character names into four main groups: epithetical, participial, titular, and proper. Epithetical names refer to epithets that others use to label characters. It is derived from the figure of speech epithet, a descriptive word or phrase used to identify a particular trait or attribute of a person or thing. Antonomasia is a situation in which a descriptive term is used instead of the person's name.[131] Nonetheless, this term broadly refers to all other name substitutes besides epithets. Therefore, there is a need to limit the labelling of such names in this study. Names, particularly those of deities, are frequently substituted with epithets to convey veneration. For instance, in ancient Egypt, the names of gods were frequently

[129] Vanguri reasons similarly in regard to the space given to the study of names as opposed to other disciplines. See Vanguri, *Rhetorics of Names and Naming*, 1.

[130] In Plato's dialogue, Cratylus, Hermogenes and Socrates discuss the nature of names. Cratylus insists that names indicate the nature of an object named. At the same time, Hermogenes argues that names are matters of convention and agreement, representing the position that gave birth to two main schools of thought on names: naturalism and conventionalism. For further discussion, see Sedley, "Plato's Cratylus."

[131] Chris Baldick, "Antonomasia," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

replaced by epithets, particularly in hymns and litanies.[132] Hymns in different media forms frequently portray a particular deity's primary activities, often using indirect expressions, and are dedicated to that deity. This tradition persisted throughout the biblical ages, spanning the period from the Second Temple until the first century CE. When an epithet replaces a character's name, it becomes the identifier that the audience associates with that character. Consequently, these names are classified as epithetical. Epithetical names may be purposefully utilized to represent the intrinsic qualities and functions of characters.

Epithetical names are intricately integrated into the narrative of Revelation, in which they play a prominent role. Epithets are linguistic indicators of identity, primarily consisting of nonverbal and timeless syntax. They resemble nonverbal personal nouns and lists, wherein the verbal structure frequently relies on the syntax of nominal and nonverbal elements. Examining how these elements are introduced and how often they appear has significant benefits in the literature and theology. In Revelation, proper names for virtuous and malevolent individuals are scarce. Epithetical and other names, as explained in this study, are used to refer to and characterise them.[133] The study reveals that proper names for good and evil characters in Revelation are scarce, but characters are frequently referenced and described with epithets that stand in for their names.

Participial names, the second group, are verbal nouns that can function as both verbs and nouns to describe a character. Cognitive grammar can aid in comprehending participial nouns as either nominal or atemporal relational profiles.

[132] Thomas Galoppin et al., *Naming and Mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean: Spaces, Mobilities, Imaginaries* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 15,

[133] Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context*, 130–50.

The third group of names, termed titular, is derived from the various titles of the dual characters in place of their proper names. These titles strategically reveal elements of character development.

The fourth category, proper names, can be readily identified as they are actual personal names. Proper names are encountered less frequently in Revelation.

3.3.3.2. Step 2: Naming Techniques

Naming techniques constitutes the second step in the implementation of theo-onomastics as a methodological approach. Each of these name classifications occurs as a literary technique. In this step the introduction of character names in narrative sequences is examined. Names are frequently introduced in one of two main ways: either they are ascribed (i.e. labels created by others to evoke characteristics of an actor in the plot) or they are Self-prescribed (i.e. declared authoritatively as the character's preferred or real name). The method by which names are disclosed inversely defines fall into two main categories: *prescriptive* and *ascriptive.*[134]

Prescriptive naming occurs when characters' names are prescribed by themselves or by a narrator. These names are prescriptive and serve as a definitive guide and point of reference for all names that other participants may give. This naming class is subdivided into two parts: self-prescription and authorial prescriptions.

Self-prescription occurs in cases where the characters make self-disclosures and precede their names with the introductory phrase *Ἐγώ εἰμι* (*I, I am*). A typical example is in Rev. 1:8 where God introduces himself with the following string names*; Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, λέγει κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.*

[134] These distinctions are the researcher's own.

In contrast, the authorial prescriptive is revealed by the narrator or the book's author. This naming convention is introduced by the present participle "ὢν" or the imperfect participle of "ἦν" as can be seen in Revelation 1:8 above.

Ascriptive naming occurs when the participants in the apocalyptic scene are characters other than the author/narrator. Such naming could reveal a character's association with other characters or the experiences that participants derived from them. These character designation styles are common in the narrative's hymnodic sections. For example of the ascription by association is in Rev. 1:2, 9 τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. cf. 6:9; 17:17; 20:4). Examples of ascription by experience include Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, He who was and is and is to come 4:8, cf. 6:10; 15:3–4; 18:8; and 22:5).

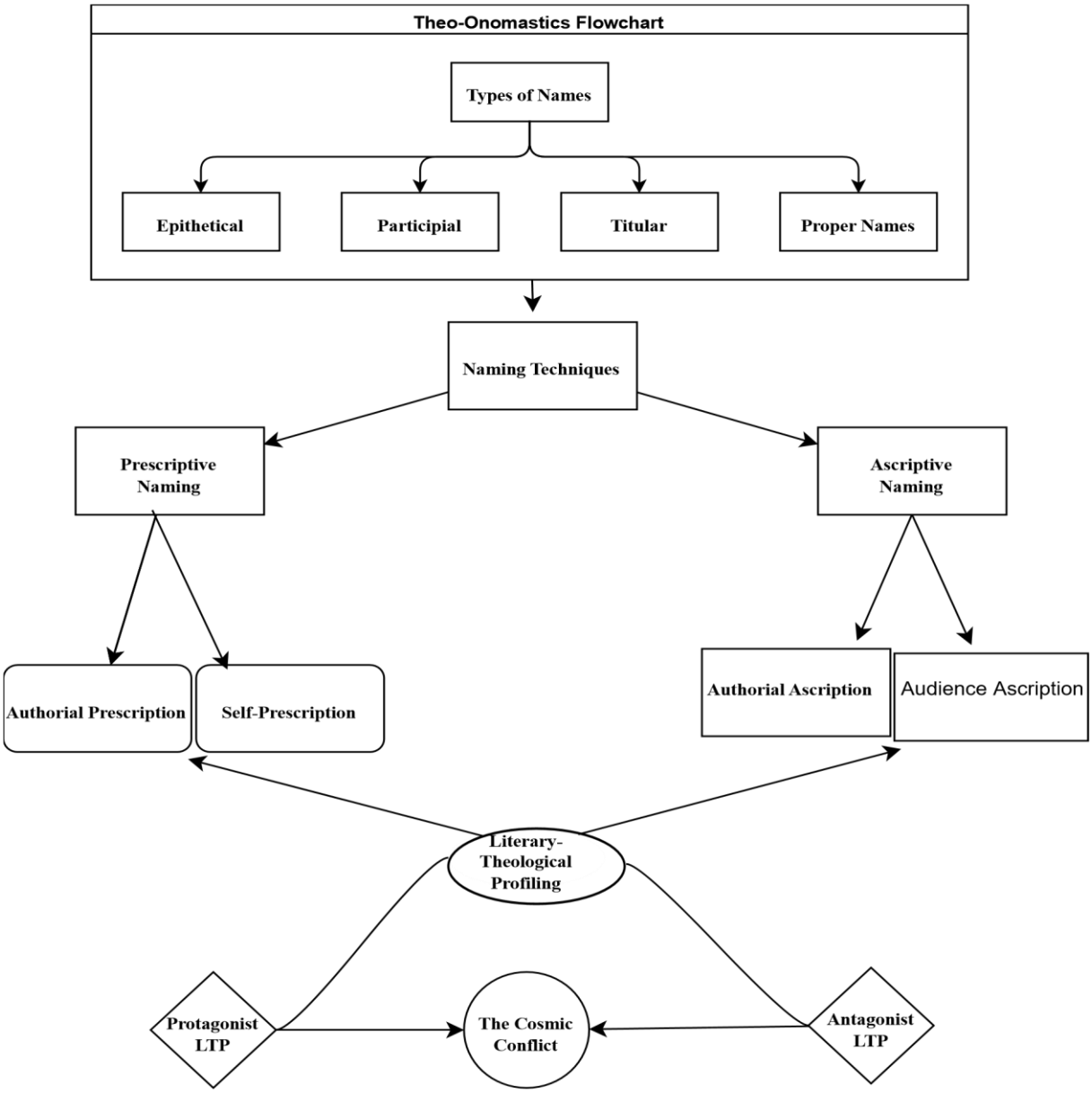
3.3.3.3. Step 3: The Literary-Theological Profile

This constitutes the third stage of the theo-onomastic analysis. It is the view that the names and naming patterns in Revelation are strategically organised to achieve the literary-theological profiling effect, which is the theological portrait that becomes evident after determining the type of name, how the name is introduced to the scene of the narrative, and their function through naming within the context of the cosmic conflict. This profile could represent either a protagonist or an antagonist faction in the cosmic battle. Hence, literary theological profiling first introduces the theme of cosmic conflict and then classifies characters based on positive or negative perspectives, leading to the final stage of methodological exploration.

3.3.3.4. Character's Relevance in Cosmic Conflict

The final phase of theo-onomastic analysis integrates the preceding steps to ascertain the significance of each name and the naming patterns within the context of the theme under consideration in this research. The names assigned to these characters are used to distinguish between them and define their roles, especially in the cosmic conflict. God is acknowledged as the principal protagonist, establishing him as the central character in the cosmic conflict. The theo-onomastic methodological structure identifies Satan as the prime antagonist. The methodological framework of theo-onomastics emphasises God as the book's pinnacle of goodness and Satan as its primary antagonist. Heavenly and demonic protégés are universally subject to this opposing essence. These procedures generate a comprehensive and methodical examination of names in theological contexts, producing perceptual findings regarding their meanings and applications in the Bible. Table 3 provides a concise overview of the processes discussed above.

Table 3 Theo-Onomastic Flow chart



3.4. Overview of the Cosmic Conflict in the Book of Revelation

Although exploring naming as a theological tool in the study of the book of Revelation has not received much attention, the topic of the cosmic conflict between good and evil has been investigated in several other ways. Bauckham identifies the theme of cosmic conflict as suddenly introduced in chapters 12–14 to indicate what he characterises as a 'fresh start' in the narrative, due to its allusion to the fall episode in Genesis 3:15. This statement demonstrates his oversight in recognising that the theme is intricately embedded

within the elements of the Apocalypse from the onset of the book. Rather, the cosmic conflict reaches a higher step in its development in chapter 12, revealing its overarching importance to the book's theology. The early description of Satan as a deceiver, accuser, and one who inflicts suffering and tribulation upon God's people is woven into letters to the seven churches as the building blocks on which the controversy theme is developed. For example, in the epistle to the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1–7), Jesus praises the church for not bearing with those who are "evil" and tries to tell those who profess to be apostles to be sure they are not "liars" (deceivers). Evil and deceitful attitudes are present in names such as Nicolaitans, Jezebel, and Balaam (2:6,14, 20). These traits mimic the active presence of Satan in the church, especially with their purported pretence.

This pattern is followed in the next message, which is addressed to Smyrna (2:8–11). Satan's role as an instigator of tribulation requires further analysis. He puts some on trial, imprisons, and even kills God's people. The symbol is concealed in antonomasia, "the synagogue of Satan' (v. 9). The different theme is further intensified in the letter to the congregation in Pergamos, where their city is described as the "Seat of Satan" (v. 13). Specific images of Satan will be identified: "Balaam/Balak" and "Nicolaitans." The pattern of gradually introducing the cosmic conflict themes is followed in the subsequent messages to the remaining churches. The common denominator in the various descriptions of the reality of Satan's opposition to God's sovereignty is the penchant for deception and coercion(especially from Rev 12 and beyond); the vivid picture John seeks to paint in the book. The manifestation of the controversy theme is evident in the self-descriptive names of Jesus at the beginning of each letter. For example, he names himself as ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος (Rev. 1:17), and ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας (Rev. 2:1). These names highlight the contrast with Satan's influence within the churches.

Thus, Revelation addresses cosmic conflict and eschatological prophecies. It contrasts good and evil through themes such as the true versus false church, New Jerusalem versus Babylon, and the Holy Trinity versus the False Trinity (Rev. 1:4,5; 2:10; 12–14; 12–13; 17:18; 21). John discusses the conflict between Michael[135] and the devil/Satan, between good angels and demons, as described in Rev. 12:7–9.[136] For Richard A. Sabuin, the book is replete with a rich "war motif "evidenced in the frequent use of the militarised terms πόλεμος and πολεμέω.[137] Richard Bauckham has argued that the book of Revelation resembles the War Scroll of Qumran and other Jewish literature that focus on the theme of holy war and the final victory of the divine Warrior for his people and his own enemies.[138] Hints of the war narrative in Revelation include the promises to the "conquerors" in the seven churches and the descriptions of the 144,000; for instance, the census in Revelation 7:2–4, in light of the

[135] This study compares the angelic figure Michael to Jesus, as Michael plays a significant role in the apocalyptic narrative of the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 12, Michael leads the heavenly hosts in a cosmic battle against Satan. His role highlights a complex relationship with Messianic themes, including a reinterpretation of his eschatological function within early Christian thought. Additionally, Michael's identity is explored through angelomorphic Christology, where early Christians often associated Christ with angelic imagery, linking Michael's role to theological views on the Messiah. Michael is portrayed as a warrior angel central to the struggle against evil, reflecting deeper connections to Messianic expectations. For detailed discussions on this, see Leo Raines Percer, "The War in Heaven: Michael and Messiah in Revelation 12" (PhD Dissertations, Baylor University, 1999), https://www.proquest.com/docview/304502937?pq-origsite=primo; Luan Henrique Gomes Ribeiro, "The Great Archangel of Many Names: Angelomorphic Christology and the Limits of Theological Imagination" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2024), http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:37378997; Blackwell et al., *Reading Revelation in Context*; Charles Arthur Gieschen, "Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence" (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1995), https://www.proquest.com/docview/304203975/abstract/3303BDC29BE64A4CPQ/1; Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology*, 53–55.

[136] Rob van Houwelingen, "The Air Combat between Michael and the Dragon. Revelation 12:7–12 in Relation to Similar Texts from the New Testament," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum et al., Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions 21 (Boston, MA: Brill, 2017), 151–66, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004337961_010.

[137] Sabuin provides statistical data on the usage of certain words in the book of Revelation. According to him, "Of the eighteen occurrences of the word polemeō 'war, battle, strife, conflict in the New Testament, nine are in Revelation (9:7, 9; 11:7; 12:7, 17; 13:7; 16:14; 19:19; 20:8). The cognate verb polemeō 'wage, war, fight' occurs six times in Revelation (2:16; 12:7 [2×]; 13:4; 17:14; 19:11) out of ten times in the New Testament." See Richard A. Sabuin, "The Alpha-Omega and the Great Controversy in Revelation.," in *The Great Controversy and the End of Evil: Biblical and Theological Studies in Honor of Ángel Manuel Rodríguez in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday / Gerhard Pfandl, Editor.*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl (Maryland, MD: Review and Herald, 2015), 85.

[138] Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 210–37.

Old Testament background, implies that they are an army, and their ritual purity in Revelation 14:4 is grounded in Old Testament rules of war (Deut. 23:9–14; Num. 2:3; 7:12: 10:14; 1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam. 11:9–13).[139]

The seven churches faced internal conflict with groups such as the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6, 15) and external threats from the "synagogues of Satan" (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Jesus warned of war against stubborn elements within the churches (Rev. 2:16; 2:5, 22-23; 3:3). The narrative is filled with war imagery: the four horsemen (Rev. 6:2, 4, 8), two large armies (Rev. 9), battles between the beast and the two witnesses (Rev. 11:7), angelic armies (Rev. 12:7–9), the dragon and Christians (Rev. 12:17), and the beast and saints (Rev. 13:7, 10).

The culmination of the earth's harvest leads to considerable conflict because of war, as referenced in Revelation 14:19–20 (see also 8:7; 11:6; 16:3–6 for related passages). According to Revelation 16:12–16, supernatural occurrences result in a significant conflict at Armageddon. In Revelation 17:13–14, ten kings unite to oppose the Lamb. After their defeat, they turn against the harlot (Rev.17:16), leading to another major battle (Rev. 19:11–21). After a thousand years, there is another conflict initiated by the devil (Rev. 20:7–9); the ultimate resolution occurs with the defeat of the devil's forces (Rev. 20:10), leading to his final condemned to the "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:9–10). The story includes numerous conflicts.

The conflict theme permeates every aspect of John's narrative. This is primarily because the book consistently underscores two certainties: the inevitability of evil and the capacity of good characters to overcome it. These dynamics necessitate frequent transitions

[139] Bauckham argues for a 'military census' in the list of tribes in Old Testament texts as background for a similar list in Revelation 7:5–8. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 220; Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John Divine: Commentary on the English Text*, Reprint edition. (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 106–8. In contrast, Aune suggests the listing only indicates the eschatological restoration of the tribes. See Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 436. For others, like Pattemore, the order of the list yields "few cognitive results." See Stephen Pattemore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse: Discourse, Structure and Exegesis*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 138; Peter Hirschberg, *Das eschatologische Israel: Untersuchungen zum Gottesvolkverständnis der Johannesoffenbarung*, WMANT (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999), 129–202.

of scenes between the heavenly court and earth. Without the theme of cosmic conflict, there would be no requirement for the depiction of thrones, war, and victory in the book's storylines. Themes can be identified in six segments: 1–3, 4–5, 6–11, 12; 13–18, and 19–22. Rev. 1–3 carries the prologue and call to faithfulness among believers in the face of evil. John's self-prescriptive phrase ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ (1:9) sets the stage for the call to faithfulness in this section. Here, the cosmic conflict foreshadows the trials of the believers as well as those who confront evil both within and without the churches. The existence of evil within the churches is contrasted with the strength of the one who instructs John to write to the churches.[140] He is characterised as someone who has the absolute authority to reward and punish (2:26; 3:7, 16, 21), who has conquered death (1:18, 2:8), who has complete knowledge of the believers, and who controls the affairs in the church (2:1–2; 3:1,15). Such descriptive names shed light on the leitmotif of cosmic conflict that runs through the narrative from the onset.

This theme also permeates chapters 4 and 5 as they portray the certainty of victory by the One seated on the throne, and the Lamb's worthiness in taking and opening the scroll reveals the true victor in the battle (5:4, 9). The names the victor disclosed here—ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ (5:5) and ἀρνίον ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον —all presage the conflict.[141] Chapters 6–11 portray the woes of those who choose faithlessness and the reward of the faithful in the face of evil.

Chapter 12 provides an analysis of the origin and rationale behind the trials that have been endured until now. It also presents the prolepsis of the next phase, which is more subtle

[140] Abir, *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church*, 7–12; Pieter G R de Villiers, J. W. van Henten, and Paul B. DeCock, eds., "Images of War and Creation, of Violence and Non-Violence in the Revelation of John," in *Coping with Violence in the New Testament*, 1st ed., Studies in Theology and Religion 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 185–200; Houwelingen, "The Air Combat between Michael and the Dragon. Revelation 12."

[141] These names and their pattern of occurrence will be discussed later in this work.

but deadlier than the previous one. The importance of this chapter lies in the fact that it helps us to understand the prevalence of evil and how God chose to annihilate it.[142]

Chapters 13–18 elaborates the proxy nature of the next phace of the conflict between the one seated on the throne and the dragon from Rev 12:17. While the Lamb fights on behalf of God, the beasts fight on behalf of the dragon. Chapters 19–22 picture the judgement of the prime evil and the ultimate recompense of the faithful.

The above analysis shows that the cosmic conflict theme runs through almost every scene of John's Apocalypse. Analysing the naming conventions of the characters involved in the dispute makes this point more evident.

The nature of the cosmic conflict is epistemic, meaning that the controversy is borne out of allegations against God's moral character and the government.[143] This view suggests that victory in battles cannot be achieved through high-handedness or power but rather through a comprehensive display of character. The names of Jesus, when viewed against the backdrop of covenants, lawsuits, and trials, serve to contrast Satan's corrupt prosecuting attorney. Principal names for God and Jesus such as "lamb" and "the Seated One" are introduced in Rev. 4–5 in what has been described as cosmic victory. Understanding the characters' names is crucial, as each name carries an aspect of the actors that must be known or revealed. Through literary-theological profiling, God's righteousness and Christ's faithfulness in the final onslaught of evil are evidenced.

The names of Prime Evil inherently depict his literary theological profile as not being an equal/eternal with God. He is the deceiver/tempter, meaning he is impersonating,

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[142] The centrality of Rev 12 is attested to in scholarly works. See, H. R. van de Kamp, *Openbaring: Profetie Vanaf Patmos*, 6th ed. (Utrecht: Kok, 2013), 278.; Henk R. van den Kamp, "Leviathan and the Monsters in Revelation," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum, Jaap Dekker, and Eric Peels (Boston, MA: Brill, 2017), 167–75; Houwelingen, "The Air Combat between Michael and the Dragon. Revelation 12."

[143] This is scriptural imagery (for example, Job 1–2 and Zechariah), especially in the book of Revelation, particularly with such names of Satan as *Slander*er and *Accuser.* See John Peckham, *Theodicy of Love : Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Academic, 2018), 55–88.

intending to deceive believers to worship and choose against God's desires. John's apocalypse is the eschatological climax of the biblical cosmic conflict theme. The relevance of the backdrop of the agelong cosmic battle is nuanced in the name of Satan as a dragon, the serpent of the old. Thus Revelation, especially Chapter 12, seeks to provide a flashback to this battle, bringing the conflict to its conclusion. The naming flow in the book thus moves from *positive to negative* and back to *positive,* thereby forming a *positive-negative-positive* cycle. Positive/good characters are first introduced, followed by evil characters, and then positive names/nature are mentioned. This pattern presupposes the eternally good nature of God and his cohorts, who stand vindicated by the short-lived onslaught of evil.

The names of God and Jesus, *Almighty and Lamb,* position them as protagonists, revealing their primary function in the struggle.[144] Furthermore, others reject Revelation as a true reflection of the socio-political context of the Roman Empire and instead argue that the conflict narration reflects the writer's perspective or interpretation of the socio-political life of the time.[145]

Another school of thought argues for the sovereignty of God or theodicy as the primary force behind John's description.[146] Throughout the book's plot, there is a strong emphasis on how God's reign permeates the operations of his church. Osborne summarizes that "even the actions of the forces of evil are controlled by God. Everything they do comes

[144] Collins sees this to be a rhetorical persuasion on the part of John to drive home the 'Combat Myth' in Revelation's symbolisms that "functions to reinforce resistance to theme and to inspire martyrdom.' See Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, 24. See also J. W. van Henten, "Dragon Myth and Imperial Ideology in Revelation 12–13," in *The Reality of the Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L Barr, SBLSymS 39 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006), 181–203.

[145] Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 101–15, 175; Abir, *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church*, 10–12; Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 84–107; Harland, "Honouring the Emperor or Assailing the Beast."

[146] Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation*; Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, 7; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 31; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 320.

only by permission from God."[147] In a recent comment, John C. Peckham analyses the ability of the dragon to give his power, throne and authority to the sea beast (Rev. 13:1–8, 12; 17:13–14) , concluding that "there are rules of engagement in the cosmic conflict such that both parties [God and Satan] know the limits within which they might operate towards settling this conflict."[148]

This argument implies that, although God is sovereign over evil, he is bound in respect to what extent he can destroy it, as he sets the parameters of dominance until the end of the age when Satan is eliminated. This seems to be a median position for earlier scholars who sought to elevate God's supremacy over the devil. Although this school of thought is not far from a true reflection of the underlying themes in the book, it perceives the critical character and function of Satan and his co-opted assigns (the two beasts) as merely foils to God's sovereignty. This advances the progression of the cosmic conflict. Some scholars have explored the influence of cosmic conflict on heavenly realms more extensively to address this weakness.[149] In addition, there are others, such as Steven Grabiner and Pieter de Villiers,

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[147] Osborne, *Revelation*, 31; Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, 7; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 320.

[148] Peckham argues that the cosmic conflict is a dispute over God's character, fuelled by demonic allegations against his justice and rule, and requires a fair hearing for Satan. God's justice and love thus require him to allow Satan to prove his case through "covenantal agreement in which the devil, a finite being who lacks authority, must conform to the boundaries God sets for him to operate. This is God's way to both purge himself and ward the world of Evil." For an extended discussion on this subject, see Peckham, *Theodicy of Love*, 106–7; Daniel Howard-Snyder and Michael Bergmann, "Reply to Rowe," in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Michael L. Peterson, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell, 2003), 138.

[149] Collins examines the cultural influence of extant, ancient combat myths upon the imagery in and design of Revelation, especially 12:1–17.8 He launches her study with an evaluation of the cyclical nature of Revelation to demonstrate the structural priority of 12:1–17. She sees it as central to the book in that it frequently echoes and is repeated in the cyclical structure of Revelation. His other edited and co-authored books all add to his powerful voice on the subject of warfare in the Revelation. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*; Collins, "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation"; John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of Genre*, Semeia 14 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1979). Abir, *The Cosmic Conflict of the Church*; Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*; Antoninus King Wai Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses: A Chiastic Reading of Revelation 11:1–14:5* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 272–76; Sigve K. Tonstad, "Saving God's Reputation : The Theological Function of 'pistis Iesou' in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation" (Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2005), https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/13491. Benjamin Steen Stubblefield, "The Function of the Church in Warfare in the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*. Steve Moyise, "Does the Lion Lie Down with the Lamb?," in *Studies in*

whose works have focused on the place and function of Satan in propelling the conflict theme in the book.

For Grabiner, "if the cosmic conflict is to be seen as the undercurrent of the entire book of Revelation, then there should be evidence of this throughout the storyline…"[150] Hence, with narrative reading, he argues that the chaining and the quick release of Satan in Rev. 20:1–3 is a testament to the vital role he plays in the conflict theme if the book is to be correctly understood, thereby concluding that Satan as a character is different from the earlier position that he was a flat character.[151] Grabiner's assertion that in "Revelation, the main characters are described through sobriquets, titles, and descriptive appellations is a progressive way of understanding the conflict theme," except that he does not deal with the rationale behind their frequent use in the book.[152] Pieter de Villiers explores the names of Satan in the Book of Revelation, identifying him as the embodiment of evil. His work focuses on key themes, including the war in heaven and the events of Satan being chained and unchained, as described in Revelation 20:1–3 and 7–10.[153]

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the Book of Revelation, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 181–94. Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 318–19.

[150] He further sees verbal trends in the book (e.g. give/given) as the driving force behind the competing role of the Lamb and Satan. Grabiner, *Revelation's Hymns*; Grabiner, *Revelation's Hymns*; Steven Grabiner, "The Cosmic Conflict: Revelation's Undercurrent," *JATS.* 26.1 (2015): 38–58. He builds on Klund's quest on why Satan could act that way. See, Robert William Klund, "The Plot of Revelation 4–22" (Ph.D., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002), 196.

[151] Stubblefield, "The Function of the Church in Warfare in the Book of Revelation," 90. Several reasons have been posited to explain this final act by Satan as follows: a) the text is faulty, b) John lost track of his material, c) Satan was depersonalized, d) meant to demonstrate God's sovereignty over Satan or e) a mere foil that allows the martyred saints to receive their deserved reward. For extensive discussion, see Kraft, *Die Offenbarung Des Johannes* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974); Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1; Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation:* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

"Flat and Round characters as described by the course of their development in a work of literature. Flat characters are two-dimensional in that they are uncomplicated and do not change throughout the course of a work. By contrast, round characters are complex and undergo development, sometimes sufficiently to surprise the reader." See "Flat and Round Characters | Definition & Examples," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d., https://www.britannica.com/art/flat-character.

[152] Grabiner, "The Cosmic Conflict: Revelation's Undercurrent."

[153] de Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation." This article makes especially important observations about the significance of the names in the understanding of evil in the text of Revelation. For instance, he states that, "To John names reveal status and many names indicate special status"

This study builds on these efforts and pursues the naming trajectory to expand the scope to include names and naming for 'good' entities such as God and Jesus Christ. It is assumed that cosmic conflict is a thematic thread that binds all parts of the book, with Satan/Dragon and his agents as the antagonists on one side, the One seated on the throne and the Lamb as the protagonists on the other. It is proposed that a proper analysis of the names will elucidate how John intended to hinge the cosmic conflict on the characterisations he employed in his material and help to situate his theological worldview of good and evil in the universe in believers' affairs.

With a specific focus on names, the scope of this research is limited to the names and descriptive titles given to good and evil entities in the book of Revelation, first addressing the role and function of names in the book, and second, analysing the cluster of names for good and evil in the chapters of the book. A summary of the descriptive titles and names of each entity is also presented.

The theological message behind the book of Revelation can be more adequately understood in conjunction with the name characterisations John employs. Readers are constantly confronted with the names of both good and evil entities that require further exploration.[154] For example, the beast's name, marked on his followers' right hands, allows them to buy or sell (Rev. 13:17–18). A mysterious name, Babylon the Great, mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth, is also inscribed on the prostitute's forehead (Rev. 17:5–6). It is not surprising that the author mentions the need for wisdom in calculating the number or finding the name of the beast (13:18). This serves as a reminder to readers of the need to avail themselves of the knowledge of the names given to the beast. De Villiers

p.66. In this study it is sought to expand the naming concept beyond the scope of de Villiers' article to include the good entities encountered beyond the second half of the book.

[154] Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1906), 404, http://archive.org/details/dieoffenbarungjo00bousuoft.

observes, “Not only is the dragon, like the other evil characters in the second half of Revelation named, but the many names that he is given would then indicate that of all the evil characters he is the one who is known by many names and, therefore, should be regarded as the most important of them all.”[155] His observation implies that reading any part of Revelation requires paying attention to the characters’ names and the tension that arises among them that is reflected their names. Thus it is worth keeping the cosmic conflict theme in mind when seeking to understand the relevance of names and naming styles in the series.

The cosmic conflict theme plays a central role in Revelation. To address the insufficient attention given to names and naming, some scholars have explored the influence of this cosmic conflict on the heavenly realms in the book. Steven Grabiner and Pieter de Villiers have focused on the place and function of Satan in propelling the conflict theme. This study decisively builds on previous efforts and expands the naming trajectory to encompass ‘good’ entities, including God and Jesus Christ. It is essential to acknowledge the diverse themes present in the narrative examined by scholars of the Apocalypse. For instance, some researchers have explored themes such as messianism, the rise and fall of empires like Rome,[156] the idea of the new Jerusalem,[157] allusions to the Exodus,[158] the continuing story of

[155] de Villiers, “Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation,” 66.

[156] Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 36–39.

[157] Revelation 21:2, 10, 16 describes a central place in a completely new order of things (Rev. 21:1; 22:5), a universal city (Rev. 21:24–26), bringing benefits to all nations (Rev. 22:2) and a city with foundations named after twelve significant figures (Rev.21:14), whose “temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Rev. 21:22).

[158] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 70–72; Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 47; deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*, 162–64.

Israel,[159] the autobiography of John, astrology,[160] and even romance.[161] However, for others like Newton, these themes should be regarded not merely as meta-narratives in the context of the Apocalypse but also as mega-narratives in their own right. This is because they engage the audience, connect John's story with other significant narratives, elicit emotions, provide a cathartic experience, and raise hope and expectations of victory, thereby reinforcing the authoritative nature of the Apocalypse.[162] Though his observation is plausible, the various themes cannot have equal emphasis in a single apocalyptic narrative; some, like the cosmic conflict theme, will form mega-narrative strands for others to form sub-plots. Thus, the theological message behind the book of Revelation cannot be adequately understood apart from the cosmic conflict theme and the names John employs in telling the story

3.5. Summary Statement of the Methodology Used in this Dissertation

In this chapter the purpose of this study has been stated and its methodology described. The methodology focuses on using names and titles in the book of Revelation as tools to enhance the narrative's theme of cosmic conflict. This methodology, here termed theo-onomastics, employs a approach that integrates biblical and theological enquiries. Theo-onomastics combines biblical-theological enquiry with literary onomastics to analyse

[159] David L Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (California, CA: Polebridge, 1998), 91.

[160] For Bruce Malina, "the book of Revelation and works like it are really a subset of the astronomical and astrological literature of antiquity." Bruce J. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 12. See also Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 73; Jacques M. Chevalier, *A Postmodern Revelation: Signs of Astrology and the Apocalypse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 3–365.

[161] Sebastian R. Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Biblical Thought: A Study with Special Reference to the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 228–363; Rudolph W Raber, "Revelation 21:1–8," *Int.* 40.3 (1986): 296–301; Bruce J (John) Malina, "How A Cosmic Lamb Marries: The Image of the Wedding of the Lamb (Rev 19:7 Ff)," *BTB* 28.2 (1998): 75–83; Kevin E. Miller, "The Nuptial Eschatology of Revelation 19–22," *CBQ* 60.2 (1998): 301–18.

[162] Jon K Newton, "Story-Lines in the Book of Revelation," *ABR* 61 (2013): 70–77.

the theological significance of names within the text. The theo-onomastic of the actors' names is determined by (a) the type of names used to describe them, (b) the naming technique used to introduce them, (c) the literary-theological profile constructed based on the first two steps, and (d) assessing the character's function within the broader cosmic conflict theme. This approach allows for a detailed exploration of how names convey theological and moral insights within the apocalyptic narrative.

CHAPTER 4
THEO-ONOMASTICS AND THE NAMING OF GOD: THE PRIME GOOD

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the names and titles of God through the lens of theo-onomastics. The chapter begins with an exploration of the general concept of naming an infinite God and then progresses into a detailed methodological framework for discussing types of names and their modes of revelation. Additionally, this study considers how these names and naming patterns shape the literary–theological profile. The final section explores God's nature and role in the narrative by examining how God takes part in the cosmic conflict theme in the Apocalypse. Understanding how God is named provides insight into what can be comprehended about Him, as the name of God carries significant meaning and influence.

4.2. The Concept of Naming the Infinite God

The ancient world placed considerable emphasis on the significance of names. The name encompasses the bearer's nature and symbolises reality itself: thus, naming something is tantamount to identifying its essence.[163] Owing to the connection between a name and the substance or characteristics of reality, names can be a form of knowledge and a means of acquiring it. Consequently, one of the most revered names has always been that of God or the Divine in general. Raschke succinctly captures this: "To name God in finality and

[163] For an extensive discussion on this concept, see: Seymour, "Personal Names and Name Giving in the Ancient Near East"; Hess, "Issues in the Study of Personal Names in the Hebrew Bible"; Nyström, "Names and Meaning"; Emilia Aldrin, "Names and Identity," in *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, ed. Carole Hough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 382–94.

fullness…is to rouse the Beast."[164] Therefore "God cannot be domesticated or analysed" in the literal sense.[165] Divinity conceals its infinite essence, which is unfathomable to mortals, but reveals some of its directing, shaping, and edifying characteristics. This constraint limits the scope of any study on God's names. Humanity is permitted to name the divine only when the naming format conforms to God's self-disclosure. In the Bible, God is essentially the Name-giver, supplying humanity with thoughts and means that lead to names, thereby reducing the distance between the divine realm and human nature.

Hence using metaphors, epithets, and titles are the most suitable ways to conceptualise the divine.[166] This is especially pertinent when God signifies Himself as the giver of the book (1:1).The importance of God's character is emphasised by Boring's observations[167] and by Du Rand's discussion of "Theocentrism in Revelation."[168]

Walter Brueggemann advocates for a method that opens up ways to observe creative and interior aspects of God's character.[169] Sternerg also posits that "God figures as both inspiring originator and individual viewpoint, as object and subject of representation, as the maker of plot and agent, as a means to an end, art and reason for the whole."[170] Revelation emphasises God's centrality as the ideal interpreter, super-author, main character, and

[164] Carl A Raschke, "The Image of the Beast, or Theology and Thought of Difference.," in *New Dimensions in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Carl A Raschke (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982), 109–27.

[165] Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne," 91–111.

[166] Alexandru Gafton and Adina Chirilă, "The Name Giver," in *Onomastics between Sacred and Profane*, ed. Oliviu Felecan, Series in Language and Linguistics (Wilmington, DE: Vernon, 2019), 59.

[167] M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox, 1989); J A Du Rand, "The Transcendent God-View: Depicting Structure in the Theological Message of the Apocalypse of John," *Neot* 28.2 (1994): 557–73.

[168] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 2018), 4; Howard I. Marshall, "How Far Did the Early Christians Worship God?," *Chm* 099.3 (1985): 216–29.; Edwin Reynolds, "The Trinity in the Book of Revelation," *JATS* 17.1 (2006): 55–72.

[169] Walter Brueggemann, "The 'Uncared for' Now Cared for (Jer 30:12–17): A Methodological Consideration," *JBL* 104.3 (1985): 419–28.

[170] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, 153.

supreme addressee, accentuating its theocentricity.[171] Speaking of God's character or name typically refers to God's intrinsic nature, which is a theological concept rather than merely a literary construct.

Consequently God becomes the standard by which all descriptions are to be interpreted. This approach to biblical naming is valid from both philosophical and theological perspectives. It provides a hermeneutic model for linking divine and human characterisation. It establishes a framework for examining God's names, positioning us between a theology from above and one from below (the earth).[172] This study argues that the Judeo-Christian God is distinctively characterised by his names. Even in contexts where these names and descriptions bear resemblance to those of deities in other religious traditions, he maintains a position of pre-eminences.[173]

The initial introduction of God is presented within the chain of transmission in the Apocalypse, beginning with God and continuing through Jesus Christ, angel, John, and finally to the messengers to the churches. This pattern not only reveals the book's title but also highlights the central role of God.[174] Thus, in verses 1-2, 6, and 9 of chapter one, where ὁ θεὸς is mentioned directly, he is identified as the principal author of the letter. Jesus is described as the one who reveals the message's content.[175] Moreover, the order of names may reflect the hierarchy of authority, similar to what was prevalent in ANE culture in the Old Testament and New Testament.[176] This reality is subtly conveyed by the notion that God

[171] Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne."

[172] Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne."

[173] Martin Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation," in *Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig R. Koester, Oxford Handbook Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 206.

[174] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 1. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 9–12.

[175] Tonstad, *Revelation*, 43.

[176] Linn Tonstad, "'The Ultimate Consequence of His Self-Distinction from the Father...': Difference and Hierarchy in Pannenberg's Trinity," *NZSTR* 51.4 (2009): 383–99; John A. Wilson, "The God and His Unknown Name of Power," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement*, ed.

is the ultimate source of revelation, even granting it to Jesus, who then communicates it to John through an angel. John's function is explicitly stated as the one who testifies to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:2).[177]

Although the preliminary verses mention the proper name ὁ θεὸς, God's name, in essence, seems concealed in the main body of the text and only reappears in the dying embers of the book (Chapters 21 and 22). Titles and actions are the modes through which God describes a person. Meir Sternberg observes that this kind of hiddenness of the divine is a strategy that John uses to show one's inability to box the divine into single names, and thus God becomes "conspicuous" by his absence through proper names.[178] The author's strategy of naming the divine bears witness to a strong relationship between language and reality, which manifests a significant difference between the descriptor and *the described descriptor*. God is the master of names and confers an ontological quality to all creation; that is, names say something about their bearers.[179] As the race of humans differs from that of the gods, names are also human expressions of the gods. Thus, total equality between language and reality cannot be achieved, and remains an illusion.[180]

It is of less surprise then that many ancient authors, both Jews and Christians, tried to inquire about the names of the divine, especially that of the Hebrew 'God', with a will both to know and to communicate religious knowledge in theophanic encounters (Gen. 3:13 and 32:27–28). Ancient Hebrew readers believed the deity's name was "the nameless one", and thus, God's sacred names were replaced with אֲדֹנָי (Lord). This may have inspired John to

James B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 12–13; Paul Haupt, "Der Marne Jahwe," *OLZ* 12.1–6 (1909): 106–7.

[177] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 1. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 9–12.

[178] Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, 323.

[179] Carmen Joy Imes and Christopher J. H. Wright, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Still Matters* (Illinois, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 173–74.

[180] François Bovon, "Names and Numbers in Early Christianity," *NTS* 47.3 (2001): 267–88.

avoid using God's name in his book.[181] Thus, Revelation balances God's transcendence and intimate involvement with his creation.[182]

As noted, God is not directly named in the narration of the vision. However, he is well referenced in the speeches of Jesus and the worship episodes with their extensive "possessive descriptors." He is portrayed as the Supreme Ruler, indirectly targeted by the dragon and his cohort. Thus he judges where one's allegiance lies in their relationship with either of the two forces. The subsequent sections discuss the specific names of God through the lens of theo-nomastics.

4.3. Analysis of the Theo-Onomastics of God

In this section the Theo-onomastic method of analysis is applied to investigate God's role within the narrative framework of the book of Revelation. By examining the literary-theological strategy of naming, it is aimed to elucidate the function God serves in the cosmic conflict depicted throughout the text.

4.3.1. Step 1: Types of Names for God

The initial step in ascertaining the theo-onomastic significance of the actors' names, as outlined in the Summary Statement of the Methodology employed in this dissertation, involves a comprehensive analysis of the typology of names utilised to reference these individuals.[183] In applying this step to the analysis of the names of God in Revelation, one notes that the name types are classified into four categories: Proper, Epithetical, Titular, and Participial. This classification scheme is adopted in the discussion.

[181] Surls, "Making Sense of the Divine Name in the Book of Exodus."

[182]This concept will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. But for information on it, see Du Rand, "The Transcendent God-View." See also M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Westminster: John Knox, 2011).

[183] See 3.6 above.

In Revelation, God is portrayed as sovereign Lord over all creation. The text illustrates his authority over various elements of the narrative, including angelic beings, nations, historical events, and even the presence of evil itself (for example, Rev. 1:8; 4:8;11:4, 15, 17; 15:3 18:8). His presence and essence as God the Father are evident throughout the vision, playing a central role in orchestrating all events according to the divine purpose.[184]

These names can be categorised into four primary types: (a) Proper Names, such as ὁ θεὸς in various grammatical cases; (b) Epithetical Names; (c) Titular Names; and (d) Participial Names. John seems to exercise considerable restraint in his descriptions and references to God. Although God is the ultimate source and subject of the Revelation (Rev. 1:1), he speaks personally only twice (Rev.1:8; 21:5–8) and is portrayed directly within the vision only once (Rev. 4:3–11); even then, John meticulously avoids describing his appearance.[185] Instead, John prefers to use epithetical names such as κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Rev. 1:8, 4:8, 11:17), and participial names like ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος (4:2b, 3, 9, 10) to describe God's activities in the apocalypse. John employs extensive titles and epithets to name God, frequently combining multiple titles or expanding them to reflect the unlimited nature of God, exemplified by the phrase ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. The act of naming God in this manner underscores John's theological acumen and God's critical role in the overarching cosmic conflict.[186]

In this section, these names are discussed to help construct an understanding of John's theo-onomastic portrait of God within the context of the cosmic conflict theme in the Apocalypse.

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[184] Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 39.

[185] Boring, *Revelation*, 65.

[186] Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 39. See also.

4.3.1a. Proper Names

ὁ θεὸς

References to the proper name, ὁ θεὸς, are frequent throughout the book. It appears ninety-five times, with 57 occurrences in the genitive case, 20 in the nominative case, 13 in the dative case, and 5 in the accusative case.[187] The sheer number and diverse uses of ὁ θεὸς in the drama of the book of Revelation emphasise the theological significance of the name. The analysis shows how the occurrence of the name helps define the context of its use and the theological dividend the various uses yield in light of cosmic conflict. This section is focused on the syntactical outlay of the name, while the theological relevance to cosmic conflict is discussed in the final section of the chapter.

As a noun, Revelation uses θεὸς as both the subject and object of the verb within the clause. It also functions as a descriptor for other nouns, pronouns, or prepositions. When functioning subjectively, θεὸς appears in the nominative case as the subject of a clause.

In such occurrences in the nominative case, the name functions in three ways: the subject performs the function of a verb (1:1, 8, 18:5, 21:7, 22:6, 18, 19), the subject of an address by another being (4:8, 11, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 21:3),[188] and as the subject of a dependent clause, the cause or reason for the main clause (7:17, 17:17, 18:8, 20, 19:6, 21:22, 22:5).

[187] **θεός** occurrences: **Nominatives**: Rev 1: 8; 4:8, 11; 7:17; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 17:17; 18:5, 8, 20; 19:6; 21:3; 21:7; 21:22; 22:5; 22:6; 22:18; 22:19. **Accusatives:** Rev 12:5; 13:6; 14:7; 16:11, 21. **Genitives** (Rev 1:2, 9; 2:7, 18; 3:1, 2, 12, 14; 4:5; 5:6; 6:9; 7:3; 7:15; 8:2, 4; 9:4, 13; 10:7; 11:1, 11, 16, 19; 12:6, 10, 17; 14:10, 12, 19; 15:1–3, 7, 8; 16:1, 9, 14, 19; 17:17; 19:1, 9, 13, 15, 19: 20:4, 6; 21:2–3, 10–11, 23; and 22:1, 3. **Datives:** Rev 1:6; 5:9–10; 7:10; 7:1–12; 11:13–16; 14:4; 19:4–5, 10; 22:9. The statistics here is sourced from SBLGNT in logos ref. Michael W. Holmes, *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2010).

[188]One might have anticipated that these uses would be classified as predicate nominatives; however, the conflation of participles and middle verbs complicates the determination of their functions. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 47–48.

God acts as the subject of the verb. For example, the prologue (Rev. 1:1–9) and epilogue (22:6–21) contain the most occurrences of θεὸς as a subject to emphasise the divine source of the vision.

The text underscores that in the book of Revelation, θεὸς (God) is portrayed as the originator of the vision imparted to John and thus serves as the subject of the verb ἔδωκεν (Rev. 1:1), the prologue Rev. 1:1, and the epilogue Rev. 22:6, cited below, emphasising the causal subject role of God:

> Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ, ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ (Rev. 1:1).
>
> Καὶ εἶπέν μοι· Οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί, καὶ ὁ κύριος, ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν, ἀπέστειλεν τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει (Rev. 22:6).

By emphasising God as the source of the vision in this way, John identifies and attributes the entirety of Revelation to God. Besides naming God this way to indicate his authoritative role in bringing ἔδωκεν and ἀποστείλας, some of the tasks attributed to him further highlight his crucial function in the apocalypse. For instance, he speaks (Rev. 1:8), created all things (Rev. 4:11), wipes away the tears from the eyes of the saints (Rev. 7:17) and reigns with great power (Rev. 11:17; 19:6).

In addition, God directs the hearts and purposes of wicked rulers to give their authority to the beast (Rev. 17:17), remembers the crimes of Babylon (Rev. 18:5), and renders swift judgement against Babylon (Rev. 18:8). Finally, God will forever be the God of his people. (Rev. 21:3). The scope of God's activity extends well beyond passively sitting on his throne and calling the shots. He actively speaks, directs, judges and reigns. Again, John intended for his readers to recognise θεὸς as the Creator and YHWH of the old covenant. This idea is reinforced when one considers the name κύριος attached to θεὸς in

seven instances (Rev. 1:8; 4:11; 18:8; 22:5,6), along with the specific title κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Rev. 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22).

The seven instances where the name θεὸς (in the nominative) serves as the subject of a dependent clause show that he acts as the primary initiator or the reason for an action (Rev. 7:17; 17:17; 18:8, 20; 19:6; 21:22; 22:5). These functions manifest using the conjunctions ὅτι or γάρ, as can be seen from the textual examples below. While both conjunctions have an explanatory force, ὅτι communicates the idea of what caused the action, and γάρ explains why.[189] As a dependent clause, it is subordinate to the idea or action expressed in the main clause; therefore, it must be viewed within the context of the whole sentence as a further explanation of the main clause. Five times ὅτι is used to express God as the cause.

a. Rev. 7:17
ὅτι τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ θρόνου ποιμανεῖ αὐτούς, καὶ ὁδηγήσει αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ ζωῆς πηγὰς ὑδάτων· καὶ ἐξαλείψει **ὁ θεὸς** πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν

b. Rev. 18:8
διὰ τοῦτο ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ ἥξουσιν αἱ πληγαὶ αὐτῆς, θάνατος καὶ πένθος καὶ λιμός, καὶ ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται· **ὅτι** ἰσχυρὸς κύριος **ὁ θεὸς** ὁ κρίνας αὐτήν

c. Rev. 18:20
Εὐφραίνου ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ, οὐρανέ, καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ προφῆται, **ὅτι** ἔκρινεν **ὁ θεὸς** τὸ κρίμα ὑμῶν ἐξ αὐτῆς.

d. Rev. 19:6
καὶ ἤκουσα ὡς φωνὴν ὄχλου πολλοῦ καὶ ὡς φωνὴν ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ ὡς φωνὴν βροντῶν ἰσχυρῶν, λεγόντων· Ἀλληλουϊά, **ὅτι** ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος, **ὁ θεός**, ὁ παντοκράτωρ

e. Rev. 22:5
καὶ νὺξ οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν χρείαν φωτὸς λύχνου καὶ φῶς ἡλίου, **ὅτι** κύριος **ὁ θεὸς** φωτίσει ἐπ᾽ αὐτούς, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

[189] In Greek syntax, the conjunctions γάρ, διότι, ἐπεί, ἐπειδή, ἐπειδήπερ, καθώς, ὅτι, and ὡς can help explain the aspect of the verb being emphasised. ὅτι is used when introducing a dependent causal clause, while γάρ is used to express the basis or ground of an action. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 460, 674; Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 452, 456.

In addition, the following two passages illustrate the use of γάρ combined with the nominative θεὸς to indicate the reason for the action of the verb:

Rev. 17:17
ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἔδωκεν εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ, καὶ ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην καὶ δοῦναι τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῶν τῷ θηρίῳ, ἄχρι τελεσθήσονται οἱ λόγοι τοῦ θεοῦ.

Rev. 21:22
Καὶ ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ, ὁ γὰρ κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ναὸς αὐτῆς ἐστιν, καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον.

Each clause aims to increase the audience's theoretical understanding of the topic. The clauses in Rev. 7:16–17 emphasise God's judgement and salvation for his people who face oppressive challenges. They assure them of future salvation through pastoral imagery. Believers in Babylon are marginalised and oppressed, but God's swift judgement brings them salvation. Joyful celebration is a proper response to Babylon's demise, as God's judgement is both an act of justice and salvation. The ultimate basis for believers' worship and celebration is that God Almighty reigns, making the earth his temple and illuminating it with his presence.

In contrast to its use as the subject, θεὸς is also used as the indirect object of a verb or within a prepositional phrase in five instances (Rev. 12:5; 13:6; 14:7; 16:11, 21). In Rev. 12:5, θεὸς serves as the refuge for the child of the woman; in 14:7, God is the imperative object of worship, as announced by the first angel. In the remaining three uses in 13:6 and 16:11, 21, θεὸς is the object of the blasphemy by the beast and his followers.
The objective sense of θεὸς is also manifest in the dative case (Rev. 1:6; 5:9–10; 7:10; 7:1–12; 11:13–16; 14:4; 19:4–5, 10; 22:9). Datives are used in worship verbs to emphasise God's nature. In most instances, God is designated as an object of worship, praise, or glory by angelic beings or the redeemed. Worshippers ascribe qualities, virtues, and attributes to God

(e.g. God is merciful). (Rev. 7:11; 19:4, 10; 22:9).[190] For example, in 7:12 the audience προσεκύνησαν τῷ θεῷ saying Ἀμήν· ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ ἡ σοφία καὶ ἡ εὐχαριστία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ ἰσχὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν. Thus, God's qualities are revealed through this process.

In Revelation, the most frequent occurrences[191] of θεὸς are in the genitive case and describe, assert, or attribute something about God. In this sense, *θεοῦ* serves as an adjectival genitive, attributing divine qualities, origin, and possession to things, people, events, and places.[192] Uses that explain the characteristics of things, events, or people that relate to God express a feature that distinguishes them from the norm. "The throne of God" (Rev. 7:15; 22:1, 3); "the glory of God" (Rev. 15:8; 21:11, 23); "the name of God" (Rev. 3:12; 16:9); "the seal of God" (Rev. 7:2; 9:4); "the mystery of God" (Rev. 10:7); "the great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14); "the power of God" (Rev. 19:1); and "the supper of God" (Rev. 19:17) are some examples.

Those instances that indicate origin typically use the prepositions ἀπό or ἐκ to denote heavenly origin and divine mission. For example, πνεῦμα ζωῆς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ; and ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ (Rev. 11:11 and 1:2). The genitive case of location also uses the

[190] The dative case, used for persons, is a personal interest case emphasising the person affected by the action. It can also function as the direct object of certain verbs. See Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 100–102; Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 139, 172; Zerwick, *Biblical Greek; Illustrated by Examples*, 19.

[191] (Rev 1:2, 9; 2:7, 18; 3:1, 2, 12, 14; 4:5; 5:6; 6:9; 7:3; 7:15; 8:2, 4; 9:4, 13; 10:7; 11:1, 11, 16, 19; 12:6, 10, 17; 14:10, 12, 19; 15:1-3, 7, 8; 16:1, 9, 14, 19; 17:17; 19:1, 9, 13, 15, 19: 20:4, 6; 21:2-3, 10-11, 23; and 22:1, 3).

[192] When Wallace describes the genitive case as "the case of qualification (or limitation as to kind) and (occasionally separation)", this use of the genitive fits quite nicely. In addition to the context, he claims that this generates semantic relevance. His classification of adjectival genitives includes possessive (relationship) genitive, attributive, and so on. Revelation's uses of θεοῦ follow these categories. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 74–92. It must be noted that not all scholars follow the same approach as Wallace. Others, like Moule, Young and Zerwick, see the use of the genitive case as more descriptive with less exegetical value than the other categories the case may have. See C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 37; Richard A. Young, *Intermediate New Testament Greek: A Linguistic and Exegetical Approach* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 23; Zerwick, *Biblical Greek; Illustrated by Examples*, 15–16.

preposition, ἐνώπιον, referring to individuals, entities, or objects that are physically present before God on His throne or are known to him (Rev. 7:15; 8:2, 4; 9:13; 11:16). Other uses of θεὸς in the genitive that emphasise possession include “the servants of God” (Rev. 7:3; 15:3); “the priests of God” (Rev. 20:6); “the city” or “temple of God” (Rev. 3:12; 11:1, 19); “the tabernacle of God” (Rev. 21:3); “the kingdom of God” (Rev. 12:10); “the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14); “the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7); and “the harps of God” (Rev. 14:2). Exploring other names for God strengthens this point.

4.3.1b. Epithetical Names for God

ὁ παντοκράτωρ (The Almighty)

ὁ παντοκράτωρ is a name for God used in four hymns, including the four living creatures, the altar voice, and the “Kingdom of our Lord.” The Almighty is emphasised in John’s vision of the satanic preparations for the great battle at Har-Magedon, where the wrath of God is emphasised. God’s reign is not coercive but based on grace, as seen in the New Jerusalem. Almighty’s omnipotence guarantees the enemy’s defeat, and his gracious presence permeates the new Jerusalem. Apocalyptic thought functions as a pictorial narrative theodicy that acknowledges the legitimacy of God’s power and willingness to destroy evil.[193] The Almighty is the One Who Is, Who Was, and Who Is to Come, and he will ultimately conquer evil.

This epithet is the most frequent name for God in the book of Revelation. The upregulation, κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, plays a significant part in Revelation’s naming of God. Each component holds both historical and theological meanings, reflecting that

[193] Carol Joyce Rotz, “The One Who Sits on the Throne: Interdividual Perspectives of the Characterization of God in the Book of Revelation” (D.Litt. et Phil., University of Johannesburg, 1998), 389–90.

Revelation's concept of God aligns with that of the Old Testament.[194] This indicates that the same God who established a covenant with ancient Israel is also present during the dramatic events depicted in Revelation.[195]

In 1:8, God identifies himself with several titles: Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, λέγει κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ. Subsequently, the epithet, The Almighty (παντοκράτωρ, becomes an appellation used in the praises given by those who worship God in the liturgical scenes of the Apocalypse. The term παντοκράτωρ appears eight times, often as part of a phrase with the nominative/vocative (κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ) in passages such as 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; and 21:22, except in 16:14 where the vocative κύριε is used, or without it, as in 19:15; τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος. Apart from Revelation, this designation for God appears in the New Testament only in 2 Cor 6:8.[196] Paul quotes six OT passages to reinforce his point in concluding his instructions that warn against a communion between the believers and non-believers.[197] The inclusion of παντοκράτωρ as the authoritative signature for Paul's instruction echoes OT prophets such as Zechariah (1:3,4,13), Haggai or Malachi (1.6), who refer to ὁ παντοκράτωρ as the source of their prophecies.

Christiane Zimmermann examines the names of God in the New Testament, especially παντοκράτωρ. Zimmermann finds that the word παντοκράτωρ, as an epithet for

[194] The name παντοκράτωρ is used in two broad ways in the Septuagint. The first is prefaced with the title "κύριος" either in the vocative or nominative case (e.g. 2. Sa 5:10; 7:8, 25, 27, 1 King 19:10, 24; 1 Ch 11:9, 17:7, 24). The second of set of uses occurs either with or without the article "ὁ" (e.g. 1 Ch 29:12; 5:17; 11:7; 15:25; 22:25; 23:16; 27:2; 27:11; 27:13; 35:13; 37:22, Jer 3:19; 5:14;15:16; 23:16; 25:27, Hos 12:5, Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:8,14–16,27; 9:6, 15, Zec 8:14,17, Mal 4:3). The objective of the name is to portray the power and might of God.

[195] James Edward Altenbaumer, "The Salvation Myth in the Hymns in Revelation" (Emory University, 1992), 94–95.

[196] 2 Corinthians 6 and 7 have long been attributed to non-Pauline authorship by some scholars. Proponents of this view cite the seemingly interrupted hapax legomena between the two chapters as un-Pauline.

God, is unlikely to have originated from pagan Greek religion before Christianity. Instead, it transposes God's name into early Jewish writings.[198] The concept of the παντοκράτωρ from the Hellenistic period, is seen as the true ruler over Israel and its enemies. It has political connotations and is often used in contrast to Roman emperors.[199]

Paul thus uses κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ in line with OT tradition to accentuate God's omnipotence, especially regarding his temple.[200] The emphasis on divine supremacy, with which all human power is relativised, also becomes a theme in New Testament writings in which the term παντοκράτωρ appears as a designation of God.[201] This Judeo-Christian tradition is echoed in the frequent use of the same title for God in the book of Revelation.

The three-part nominal epithet for God is fringed with another three-part designation that is ascriptive and temporal in outlook: ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (1:4). In 1:8 these designations set the tone for how God wants to be named in the Apocalypse. He is "He who is, He who was, and He who is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord God Almighty." The combination of the two three-part formulae, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, which occurs for the first time in 1:8, is worth noting. Thus, the temporal component of God's power and the presence of God are emphasised.[202] In addition, the political dimension of the use of the title, by means of which it is set apart from the claims of the Roman emperor, should be considered: 'God proves himself to be, despite all earthly

[198] Christiane Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters: Studien Zu Ausgewählten Neutestamentlichen Gottesbezeichnungen* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 234–50. Cf: Leviticus 26:12; Isaiah 52:11; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel; 20:34,41; 37:27

[199] Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters*, 240.

[200] Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters*, 258.

[201] Tobias Nicklas, "Der 'Pantokrator': Die Inszenierung von Gottes Macht in der Offenbarung des Johannes," *HvTSt* 68.1 (2012): 1–7; Michael Bachmann, *Göttliche Allmacht und theologische Vorsicht: zu Rezeption, Funktion und Konnotationen des biblisch-frühchristlichen Gottesepithetons pantokrator* (Stuttgart, Germany: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002), 182.

[202] Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters*, 263.

rulers, the sole ruler of the world exalted above time and space, who will finally establish his heavenly rule, in which dominion structures are no longer necessary.[203]

In chapters 4–9, the occurrences of ὁ παντοκράτωρ are presented in an *ascription-by-experience* format within a worshipful context. Worshippers, drawing from their personal experiences with God's mercy, deliverance, or justice, spontaneously praise the Almighty God. A trend evident in these chants of παντοκράτωρ is that those proclaiming the name in these scenes do so spontaneously in response to their personal experience with God. In contrast, in Revelation 13, those who worship the dragon are either persuaded or coerced to do so. Against this background, the repeated attribution of power to God by mentioning his name in the liturgy is relevant to the cosmic conflict theme in the book.

In 4:8, the four living creatures around the throne worship and invoke God's name in giving honour and glory to the one who sits on the throne. The scene resembles Isaiah 6:3b (LXX), where the Prophet observes the seraphim praising God, saying "Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος Κύριος σαβαώθ, πλήρης πᾶσα ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ."[204] In Isaiah, God's power is spatially spread throughout the world. This claim about God's power is also evident in Revelation. God was enthroned as Ruler of the Earth; hence, the 24 elders also follow the same pattern 11:7, where God is reaffirmed as the only one worthy to be ascribed power and might.

In Rev. 15:3, the Almighty again appears in the ascriptive assertion in an acknowledgement of God's justice meted out in the pouring of the bowls of judgement. This further heightens John's portrayal of God's might and power as not just the ruler, but the only rightful judge of all other competing forces, including the dragon and his cohorts. Chapter 19.6 concludes the ascriptive naming of God. The Kingship of God is prepared in 11:15, 17,

[203] Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters*, 268.

[204] Henry Barclay Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint: Volume 3: Hosea – 4 Maccabees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3: Isaiah 6:3.

12:10, and 15:3. As the all-powerful, God remains superior to Christ, who shares in the eschatological exaltation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (17:14; 19:16).

Just as the name appears in the opening verses of the book, it appears in the concluding chapter (21:22). The author of the Apocalypse is the only one among the early Christian writers to use ὁ παντοκράτωρ as a preferred epithet to describe God's unlimited power in time and space. John's preference in describing God as κύριος ὁ παντοκράτωρ is an intentional pointer to the superiority of God (revealed in the book) as opposed to the gods of the Greeks (Zeus and Isis), who were also referred to as παντκρατής, with the feminine form; παντκρατής used to refer to Isis.[205]

In the Septuagint and in other early Jewish writings in the Greek language, παντοκράτωρ is often used in connection with κύριος and θεός as an equivalent for the Hebrew צְבָאוֹת to emphasise God's unparalleled divine power.[206] Among ten occurrences in Revelation, seven are combinations of κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6).

The following are examples in the book of Amos, with two occurring in the format ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Amos 3:13; 4:13; 5:8,14–16,27 LXX; cf: Rev. 16:14; 19:15) and the last joining the first two usages with an article qualifying them all as follows: ὁ γὰρ κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Rev 21:22).[207] Except for 1:8 and 21:22, John states the epithets in his description of the visionary scenes. The remaining six in Revelation occur in worship settings where angels or living creatures acclaim the righteousness of God in the judgement he dispenses on his enemies. Hence, the designation can be ascriptive in recognising God's

[205] Jacob E. Hondius, ed., *Supplement Epigraphicum Graecum* (Leiden: Brill, 1923), 11:548; Spencer Sabin, *Katalog Der Antiken Inschriften Des Museums Von Iznik (Nikaia)*, 1st edition. (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1981), 1121; 1512.

[206] Tobias Nicklas, "God's Power According to Revelation," *HTS* 68 (2011): 1.

[207] Karrer observes the name in 21:22 as resulting in an unresolved contradiction to the character of God as being both judgmental and graceful. However, the name in that verse is the way John used it in 1:8. See Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation," 215.

sovereign rule over every power in time and space.[208] The remaining two that combine θεὸς with παντοκράτωρ intensify the thought above in that God's sovereignty is asserted in the face of direct opposition from the Dragon himself (cf. Rev 16:14).[209] It is clear that using the descriptor of God as the παντοκράτωρ was intended to illustrate God's unparalleled rule over all things during the cosmic conflict.[210]

The παντοκράτωρ of Revelation is the One who has shown himself to be supreme through creation, who already rules in the affairs of humanity in both OT and NT times, and proves himself as the overlord of all earthly rulers through his yet-to-be-completed judicial adjudication in the New Jerusalem.[211] In this picture, God is presented as the sole ruler of the world, exalted above time and space, who will finally establish his unbounded heavenly rule. John's style of naming God reveals the victor and villain in the cosmic conflict between God/Christ and Satan/ his cohorts. This is connected to the name τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.[212]

4.3.1c. Titular Names

τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ

The climax of the prologue of the Apocalypse ends with God prescribing his own name: "I am the Alpha and Omega", declares the Lord God, "Who Is and Who Was and Who Is to Come, the All-Powerful" (Rev. 1:8). He utters this name only once more: "I am the

[208] Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters*, 268.

[209] Richard Bauckham, "God in the Book of Revelation," *PIBA* 18 (1995): 47.

[210] Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 140; Paul Spilsbury, "The Apocalypse," in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of the Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 143.

[211] Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters*, 286.

[212] Rev 4:9, 10, 6:16;10:6

Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end' (Rev. 21:6). This name seems to echo the divine self-designation in the book of Isaiah. ἐγὼ πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα· πλὴν ἐμοῦ οὐκ ἔστι Θεός (Is 44:6 LXX) and ἐγώ εἰμι πρῶτος, καὶ ἐγώ εἰμι εἰς (Is 48:12; see also 41:4 LXX). This name embodies the concept that the God of Israel is the Creator of all things and the Lord of history.[213]

God's essence and actions encompass all time from creation to the new Jerusalem. Creation marked the beginning of God's reign in history, which culminates when all creation is gathered in the New Jerusalem. God precedes everything and brings everything to an eschatological conclusion.[214]

ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός

In their hymn the Four Living Creatures around the One Who Sits on the Throne honour him as Ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος (Rev. 4:8). At the opening of the fifth seal, the martyrs beneath the altar also appeal to God, crying out ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός to avenge their souls (Rev. 6:10). The souls of the slain refer to God's ἀληθινός, highlighting his virtuous nature as the reason for his actions. Similarly, the redeemed sing the "Song of Moses and the Lamb" in praise of God's righteous judgment, giving their reason for praise: ὅτι μόνος ὅσιος (Rev. 15:4). In all three instances there is an expression of their experience and confidence in the holiness innate in God's character to situate their request or praise for God's just actions. It is also evident that God's war over evil and his loyalty to the people of Lamb are praised by those who, in turn, battle evil and remain faithful to God. They survived and emerged victorious after the beast's attacks. They concluded that God's judgement reflects His holy character. This naming style is an ascription based on experience in the field.

[213] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27.

[214] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27.

These ascriptive names contribute to God's characterisation in Revelation by establishing a paradigm of traits ascribed to the One Who Sits on the Throne by various characters in the story. They thus set up expectations verified by God's actions and further characterisations. The holiness accolades cast a slur on the prime antagonist, the dragon, whose name portrays a character directly opposite to God's.

πατήρ

Among the grandiose and awe-inspiring names for God, one is incredibly intimate with human beings. The One Who Sits on the Throne is called Christ's πατήρ twice. In the epistolary greeting, John refers to his co-author as "he who made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (1:6). In John's vision of 144,000 he sees the multitude with the name of the Lamb and the name of his father inscribed on their foreheads (Rev 14:1). Three times, the Lamb himself refers to God as "My Father" in conjunction with promises made to the overcomers. Jesus promises the overcomers authority, just as he received authority from his Father (Rev 2:27). He discloses his identity to his Father (3:5). They sit with the Lamb on his throne, just as the Lamb overcomes and seats himself on the throne (Rev 3:21). God is also identified as the Father through Christ's portrayal of himself as the Son.[215] Some trace the background of the concept of fatherhood in the Bible to the Ancient Near East, Egypt, Second Temple Judaism, or Hellenism.[216] Nevertheless, in Revelation God is referenced as father to juxtapose the relations between God, the Lamb, and their followers with those of the dragon, the beasts, and their followers.

[215] Coutts, "'My Father's Name.'"

[216]Franco Ferrari, "Gott Als Vater Und Schöpfer. Zur Rezeption von Timaios 28c3–5 Bei Einigen Platonikern," in *The Divine Father: Religious and Philosophical Concepts of Divine Parenthood in Antiquity*, ed. Felix Albrecht and Reinhard Feldmeier, Bilingual. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 57–70; Hermann Spieckermann, "The 'Father' of the Old Testament and Its History," in *The Divine Father: Religious and Philosophical Concepts of Divine Parenthood in Antiquity*, ed. Felix Albrecht and Reinhard Feldmeier, Bilingual. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 73–84; Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, "'Vater Zeus' Im Griechischen Epos," in *The Divine Father: Religious and Philosophical Concepts of Divine Parenthood in Antiquity*, ed. Felix Albrecht and Reinhard Feldmeier, Bilingual. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 37–55.

Although God is often characterised with paternal imageries in the Old Testament, Jesus consistently employed the name "Father," particularly in his prayers, as substitutes for the divine designation *Theos* in the book of Revelation. This evocation of the name while saying "Father" suggests something novel that does not break from but arises in profound continuity with the tradition of Israel's relationship to God. Jesus understands himself pre-eminently as a "son" to God his Father, which he knows for himself before he can share it with others.[217]

The Church of Thyatira identifies Christ as "the Son of God" (2:18). A boy is born to a "Woman" clothed with the sun (12:5). This cosmological depiction of the Incarnation implies God's fatherhood. It indicates that God is Christ's father, highlighting their profound relationship. The Father communicates with and works through Christ (19:13; 6:1ff). Throughout the dramatic throne sequences, God rules the universe as the king of the nations and keeps a sealed book with seven seals that only the Lamb can open. The execution of God's plan is entrusted to the messianic king, the lion of the tribe of Judah, David's descendant (5:5).[218]

However, God's paternity is directly applied to humans. The One Who is Seated on the Throne declares the heritage of the victors (21:7). The overcomer inherits all the promises of New Jerusalem. They are the offspring of God. The metaphor evokes visions of a relationship characterised by privileges, duties and promises. A father on Earth loves, cares for, and provides for his children using his resources.

[217] For a detailed discussion on Jesus' use of "father" instead of the Old Testament's frequent use of אֲדֹנָי to refer to God. Richard Bauckham, "Jesus's Use of 'Father' and Disuse of 'Lord,'" in *Son of God: Divine Sonship in Jewish and Christian Antiquity*, ed. Garrick V. Allen et al., 1st ed. (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019), 87–105.

[218] Paul Niskanen, "Yhwh as Father, Redeemer, and Potter in Isaiah 63:7–64:11," *CBQ* 68.3 (2006): 397–407.

Similarly, the heavenly father seeks the highest good for his children. The One Who Sits on the Throne wipes away every tear from the eyes of the overcomers and brings them into an intimate, barrier-free friendship with him. This is consistent with Zimmermann's observation that in the New Testament, Jewish allusions to God as "Father" are adopted and given greater importance, especially in portraying Jesus as God's unique Son and the Christian fellowship as God's family. Similarly, the New Testament's references to God as the one who raised Jesus provide a biblical/Jewish emphasis on God as living and life-giving from a new and clear perspective.[219]

Notwithstanding, the fatherly figure has more to do with God's theological profile in the cosmic conflict. The relationship between God and Christ occurs in a familial setting, while that between the dragon and the beasts exists in a master-servant context. As will become clear in the next chapter, a portrait of God painted through the names either prescribed by himself or ascribed to him by other actors develops a profile meant to contrast God with Satan, the chief antagonist of the narrative.[220]

The Hebrews regarded God's name, YHWH as too holy to be uttered. Similarly, it may be claimed that God's name is never mentioned in Revelation. Nevertheless, God's name in Revelation contributes to the revealing of his character. Both prescriptive and ascriptive naming reveal God's essence and role. In this instance, the names of God reflect the nature of his relationship with the characters. These names show that God is both everlasting and involved in human affairs. God is supreme and in charge of everything in heaven and on Earth. God is well acquainted with humanity and devoted to its welfare. Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, encompass history and determine the fate of all

[219] Zimmermann, *Die Namen Des Vaters*, 512–16.

[220] Sigve K. Tonstad, "The Father of Lies, the Mother of Lies, and the Death of Jesus.," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard J. Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 193–210.

creation. The One Who Was, Who Is, and Who Is to Come is responsible for planning and executing the fulfilment of human history. The Lord God, the Almighty, has sufficient strength to carry out his purposes. God's involvement in human problems does not diminish his transcendence or majesty. Through his Son, Jesus Christ, the Father provides salvation and brings people into close connection. The One Who is Seated on the Throne rules supremely and deserves respect. Anaphoric names stress the relationship between God the Father and the Lamb.

This establishes God's literary-theological profile as the *Pantokrator* who rules over the entire apocalyptic tale and circumstance. Thus, the awe-inspiring depiction of God's person and purpose tempers the dragon's ferocity, despite his terrifying nature. Thus, the final victor in the cosmic conflict depicted in the Book of Revelation is revealed in advance.

4.3.1d. Participial Names of God

ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου

The vision of the throne in Rev. 4–5 is a pivotal scene in Revelation, describing the divine space and the invisible God. John's vision of the universe begins with the throne, symbolising God and Christ. The "Amen" marks the beginning of a whole sequence which culminates with thousands worshipping the Lamb. The scene concludes with another "Amen."[221] The visionary image depicts a heavenly throne room, with the one sitting on the throne (Rev. 4:2), twenty-four thrones, and elders sitting upon them (Rev. 4:4). The area surrounding the throne is described, and the four living beings are present (Rev. 4:5–8). The Lamb is described as the one who can take and open the sealed scroll, and the angels acknowledge the throne. The passage aims to turn viewers into eyewitnesses and for them to

[221] This creates a unique and significant linguistic image representing God and his eternal kingdom, Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne."

develop an emotional attachment to the heavenly scenes.[222] John becomes theologically aware of the distinction between the illuminating presence of God and that of Christ because of his fantastic throne room encounter.

In Revelation, the name for God as ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον occurs within the context of the throne room. The throne is a primary element in Revelation's collection of symbolic images and serves as a central theological motif. This represents faith in God's sovereignty, a key theological perspective in Revelation. The throne of God is an important theme for believers in Asia Minor.[223]

καθήμεν with ἐπί occurs about 27 times, but it combines with θρόνος to form a participial name 12 times in different cases: accusative three times (For example ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος, Rev. 4:2, 3; 20:11); in genitive the case five times (e.g. τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου, Rev. 4:10; 5:1,7; 6:16; 7:17); and in the dative five times (e.g. τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ, Rev. 4:9; 7:10; 19:4; 21:5).[224] Middle and passive voices are mixed in their occurrence. Consistent with the name's rendering is the presence of the articles τὸν, τοῦ and τῷ to refer to both the seated one and the throne and the use of the present participle. This seems to indicate, first, that John was precise about the figure he was naming in all instances

[222] Nils Neumann, *Hören und Sehen: Die Rhetorik der Anschaulichkeit in den Gottesthron-Szenen der Johannesoffenbarung*, 1st edition. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 208–10.

[223] Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, 330–35; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 320; Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 31, 58, 120; Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 31; Merrill Tenney, "The Theism of the Apocalypse," in *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, ed. Morris A. Inch and Ronald F. Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 187; Alan Bandy, "God in John's Apocalypse," *PERC* 22.2 (2024): 4–29; Aune sees the name as a political tool that mimics how power was portrayed in the Imperial Roman court. See Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John."

[224] Aune observed five different formats of the names but classified them according to the cases in which they appear. See Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 285.

and the specific throne that he meant.[225] Second, God's being seated throughout supports the idea of his eternal control and judgement over events in the narrative.

The name accurately describes God's role and function as the sovereign creator and Lord over the events and players in the storylines. It appears frequently and it appears in worship and judgement scenes. Neumann describes the throne scene as John's vivid portrayal of the majesty of God, inviting the reader/hearer to join the emotional euphoria in the throne room.[226] Referring to God as "ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον" merges the concepts of God and king, emphasising absolute power.[227] God reigns over the cosmos from his heavenly throne, and Revelation concludes with God's rule on earth, making all things new (Rev. 21:1–6). This symbolism of God seated on the throne underscores his sovereignty, addressing questions of divine rule and cosmic conflict.[228]

John refers to Jesus as the Lamb, demonstrating his recognition even in his exalted state, emphasising the need for vivid yet concealed imagery. [229] Karrer interprets John's picture of God in this text as a soteriological suspense meant to reflect the triumphant

[225] Wallace describes such articular uses as a substantival participle, which functions like a noun with its verbal aspects retained. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 617–23. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2016), 395–97.

[226] Neumann, *Hören und Sehen*, 180–210.

[227] Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, 123; Stephen D Moore, "The Beatific Vision as a Posing Exhibition: Revelation's Hypermasculine Deity," *JSNT* 18.60 (1996): 32; James Valentine, *Theological Aspects of the Temple Motif in the Old Testament and Revelation* (Boston, MA: Boston University, 1985), 210–11; R. Dean Davis, *The Heavenly Court Scene of Revelation 4–5* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 118–43; Jon Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 33.2 (1995): 245–65. For Aune this also has a connotation of political power. See Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John."

[228] M. Eugene Boring, "The Theology of Revelation: 'The Lord Our God the Almighty Reigns,'" *Int* 40.3 (1986): 257.

[229] Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation," 216; Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 23. John's encounter and response to the presence of God here resemble the theophanic experiences of OT prophets like Micaiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, who similarly could not fathom the splendid presence of God. For an extensive discussion on this background, see Davis, *The Heavenly Court Scene of Revelation 4–5*, 104–27; Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, 21–76.

declaration of the redeemed crowd, Ἡ σωτηρία τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ. (7:10).[230] While this observation is accurate, the contexts of the remaining six of the 13 instances (i.e. 6.16; 7.10, 15, 19.4; 20.11, and 21.5) force us to enlarge the theme underlying John's method of referring to God. The name demonstrates God's salvific authority and unquestionable ability to execute justice against hostile individuals or groups. For instance, in 6.16, the dreadful effects caused by the opening of the sixth seal causes the ungodly to flee from the wrath of the one seated on the throne. Similar ideas are expressed in 19.4 and 20:11, where the 24 elders spontaneously worship God for punishing Babylon and her allies. In this naming style, John emphasises God's immense power, following the name (παντοκράτωρ Rev. 4:8), in stark contrast to the dragon, who, despite possessing a throne of his own, is unable to stand against the One seated on the throne who will mete out judgement to him and even annihilate him in the lake of fire forever.

Traditions from within and outside the Bible (which may have influenced this depiction of God as one seated on a throne) indicate that God is loftier than can be adequately captured by human language.[231] Sitting on the throne signifies God's absolute power and

[230] Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation," 216.

[231] Revelation's throne room scenes have long been closely associated with visions of the throne in both the Old Testament and the extra-biblical texts. Cf. 2 Kgs 22:19; Isa 6:1-13; Ezek 1-2, 40-44; Dan 7; 1 En. 14-16; 37-72. For detailed discussions, see Jörg Frey, "'Mystical' Traditions in an Apocalyptic Text? The Throne Vision of Revelation 4 within the Context of Enochic and Merkavah Texts," in *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter G. R. Villiers, and Adela Yarbro Collins, 397 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 111–126; Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Carol J Rotz and J A Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne: Towards a Theory of Theocentric Characterisation According to the Apocalypse of John," *Neot* 33.1 (1999): 91–111; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, 1st ed. (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1982); David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), acts 276–278; Meira Kensky, *Trying Man, Trying God: The Divine Courtroom in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang, "The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation" (Thesis, Harvard University, 1985), 172–74; Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 72; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 320; Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 226–27; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 285; Beate Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes*, SBB 52 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004), 106–8..

glory.[232] It is fascinating to see the Apocalypse continue the Old Testament's traditional assertion of God's supremacy through naming. [233] Boring highlights the significance of God's culmination in history. He claims that Revelation's statements about the "end" are comments on God.[234] Eschatology is a facet of God's character. "The end is not a thing, but a person," Caird declares.[235] God plans, directs, and enacts the conclusion of history, as revealed in the Book of Revelation. The name, One Who Sits on the Throne, exemplifies the eschatological completion of God's purpose.

ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (He Who Is, Was and Is to Come)[236]

This is a distinctive phrase used in Revelation to refer to God. It occurs three times (1:4, 8, and 4:8 with slight variation) in the book.[237] A shortened form, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν, is also used elsewhere (11:17, 16:5). The perceived variation in tone between the designation for God in Revelation 1:4 (ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος) and its occurrence in 1:8 (ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος) has prompted certain scholars to contend that the latter instance may, in fact, refer to Jesus Christ rather than to God.[238] Those who subscribe to this view believe that the final phase, ὁ ἐρχόμενος, primarily foretells the parousia in 2:5, 16; 3:11; 16:15; 22:7, 20, where Jesus audaciously proclaims his imminent arrival, emphasising himself as the coming

[232] As in Matthew 23:22. Jesus' absolute authority is signified similarly, cf. Mark 14:62, Luke 22:69 and Col 3:1. It is then not surprising that God shares his throne with Christ in the Apocalypse of John, Rev 3:21 and 4:3.

[233] Choo Sung Kim, "Revelation 4–5 and the Jewish Antecedents to the Portrait of God and of Messiah in the Old Testament and Apocalyptic Literature" (Ph.D., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2002), 95–131; Boring, "The Theology of Revelation"; J. Daryl Charles, "An Apocalyptic Tribute To The Lamb (Rev 5:1 and 14)," *JETS* 34.4 (1991): 461–73.

[234] Boring, *Revelation*, 215.

[235] G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Reprint edition. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 266.

[236] Rev 4:2b, 3, 9, 10; 5:1, 6:16, 7:10, 15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5

[237] Aune compares the phrase to Paul's letters and concludes that John uses it in Revelation in a distinct way. SeeAune, *Revelation 1–5*, 30.

[238] See Bandy, "God in John's Apocalypse"; Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation."

One.[239] This author posits that in both instances the name references God. The reason is that 1:18: (ὁ ζῶν—καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων) makes a clear distinction between the aspects of the function of the God and Jesus he wanted to emphasise. The names of Jesus reveal three distinct phases of his ministry: pre-eminence, death, and the promise of eternal life following death. In this context, the reference to God serves to underscore his authority throughout history. Additional support for this view comes from the fact that at the introduction of the names, the overarching rulership of God is acknowledged; he is ὁ παντοκράτωρ.

The substitution of the proper name for God with three nominative clauses linked by καὶ at the formal beginning of the book calls for an enquiry. This interest is further heightened by the fact that ἀπὸ, which generally often follows the genitive case, is followed by a nominative. This previously unattested string of titles that reference God in Christian literature appears three times in Revelation, with additional variations in word order in 11:17 and 16:5. The analysis of this formula begins with a discussion of the possible background of the phrase and its theological meaning in the context of the theme of the cosmic conflict.

Attempts to account for the source of the tripartite name. Efforts to account for the origins of the tripartite name frequently rest upon the observation that John appears to demonstrate a pronounced engagement with 'pagan' imagery and practices, interpreting these as part of a broader apologetic critique directed at Greco-Roman culture itself.[240] Some

[239] For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 198; Fee, *Revelation*, 6; J. du Preez, *Die Boodskap van Die Laaste Bybelboek : N Kommentaar Op Openbaring*, 1st ed. (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo, 1992), 69; J. A. Du Rand, *Die A-Z van Openbaring:'n allesomvattende perspektief op die boek Openbaring*, 1st ed. (Vereeniging: Christelike Uitgewersmaatskappy, 2007), 126; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Revised. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 104; Mark L. Strauss and Tremper Longman, III, eds., *The Baker Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2023), 165; H.P. Malan van Rhyn, "Ἔρχομαι as Wederkomswoord En Die Telos van Die Gebruik Daarvan in Die Boek Openbaring," *InSK* 58.1 (2024): 1–10.

[240] David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic," *NTS* 33.4 (1987): 481.; see also Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 26–31; G. R. Beasley-Murray, ed., *The Book of Revelation* (London: Oliphants, 1974), 191–97.

scholars, such as Bauckham, propose that John's presence on Patmos was not due to exile, as traditionally asserted, but rather that he travelled there specifically to receive the revelation. This perspective implies that John retained a degree of authority over the church, which, in turn, is reflected in his use of this divine formula to reinforce the credibility and authority of his prophetic message.[241] This view sounds more speculative than factual.

Rather John asserts an ontology of God that transcends both Jewish and Greco-Roman constructs. The *Dreizeitenformel*, therefore, functions as an intentional theological assertion: it encapsulates the entirety of God's existence in the past, present, and future, not simply to echo antecedent traditions, but to redefine them within the apocalyptic context of Revelation. In this way, John's usage signals a deliberate and nuanced theological innovation, reinforcing the sovereignty and immediacy of God's rule amid the cosmic conflict. By foregrounding God's continuous reality in this manner, John frames the narrative of Revelation as a drama whose outcome is determined by the immutable essence and active presence of the divine, thereby challenging and ultimately subverting any competing claims to cosmic authority found in his contemporary philosophical or religious milieu.[242]

Thus, although some names for God in Revelation may have parallels in pagan religions, John does not describe God with personal names from Hellenistic culture.[243]

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[241] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 4. Others, like Thompson, state plainly that John had gone to Patmos to preach. See Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 172–73. For alternative arguments, see Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 102–4; Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 12–14.

[242] Sean M. McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos: Rev. 1:4 in Its Hellenistic and Early Jewish Setting* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 197.

[243] A good example here is the Aeon Inscription from Eleusis, which describes Aeon as *κατὰ τὰ αὐτά, ὁποῖος ἔστι καὶ ἦν καὶ ἔσται, ἀρχὴν μεσότητα τέλος (*Concerning those things, who he is and was and will be...a beginning, middle or end...). Although the inscription here describes Aeon as being eternal, John subtly makes a distinction between him and the true God, with the claims of the latter bearing the name ἰαῶ. See, "Aeon: Inscription from Eleusis," n.d., https://www.hellenicgods.org/inscription-aion-from-eleusis; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Wipf & Stock, 2003), 107–30. Others like McDonough see Aeon as a promising background to John's naming of God in 1:4 as the One Who Was, Who is and Who is to come. See McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 199.

The allusion to the Jewish Tetragrammaton in Exod. 3:14 is widely suggested as the basis for the naming of God in Rev. 1:4 as the ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος .[244] The burning bush experience was both a revelation of God's authority and a derivative authority for Moses in his commissioning as the spokesman for God. Hence, if John was to authenticate his source in the reception and subsequent dispatch of the vision, whereby he writes as a spokesman for God, the theophanic experience of Moses (the most excellent prophet) and the following name of God revealed to Moses could have been an obvious choice.[245] It is essential to assert that God, having chosen Moses as his agent, also sought to reveal himself to him, as evidenced in the historical narrative of the Jewish people.[246] Such an occurrence is a standard expectation in most call-narrative episodes in the ancient world, where establishing one's authority as God's spokesperson was as necessary as the message to be conveyed.[247] Aune sums it up by saying that just as God told Moses "to accredit his message by telling the people that ὁ ὢν [LXX; MT: YHWH] had sent him, so John appears to be authenticating his prophetic book by claiming that its actual source is none other than ὁ ὢν."[248]

Koester, *Revelation*, 215; C. G. Ozanne, "The Language of the Apocalypse," *Tyndale Bulletin* 16 (1965): 3–9; James A. Walther, "The Address in Revelation 1:4,5a," *HBT* 17.1 (1995): 165–80; Steve Moyise, "The Language of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 22.76 (2000): 97–113; Sean M. McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos: Rev. 1:4 in Its Hellenistic and Early Jewish Setting*, vol. 107 of *WUNT* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 230.

[245] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 2–9; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 83–91.

[246] This is another way to understand the issue of John's prophetic ministry, to check the excesses of human instruments in divine inspiration. Philo read God's revelation of his name to Moses as the means to assert himself from all other gods and thus reveals to Moses that He is the God of those men who derived their names from virtue, i.e. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. See Alexandria of Philo, *On the Life of Abraham*, trans. Charles Duke Yonge, 10 (Massachusetts, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

[247] This could be the reason for Moses' quest to know the name of the God with whom he was engaging (Exod. 3:13). The call narratives of Isaiah and Jeremiah all reveal this phenomenon (Isa. 6:1–13; Jer. 1:1–9 and Ezek. 1).

[248] Lampe and Liddell state that John is the first Christian author to use this Divine name, as it rarely occurs among later Christian authors. G. W. H. Lampe and Henry George Liddell, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (New York, NY: Clarendon, 1961), 418; Aune, Revelation 1–5, 31.

This background helps explain the context of Rev. 1:4 and 8, where instead of John calling God θεὸς as in 1:1, he addresses him as ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. Beale has observed that this is an allusion to the Tetragrammaton in Exodus 3:14 and its subsequent use in Isa. 41:4, 43:10, 44:6, and 48:12.[249] He further argues that the last title, ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ought to be conceived eschatologically as a reference to "God's sovereign consummation of history in the future."[250] McDonough observes that the three-fold name of God ("the one who is and who was and who is to come, "1.4) seems to combine well with the prophetic instruction to John to "write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things" (Rev. 1:19).[251] The similarities in the portrayal of time across the past, present, and future in these visions are unlikely to be coincidental. They establish a direct connection between the nature of God and the message communicated by John. Although the threefold phrase stands as a single name, each element can be considered separately.[252] Hence, analysing how John uses each unit of the threefold name for God will help appreciation of the importance of John's usage and its purpose. McDonough also posits that John chose the tripartite title for two main reasons: *aesthetics* and *tradition*.[253] With respect to aesthetics, he argues that John followed the literary symmetry of his time, in which the title import could also be deduced from other titles such as "The Beginning and the End"

[249] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 187. Beale built on the earlier work by McNamara, who argued that the titles are paraphrased from the Hebrew tetragrammaton in Exod. 3:14, thus following the rabbinic fondness for God's title as "one who is 'I am he who will be forever'. See Martin McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966), 103–12. Cf. also Tg. Ps-Jonathan, Deut. 32:39; Exod. Rab. 3.6. Koester further notes the prior reference to God in Hellenistic culture as the 'existent One.' See Seneca the Younger, Eph. 58.7, 17; Plutarch, Pel 16; Cicero Nat. d. 1:24).

[250] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 188.

[251] McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 201. Others, like R. H. Charles and J. Ramsey Michaels, see this directive as both the summary of the book's content and a clue to the structure of the book. See Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 1:1,33; J. Ramsey Michaels, "Revelation 1:19 and the Narrative Voices of the Apocalypse," *NTS* 37.4 (1991): 604. See also Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 26.

[252] Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 30–31.

[253] McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 230.

and “The Alpha and Omega.” Thus “Divine titles appear particularly ripe for such multiplication since the piling up of epithets and attributes was already a part of Jewish Worship.”[254]

Although this reasoning appears plausible, it seems not to align with the theological objectives John intended for the churches if his primary focus had been on aesthetic communication. McDonough further explains that John possibly echoed the Hebrew Tetragrammaton to confirm his ‘prophetic calling’ and connect the book of Revelation with God’s previous acts of deliverance.[255] One fact that cannot be missed in respect to John’s use of the pre-existent ὁ ὢν is that he contextualises it to suit the theological message unique to his material. Hence, he states three linear patterns of God’s existence: past, present, and future, which are not present in any prior biblical work. In other words, although John might have alluded to the previous Jewish divine titular tradition, he was not merely mimicking it without evoking the incredible connotations that the name of God evoked.

MacNamara argues that John did not rely on the Septuagint, and contrary arguments can also be persuasive.[256] An obvious meaning of the phrase in the context of Rev. 1:4 could be that it is John’s strategy to draw attention to God’s existence perpetually or to indicate that God is ever-present among the congregations. However, the open-ended nature of the phrase could lead to several plausible interpretations, even in the ears of the first recipients. Three interpretations can be proffered as the intended meaning of ὁ ὢν in the tripartite phrase.

The first is a reading that represents God’s self-existence, especially as the creator. Although verses such as Rev. 14:7 call attention to the need to worship only God, the creator

[254] McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 230.

[255] McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 230.

[256] McNamara, has argued that John instead relied on Pseudo-Jonathan and Deuteronomy 32:39, McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 103. But many other scholars argue for an allusion to the LXX, which makes more sense, especially since the LXX served as the go-to text for most new Testament writers. See Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 54; Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 16; John Sweet, *Revelation*, 1979, 65; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 30–31.

of all things, there is not much evidence to support this as the background for John's use of the phrase. This interpretation draws from Philo's theology about ὁ ὢν, but evidence to support this reading is hard to find in the Apocalypse.[257] In summary, it is an inference rather than the actual meaning.[258]

A second view is that ὁ ὢν conveys the meaning of God's presence among his people. When one considers ὁ ὢν against the backdrop of God's self-revealing "I" (Exod. 3:12, 14) especially in v.12, where it is clearly stated, "…I will certainly be with you and shall be a sign to you that I have sent you…", God reveals his abiding presence to Moses. If Revelation was written to encourage Christians to be faithful in the face of creeping compromise and assimilation into Roman culture and practices[259] in the hands of Imperial Rome, then the author of the Apocalypse's appeal to ὁ ὢν in the salutation in 1:4 might be emphasising God's presence among his people.[260]

However, with recent scholarship discounting persecution as the setting of Revelation, coupled with John's contextual adaptation of Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions, it is worth considering other possibilities for the meaning of the phrase. Thus, the third argument is that John's use of ὁ ὢν connotes God's present existence, in line with the Jewish tradition in the Palestinian Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan on Exod. 3:14) and the Sibylline Oracle (SibOr 3:16).[261] However, further evidence suggests that ὁ ὢν does not necessarily imply present existence but can describe reality in contrast to the unreal. In his article on Rev. 1:19,

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[257]. Mos. 1:74–76; Det. 160).

[258] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 50–51.

[259] For a discussion on this subject, consult Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*.

[260] There is an unsettled debate as to whether the temporal aspect of ὁ ὢν meant timeless eternity or eternal presence. For extensive discussions, see Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 113; McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 207–8; Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 291; Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse*, ed. Myles M. Bourke (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 18.

[261] Bauckham, "God in the Book of Revelation."

Michaels relies on several examples to prove that 'is' and 'are' used about persons in Revelation imply reality rather than just the present tense.' Examples include the letters to Ephesus, Smyrna and Sardis, where there were persons who claimed to be apostles or Jews but (οὐκ εἰσίν) they were the opposites of what they claimed to be (Rev. 2:2, 9; 3:9).[262] In this way, John underscores the sharp distinction between the true nature of God and the pretensions of the dragon, who seeks to rival God's authority.

This reading is in line with Rev. 17, where a similar naming strategy occurs. Here, the beast that carries the scarlet woman '…was and is not…' (ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν; οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται v.8; 11) and of the seven kingdoms, 'One is, and the other is yet to come (v.10 ὁ εἷς ἔστιν, ὁ ἄλλος οὔπω ἦλθεν). God, who *Is*, contrasts with the beast who also professes *to be but* is *not*.[263] Thus, John chooses ὁ ὢν, considering the cosmic conflict theme to show the difference between God and his opponent, Satan and his cohorts.

John's 'unique' Greek grammar in the Apocalypse becomes complicated when ὁ ἦν (*Who Was)* is considered. He not only maintains the masculine nominative singular article but also adds a finite verb where a participle of *εἰμί* would have been ideal. The grammatical construction of Revelation 1:4a is considered to be the first and most famous solecism of the Apocalypse.[264] It is impossible to translate it into English and is awkward in Greek. John uses the nominative case and a single indeclinable noun to allude to the Tetragrammaton. There are various theories about the solecisms in Revelation, including Semitic language transfer,

[262] "The third person plural εἰσίν ('are', or 'they are'), like the third person singular ἐστίν ('is') and the first person singular εἰμί or ἐγώ εἰμι (I am'), is used repeatedly to identify specific details or characters in John's visions." See Michaels, "Revelation," 1.

[263] See McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 206; Koester, *Revelation*, 215.

[264] For discussion on solecisms in the book Revelation, see Paul M. Bretscher, "Syntactical Peculiarities in Revelation," *CTM* 16.9 (1945): 95–15; Georg Benedikt Winer, "De Soloecismis Qui in Apocalypsi Joannea Inesse Dicuntur," in *Exegetische Studien: In Verbindung Mit Mehrern Gelehrten*, ed. Georg Benedikt Winer (Leipzig: Hartmann, 1827), 144–58; Cowden T. Laughlin, *The Solecisms of the Apocalypse* (New Jersey, NJ: Robinson, 1902), 5–20; Thomas Paulsen, "Zu Sprache Und Stil Der Johannes-Apokalypse," in *Poetik Und Intertextualität Der Johannesapokalypse*, ed. Stefan Alkier, Thomas Hieke, and Tobias Niklas, WUNT 346 (Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 2015), 3–25.

intentional imitation or unintentional influence, translation from Hebrew or Aramaic Vorlagen and grammatical irregularities as a Greek idiolect. Some scholars argue that solecisms are intentional literary devices, such as used by Jamaican Rastafarians, in Old Testament allusions, or masters of the Greek language.[265] Some scholars also suggest that solecisms give the document an ecstatic quality, highlighting the author's mastery of Greek. John regularly uses grammatical nuance to make theological points, especially when ample evidence shows his ability to use correct grammar in the doxological salutation.[266]

In this instance, the author's choice of words and syntax when describing God's person and character appears deliberate.[267] The appellation, "One who was", implies pre-existence and the thought of a founder of all that has ever existed. Primarily because, in Revelation, created things are deemed preeminent in God's everlasting desire prior to their physical manifestation, this may be an aspect of God's creative power.[268]

This phrase, therefore, does not serve to contrast John's depiction of God with that of Zeus, as some have suggested.[269] In this passage, the author emphasises not only the future existence of God but also his coming to complete human history through judgement and

[265] Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek*, 24–25; Ozanne, "The Language of the Apocalypse," 4, 22; Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, 29, 32; R. B. Y. 1899- Scott, *The Original Language of the Apocalypse* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1928); Georg Benedikt Winer, *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament: Prepared as a Solid Basis for the Interpretation of the New Testament* (Massachusetts MA: Draper, 1883), 535; Stanley E Porter, "The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion," *NTS* 35.4 (1989): 582–603.

[266] Allen Dwight Callahan, "The Language of Apocalypse," *HTR* 88.4 (1995): 453–70; G. K. Gregory K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNTSup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 1–22; G. K. Gregory K. Beale and David H. Campbell, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 101; Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation after Christendom* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress, 2002), 110–16.

[267] Garrett Best, "The Aural Impact of Solecisms in Revelation," *NovT* 63.1 (2020): 90–111.

[268] For example, Rev. 4:8,11; 13:8; 17:8. See also, Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 140.

[269] "Ζεὺς ἦν, Ζεὺς ἐστίν, Ζεὺς ἔσσεται: ὦ μεγάλε Ζεῦ (Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus shall be O mighty Zeus), Pausanias states that Pleiades (plural) were sacred women is the first woman to have chanted the phrase. See**,** Pausanias Pausaniae, *Graeciae Descriptio* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903), 3:10.12.10.

salvation.[270] Apart from the references in the book of Revelation, this phrase is rarely used to describe God's future existence in the Old Testament, Rabbinic traditions, or elsewhere in the NT. It was used as an independent title in Matthew 3:11;[271] 11:3 (Luke 7:20), and Hebrews 10:37. The first text refers to the ministry of John the Baptist. The second occurs when John the Baptist asks his followers to go and enquire from Jesus Christ, "Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος…" (Matt. 11:3 "Are you the coming one?" The obvious meaning here is John's difficulty in juxtaposing the realities between messianic figures in the person of Jesus viz-a-viz his (i.e., John the Baptist's) incarceration. The third use (Heb. 10:37) could be a reinterpretation of Habakkuk 2:3 to apply to Jesus as the coming one.[272] One interesting twist in John's reference to God as the coming one is his avoidance of the future tense *Will Come.* Instead, he uses the present tense to stress the activated nature of his coming to be. It can emphasise the nearness of the coming so much that it can be described as a "present eschatology' in the book.[273] Therefore, the phrase regarding God can be considered as John's highest theological prowess, combining the transcendence and condescendence of Jesus.[274] Hence, John's shift from the common phrase "he who will be" to "the one who is come" has immense theological significance. In the words of Bauckham, "This is the biblical God, who chooses as his future, his coming to his creation, and whose creation will find its future in Him."[275] Notably, in John's scheme, the person and nature of God, as revealed in his name, are directly linked to the ministry and acts of Jesus Christ. Thus, in describing God as "the one who is to come",

[270] It has been rightly observed how this would have sounded offensive to Greeks but as exerting authority for Jews. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 54; Sweet, *Revelation*, 65.

[271] Mark 1:7 and Luke uses Ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός.

[272] F. F. Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Morgan & Scott, 1964), 271–74; George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 1st edition. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday & Co., 1972), 175.

[273] Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation," 212.

[274] McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 214.

[275] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 30.

John implies that it is an unavoidable outcome of God's nature to come with both reward and justice through Christ.

The formula used in Rev. 1:4 seems to run through other sections of the Apocalypse, with some variations that require separate examination. John repeats the phrase in verse 8 and adds additional name epithets.

> Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, λέγει κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.
> (I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty.)

The divine predicate (Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ) occurs three times in Revelation, with two referring to God and the other to Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:8a, 21:6, and 22:13, respectively). Since Ἄ and Ὦ in the merism represent the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the emphasis is on God's sovereignty, as in other titles such as "the first and the last" (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13) and "the beginning and the end" '(Rev. 3:14; 21:6; 22:13). Ἄ and Ὦ" also corresponds to Hebrew *Alef* and *Tau,* which were common alphabets for the sovereignty of God over all history and his capacity to bring it to an end. This does not exclude his authority to dispense rewards and punishments.[276] For some, the underlying background of τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ in Revelation is the *IAO* of the LXX translation of the Hebrew YHWH[277] as well as the popular Greco-Roman fondness for abbreviating names with vowels in magical incantations.[278] Irrespective of the background, John's use of this

[276] It has been suggested that formulation of this phrase might have been influenced by Isaiah's fondness for a similar title, *the first and the last,* in the LXX translation of Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:1. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 199. Others, like Rand, suggest that the comparison to the Hebrew alphabet is less important than John's usage. See Jan A. Du Rand, "Alpha and Omega. I. New Testament," *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* 1:850–52.

[277] Frank Edward Shaw, "The Earliest Non-Mystical Jewish Use of Ιαω" (Ph.D., University of Cincinnati, 2002), 170–76.

[278] It is possible that John was aware of the powerful nature of the vowels, especially when he describes having the name of God on one's forehead, sealing a person for salvation. Writing the full name of God on the forehead would not be the best option when there is the option to abbreviate. For extensive discussion on this see David E. Aune, "Iao," in *Iao*, ed. Ernst Dassmann, vol. 129 of *RAC: Sachwörterbuch Zur Auseinandersetzung Des Christentums Mit Der Antiken Welt* 17 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1996), 1–12;

phrase helps in his characterisation of God as the One who transcends time and space, who guides the course of human history to his own will and purpose.[279] Another element in the variant use of the formula in 1:4 is the addition of κύριος, ὁ θεός (Rev. 1:8). This title occurs in this exact form in six places (Rev. 4:8; 18:8; 19:6; 21:22; and 22:5) within the Apocalypse, with only one exception in 4:11, where the article is added to the κύριος and θεός connected by καὶ plus genitive pronoun. Some English Bible translations miss out on the anarthrous nature of κύριος, thereby mistranslating the articular θεός attributively as "the Lord God." Such a translation can result in a misleading interpretation that diminishes the essential role of κύριος without the article naming God.[280]

To translate κύριος ὁ θεός, the former is turned into an adjective, qualifying the latter, instead of standing on its own as a name. One argument asserts that the rendering of κύριος, ὁ θεός was an idiom used in place of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton for John's Greek audience.[281] If this is correct, John resorts to this idiom to address his predominantly Greek audience and continue an existing practice among Greek-speaking Jews who prefer to use Kurios as the equivalent of אֲדֹנָי, the vocalised substitute for YHWH.[282] Others have identified this phrase with an interpretation of Hebrew YHWH Sabaoth in the LXX.[283] In about 285 places in the Hebrew Scriptures the name of God is expanded to יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת. In some places,

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Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 452–54; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 57; Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic"; McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 58–122.

[279] Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 59.

[280] See NIV, ESV, NASB and NRSV. The KJV and NKJV omits Theos (God) but references its existence in the M-Text and the NU-Text.

[281] Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation," 207–9. A summary of his arguments is reproduced in the next paragraphs.

[282] See Peter Nagel, "The New Testament Κύριος Problem and How the Old Testament Speeches Can Help Solve It," *HvTSt* 76.4 (2020): 1–14; Martin Rösel, "The Reading and Translation of the Divine Name in the Masoretic Tradition and the Greek Pentateuch," *JSOT* 31.4 (2007): 411–28; Jacob A. Loewen, "The Names of God in the New Testament," *TBTr.* 35.2 (1984): 208–11; Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981); George Howard, "The Tetragram and the New Testament," *JBL* 96.1 (1977): 63–83.

[283] McDonough, *YHWH at Patmos*, 214.

this name is rendered as "Lord of the heavenly hosts" (Κυρίου τῶν δυνάμεων; 2 Sam 6:18). In other places, Greek and Hebrew were fused, as in κύριος צְבָאוֹת (Isaiah 45:13–14 LXX). This rendering of the Hebrew name of God was adopted by some early Christians, as can be gleaned from Paul's and James' use of either the transliteration or the LXX's rendering of the Hebrew יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת as κύριος Σαβαὼθ (Romans 9:29 and James 5:4). Paul, at other times, seems to have followed an alternative OT name of God that indicates his eternal control of time and space, κύριος παντοκράτωρ (cf. LXX Amos 3:13; Hab. 2:13; ref: 2 Cor. 6:18).[284] The latter is the adaptation found in the Book of Revelation.

John's unusual syntactical inaccuracy in combining the preposition ἀπὸ with a nominative case instead of the regular genitive, the mixture of participles (ὁ ὢν) with the indicative verb (ὁ ἦν) and the frequent use of the nominative article with genitive cases could be intentional or may reflect a poor appreciation of Greek grammar.[285]A concession of the latter would imply that it has no literary or theological relevance to the titles; therefore, it is for rhetorical effect only. However, most scholars support the first option, although few have pressed the real motive behind the "ing" error. For Beale, this solecism signals the presence of an Old Testament allusion in John's mind.[286] If this is so, the author is not alluding to the indeclinable nature of God's divine titles, which heightens the intention to describe God as absolute.[287]

God's eternity is reflected in his compound names, The One Who Is, Who Was, and Who Is to Come, (1:4,8), the One Who Was and Who Is and Who Is to Come (4:8), and the One Who Is and Who Was (1:4,8). (11:17; 16:5). This designation is a translation of the

[284] Karrer, "God in the Book of Revelation," 214.

[285] Koester, *Revelation*, 215; Ozanne, "The Language of the Apocalypse"; James Arthur Walter, "The Address In Revelation 1:4, 5a," *HBT* 17.2 (1995): 165–80; Moyise, "The Language of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse." Mark Bredin, "The Influence of Aqedah on Revelation 5:6–9," *IBS* 18 (1996): 26–43; Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 16. Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, 52:83–88.

[286] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 100–102.

[287] Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 29–35; Koester, *Revelation*, 216.

Tetragrammaton (YHWH). Exodus 3:14 provides the only explanation for this term in the Old Testament. It is explained by the cryptic statement "I am who I am", followed by "I am." In later Jewish exegesis thesewere viewed as assertions of the divine eternity.[288] This phrase emphasises God's continuous engagement with the universe and his continual favour for the saints. The fleeting and unpredictable pleasures they offer are insignificant compared to the eternal goodness of the transcendent God, who exists beyond and includes time. The story contrasts the eternal nature of God with the temporary presence of Satan. Satan is furious because his time on Earth is limited (12:12). The catastrophic collapse of Babylon occurs within one hour (18:10). Ironically, the beast is "the one who was and who is not and who is to come" (variations: 17:8,11). This parody is marked by its denial of God's eternity, contrasting it with immutability. In Revelation, God's eternity is not emphasised as a property distinct from the earth. The One Who Sits on the Throne is revealed not as essence but as action. God's being is revealed through his actions, both in the past and present.

God's enduring presence is related to his devotion to his creation. God, who created and sustains all things, will complete them all—the One Who Sits on the Throne guides and directs history towards its fulfilment. God's 'was-ness' includes his covenant with Israel. There is no chronological account of God's magnificent deeds in the book of Revelation. Instead of dividing the past from the present, images of the past serve as vehicles for the prophetic message of God compressed into the present.[289] However, this is primarily a Christ event. The Book of Revelation contains no accounts of Jesus' life or teachings. Michael and his angels defeat Satan in heaven. However, salvation is also provided by God and the Lamb (7:10). God's giving of salvation and his exercise of kingly reign constitute a "declared

[288] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 28.

[289] Boring, "The Theology of Revelation."

promise". God's name, The One Who Is, Was, and Will Be, embraces the great deeds of the past, present, and future.[290]

At this point, Boring's statement is instructive: "the Apocalypse must be grasped as a whole, for it cannot be understood verse by verse. It is a narrative and drama with action and movements conveying two messages within the story's context in its totality."[291] The description of God concerning the past, present and future coming ties in very well with the other titles such as τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ and "the beginning and the end" to reveal the *horizontal*[292] supremacy of God concerning space and time up and above all opposing forces.

Thus "John interprets the divine name as indicating not God's eternity in himself apart from the world, but his eternity about the world."[293] However, why is it necessary to mention God in this context? This question finds its proper response in the cosmic conflict that ensues, in which John seeks to lay the foundation for comparing God's character and quality to what God's adversary pretends to "be" but is not (Rev. 17:8). With his self-existence in the past, present, and future, John credits God by revealing every power that raises itself to challenge his authority over the church, be it from the sea or the earth. Using the tripartite phrase to name God is thus a strategic literary and theological tool that offsets the brewing struggles that later reach a crescendo in the book's narrative.[294]

The fact that God predates and presides over both the *vertical and horizontal* spheres of time in the cosmos invariably makes God Lord over all other powers that surface within

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[290] Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation, and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise*, 2nd ed. (California, CA: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 39, 45.

[291] Boring, *Revelation*, vii.

[292] In this context, "horizontal" refers to the sphere of God's dominion. I categorise this authority as horizontal, while his temporary authority over the earth and all its deities is classified as vertical. These terms will be used consistently throughout the rest of this work.

[293] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 30.

[294] Tonstad rightly argues that it is in a careful tracing of the Cosmic thought in the book that gives meaning to John's characterisations. See Tonstad, *Revelation*, 44–46.

time in John's visionary experience. This gives way to John's overarching title for God as the ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Rev.1:8b; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22) of the vertical space of authority.

At this point, it is apt that the allusion to the name of God in the prologue was neither merely appealing to the Old Testament tradition nor intended to boost his prophetic pedigree, as some scholars have suggested.[295] Instead, John sets out what can be termed *the Literary-Theological profiling* of the person and character of God through these deliberate names and naming strategies. In other words, such a God-name was chosen to function theo-onomastically to portray the cosmic conflict that runs through the book.[296]

4.3.2. Step 2: The Naming Techniques

The introduction of names within apocalyptic narratives follows the second step in the Theo-onomastic methodology described in the "Summary Statement of the Methodology Used in this Dissertation."[297] Actor-naming techniques can be prescriptive, ascriptive, or both prescriptive and ascriptive. These methods may involve authorial prescription/ascription, self-prescription or audience ascription.

God's epithetical names appear in nominative phrases in which God discloses how he wants to be known and called upon by the audience. Hence, the naming technique is self-prescriptive in nature. In addition, God is given titular names by worshippers in the heavenly court that are based on their experiences. They ascribe titles to God such as Holy and True (Rev. 6:10). The final category of God's name is participial. As suggested by the name, these

[295] These have been the dominant proposals from most critical scholars. See deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*, 65–72; Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 30; Koester, *Revelation*, 215–18.; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A.

[296] I have coined this term to represent the use of antonomasia in place of proper names that reveal the theological character, role, and nature of a literary actor in a biblical literary narrative. In this instance, *Literary Theological Profiling.*

[297] See 3.6 above.

are verbal nouns derived from the participles. In this context, John used these names to describe the visual elements he observed. Consequently, they also serve as authorial prescriptions.

The technique used to reveal these names is an authorial prescription. This means that John designates God as the one who sits on the throne to conceal his identity. The names were individually explored to ascertain their literary and theological impacts. As already observed, the names in this category follow the ascriptive style of naming, with the appellations coming from those around the throne, making them experiential ascriptions. The following discussion supports this understanding.

4.3.3. Step 3: The Literary Theological Profile of God

The third aspect of Theo-onomastic analysis is to determine the literary and theological portrait of God's names and their introduction within the literary structure of Revelation. This analysis depicts God as both a protagonist and antagonist in the narrative.

Some scholars argue that John uses antonomasia instead of the proper name for God in the prologue neither to reference the OT tradition nor to demonstrate his prophetic lineage.[298] However, this view requires reassessment with theo-onomastics. John aims to portray God's literary-theological profile throughout the narrative and message of the Apocalypse as the sovereign ruler, the chief protagonist in the ensuing cosmic conflict. Names for God such as ὁ παντοκράτωρ and τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ emphasise his omnipotent power. Furthermore, the imagery ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου signifies his supreme authority over the universe. Throughout Revelation, God's decrees and acts of judgement are central, showcasing God's control over creation, events, and history in the narrative. His judgments,

[298] These have been the dominant proposals from most critical scholars. See deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*, 65–72; Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 30; Koester, *Revelation*, 215–18.; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52A.

executed through various agents, highlight his righteousness and justice and encourage believers' faith amid suffering. The overall literary-theological profile is that he is the protagonist par excellence, who grants power and authority to even his enemies to act.

Thus, the names of God were chosen and functioned because of the cosmic conflict that runs through the book. In the words of Koester, "In Revelation, this formula underscores God's true deity in contrast to the claims of others [competing powers]."[299] Aune adds to this concept when he states:

> In John's Day's highly stratified society, deities and rulers were accorded strings of extravagant titles of dignity. One of John's strategies for underlining the majesty of God and Christ in contrast to Satan and the earthly rulers in league with him is using titles of dignity drawn from various sources. Alpha and Omega's divine name (synonymous with Beginning and End 21:6; 22:13, and First and Last, 1:17) from Hellenistic revelatory magic is an abbreviation of the seven vowels widely believed to constitute the name of the highest God. John's developing Christology is evident when the same divine names that he earlier ascribed to God are applied to Christ.[300]

The highest theological significance is attached to the depiction of God as the "All Ruler" over any fictitious rivals like the dragon and his allies. It is the declaration of God in the Apocalypse as *Pantocrator*. The Apocalypse explicitly describes God's supremacy and power, but John's naming pattern and the context in which God is named paint God as a flat character. [301] There seems to be an emphasis on the distance between God and the world. Although the book's content stems from God, it is communicated through a long chain of figures (Rev. 1:1): from God to Christ, from Christ to his angel, and from the angel to the visionary, who finally writes down the vision into a book. This significant introduction points

[299] Koester, *Revelation*, 215.

[300] Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 58–59.

[301] This is a literary term that is used in novels and drama with reference to characters whose roles seems to be straightforward with no surprises. When one focuses on God's role in the Apocalypse, it seems to suggest he is flat. For a full understanding of this style of characterisation, see Lisel Joubert, "The Growth of the Holiness of Mary: From Flat Character to Theological Construct," *STJ* 3.2 (2017): 423–37; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 1st ed. (New York , NY: Basic Books, 2011); Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*; Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, Bible and Literature Series 9 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983).

to the fundamental truth that God is invisible, and even within the visionary account, God, "sitting on the throne", seems to be relatively passive. Thus, when one analyses the names of God from a theo-onomastic standpoint, God's innate character and function in the Apocalypse become evident.

4.3.4. Step 4: The Role of God in the Cosmic Conflict

The theological designations for God invariably highlight his role in the cosmic conflict, representing the final phase of the theo-onomastic analysis.

God's literary–theological profile as the supreme ruler and creator of things invariably sets him up as a force to be reckoned with. He is not just the protagonist, as if there is any power apt to compete with him, and he is the source and pivot around which victory is assured in the cosmic conflict. Although there is no direct action of God, nor does he speak directly, at least not before the final and climactic image in 21:3–5, where God opens his mouth for the very first time to pronounce his single direct word in the whole book: "I make all things new."[302] Apart from the prescriptive naming in 1:8, God does not seem to speak or act directly in the book. The rest of his designations occur either in a worship setting or in a context where believers affirm his righteous and just acts by ascribing power and might to him. Such acknowledgement leads to questions about God's silence despite his revealed ability to act in the face of direct opposition to his authority. Although God is not often pictured as speaking directly, his bold declaration in Rev. 21:5, Ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα, reveals his direct involvement in the war.

In his article on this subject, Tobias Nicklas considers Rev. 6:9–11 a vital scene for understanding the role of God in the book of Revelation.[303] It contains the opening of the

[302] Frey, "'Mystical' Traditions in an Apocalyptic Text? The Throne Vision of Revelation 4 within the Context of Enochic and Merkavah Texts," 109.

[303] Nicklas, "Der 'Pantokrator, '" 5.

fifth seal where John sees under the altar of sacrifice 'the souls of those 'who were slain because of the word of God and because of their testimonies' (6:9) crying with a loud voice, question God about his timing in avenging their blood. Their question to God (Ἕως πότε, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός, οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν ἐκ τῶν κατοικούντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;) does not indicate denial of the rulership or the omnipotence of God. With these titles, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός, they acknowledge him as the only one with the authority to execute just punishment on the enemies of the faithful believers. Instead, their question raises the problem of how God's power can function in a world where people die for the sake of the witness they had borne for the word of God.[304] Their hope of getting an imminent reply is broken through the response: "… each (was) given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number should be complete both of their fellow servants and of their brothers and sisters, who were soon to be killed as they had been killed" (6:11).

When one considers the names and titles that God is given in Revelation 4, this impression of him as passive and distant from direct action is further enhanced. "Sitting One on the Throne, looking like Jasper and Carnelian", is who he is (v 3). This is particularly striking because every other figure in the scene is depicted as having an eternal or a fixed pose. For instance, the four living creatures never rest in praise (Rev. 4:8b). Meanwhile, the twenty-four elders remain in perpetual prostration in worship and lay down their crowns before the one who sits on the throne. God's primary function may seem to be to receive reverence in worship. Ultimately, this apparent passivity seems to depict him as being inaccessible. Rotzs and du Rand argue that this is an intentional mystery that emphasises the 'qualitative distance that separates God from humans. It also separates God from pagan gods who, like humans, exist in matter, time, space and society.'[305]

[304] Nicklas, "Der 'Pantokrator, '" 5.

[305] Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne," 95.

This shows that God is the source from which all other activities in the book originate, even though there are only a few instances in which he acts in the book. For instance, the scrolls that the Lamb opened were taken from the hands of the one who sat on the throne (5:1). If God had not given the scroll to Jesus Christ, the events that unfolded after the scrolls would not have occurred. Thus, the Lamb's action reveals that God, who appears not to act, is the one from whom all subsequent activities that occur afterwards proceed. Moreover, all other characters in Revelation, including Jesus, 'assume their identity by their loyalty to God or [being] enemies to God.'[306] In other words, the question about God's passivity is answered through the action of the Lamb, which confirms the actual intent of the book's first verse as the Revelation that God authorises, but it is about Jesus.

Moreover, victory in the cosmic conflict between God and evil is not to be gained by taking up arms and fighting in the same way that God's enemies conquer. Victory in the book is gained by the Lamb, who is introduced as though slaughtered, but proves to be the victorious Lion of Judah.[307] This pattern of warfare runs throughout the narrative in Revelation, where Jesus rides on a white horse, and by his blood, believers conquer the dragon (Rev. 6:4;12:11).[308]

The names ascribed to God in the form of epithets by the characters of Revelation serve as a rich model of the characteristics by which other actors are judged and rewarded. Most are sung in songs that praise God's holiness, omnipotence, eternity, worth, glory, honour, riches, wisdom, blessings, dominion, salvation, righteousness, personhood, and truth, as well as his anger and judgement. This model of characteristics is remarkable and

[306] Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne," 104.

[307] Taeger expands on this victory concept in the book of Revelation. See Jens-Wilhelm Taeger, "Gesiegt! O Himmlische Musik Des Wortes! : Zur Entfaltung Des Siegesmotivs in Den Johanneischen Schriften," *ZNW* 85.1–2 (1994): 23–46.

[308] Tobias Nicklas, "Der Krieg und die Apokalypse: Gedanken zu Offb 19:11–21," in *Krieg Und Christentum: Religiöse Gewalttheorien in Der Kriegserfahrung Des Westens*, ed. Andreas Holzem (Paderborn: Brill Schoningh, 2009), 150–65.

prestigious; however, its reductionism is excessive and problematic. The interpersonal relationships that inspire such tributes reveal the true nature of He Who Sits on the Throne. Moreover, the names used in the narrative descriptions further underline these links.[309]

In summary, applying the methodology of Theo-onomastics reveals that in Revelation, John depicts Yahweh's character and personality in a way that portrays him as having absolute power, to the extent that nothing in the Apocalypse happens without his approval. On the surface, this imagery conflicts with the experience of the audience of the Apocalypse, especially in their resolve to remain faithful to God. In his perceived silence, God speaks loudly and decisively through the Lamb, whose bloody victory is secured. This critical role of Christ as the object of the Apocalypse justifies John's portrait of God vis-à-vis the direct role he needs to play in the book's scenes. Revelation thus serves as a significant theological workbook defining God's sovereignty to act on his terms and time. More intriguing is that the dragon, the antagonist of God, appears to mimic the similar background role played by God when it gives its power, throne, and great authority to the beast from the seas in 13:1–2, just as God shares his throne with the Lamb. This parallel struggle notwithstanding, John's theo-onomastic style of naming God and the setting in which they are introduced reveal God's superiority over all opposing rulers. God rarely appears directly in Revelation. God does speak (1:8; 21:5–8), but most of the time, God works indirectly through interactions with His creation. God's nature can be inferred from this de facto perspective. The unique connections between the Creator, the Lamb, and all of creation (including God's opponent), whose personhood originates from the One who sits on the throne, bring the character of God to life.[310]

[309] Rotz describes this relationship between God and all other characters as *Interdividual,* meaning that God is the central character around whom all others revolve in John's Apocalypse. For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Rotz, "The One Who Sits on the Throne," 364–65.

[310] Rotz and Du Rand, "The One Who Sits on the Throne," 108.

4.4. Summary

In this chapter the theo-onomastic method of naming and analysis has been systematically employed to explain the conventions in the names attributed to God in the Book of Revelation, offering an in-depth examination of their theological and literary implications.

God's names may be categorised into four primary types: Proper, Epithetical, Titular and Participial. Proper names, such as ὁ θεός, emphasise God's fundamental identity and omnipresence throughout the narrative. Epithetical names, including ὁ παντοκράτωρ (the Almighty), underscore God's sovereignty and omnipotence, particularly in worship settings where God's power is acknowledged and reversed. Titular names, such as τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ (the Alpha and the Omega), highlight God's supremacy over time and creation, reflecting His ultimate authority in the cosmic struggle. Participial names, notably ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου (the One Who Sits on the Throne), depict God's supreme authority and judgement, reinforcing his role as the sovereign ruler over all creation.

The way these names are revealed and utilised within the narrative is both prescriptive and ascriptive. God prescribes his names to reveal his authority and nature, while worshippers ascribe titles based on their experiences and acknowledgement of his divine acts. This dual approach enriches the theological depth and literary complexity of Revelation. The literary-theological profile of God in Revelation is meticulously crafted through these names and titles in the text. God is depicted as the ὁ παντοκράτωρ, the ultimate ruler, whose authority spans time and space. Despite his perceived passivity, God's actions and judgments are executed through the Lamb, emphasising a collaborative divine hierarchy. The portrayal of God as distant yet deeply involved in the cosmic conflict underscores his transcendence and immanence, balancing his supreme authority with his intimate involvement in the redemption of creation.

The relevance of these naming conventions to the theme of cosmic conflict is paramount. God's names serve not only to distinguish him from all opposing powers, but also to affirm his ultimate victory in the cosmic struggle. The intricate interplay between God, Christ, and the forces of evil highlights the overarching narrative of divine sovereignty and justice. This thematic thread runs through Revelation, showcasing God's supremacy and the inevitable triumph of good over evil. God rarely makes a direct appearance in the Book of Revelation. God does speak (1:8; 21:5–8), but most of the time, God is inspired indirectly through interactions with God's creations. God's nature can be inferred from this de facto perspective. The unique connections between the Creator, the Lamb, and all of creation (including God's opponent), whose personhood originates from the One who sits on the throne, bring the character of God to life.

This chapter underscores the theological richness and literary sophistication inherent in naming conventions of God in Revelation. Through a nuanced exploration of names, titles, and contextual usage, a comprehensive portrait of God as the sovereign ruler, intimately engaged in cosmic conflict, and destined to bring about the ultimate restoration of creation has been released. This analysis enhances our understanding of the Book of Revelation and reinforces the enduring significance of divine nomenclature in theological discourse.

Table 4 Theo-Onomastics of God

THEO-ONOMSTICS OF GOD						
Name	**Bible Reference**	**Type of Name**	**Naming Technique**	**Characteristics**	**Literally-Theological profiles**	**Relevance to CosConf**
ὁ θεὸς	1.1; 5:9; 7:11,17; 8:2, 4, 9:13; 11:4, 13,16, 12:5,6,10; 12:6; 14:4,7; 16:11; 16:19,21; 17;17; 18:5,20; 20:9,12; 21:2–3, 7,10; 22; 22:9, 18,19	**PROPER**	Authorial Prescriptive Audience Ascription	The name occurs 57x in genitive, 20x in nominative, 13x in dative and 5x in accusative cases. All the references are either prescribed in the visionary report or acclaimed by the audience.	Protagonist	The acknowledgement of the central role of God in the cosmic war is evident in the many references to things and persons that either belong to God or relate to him. The names depict his posture and essential qualities like 'the Seated One, the Almighty' (4:2 and 11:17), all of which reveal the settled status of the overarching function of God in the cosmic conflict. In events where Jesus' redemption is

						praised, it is the reconciliation created by his sacrifice that erupts the chorus of praise, e.g. Rev. 5:9–10
κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ	1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:23	**Epithetical**	Authorial Prescriptive Audience Ascriptive		Protagonist	
τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων	4:9, 10, 6:16;10:6					
τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ	1:8a; 21:6	**Titular**	Audience Ascriptive			
ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός	6:10,				Protagonist	
ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν αἰώνων	15:3					
κύριε, ὁ θεός	15:3					
κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ	18:8, 22:5					
ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος	1:4; 1:8b; 4:8; 11:17, 16:5	**Participial**	Authorial Ascriptive		Protagonist	
ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος	4:2, 3, 9, 10; 5:1, 6:16, 7:10, 15; 19:4; 20:11; 21:5					

CHAPTER 5
THEO-ONOMASTICS AND THE NAMING OF THE LAMB AND THE SPIRIT

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the extensive list of names[311] attributed to Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation, analysing their theological and narrative significance within the broader cosmic conflict depicted in the text. The Theo-onomastic analysis model is applied to explore the categorisation of names, naming techniques, and the Literary-Theological Profile that collectively defines Christ's identity and role in the apocalyptic framework.

Given the substantial number of names ascribed to Jesus, this discussion focuses primarily on the two principal designations: ὁ λέων (the Lion) and ἀρνίον (the Lamb), which serve as foundational markers of his messianic and redemptive functions. The remaining names are examined in clusters according to their typological characteristics. This allows for a systematic evaluation of their collective contribution to then portrayal of Jesus as the protagonist in Revelation's eschatological drama.

Through an integrated approach that synthesises theological reflection together with apocalyptic imagery, in this chapter it is demonstrated how these naming conventions operate as a literary-theological mechanism, reinforcing Christ's centrality in the cosmic struggle between the divine and demonic forces. By analysing the function of names within this framework, the deeper implications of Christological nomenclature in shaping the interpretive and doctrinal dimensions of Revelation are illuminated.

[311] The word *Name* as used in this research is a generic term in reference to titles, metaphors, similes, and participial constructs that describes Jesus Christ.

5.2. Naming Jesus Christ in Context

Central to the theology of Revelation is the portrayal of Jesus Christ as a triumphant protagonist in the cosmic conflict between good and evil.[312] This portrayal is intricately crafted partly through the deliberate use of titular, epithetical, participial, and proper names in the text. These linguistic elements highlight Jesus' character and authority and deepen the reader's understanding of Christ's pivotal role in resolving the battle between good and evil. Examining these naming patterns sheds light on how they collectively present a multidimensional portrait of Jesus, emphasising his dominance in the apocalyptic narrative in general and the cosmic conflict in particular.[313]

5.3. Concealed Names of Jesus Christ.

The author of Revelation used concealed or unknown names to compare good and evil entities. The rider who appears in 19:11 is significant for his name and serves as a comparative figure within the text. The rider is connected to the Son of Man through shared symbols, such as flaming eyes and a sharp sword. He is described as "faithful and true", which are descriptive titles, and he has a written name known only to him (19:12). This secret name contrasts with the harlot's "mysterious name" (Rev. 17:5) and the beast's coded numerical name (Rev. 13:17–18), all of which are revealed later and indicate key character traits of the named.

[312] It has been argued that John follows a pre-existent pattern in Judeo-Christian revelatory materials in the announcement of the names and the main subjects in Rev. 1:1. The difference here, however, is the repetition of the same pattern in other sections where John introduces other primary characters. See Richard Bauckham, *The Jewish World Around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). Aunes cites examples from Jer. 1:1–2; Ezek. 1:1–13; Amos 1:1, 1 En 1:1–2; 93:1–10; 3 Apoc. Bar. Praef. 1–2; to prove the occurrence of this pattern. For more discussions on it, see Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 8–10.

[313] Bauckham views this approach as the most productive, although he acknowledges that it is not exhaustive. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 177–78.

In ancient times, secret names indicated divine or magical powers and highlighted the transcendence of deities. Knowing such names established a hierarchy among the initiators who could invoke them.[314] While this historical background offers context for the practice, the rider's secret name may resemble the new names promised to the faithful in Rev. 2:17.[315] There is considerable linguistic resemblance between the two expressions, **ὄνομα** καινὸν **γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ** ὁ λαμβάνων (Rev. 2:17) and **ὄνομα γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ** αὐτος (Rev. 19:12), which further buttresses the possibility of correlation.[316]

Only the rider is aware of his secret name. The new names of the rider and believers relate to a future time when God's victors are revealed. This is associated with the final judgement (see Rev. 3:12). Consequently, new names, along with a new song, robes, and the new Jerusalem, signify the Second Coming and God's victory, when all things are renewed (Rev. 21:5). A new name signifies the recipient's identity as a victor and member of God's people. Another example of the exclusivity and confidentiality of new elements in Revelation is the new song that only 144, 000 people who bear God's name can learn (Rev. 14:3).[317]

Although only the rider knows the secret name, the author provides two significant titles by which the rider is identified: "Word of God" (Rev. 19:13) and "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). These titles play a key role in emphasising the rider's authority

[314] Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells.*, 1st edition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), XII:240; Karl Preisendanz, trans., *PGM: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928), 216–17. Other ancient texts such as Homer *Il.* 1.403–4, 2.813–14; Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 10.23. See Aune for an extensive list, David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22,* WBC 52C (Nashville, TN: Zondervan, 1998), 1055–57.

[315] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 953.

[316] For Charles and Wellhausen the phrase is a later addition to the original text because it differs from the earlier format of description and seems contradictory. See R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: With Introduction, Notes, and Indices, Also the Greek Text and English Translation* (New York, NY: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 2:132, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044016929259; Julius Wellhausen, *Analyse der Offenbarung Johannis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Library, 2010), 30.

[317] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 257.

and divine identity.[318] The question is whether these titles can be seen as the hidden names mentioned in Rev. 19:12. The first title, "Word of God", is introduced following the description of the rider's robe and is noted as the name by which he is called (κέκληται). However, because the secret name is said to be written (γράφω) and the other is described as spoken (καλέω), it is unlikely that they refer to the same name.

The second designation, "King of kings and Lord of lords", appears inscribed on the rider's thigh and is explicitly identified as a singular name (ὄνομα), emphasising its importance. Notably, both the secret name and the name on the thigh are described as "written", which supports the possibility that they may refer to the same name. This association encourages readers to explore the symbolic and theological significance of these naming practices, which serve to affirm the rider's supreme authority and signal the impending victory of divine judgement within Revelation's eschatological framework. The author's repeated reference to the rider's name—mentioned three times within four verses—alongside the secret title "King of kings and Lord of lords", underscores its centrality in the narrative.

5.4. Analysis of the Theo-onomastics of Jesus

In this section the theo-onomastic method of analysis is used to investigate the role of Jesus within the narrative of Revelation. This technique will facilitate understanding of Satan's function in the cosmic conflict as portrayed through literary and theological naming strategies.

[318] Robyn J. Whitaker, *Ekphrasis, Vision, and Persuasion in the Book of Revelation*, 1st ed., vol. 410 of *WUNT* 2 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 198.

5.4.1. Step 1: Type of Names

The initial phase of the theo-onomastic method involves categorising the names of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. These names are divided into four categories: Proper, Epithetical, Titular, and Participial. This section describes the proposed classification framework.

5.4.1a. Proper Name

These names directly identify Jesus. In Revelation, they anchor his identity and connect his earthly ministry to the cosmic narrative, thus linking the historical Jesus to the divine Messiah. This connection grounds the cosmic conflict in real events and affirms Jesus' role in the redemptive plan of God. Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ are the proper names for Jesus in the Book of Revelation. The names are presented in three variant forms as follows: full name Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, appearing three times (Rev. 1:1,2,5); Ἰησοῦ alone occurs nine times (Rev. 1:9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10x2; 22:16, 20, 21); and Χριστοῦ appears alone four times (Rev. 11:15; 12:10; 20:4, 6).[319]

The two names are separated by one verse (Rev. 20:4). All uses are in the genitive case, except 22:16 and 20, which are in the nominative and vocative cases, respectively. The dual form Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and the singular Ἰησοῦ appear anarthrous, that is, without the article. However, all singular uses of χριστοῦ are articular with τοῦ in the genitive case.

The introduction of Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in the genitive case in 1:1 is much discussed among scholars of Revelation. Some argue that it is a subjective genitive, meaning that Jesus

[319] Bauckham argues that these four individual uses of Χριστοῦ and the three joined with Ἰησοῦ are symbolic of perfection and completeness. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 34. But this stretch of the symbolism in the number of occurrences seems far-fetched because the author uses the combined names and their separate forms interchangeably.

Christ gave the contents of the Apocalypse.[320] The text ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς (which God gave to him) is often cited in support of this position. According to Weinrich, the insight that God is giving to Jesus highlights his humanity as a person who receives revelation from the Father.[321]

Given the chain of transmission of the apocalypse in verses 1–3 (God – Jesus – John-the churches), others argue for "plenary genitive."[322] This means that Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ could be both the subject and object of the book's content. Thus, reading it as an objective genitive is also plausible, especially when Jesus personally reveals and prescribes his name to John in 1:11. No matter where one stands on the divide of arguments, it is evident that the role and function are key. He is both the source and content of the Apocalypse, making him a critical player in the cosmic war that ensues in the narrative. He dominates the book from the beginning to the end.

5.4.1b. Epithetical Names[323]

These names function as descriptive phrases that illuminate Jesus's specific qualities, enriching the narrative by providing deeper insights into his character. In the prologue, Jesus

[320] George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 21; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 183; Osborne, *Revelation*, 52; Koester, *Revelation*, 211; Buist M. Fanning, *Revelation*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 74.

[321] William C. Weinrich, ed., *Revelation*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006), 114. But this is speculative in effect.

[322] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 119–21; David L. Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Texas, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 1; Paul, *Revelation*, 59; Peter J. Leithart, *Revelation 1–11*, 1st ed., The International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments (London: T & T Clark, 2018), 69–70; John Christopher Thomas and Frank D. Macchia, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 73; Edmondo F. Lupieri, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John*, trans. Maria Poggi Johnson and Adam Kamesar (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 97; Martin Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung: (Offb.1,1–5,14): XXIV/1* (Ostfildern: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 188; Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 62; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 70.

[323] These are mostly in Rev. 1:1, 2, 5, 9, 12–13, 17; 2:8; 3:14; 5:5–6; 11:15,12:5; 22:13: ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν, ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς, τὴν φωνὴν ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ, μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.

Christ is mentioned three times (1:1–8); however, an epithetical naming pattern continues in the main visionary report. He is designated with epithets such as in Rev 1:5 (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν, ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς) to contrast Jesus' faithfulness with the deceit of his adversaries and their short-lived authority, establishing him as the trustworthy source of divine truth amidst cosmic deception. This, in one sense, could refer to Christ's faithfulness in his earthly ministry and, in another sense, to the completeness of his witness through death as an 'uncompromising commitment to truth.' In John's context, conflict with opponents makes it likely that his message will be disputed (cf. 2:9–10, 14, 20; 3:8–9), but his ever-living nature continues to attest to the truth of his message. In Rev 1:13; 14:14 Jesus is the ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, the τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ (Rev 22:13), and ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος (Rev 22:13).

In chapters 1–3, whenever Jesus refers to his divine authority, he uses epithetical names to describe himself. With these, he is invoked not "simply as John's underlying authority or main writer, but as the underlying author and the ultimate victor in the cosmic conflict."[324] The epithetical names that are most frequently examined are ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζ Δαυίδ, and τὸ ἀρνίον (5:5–6).The epithetical names that are most frequently examined are ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζ Δαυίδ, and τὸ ἀρνίον (5:5–6), and the rest of this discussion will focus on them.

ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζ Δαυίδ

It is an observable fact that the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah' (Rev. 5.5) symbolised power. Not only has he conquered, but the image of the lion also suggests royal strength. This is a seeming allusion to Gen. 49.8–10, which invokes the expectation of the Davidic Messianic. The Messiah is likened to a lion in *4 Ezra*, where the Seer has a vision of a lion vanquishing

[324] Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming," 166.

an eagle (*4 Ezra* 11.36–46), which is later interpreted as 'the Messiah whom the highest has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David' (12.32). While Johns sees no evidence that 'the Messiah was ever called a lion prior to the first century CE',[325] a messianic interpretation of Gen. 49.9–10 is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, including a reference to the Messiah as a lion (1QSb 5.27–29).[326]

In his book, Brent Strawn explores lion symbolism in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East (ANE), highlighting its ambivalence and dual usage in positive and negative contexts.[327] The lion symbolises chaos, threat, enemy, righteousness, royalty, and God. The book also explores the lion's association with kingship and power in the ANE, with kings often depicted as lions, embodying ferocity and dominance. Lions are also linked to deities in various ANE cultures, with gods depicted as fighting, controlling, or even becoming lions. The lion's ambivalence allows it to symbolise different facets of the cosmic conflict, including the forces of good and the threats of evil. In Revelation, the Lamb subverts expectations, indicating that God's power manifests through sacrificial love rather than brute force. Strawn's analysis suggests that the cosmic conflict transcends a simple clash of powers, and the Lamb exemplifies a different kind of power – one that conquers through sacrifice and love. Following Strawn, it can be said that the Book of Revelation does not reject the lion imagery that precedes it. Instead, it transforms it through the symbol of the Lamb to portray two sides of Jesus' character, one whose virtuous nature of winning through

[325] Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: An Investigation into Its Origins and Rhetorical Force* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 166.

[326] Koester, *Revelation*, 375.

[327] Strawn's work challenges the simplistic interpretation of the lion as solely representing power or dominance, arguing that its ambivalence can symbolise various aspects of cosmic conflict. See Brent A. Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 212 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 6–277. Based on his work, it can be said that the book of Revelation does not reject the lion imagery that precedes it entirely. Rather, it transforms it through the symbol of the Lamb to portray two sides of Jesus' character as one whose victory is achieved through sacrifice, granting the authority to judge and rule like the lion of Judah.

sacrifice brings the resultant effect of having the authority to judge and rule like the lion of the tribe of Judah.[328]

Moreover, the ancestry and the conclusive triumph (ἐνίκησεν) of the ὁ λέων captured in the phrase ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ, adds to the idea of Jesus' victory and the ensuing authority to rule.

The phrase echoes the Isaian (ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαί; Isa. 11.1, 10). In the Apocrypha, lions are associated with kings,[329] warriors[330] (including Judas Maccabeus [1 Macc. 3.4] and Israel as a conqueror [Num. 23.24; 24.9]), nobility,[331] and with general power and danger.[332] There is ample evidence that many contemporary Jews expected a Davidic Messiah.[333] According to Nathan's prophecy, God would establish David's throne forever from his offspring (2 Sam. 7.5–16//Ps. 89.20–37). Resonances of this covenant are found throughout the Old Testament (Ps. 132.10–12, 17; Isa. 9.2 7; Hos. 3.5; Amos 9.11; Mic. 4.13–5.5). The root and branch of David fed into eschatological expectations in which God would 'raise up for David a righteous branch' (Jer. 23.5; 33.15) and the terminology of 'the Branch' itself became a messianic title (Zech. 3.8; 6.12). In the Qumran writings it is said that 'the Branch of David' (צמח דויד) will arise in the last days (4QFlor = 4Q174 1.1.11–12). Thus, the Lion of Judah, from the Root of David in Revelation, relates to Jesus' acquired status to reign and judge his enemies (open/loose the scrolls). The name shows that Jesus has authority to decide who enters the kingdom, the authority of the person in the kingdom, and the role of the

[328] *Ibid,* 200–230. See also Carson Bay, "Lion of the Apocalypse: A Leonine Messiah in the Book of Revelation," *BR* 60 (2015): 79–83 for a discussion on the terrifying strength of the Lion, which was well-known in the ancient world.

[329] 1 Kgs 10.19–20; 2 Chron. 9.18–19; Prov. 19.12; 20.2; 28.15; 30.30–31; Jer. 2.15, 30; Ezek. 32.2.

[330] 2 Sam. 1.23; 17.10

[331] Prov. 28:1; 30:30

[332] For example: Pss. 7.2; 10.9; 17.12; 22.13, 31; 35.17; 57.4; Prov. 22.13; 26.13;30.30. See also Judg. 14.18; 1 Sam. 17.37; 2 Sam. 17.10; 1 Kgs 13.24–25; Job 10.16; Isa. 5.29; 31.4; 38.13; Jer. 4.7; 25.38; 49.19; 50.17, 44; Ezek. 19.1–6; 22.25–27; Hos 5.14; 13.7–8; Joel 1.6; Mic. 5.8; Nah. 2.13.

[333] Mark Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfilment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 35–76.

person as the ruler of the kings of the earth. They also reveal Jesus as the 'root of David', a reference to the Davidic messiah, highlighting his essential role in the cosmic conflict.

τὸ ἀρνίον

The name "Lamb" (ἀρνίον) constitutes the most prevalent designation for Jesus within the Book of Revelation, appearing twenty eight times. Notably, except for Revelation 13:11, where the term is employed in a simile to describe the horns of the beast from the land as resembling those of a lamb, every instance refers directly to Jesus.

Although a consensus position about the heritage of the lamb has not been reached among scholars, the context of usage and the descriptive phrase in 5:6 as "ὡς ἐσφαγμένον" make its implied referent and theo-onomastic significance clear.[334]

Among the references to Jesus as τὸ ἀρνίον (the Lamb), most are in the genitive case, totalling sixteen (Rev 5:8; 6:16; 7:9, 14; 12:11; 13:8; 14:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 27; 22:1, 3). Eight are in the nominative singular neuter case (Rev 5:6, 12; 6:1; 7:17; 14:1; 17:14; 21:22, 23), while four are in the dative case (Rev 5:13; 7:10; 14:4).

[334] Here, it is important to reiterate that the theo-onomostic methodology developed in this research focuses primarily on the theological implication of the names in the book rather than on their etymology, especially with reference to the cosmic conflict. Hence argument about the source criticism of the name is not discussed. Caird, since the 1960s, concluded that the meaning and function of ἀρνίον ought to be sourced from the book itself and that John himself tells us what the names mean and their referents. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 74. For this reason, many scholars understand the imagery to prefigure the death of Jesus and his subsequent closeness to the throne. See, Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 132; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 353; Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John* (London: A&C Black, 2006), 98; Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, 154–55; Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 452; Osborne, *Revelation*, 255. Others who examined the possible source of the name concluded that relying on one theory of the source can be misleading. It could have its parentage from the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha or even the Dead Sea Scrolls. In all these, what stands out is that John does not use the usual Greek word for lamb found in the NT (as in Jn 21.15–17, where in the plural, ἀρνία represents the community over which Peter is given pastoral charge. For extensive discussion see Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 127–49; Loren L. Johns, "Jesus in the Book of Revelation," in *Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig R. Koester, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 129–30; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 351; Koester, *Revelation*, 377; Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 85–86; Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation*, 155–56; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 183–84; Prigent and Pradels, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, 251; Schreiner, *Revelation*, 245–47; Moyise, "Does the Lion Lie Down with the Lamb?"; David J. MacLeod, "The Lion Who Is A Lamb: An Exposition Of Revelation 5:1–7," *BSAC* 164.655 (2007): .323–340; Rebecca Skaggs and Thomas Doyle, "Lion/Lamb in Revelation," *CBR* 7.3 (2009): 362–75.

The first instance of τὸ ἀρνίον in the nominative case is in Revelation 5:6, which is anarthrous, meaning that it lacks an article (the). This evokes an "apocalyptic mystery" [335] surrounding the individual being named by John. Although this conceals the identity of Jesus, it suggests that John might have intended to highlight the qualitative nature of Jesus as the ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον" (Rev 5:6), reflecting his new status after his sacrifice.[336] The depiction of the Lamb standing serves as an allusion to Jesus' resurrection. In this context, he is presented as the Lamb who was slain, yet remains standing, thereby encompassing both his sacrificial death and his triumph over death through resurrection. This interpretation underscores the name's importance within Jesus' literary and theological profile, particularly in the framework of theo-onomastics.

After the initial introduction of the name, the remaining nominative uses have articles and similarities that feature some functions or roles that Jesus receives. For example τὸ ἀρνίον ἤνοιξεν (the lamb opened, Rev 6:1); τὸ ἀρνίον… ποιμανεῖ (the lamb shepherds, Rev 7:17); τὸ ἀρνίον ἑστὸς (the lamb stands, 14:1, cf. 5:6); and also serves as both the ναὸς… ἐστιν, καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον (the temple) and ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἀρνίον (the lamp of the city, Rev 21:22–23).

Moreover, the Lamb is the target of the πολεμήσουσιν of the devil and his agents, but he νικήσει αὐτούς (prevails against them) because he is the ὅτι κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ

[335] Edith Humphreys uses this term for the intentional concealment of a character's real identity prevalent in the books of Daniel and Revelation, seen as apocalyptic material. An example of such practice is Daniel's cryptic naming of God as the 'Ancient of Days' (Dan 7:13) synonymous with John's naming of Jesus as the "one like a Son of Man" (Rev 1:26 and 14:14). See Edith uses this Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming."

[336] Cowell first discussed the relevance of an anarthrous pre-verbal nominative construction to exegesis to conclude that such uses of the nominative could mean an emphasis on the qualitative nature of the nominative rather than indefiniteness. Wallace restates Colwell's rule: "An anarthrous pre-verbal PN is normally qualitative, sometimes definite, and only rarely indefinite." Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 255–63. See also, Philip B. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," *JBL* 92.1 (1973): 75–87; Paul Stephen Dixon, "The Significance of the Anarthrous Predicate Nominative in John" (Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975), 11–12; Bernhard Weiss, *Der Gebrauch Des Artikels Bei Den Gottesnamen: Exegetische Studien Zur Neutestamentlichen Grammatik* (Gotha: Perthes, 1911), 503–8.

βασιλεὺς βασιλέων (Rev 17:14) alongside God. A prelude to the roles and functions is the rapturous proclamation, Ἄξιόν ἐστιν τὸ ἀρνίον (5:11–12), from the angels, living creatures, and the elders around the thrones. What is significant about this loud shout of praise to the Lamb is indicated by the rare occurrence of John's εἶδον and ἤνοιξεν culminating in the same act of worship to the Lamb (5:11). The event cannot be seen as accidental; instead, it underscores the connection between the slain lamb and its worthiness to receive τὴν δύναμιν καὶ πλοῦτον καὶ σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχὺν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν καὶ εὐλογίαν (Rev 5:12), all symbols of rulership and sharing in the praises due God.[337] Koester claims that the notion that one's worthiness in the eyes of heavenly worshippers could be connected to triumph had a significant position in the readers'social circles. He cited the Roman ideology that the gods alone could sanction the imperial and that such edicts were celebrated with praise for imperial conquest.[338] This could be a possible background, but John redefined it to suit his needs. Notably, there is an irony evident in that the elder who initially referred to Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah seems to have joined the heavenly chorus that proclaims Jesus as τὸ ἀρνίον. It integrates the language of the sacrificial system, highlighting Jesus' reign and central role in the cosmic conflict.[339]

[337] Paul, *Revelation*, 136.

[338] Koester, *Revelation*, 384–85.

[339] Johns is one voice that does not support an expiatory reading of ἀρνίον, arguing that if John intended it, he would have made the link explicit by using the most common word for ἀμνός in a sacrificial context instead of ἀρνίον. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 129–30. However, an expiatory reading of the lamb cannot be held back based on the sole reason that John did not explicitly use the common word for the Lamb. A careful study of the book of Revelation reveals that the author did not, most of the time, follow established conventions of Greek grammar. Still, Revelation focuses more on the Lamb's exalted status than on his sacrifice in the past, and thus his argument is insufficient in this case. He further asserts that the account of the slain lamb in Revelation is devoid of any context for sacrifice and overemphasises the lexical meaning of terms that are used inconsistently. The hymn of the celestial worshippers gives their reason for the praise as ὅτι ἐσφάγης καὶ ἠγόρασας τῷ θεῷ ἐν τῷ αἵματί (Rev 5:9). The use words like ἐσφάγης καὶ ἠγόρασας and τῷ αἵματί obviously depicts the sacrificial intent in John's use of ἀρνίον. The instrumental dative here could also be seen as a dative of price, indicating the cost Jesus had to bear to merit to purchase the worshipers i.e. his sacrificial death like the paschal lamb. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 77; Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 589. For extensive discussions on the possible sources behind John's use of ἀρνίον see Paul Middleton, *The Violence of the Lamb*

In addition to the uses of ἀρνίον in the nominative case, it also occurs in the dative case in four instances (Rev 5:13; 7:10; 14:4). Three out of the four are used in contexts that show shared worship (ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, Rev. 5:13), salvation (Ἡ σωτηρία Rev. 7:10), and redeeming ἀπαρχὴ from among humanity to God and the Lamb (Rev. 14:4c).[340] These uses are connected by the conjunction καὶ to show the mutual relationship that exists between the "Sitting One of the Throne" and the Lamb and their co-function as the protagonists in the cosmic conflict. The remaining usage in Rev. 14:4b (οὗτοι οἱ ἀκολουθοῦντες τῷ ἀρνίῳ ὅπου ἂν ὑπάγῃ) pictures the lamb as the shepherd and the one who disciples the redeemed 144,000 that John sees standing on Mount Zion. This seems to imply that, by way of the redeemed people's relationship with Jesus, they are called actors in the cosmic conflict: no wonder they are depicted as reigning with Christ (Rev. 20:4–6).[341]

The use of ἀρνίον in the genitive case as the preferred name for Jesus (τοῦ ἀρνίου) has 16 occurrences.[342] The type of genitive used here fits into Wallace's "unaffected genitive" category, which is used between nouns. This has some limitations, specifically in terms of

Martyrs as Agents of Divine Judgement in the Book of Revelation, vol. 586 of *Library of New Testament Studies* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 69–92 ; Kraft, *Die Offenbarung Des Johannes* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1974), 109; Joachim Jeremias, "Ἀμνός, Ἀρήν, Ἀρνίον," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1:338–41.

[340] Yarbro Collins suggests that the word symbolises the first fruits, indicating a potential for further harvest. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 127–28. For an extensive discussion on the possible background and meaning of the noun ἀπαρχὴ see Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 814–18; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, "Ἀπαρχή," *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 533.

[341] Aune describes following the lamb wherever he goes as a "metaphor for martyrdom, conceived as true discipleship." Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 814. Koester adds that " portraying the redeemed as chaste males in 14:4a indicates they resist the idolatry and sins associated with the whore …" Koester, *Revelation*, 618. Paul calls this a "metaphor of manumission", like the one the apostle Paul used in his slave-market analogy in 1 Cor. 6:20 and 7:23. Paul, *Revelation*, 247. There are others who see the concept of these males being virgins as mimicking the Book of the Watchers. Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John," *JBL* 96.2 (1977): 241–56; Daniel C Olson, "'Those Who Have Not Defiled Themselves with Women': Revelation 14:4 and the Book of Enoch," *CBQ* 59.3 (1997): 492–510. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 123–46; Ruben Zimmermann, "Nuptial Imagery in the Revelation of John," *Bib.* 84.2 (2003): 153–83.

[342] Rev 5:8; 6:16; 7:9; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8; 14:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 27; 22:1, 3.

indicating ownership or specifying to whom something belongs.[343] Their frequent appearances further deepen the theo-onomastic portrait and Jesus' indispensable role in the cosmic war. In all the instances where the name is present, it is articular and describes possessions of things that belong to Jesus, such as τὸ αἷμα (blood, 7:14 and 12:11);[344] τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς (book of life, 13:8 and 21:27); ἀποστόλων (apostles, 21:14), δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου (marriage banquet, 19:9); τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα (bride/wife, 21:9); and ὁ θρόνος (throne, 22:1, 3). The lamb also has wrath that no one can withstand (6:17). In addition to the things he possesses, some events and acts occur in his presence. For instance, in Rev. 7:9, the uncountable multitude is seen standing before the throne and the lamb (ἑστῶτες ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου). Again, in 14:10, whoever worships the beast and its image, and receives its mark shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the angels and the lamb (ἐνώπιον ἀγγέλων ἁγίων καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἀρνίου). These two acts are connected by the adverbial preposition ἐνώπιον. They present two contrasting fates of two groups; first, those who worshipped God and the Lamb thus can ἑστῶτες (stand) in the presence of the Lamb just as Jesus the faithful witness could also stand in the presence of God to receive worship (Rev 5:6). The concept of "standing" is synonymous with being saved or triumphing over the devil and his cohorts.[345] Hence, those standing in his presence

[343] Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 76–77; Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 72–74.

[344] "Blood", in his context, means much more than literal blood; In Revelation it is the means of salvation, purification, martyrdom, and an instrument for conquering. For in-depth study on the symbolism of blood see Prigent and Pradels, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John*, 123, 126; R Bauckham, "The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll," *Neot* 22.1 (1988): 17–40; Paul B. Decock, "The Symbol of Blood in the Apocalypse of John," *Neot*.38 (2004): 157–82; Tony Keddie, "Blood Sacrifice in Revelation and Roman Asia: Encoding and Decoding Embodied Experiences," in *Revelation and Material Religion in the Roman East: Essays in Honor of Steven J. Friesen*, ed. Nathan Leach, Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies (Milton: Taylor & Francis, 2023), 92–108.

[345] Just as Rev 15:2 also tells that those who have conquered the beast and his image do ἑστῶτας on the glassy sea, so do the murdered faithful witnesses who receive the breath of life from God also ἔστησαν. These tie in with the question of the great kings of the earth who sought refuge in the mountain after the sixth plaque saying, "for the great day of his wrath has come who can σταθῆναι; (stand?). This means "standing" has theological implications. See Schreiner, *Revelation*, 302–4.

have avoided God's end-time wrath and do not fear being in his presence.[346] The second group, in contrast with the first group, is composed of those who could not stand before the Lamb but rather were tormented in his

presence.

This analysis reveals that, irrespective of the perspective with which one perceives τὸ ἀρνίον as John's favourite name for Jesus, the manner and context in which the name is either prescribed or ascribed has enormous theo-onomastic significance and builds the literary-theological profile of Jesus as an indispensable actor in the cosmic conflict. He is one of the central protagonists in the cosmic conflict theme in the book of Revelation. He is the trailblazer of the victory of God and the epitome of the guarantee for believers that they can also become conquerors through his blood, and that they have already achieved triumph through his sacrifice. The lamb is the target of the military onslaught (πολεμήσουσιν, Rev. 17:14) of the beast and the woman, and in this battle, the lamb νικήσει (prevails) because of (ὅτι) his names as κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων (Lord of Lords and King of Kings).

ὁ λέων and ἀρνίον Relationship

The sudden shift from calling Jesus ὁ λέων to ἀρνίον has sparked a variety of scholarly interpretations, ranging from accidental to theological intention.[347] For example,

[346] Koester, *Revelation*, 419.

[347] David L. Barr, "Doing Violence: Moral Issues in Reading John's Apocalypse," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L Barr, Resources for Biblical Study 44 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2003), 100; L. Barr David, "The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterising Jesus in John's Apocalypse," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. L. Barr David, 39 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006), 205–20; Donald Guthrie, "The Lamb in the Structure of the Book of Revelation," *VE* 12 (1981): 64–71; Moyise, "Does the Lion Lie Down with the Lamb?"; Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 115–24; deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*, 101–2; Skaggs and Doyle, "Lion/Lamb in Revelation"; Ian Paul, "The Book of Revelation: Symbol, Image, and Metaphor," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 131–48; Harry O. Maier, "Staging the Gaze: Early Christian Apocalypses and Narrative Self-Representation," *HTR* 90.2 (1997): 131–54; MacLeod, "The Lion Who Is A Lamb"; Andrews S Jacobs, "The Lion and the Lamb: Reconsidering Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity," in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians*

Laws described it as a violent disruption, whereas Boring viewed it as a significant transformation of imagery.[348] Kraybill anticipated a fierce lion but instead saw a lamb, highlighting the stark symbolic contrast between the angel's announcement and what John saw.[349] Aune sees this as a dramatic interpretive matter, while Bauckham notes the importance of contrasting what John hears and sees: he hears about the conquering Lion of Judah. However, he sees a sacrificial lamb that redeems humankind.[350]

In his extensive study of leonine imagery in the Bible and ancient literature, Strawn explains John's shift from the name "lion", as prescribed by the elder, to "the lamb", a brief summary of which is provided below.[351] The elder's introduction of Jesus as the lion from the root of David (5:5) invokes a rich history of positive associations such as power, dominance, and majesty. However, the lion also carries profound negative connotations, such as ferocity, threat, and destructive potential, which would have created ambiguity in the character of Christ portrayed in the Apocalypse. To mitigate these negative aspects, John swiftly changes to the imagery of the Lamb. The transition is deliberate, inviting positive attributes commonly associated with a lamb, such as innocence, purity, and sacrifice. The lamb, while lacking the overt power and dominance of the lion, embodies these qualities in a transformed

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in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, ed. Annette Yoshiko Reed and Adam H. Becker, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95 (Tubingen: Mohr Seibeck, 2003), 95–118.; David L. Barr, "Doing Violence: Moral Issues in Reading John's Apocalypse," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, Resources for Biblical Study; No. 44 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 100; Donald Guthrie, "The Lamb in the Structure of the Book of Revelation," *VE* 12 (1981): 64–71; Middleton, *The Violence of the Lamb Martyrs as Agents of Divine Judgement in the Book of Revelation*, 66; Bay, "Lion of the Apocalypse."

[348] See Sophie Laws, *In the Light of the Lamb: Imagery, Parody, and Theology in the Apocalypse of John*, Good News Studies 31 (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1988), 29; M. Eugene Boring, "Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse," *CBQ* 54.4 (1992): 708.

[349] J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 132 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 98.

[350] Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 52A:351; Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 74.

[351] Brent A. Strawn, "Why Does the Lion Disappear in Revelation 5? Leonine Imagery in Early Jewish and Christian Literatures," *JSP* 17.1 (2007): 37–74; See also for a detailed discussion on the Leonin imagery, Brent A. Strawn, *What Is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, OBO 212 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

way. In Revelation, the lamb is not ordinary; it possesses seven horns and seven eyes (Rev. 5:6), symbols of complete power and knowledge, and is deemed worthy of receiving power, wealth, wisdom, might, honour, glory, and blessing (Rev. 5:12–13). This depiction allows the lamb to convey strength and authority without the negative associations of the lion. This shift operates at multiple semantic levels, particularly regarding power, dominance, and threat. While the lion naturally embodies these traits, its use in reference to the Lamb redefines it, especially with the sacrificial love and redemption connotations. The Lamb's power is demonstrated through its victory in suffering, in contrast to the lion's dominance. Further emphasising this point, leonine qualities reappear in Revelation, but are associated with negative entities after chapter 5, verse 5. A swarm of locusts has lion's teeth (and a scorpion's sting) that torment those without God's seal (Rev. 9:8). The horses of the four angels possess lion-like features and unleash plagues that kill a third of humanity (Rev. 9:17). The first beast from the sea has a lion's mouth and embodies opposition to the divine authority (Rev. 13:2). These instances detach the lion imagery from positive figures and reinforce their negative connotations. The only exception is the angel whose shout resembles a lion's roar (Rev. 10:3), but even here, the lion-like quality pertains solely to the voice, not the character's essence.

Thus, in Strawn's assertion, the ambivalence of the lion image, with its capacity for both positive and negative interpretations, necessitates a switch to the lamb. The lion's potential for negative associations could undermine the portrayal of Christ as an unambiguous embodiment of divine redemption. Conversely, the lamb lacks these negative connotations, allowing it to be a clearer and more focused symbol of salvation and victory through sacrifice. Moreover, the lion-like qualities of the first beast (Rev. 13:2) and the lamb-like qualities of the second beast (Rev. 13:11) highlight the dangers of ambiguous imagery. The second beast appears lamb-like but speaks like a dragon, suggesting deception. This

underscores the importance of lamb imagery for Christ, as it conveys purity without the risk of misinterpretation or confusion.

However, Strawn's argument may have overlooked the text's deeper narrative and theological nuances. A critical examination reveals that John's shift from lion to lamb imagery is not explicitly about avoiding the lion's negative aspects but is instead a deliberate contrast between the expectations of the elder and John's revelation. This contrast highlights the differing understandings of Jesus' role and character in the cosmic conflict. In Revelation 5:5, one of the elders tells John not to weep because the Lion of the tribe of Judah[352], the Root of David, has triumphed. These epithetical names are steeped in messianic expectations that emphasise the strength, authority, and fulfilment of Jewish prophecy concerning a mighty deliverer who would establish dominion, echoing the hope for a warrior messiah who would vanquish the oppressors.

When John turns to see this lion, he beholds a lamb standing as if it had been slain (Rev. 5:6). This startling revelation subverts the traditional expectations. Rather than depicting Jesus in terms of martial strength and dominance, John presents Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb, emphasising the virtues of humility, self-sacrifice, and redemptive suffering.

John's decision to portray Jesus as the Lamb should not be understood as an avoidance of the lion's predatory nature; rather, it constitutes a deliberate theological affirmation of Christ's dual roles as embodying both strength and enduring protection.

This reflects his understanding of how Jesus triumphed in the cosmic conflict, not through conventional power or violence, but through his sacrificial death and resurrection. The Lamb's victory is achieved by the shedding of its blood for humanity, which is the

[352] The phrase "the lion from the tribe of Judah" is deeply embedded in biblical tradition and encompasses various interpretations and implications. The tribe of Judah is of particular significance within the context of the Hebrew Scriptures, recognised for its prominent role among the tribes of Israel. This stems from the prophecy of Jacob in Genesis 49:9 (cf. Numbers 23:24).

ultimate act of love and redemption. The souls under the altar in Revelation 6:9–10 cry out: "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge (κρίνεις) the inhabitants of the earth and avenge (ἐκδικεῖς) our blood?"

Their plea for judgement and vindication reflects their desire for justice. This suggests that heavenly audiences, including the elders, may have an incomplete understanding of how God's purposes are fulfilled.

The elder's prescriptive naming focuses on Jesus' acquired status and the traditional messianic expectation[353] that Jesus is worthy to rule in the line of David. This reflects a perspective that anticipates a conquering king wielding power in a conventional sense. In contrast, John's ascriptive naming arises from his direct vision and personal familiarity with Jesus. By depicting Jesus as the Lamb, John emphasizes the salvific importance of virtuous humility. The lamb symbolises the paradox of strength through weakness and victory through sacrifice.[354] This imagery underscores that Jesus' triumph in the cosmic conflict comes not through force but through self-giving love. The subsequent hymns and declarations in Revelation exalt the Lamb for his redemptive work:

Revelation 5:9–10:

> "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain (ἐσφάγης), and with your blood, you purchased (ἠγόρασας) for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation."

[353] For a deeper discussion on the Messianism in a Lion imagery see; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 182; Allan Aubrey Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: Reflections on the Apocalypse of John of Patmos*, 1st ed. (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1987), 56–57; David, "The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterising Jesus in John's Apocalypse"; Gottfried Schimanowski, *Die himmlische Liturgie in der Apokalypse des Johannes: Die frühjüdischen Traditionen in Offenbarung 4–5 unter Einschluss der Hekhalotliteratur*, vol. 154 of *WUNT* II (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 197–202; Koester, *Revelation*, 375; Louis Ginzberg and David Stern, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), I, II, III, VI:I, pp. 404, 406; II, 32, 105, 143, 147, 149, 198; III, pages 237; VI, 83.

[354] Aune rightly observes that 'the striking contrast between the two images suggests the contrast between the type of warrior messiah expected by first-century Judaism and the earthly ministry of Jesus as a suffering servant of God.' Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 373.

Revelation 5:12:

> "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain (ἐσφαγμένον), to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"

These hymns accentuate the redemption achieved through the Lamb's sacrifice. This reinforces John's emphasis on the Lamb's role in the cosmic conflict as reconceiving the way victory is gained.

A Theo-onomastic reading—a study of literary and theological names and naming and their significance–reveals that the names and titles used for Jesus in Revelation are not merely literary devices but carry deep theological import. John's deliberate use of Lamb over Lion communicates a shift in understanding the nature of Jesus' messiahship and how he accomplishes salvation. The contrast between the elder's declaration and John's vision corrects and expands the audience's comprehension of divine victory. It challenges assumptions about power and invites readers to embrace a model of leadership and triumph grounded in humility and self-sacrifice rather than domination.

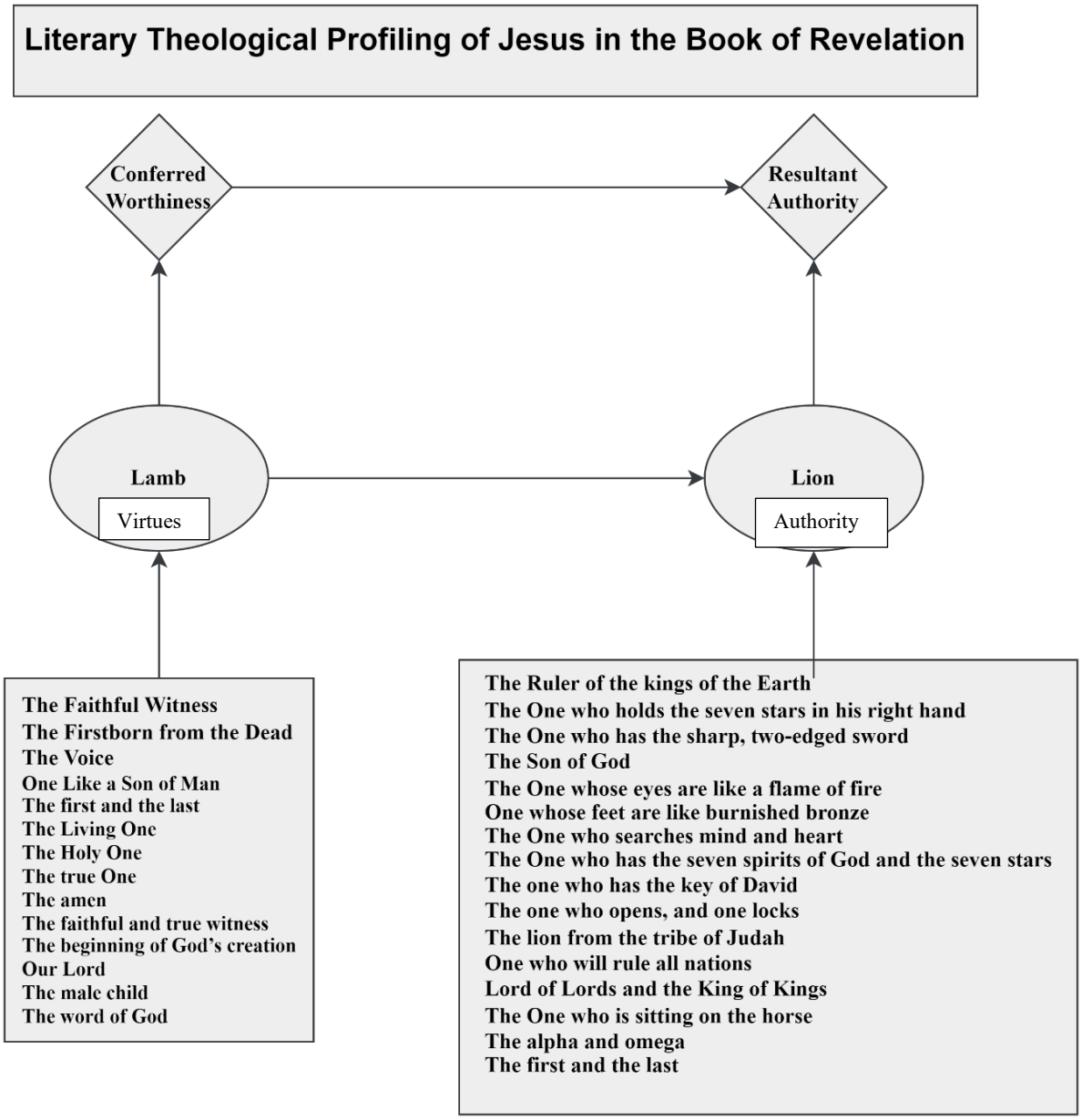
In essence, lamb imagery does not replace the lion merely to avoid negativity. However, it serves as a profound theological statement on the nature of Christ's victory in the cosmic conflict. The theo-onomastic approach underscores the significance of the names and titles ascribed to Jesus, revealing a richer and more nuanced interpretation that aligns with the overarching message of the book of Revelation.

The dual imagery of the lion and lamb in Revelation reveals Jesus' multifaceted role. The lion symbolises royal power, strength, and messianic authority, whereas the lamb signifies sacrifice, humility, and redemption. These images illustrate Jesus' authority and triumph attained through self-giving love. Although these qualities may appear to be at odds, together they offer a complete understanding of Jesus' character and purpose, showing that his ultimate triumph is achieved through both strength and self-sacrifice. The epithets in Revelation deepen the portrayal of Jesus by highlighting the essential qualities of

faithfulness, strength, legitimacy, and truth. These attributes are essential in demonstrating his capability and rightful position as the central figure leading the war against cosmic evil.

This combination of power and humility defines Jesus' role in the cosmic conflict and underscores the fact that true authority is achieved through grace and redemption. John's vision merges these perspectives to form a comprehensive picture of Jesus' virtue and the resultant worthiness, emphasising his reign, judgement, and sacrifice. It is upon these two strands of Jesus' character that all other names hang, as illustrated in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Literary-Theological Profile of Jesus in the Book of Revelation



5.4.1c. Participial Names[355]

Participial phrases in Revelation depict Jesus' active role and his continuous presence in the narrative. They describe ongoing actions or states, highlighting their dynamic involvement in both the cosmic conflict and believers' lives. For instance, "He who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood" (τοῦ ἀγαπῶντος ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντος ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ) in Revelation 1:5 emphasises Jesus' ongoing love and redemptive sacrifice. This phrase illustrates how Jesus defeats evil through self-sacrifice, liberating believers from sin's grasp and undermining the power of his enemy.

Similarly, "he who walks among the seven golden lampstands" (ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν) in Rev. 2:1 portrays Jesus' intimate presence among the churches: "These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands." This participial phrase reassures believers of God's guidance and support, highlighting His active involvement and leadership during persecution and spiritual warfare.

5.4.1d. Titular Names[356]

The titles in Revelation serve as formal designations that underscore Jesus's authority, divinity, and cosmic roles. They are instrumental in establishing his supremacy over all creation and history, positioning Him as the central figure in the cosmic conflict. One of the most significant titles is "The Alpha and the Omega" (ὁ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ). In 1:8, the name is

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355 Here is full list of the participial names for Jesus: καὶλύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ, ὁ ζῶν, ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ, ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν, ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρός, καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ, ὁ ἐραυνῶν νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας, ὁ ἔχων τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας, ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖν Δαυίδ, ὁ ἀνοίγων καὶ οὐδεὶς κλείσει, καὶ κλείων καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀνοίγει, τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης, τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου

356 ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ; ὁ ἅγιος; ὁ ἀληθινός ; ὁ Ἀμήν ; ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ; τὸ τέκνον υἱόν, ἄρσεν κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν; καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων; ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ.

self-prescribed by God, which gives 22:13 great significance, emphasising Jesus' eternal nature and sovereignty over time. It asserts that he is both the origin and the consummation of all things: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 22:13). This declaration positions Jesus as the ultimate authority who initiates and completes the divine plan, emphasising his control over the cosmic narrative.

Another pivotal title is "The first and the last" (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος)(Rev. 1:17–18): "Do not be afraid. I am the first and last and the living one; I was dead, and now look, I am alive forever and ever!" This title reinforces Jesus' victory over death and eternal existence, assuring believers of his power to defeat evil. Similarly, "The beginning of God's creation" (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ) (Rev. 3:14 highlights Jesus as the foundational force behind all creation: "These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." This title affirms his divinity and authority to restore and judge creation, which is essential for resolving the cosmic conflict.

5.4.2. Step 2: The Naming Techniques

The introduction of names in apocalyptic narratives aligns with the second step of the theo-onomastic methodology. Names given to actors can be prescriptive, ascriptive, or a combination of both. These methods may involve authorial prescription/ascription, self-prescription or audience ascription.

The author used a rhetorical and persuasive approach to engage the reader/listener in the enigmatic nature of the individual with the 'loud voice, resembling a trumpet', that communicated with him while he was in a spiritual state on the Lord's Day (1:9–10).

An important observation to be made from John's description of his vision is that Jesus, in his self-revelation to the author never explicitly refers to himself by his proper name in the rest of the narrative. Instead, he chooses to express himself epithetically. The reader, listener, and writer are interrupted by an unidentified 'loud voice' behind him. However, the

speaker's words indicate familiarity with the seven churches and issue a command to write. On one level, the speaker remains mysterious until the climactic epiphany in 19:16 reveals his identity. When John turns, he sees lampstands, among which there is 'one like a son of man' (1.13). [357]

John employed authorial ascriptive naming to intensify secrecy. Here, in line with the apparent 'mystery' setting, John uses a phrase with antecedent; he discloses the unknown nature of the figure who looked like 'a son of man.' Thus, he described the figure as human-like. This is retained despite the lack of the article in the phrase ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου (1.13). In verse 18, the figure John sees identifies himself with a chain of participial names beginning with the present participle ὁ ζῶν (the living One), moves to the past tense ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς and ends in the present participle with an eternal outlook as follows; καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. The human-like figure goes on to describe himself as having the keys to Death and Hades without revealing his real identity, thereby maintaining the mystery of his person. Here, the name substitution itemises possession by forging a solid link to the style of the letters to the seven churches.[358]

The mysterious man has a *head and hair as white as snow*, *eyes like a flaming fire*, *feet like fine brass*, and *a voice like the sound of many waters* (v.14–15). In his right hand were seven stars, his words were like a two-edged sword, and he had a bright face (v.16). His

[357] It has been observed that this phrase is an apparent allusion to the Hebrew אֱנָשׁכְּבַ in Dan 7:13. With an apparent lack of direct quote from the OT, Beale asserts that the 'Son of Man" in Daniel offered John the template from which to operate. However, Dan 10:5–6 fits the indefiniteness of the phrase in Revelation. It is best to translate it without the article as that best suits the "mystery" aura that surrounds John's description of the visionary experience in 1:9–20. For an extensive discussion on this see Leonard Thompson, "Einer Gleich Einem Menschensohn: Die Christusvisionen in Offb 1,9–20 Und Offb 14,14–20 Und Die Christologie Der Johannesoffenbarung," *CBQ* 70.2 (2008): 90–92. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 90–92. Thomas B. Slater, "One Like a Son of Man in First-Century CE Judaism," *NTS* 41.2 (1995): 183–98. Karl A. Kuhn, "The 'One like a Son of Man' Becomes the 'Son of God.,'" *CBQ,* 69.1 (2007): 22–42. Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 8–11.

[358] In the letters, the things Jesus possesses are given a participial structure that follows a Τάδε λέγει formula, which Aune compares to the *praescriptio* of Romans edicts. See Aune, "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3," 193.

spectacular appearance elicits absolute reverence; hence John falls *as a dead [man] at his feet*. Through prefiguring, John establishes a link between his prior understanding of the Old Testament passages regarding an enigmatic entity and the one now visible before him. John's response is like that found in theophanic encounters of Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah (Isa 6:5), Ezekiel (Eze 1: 28b), and Daniel (Dan 7:17). Additionally, John characterises Jesus as an 'apocalyptic mystery' rather than explicitly revealing his true nature.[359] The concealment of the name is explicitly supported by the phrase, '*One like a son of man* (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου). However, some translations add articles that are not present in Greek. However, the antonomasia employed is reminiscent of Jesus Christ. In Rev. 1:17b–18, the figure that John sees initiates a process of self-revelation, expressed through symbolism.

The purpose of the vision narrative is to describe vividly the person the author saw using detailed descriptions. Individuals anticipate the revelation of personal information from people they have seen. John does not document any opposition or individuals in the initial chapter. He portrays a person with immense power and influence that extends across time, conquering death, humanity's greatest fear. The Apocalypse begins with Jesus emerging as a triumphant figure in the cosmic war that unfolds over the rest of the book. This opening chapter encompasses all these elements in its approach to names and naming.

In instances where John designates Jesus, he perceives his identity as concealed and used an authorial ascriptive naming technique to maintain the anonymity of the person (except 1:1) who directed him to write the prophecy.

[359] The term "apocalyptic mystery" is from an article by Humphrey, and refers to the deliberate hiddenness prevalent in the identification of characters in the apocalyptic writings (definition is my own understanding of the context in which she uses the term). See Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming," 167.

The use of antonomasia in the description of vision invites further investigation of its theological significance. It is essential to determine whether John used descriptive terms because of an inability to identify the person or to highlight their extraordinary presence. Additionally, exploring whether "Apocalyptic secrecy" and "Mystery" were deliberate choices to enhance the protagonist's character and contrast them with the adversary in the cosmic struggle could provide valuable insights.

5.4.3. Step 3 Literary-Theological Profile of Jesus

A critical component of theo-onomastic analysis is the examination of the literary and theological characterisation of Jesus Christ through the names assigned to him and their presentation within the literary framework of Revelation. This analysis depicts Jesus as the protagonist or antagonist of the narrative.

The analysis demonstrates that Jesus' proper name appears primarily as an authoritative reference within John's letter. Although the explicit use of Jesus' name is rare throughout the Book of Revelation, occurring chiefly in 1:10 and 22:16, his identity is predominantly conveyed through a range of epithets, participial expressions, and titles. The strategic use of these appellations, along with self-prescriptive naming, underscores Jesus' pivotal role within the overarching cosmic conflict depicted in the narrative.

His literary-theological profile shows him as a protagonist alongside God. With the aid of the naming style above, John enhances Jesus' literary-theological profile to reveal both his nature and the scope of his authority, and thus John establishes the foundation for the topic of cosmic warfare.[360]

[360] For Humphrey, such naming pattern conforms to classical rhetoric practices that elucidates *ethos and pathos*; Humphrey, "On Visions, Arguments, and Naming," 177.

Collectively, these linguistic elements create a multidimensional and profound portrayal of Jesus in the Book of Revelation. His titles assert his supreme authority and eternal sovereignty, establishing him as the ultimate force in the cosmic struggle. Numerous epithets highlight his essential attributes, faithfulness, strength, legitimacy, and truth, that equip him with victory over evil. Participial phrases depict his active involvement and relational presence with believers, illustrating how his love, sacrifice, and guidance are instrumental in overcoming evil and supporting the faithful. Symbolic proper names anchor Jesus' identity in history, connecting the earthly Jesus with the cosmic Christ and making His actions and characters the narrative's focal point.

This deliberate and nuanced use of language emphasises Jesus' character and authority, demonstrating how he resolves the cosmic conflict through truth, sacrifice, love, and righteous judgement. The interplay of titles, epithets, participial phrases, and proper names reinforces God's dominance in the narrative and provides hope and assurance to believers facing opposition and trials. By portraying Jesus as the definitive answer to the cosmic struggle, Revelation weaves a narrative that is both theologically rich and compelling.

The linguistic artistry of the Greek text adds to the illumination of these themes. For instance, participial forms like ὁ ζῶν (the living one) emphasise Jesus' eternal vitality. Simultaneously, genitive constructs such as ὁ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ (the beginning of God's creation) highlight His foundational role in creation and redemption. These linguistic nuances enrich the theological and narrative portrayal of Jesus, providing a rich tapestry of meaning that deepens the reader's engagement with the text and enhances their appreciation of its message and themes.

Through these linguistic features the Book of Revelation presents a multidimensional portrait of Jesus Christ as the dominant protagonist in the cosmic conflict. They reveal how Jesus embodies the resolution of the cosmic struggle between good and evil, offering a

comprehensive portrayal that integrates theological insights with apocalyptic imagery. This portrayal not only enhances the reader's understanding of Jesus' authority and character but also demonstrates how He provides hope and assurance to the faithful

5.4.4. Step 4: The Role of Jesus in the Cosmic Conflict

This self-disclosure of Jesus' existence, spanning the past, present, and future, is akin to the pattern for the naming of God, as discussed in step 2. The scope of influence of each naming pattern differed significantly. For instance, whereas God's sphere of authority covers both the horizontal and vertical space of the universe, Jesus' authority is predominantly *horizontal,* wielding power to the extent of possessing the keys of Death and Hades, the one who 'walks among the candlesticks', 'died and came to life', 'has the two-edged sword', 'has eyes like a flame of fire', 'feet like nourished bronze', 'has the seven spirits and the seven stars', 'opens and no one shall shut' and 'Ruler over the Kings of the earth', with a 'two-edged sword coming from his mouth' (1.16).' Using such descriptive phrases instead of proper names helps the author convey the absolute sovereignty of Jesus over the seven churches and any power that seeks to usurp his authority over them.[361] This adds to the glorification of Jesus, positioning him as the primary target of Satan and his forces, thus fitting the nature of the cosmic conflict in Revelation.[362]

The vision reported in Rev. 5:1–14 is a continuation of Rev. 4:1–11, framed by the vision-narrative formula Καὶ εἶδον, "then I saw (5:1), and punctuated by the same means in 5:2. In Revelation this formula seems to function in two ways: a) it can be used to introduce a significant break in the vision narrative (as in 5:1), and thus frame a discrete text unit; and b)

[361] Koester, *Revelation*, 253.

[362] Some scholars argue that the conflict is between John and an opposing Roman imperial culture. However, the position adopted here is that the conflict is cosmic and the struggle is between Christ and Satan. See Ernst Janzen, "The Jesus of the Apocalypse Wears the Emperor's Clothes," in *SBLSP*, ed. E. H. Lovering Jr. (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1994), 637–61; Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 47; David, "The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterising Jesus in John's Apocalypse."

it can also be used to mark a change in the focus of the vision. [363] Despite their connection, two different events remain, with Chapter 5 being a sequel to Chapter 4. The setting of Revelation 4 is carried over into Revelation 5, along with new elements such as the scroll in the right hand of the One seated on the throne, the introduction of the worthy Lion-Lamb who takes the scroll to break its seal, and the culmination of praise and worship by the heavenly hosts.

Chapter 5 of Revelation can be subdivided into three units as follows: 5:1–5, which is about the scroll and the search for a worthy person to take and open it; 5:6–10, which dwells on the worthiness of the Lion of Judah and the Lamb who opens the scrolls; 5:11–14, which tells of the response of heavenly worship of the Lamb who is worthy. In Rev. 5, the Lamb of God is enthroned and takes a scroll or book from God's hand in the enthronement/ coronation of Jesus (Rev. 5:5–6).[364]

A careful analysis of Rev 5 reveals a two-level presentation of heavenly and earthly dimensions. For instance, the chapter begins with a heavenly event revealed to John, an earthly prophet. He sees in the right hand of the One seated on the throne a scroll that has inscriptions both inside (ἔσωθεν) and on the Outside (ἔσωθεν). Although the scroll is sealed with seven seals, the writing outside is exposed. This suggests that an aspect of the scroll is neither fully closed nor secretive.[365] No one could open the book (v.3). Moreover, the Worthy

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[357] For a more detailed discussion on the unity of the two chapters, see Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 329.

[364] Jeremias is credited with being the first to suggest the similarities between Revelation 5 and ancient Near Eastern enthronement motifs. Following his work, the concept has expanded to include comparisons between Revelation 5 and other Old Testament and Jewish enthronement accounts. For detailed analysis, see Joachim Jeremias, "Ἀμνος Τοῦ Θεοῦ - Πὰις Θεοῦ," *ZNW*.34 (1935): 115–23; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 196–208; Ranko Stefanovic, "The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 56.1 (2018): 177–80; Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 332–35.

[365] Some believe that the inside of the scroll contained the authoritative text of God's will, and that the back of the scroll contained a readable copy of this text. In Jewish custom, a legal document, such as a deed, was sealed and stored alongside an unsealed and legible copy (Jer 32:9-15; Mur 18; m. B. Bat. 10:1-2). Thus, the inscriptions on both sides of the document demonstrated its authenticity. Others argue the scroll was not indeed written on both sides because that would mean John was only assuming that there were inscriptions

One is required to perform two main functions: to open (ἀνοῖξαι) and to loosen/break (λῦσαι) the seals. These two acts are both in the aorist active infinitive. The aorist active tense shows the direct relationship between opening/ loosening the scroll and its seven seals, on the one hand, and the virtue of worthiness, on the other.

Another two-level presentation is reflected in John's' eventual description of the son of man.[366] The style is filtered through the experience of John, who lacks knowledge of who is worthy, leading to his weeping, in contrast to the 24 elders who had absolute knowledge of the person who is worthy. The two levels of perception within the chapter result in the two names for Jesus as (1) the Lion of Judah, the root of David, as presented by one of the 24 elders, and (2) the Lamb, ascribed by John to the standing figure he sees approach the throne of the Seated One, from whom he receives the scroll. This dual perspective reaches its climax in revealing the worthy one as the Lamb, the lion of Judah, the Lion from the root of David. .

John narrates the heavenly scene with his active participation captured in the repetition of the aorist active indicative singular εἶδον. The only section in the chapter where the author needed instruction was the revelation of the worthy one in vs.5. The elder's use of the present active imperatives, Μὴ κλαῖε· and ἰδοὺ, an attention-marker, functions to make the statement that follows emphatic, suggesting that the elder's knowledge and the name of the *Worthy One* as ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα is not a misnomer or character blindness. [367] For Bauckham, ἰδοὺ combines well with εἶδον to reflect heightened experiences of visual

inside, while he could only see the outside. For this study, an extensive discussion of this point is not warranted. See the following for detailed discussion: Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 338–41; Koester, *Revelation*, 374.

[366] Charles Talbert agrees with Boring's two-level Christological naming of Jesus as indicative of the 'human and heavenly faces of Jesus', arguing that Revelation seem to give more attention to the heavenly aspect than the human. See Charles H. Talbert, *The Development of Christology During the First Hundred Years: And Other Essays on Early Christian Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 149–50; Boring, "Narrative Christology in the Apocalypse."

[367] ἰδοὺ as deitically pointing out important objects and actions is a common occurrence in the book of Revelation. Examples include: 1:7, 18; 2:10; 4:1-2; 5:5; 6:2, 5, 8; 7:9; 9:12; 11:14; 12:3; 14:1, 14; 19:11; 21:3. See Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 7.

imagination, in which John is given images that evoke spiritual insights.[368] John actively participates in the vision, yet he still needs to pay particular attention to the dilemma that occasioned his weeping. This means that the elder's naming style for the Worthy one is prescriptive, hence the name given to John, and indicates that John should have continued the rest of the narration using the revealed name: ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ. Even then, his substantial personal involvement led him to see things differently from the name prescribed by one of the 24 elders. When prompted, John describes the worthy person he sees using the *ascriptive* style of naming, i.e. ἀρνίον ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, ἔχων κέρατα ἑπτὰ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἑπτά.

The fact that John sees the *Worthy One* as ἀρνίον instead of λέων underscores the significance of the ὀφθαλμοὺς as πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ, and his subsequent fondness for the former name sets the tone for heightened tension about the character and nature of Jesus Christ in this chapter and the rest of the story. It may well indicate the different aspects of the Worthy One (Jesus) that the elder and John seek to emphasise.. The passing of the scroll to the Lamb results in three sets of hymns of praise offered by: a) the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (v. 9); b) angels, four living creatures, and the elders numbering a thousand times tens of thousands (v. 11); and c) every creature in heaven and on Earth, and all that is in the sea (v. 13). The common factor among them all is their implicit acknowledgment of the worthiness (ἄξιος) of the ἀρνίον to receive power and authority. The following discussion centres on the author's intended relationship between the two names. Does one destroy the other? Does one of them (the Lamb, according to many scholars) reinterpret the other, or is the relationship between them more complex than "either/or" or "both/and"? In essence, does one of the figures "defeat" the other, does the Lion lie down with the Lamb, or are they capable of fusing into one complete picture of the character of

[368] See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 178.

Jesus Christ? Why did the Lion disappear? How does the resolution of these questions help define how Jesus is named, and what is its impact on the theme of cosmic conflict?

Scholars have interpreted the contrast between the Lion and the Lamb in different ways. For example Bauckham rightly asserts that "the contrast of Lion and lamb was certainly intentional on the part of a writer as attentive to his symbols as John and is reinforced by remembering their natural enmity by which the helpless lamb commonly falls prey to the hungry lion…"[369] For H. B. Swete, this is a combination of majesty and meekness that characterises the life of Christ.[370] Caird, on the other hand, argues that John was contrasting two titles from the Hebrew Scriptures such that "wherever the Old Testament says 'lion' [it should be] read [as] Lamb. Wherever the Old Testament speaks of the victory of the Messiah or overthrow of the enemies of God, we are to remember that the gospel recognises no other way of achieving these ends than the way of the cross."[371] The similarity in the positions mentioned above is that they all recognise that there must have been a reason for John's report on the two names being placed next to each other in the same chapter in sequential verses. That said, the significance proposed by both Caird and Swete's is speculative because if the author intended for the Lamb to obliterate the Lion or vice versa, their usage would have no significance for the messages they are intended to carry.[372] Others agree that the Lamb represents a reinterpretation of the Lion. Hence, the names act as a contrast that shows how John stresses the fulfilment of the Messianic kingdom prophecies of

[369] Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 180.

[370] H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1911), 78.

[371] Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 75.

[372] Although the earlier extreme stance of Caird and Swete has been modified in subsequent explanations, a few still support this position. Steve Moyise sees the contrasting names as a "hermeneutic of replacement" and thus blames Caird's inability to appreciate the unique tension between the Lamb and the Lion. See Moyise, "Does the Lion Lie Down with the Lamb?"; Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 129. Boring also supports this position see Boring, *Revelation*, 108–10.

the Old Testament.[373] Collins and Boring interpreted lion/lamb imagery in an entirely different context, specifically in a courtroom setting. Boring explains that the term 'conquer' has a 'forensic, legal connotation' for John, signifying acquittal in court. Under Roman law, the recipients of this book may be found guilty and sentenced to death. However, their testimonies exonerate them in heavenly courts. The cross of Jesus redefines their victory.[374]

But perhaps John's image of the Lion and Lamb is not as starkly different as it first appears. However, a combination of the two aspects of the same person is presented in the book of Revelation to build the literary and theological profile of Jesus Christ. The reasoning behind this position is the certainty with which the elder and John introduce their respective names for Jesus, revealing the importance of the two names, though Lamb is John's favourite. The imperative ἰδοὺ calls attention to what the elder introduces, the sheer specificity identifying Jesus as originating from τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ presupposes that he could not have gotten the prescribed name wrong.

In contrast to his general practice in the initial chapters of Revelation, where John often employs similes to identify and describe Jesus, in Revelation 5 he shifts to the use of metaphor, providing more detailed characteristics that indicate his familiarity with the figure he observes, ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, ἔχων κέρατα ἑπτὰ καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἑπτά. This nuanced portrayal allows John to convey a deeper theological significance within the narrative framework.[375]

These provide a picture of the certainty of these two names. It is possible that the elder had in view the royalty and judgement of Christ, whereas John focused on his sacrifice and the resultant effect. This ties well with the heavenly and earthly mix in the conversation

[373] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 353; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 146.

[374] Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 14; Boring, *Revelation*, 111.

[375] A metaphor is more specific in comparative analyses than a simile. See Richard J. Gerrig and Zared R. Shawver, "Narrative Experiences of Metaphor," in *Dynamism in Metaphor and Beyond*, ed. Herbert L. Colston, Teenie Matlock, and Gerard J. Steen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2022), 45–77, h.

scenes in chapters 4 and 5. Beasley-Murray supports the view that they are 'variant symbols of one idea of all prevailing Messiah'.[376] The Christ of the Old Covenant promise and apocalyptic hope is revealed in terms of the fulfilment of the New Covenant. Barr sees the change from merging the Lion with the Lamb, but does not acknowledge the difference in the Lion.[377] Aune and Thompson argue that John does not dismiss the Jewish messianic hopes embodied in the 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah' and the 'Root of David'.[378] Instead, he merges them, reinterpreting and creating something new: a symbol of conquest through sacrificial death. For Grabiner, the analysis reveals the depth of the text's theological message and its enduring significance for readers seeking to understand the nature of Christ's victory over evil.

[376] Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 125.

[377] David, "The Lamb Who Looks Like a Dragon? Characterising Jesus in John's Apocalypse," 214–15.

[378] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 373; Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 58–59.

Table 6: THEO-ONOMASTICS OF JESUS[379]						
Name	Bible Reference (Revelation)	Type of Name	Naming Technique	Characteristics	Literal-Theological profiles	Relevance to CosConf
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ[380]	1: 1, 2, 5, 9; 11:15; 12:10, 17; 14:12; 17:6; 19: 10; 20: 4, 6; 22:16; 20, 21	PROPER	Authorial prescription: i.e. the author is the one who reveals the name as the authentic identifier of what he received in the vision	This type of name is often a proper noun in the nominative, genitive and dative cases where a relationship with the name is intended.	Protagonist	He is the central feature of the entire revelation, hence part of the causal agency of the entire narrative.
ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός	1:5		Self-Prescriptive	These names are often introduced in the first-person voice, with the phrase: Ἐγώ εἰμι, e.g. Rev 1:8, 11, 18. In these, the author self-discloses how he would want to be known and called.	The contextual implication of the names indicates a protagonist character.	These names highlight the nature and function of the cosmic conflict. Jesus shares characteristics with God, who is also the Alpha and Omega. Such epithetical names help to determine the

[379] It is worth noting that titles like Saviour, teacher, prophet, master, and servant commonly used about Jesus in the Gospels do not occur in Revelation. However, Christ's salvific death is presented in 1:5; 5.9. Koester conceives the salvific effect of the death of Christ in four paired terms: a) sin and forgiveness, b) bondage and liberation, c) defilement and cleansing, and d) falsehood and truth. From this understanding, it is safe to say the cosmic conflict theme is present on every page of the book, because even in the opening verses 1(:2-5), when John is focused on greetings, the naming pattern reveals all four types of conflict resulting from Jesus's death and resurrection. Hence, the naming style (Theo-onomastics) is intentional and essential for our understanding of the cosmic conflict theme. See Koester, *Revelation*, 228; Brian K. Blount, *Can I Get a Witness? : Reading Revelation through African American Culture*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2005).

[380] The name form occurs in three categories as follows: Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ three times (Rev 1:1,2,5); Ἰησοῦ alone: nine times (Rev 1:9; 12:17; 14:12; 17:6; 19:10x2; 22:16, 20, 21; Χριστοῦ alone three times (Rev 11:15; 12:10 and 20:6). The two names are also split in one verse in 20:4.

				Thenames help shape the character, i.e., his nature and function.		ultimate victor in the battle.
ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν	1:5					
ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς	1:5					
τὴν φωνὴν	1:12)55x but the only reference to Christ)					
ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου	1:13 and 14:14	EPITHETICAL				
ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος	1:17; 2:8; 22:13					
ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός	3:14					
ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ	3:14					
ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα	5:5					
ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ	5:5 cf. 22:16					
τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἐσφαγμένον	5:12, 13:8					
μέλλει ποιμαίνειν	12:5					

πάντα τὰ ἔθνη						
τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ,	22:13,					
ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος	22:13					
ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος	22:13					
ἀρνίον	5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1,16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 11 (this refers to the lamb-like beast who possesses features like a lamb)			This name occurs about 28x in the narrative, in three cases in singular neuterWhy ment: nominative, genitive and dative.[381]		
καὶλύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ	1: 5		Authorial prescription and Authorial Ascription: this is when the author puts his perception of the Jesus figure he sees in the vision. For example, he sees a "lamb" instead of the lion image dictated to	Such names are common in the letters to the seven churches (Rev 2-3). In such settings, the introduction of the name is preceded by the phrase Τάδε λέγει which, which pre-empts that it is a	Protagonist	This name shows Jesus' sphere of authority. He is the one who has conquered the Past, Present, and future. This gives him an unparalleled power that competing powers in the

[381]The breakdown is as follows; 8 Nominatives (5:6, 12; 6; 7:17; 14:1; 17:14; 21:22, 23); 16 Genitives (Rev 5:8; 6:16; 7:9; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8; 14:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 27; 22:1, 3) and 4 Datives (Rev 5:13; 7:10; 13:11; 14:4).

		PARTICIPIAL	him by the elder in the heavenly court (Rev 5:5). And finally, Audience ascription: this is where the secondary actors in the drama, such as the 24 elders and angels, especially in the hymnody sections, reveal the Elder's perception of Jesus in the drama. For example, the elder who sought to encourage John not to cry revealed that the figure worthy of taking the scroll and pen is the Lion from the tribe of Judah and the root of David. Rev 5:4	reported speech, e.g. 2:1,8,12; 18,		cosmic drama cannot compare to. It heightens the tension within the cosmic conflict.
ὁ ζῶν	1: 18					
ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ	2:1			These also predominantly bring to the fore what Jesus is through what he does and owns. They are introduced in the	Protagonist	Most of the things Jesus does and has, as communicated by such names, directly contrast with the activities of his archenemy (Satan /

				present participle nominative singular.		Beasts), thereby aiding the further development of the cosmic conflict theme.
ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν	2:1					
ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν	2:12					
ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρός	2:18					
καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ	2:18					
ὁ ἐραυνῶν νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας	2:23					
ὁ ἔχων τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας	3:1					
ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖν Δαυίδ	3:7					

ὁ ἀνοίγων καὶ οὐδεὶς κλείσει	3:7					
καὶ κλείων καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀνοίγει	3:7					
τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῆς νεφέλης	14:15, 16, like 14:14					
τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου	19:19, 21					
ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ	2:18	TITULAR	These names are revealed in three techniques: Authorial prescription, Authorial Ascription And Audience Ascription	These names are presented metaphorically, connoting the qualities of Jesus as one of the primary characters.		
ὁ ἅγιος	3:7					
ὁ ἀληθινός	3.7					
ὁ Ἀμήν	3:14					
ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν	11:8; 14:13 and 22:20					
τὸ τέκνον	12:4					
υἱόν, ἅρσεν	12:5					
κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν	17: 14; 19:16					
καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων	17: 14					
ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ	19:13					

5.5. Naming the Spirit

The Spirit, when compared to other actors within John's apocalyptic narrative, has not received much scholarly attention.[382] But in the words of Bauckham, "The prominence of the Spirit is one of the characteristics which marks the Apocalypse out from the category of apocalyptic works in which its literary genre places it."[383] This is because the Spirit plays an important role in the book's eschatology. Therefore, a theo-onomastic analysis of its naming, the imagery presented in the book, and its overall relevance to the theme of cosmic conflict is worth considering.

5.5.1 Step 1: Types of Names

The first step in the theo-onomastic methodology of the names used to refer to the Spirit in the book is τὸ πνεῦμα. In Revelation, the Spirit carries five different names, all in the neuter gender, in four main cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, and dative, falling in three broad types of names: Proper, Epithetical and Titular.

5.5.1a. Proper Name

τὸ πνεῦμα

This is the most common name for the Spirit in the Apocalypse, appearing ten times (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 19:10; 22:17). All ten instances are in the nominative neuter case and include the article. All references, except one (Rev 19:10), include the verb "λέγω" in the present indicative tense.

[382] Aspects of the Spirit often explored include "the seven spirits" and phrases like "in the Spirit" or "the spirit of prophecy." See John Christopher Thomas, "The Spirit of the Book of Revelation," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig R. Koester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 241.

[383] Richard Bauckham, "The Role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse," *EVQ* 52 (1980): 66–83.

5.5.1b. EpitheticalNames

ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ and ἐν πνεύματι

In the Book of Revelation, these two names appear seven times in the dative case. Of the seven instances, three utilise the dative + ἐν construction, while the adjective ἑπτὰ precedes the remaining four. Regarding the former, ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ (Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), the exact meaning and background are debatable.[384] Some interpret this name as being synonymous with the seven angelic beings.[385] Others understand this as the singular spirit of God.[386] The other name in this category, ἐν πνεύματι, has also been interpreted in various ways. For some, it serves as a literal or a structural marker.[387] Others view it as an expression of spiritual experiences.[388] With the current study's objective of highlighting the significance of the Spirit's names and functions, interpreting both ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ and ἐν πνεύματι as references to the same spiritual entity. Particular attention is given to the Spirit's location and the motif of completeness these names suggest. Furthermore, these designations

[384] Robby Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, JPTSup 30 (Blandford Forum: Deo, 2006), 9–12.

[385] Those with this view cite the lack of similar uses in the Old Testament. See David E. Aune, Revelation 1-5, WBC 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), 33–35; Craig R. Koester, Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Translation. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 226; G. H. Dix, "The Seven Archangels and the Seven Spirits: A Study in the Origin, Development, and Messianic Associations of the Two Themes," *JTS* 28.111 (1927): 233–50; Alb. Škrinjar, "Les Sept Esprits," *Bib.* 16.1 (1935): 1–24; Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *God the Trinity: Biblical Portraits* (Brentwood, TN: B&H, 2016.

[386] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 109–15; Bauckham, "The Role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse"; F. F. Bruce, "The Spirit in the Apocalypse," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley, 1st edition. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 333–44; John Christopher Thomas, *The Apocalypse: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 329–31; Waddell, *The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*, 172–78.

[387] Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 33; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 1–7.

[388] Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 51; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 82; Koester, *Revelation*, 251–52.

underscore the Spirit's capacity to impart and mediate revelatory experiences to individuals within the narrative framework.[389]

5.5.1c. Titular Names

ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου (Rev 1:4) and τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν (Rev 22:6)

These are the only two names in the genitive plural case. The first reiterates the Spirit's location before the throne of God and seems to authenticate its authority. The second phrase is related to the testimony of Jesus mentioned in Rev 19:10, where it is referred to as τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας. An important interpretive challenge is to determine the grammatical function of this construction, specifically, whether it is subjective or objective. If interpreted as a subjective genitive, this phrase describes Jesus' role as a witness. Conversely, if understood as an objective genitive, it indicates who the witness is addressing. Regardless of one's preference for either view, the prophecy to which the Spirit bears witness is about Jesus' coming.[390]

5.5.2. Step 2: The Naming Techniques

Names are introduced in scenes where they appear through a technique called authorial prescription naming. This means that the author or narrator assigns names to the spirits. While it is stated that the Spirit speaks to the churches, direct speech from the Spirit is not recorded in this passage.

[389] Leonard L. Thompson, "Spirit Possession: Revelation in Religious Studies," in *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*, ed. David L. Barr, RBS 44 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 140–41; Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective*, 300–303, 377–83; Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, 32–33.

[390] J. Ramsey Michaels, *Revelation* (Illinois, IL: IVP, 1997), 213.

5.5.3. Literary-Theological Profile

The names and naming patterns of the Spirit align with the broader pattern of divine naming found throughout Revelation. In nine of ten instances, the term τὸ πνεῦμα is followed by the verb λέγω in the present indicative active voice, suggesting that the Spirit serves a proclamatory role, communicating the word and will of God in the apocalyptic context. The names ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ and ἐν πνεύματι appear seven times, three preceded by the adjective ἑπτὰ and four in the dative + ἐν, indicating completeness and the Spirit's ability to influence events and individuals. The first name describes the Spirit's location as being before the throne of God, highlighting its direct role and function in the throne room of God. Thus, the Spirit plays a significant role in the narrative as a para-protagonist.

In post-canonical Jewish literature, the Spirit inspires prophetic speech more frequently than vision.[391] However, the Apocalypse occasionally mentions the Spirit as the agent of visionary transportation and possibly as the agent of vision.

As Revelation describes, the seven Spirits of God are not independent of Christ's church but are active through the Lamb's followers, who are Jesus' witnesses. The Spirit's ministry in the churches is directed towards their effectiveness as witnesses in the world. The messages of the Spirit speaking through Christian prophets to the churches are intended to give the churches "power to prophesy" themselves.

5.5.4. Relevance of the Spirit to the Cosmic Conflict

The narrator of the Apocalypse repeatedly counsels the seven churches to listen to the Spirit's message, urging them to perform the first fundamental act of worship of the one true God.[392] Thus, it can be confidently concluded that John places the Spirit before the throne on

[391] 1 En.91:1; Jub.25:14; 31:12; Ps.-Philo, LAB 18: 11; 32:14; 4 Ezra 14:22.

[392] Scott R Swain, "'To Him Who Sits on the Throne and to the Lamb': Hymning God's Triune Name in Revelation 4–5," *RFP* 4.2 (2019): 4–22.

the divine side of the creator–creature distinction, recognising it as the source of divine blessing and deserving of divine honour.

From the tripartite salutation (Revelation 1:1-10) through the letters to the churches (Revelation 2:1-3:22) to the throne room scene (Rev 4), the Spirit is depicted as being closely intertwined with the One Seated on the Throne. The Spirit is also intimately associated with the Lamb, who has seven horns and seven eyes and stands before the throne, symbolising the seven spirits of God sent out into the earth (Revelation 5:6). The Spirit is equivalent to God and the Lamb, engaging in cosmic conflict and warfare throughout the universe through both the Lamb and the Spirit. This relationship is so close that God, the Lamb, and the Spirit are sometimes referred to interchangeably. The Spirit is identified with the eyes of God, the Lamb, and the believers, observing the cosmos and influencing the seven congregations. The Spirit in Revelation represents the strength of the Lamb, used to triumph over the power of the beast and the dragon (2.1, 12.3, 17.12, and 13).[393] The Spirit, sent by God and the Lamb, proclaims the Lamb's victory, referring to the Spirit poured out on believers at Pentecost, working diligently in the world.[394]

Through the Theo-onomastic method of enquiry, the pivotal role of the Spirit in the narrative and cosmic conflict is highlighted. This Spirit facilitates the revelation of the Apocalypse. The Spirit's role is contrasted with the frog-like πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα that come from the mouth of the beast, the dragon and the false prophet (Rev 16:13-14).

[393] Boring, "The Theology of Revelation"; Smidt J. C. De, "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Revelation - Nomenclature," *Neot* 28.1 (1994): 229–44; Adela Yarbro Collins, "What the Spirit Says to the Churches: Preaching the Apocalypse," *QR* 4.3 (1984): 69–84.

[394] J. du Preez, "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Revelation," *RB* 2.3 (1974): 1–10; J. C. De Smidt, "Die Oë Van Die Gees In Die Boek Openbaring - 'N Teologiese Perspektief," *Scriptura* 54 (1995): 159–76.

5.6. Summary

In this chapter the theo-onomastic method has been employed systematically to analyse the conventions of naming and the names attributed to Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation. Through this rigorous methodology, the profound theological and literary implications of these names have been uncovered. Their significance in revealing the essential role of Jesus Christ in the broader narrative of the cosmic conflict have been highlighted.

John uses the Lamb and Lion as a pivoting naming structure, particularly in chapter 5, to reveal prominent names for Jesus in Revelation. Chapter 1 is divided into two sections, with the first section focusing on verses 1-8 and the second section (vv 9–20) describing John's apparent theophanic experience. Jesus never explicitly refers to himself by name, instead expressing himself figuratively. The author uses the metaphor of a lamb 29 times in the book, 28 of which refer to Jesus. The account of John's vision is framed by the vision-narrative formula Καὶ εἶδον, which introduces a break in the narration of the vision and marks a change in the focus of the report. Chapter 5 begins with a heavenly event revealed to an earthly seer, John, who sees a scroll with inscriptions on its side. The two naming styles used for Jesus are the Lion of Judah and the Lamb, symbolising power and royal strength and sacrifice respectively. The titles of Jesus in the book of Revelation reveal his role as ruler and judge, reflecting his authority in deciding who enters the kingdom. The Lamb metaphor is often used by Jesus, making it the title most frequently used by Christ in Revelation.

Table 7: Theo-onomastics of The Spirit

Theo-onomastics of The Spirit[395]						
Name	**Bible Reference**	**Type of Name**	**Naming Technique**	**Characteristics**	**Literally-Theological profiles**	**Relevance to CosConf**
τὸ πνεῦμα	Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 19:10; 22:17	Proper	Authorial Prescriptive	This name occurs 10x in the nominative neuter case with the article.	In 9 out of the 10 instances of this name, they are succeeded by the verb "λέγω" occurring in the present indicative active voice. This casts the Spirit in a way that projects a proclamatory voice, communicating the word and will of God in the Apocalypse. Thus, the Spirit acts as a para-protagonist..	The names and the pattern in which they occur paint the crucial role of Spirit in the cosmic conflict. It is the Spirit that facilitates the revelation of the Apocalypse. The Spirit's role is contrasted with the frog-like πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα that come from the mouths of the beast, dragon and false prophet (Rev 16:13-14).

[395] In the book of Revelation, the Spirit is neuter in gender.

ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ	Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6	Epithetical	Authorial Prescriptive	These names occur 7x in dative + **ἐν.** Three of them are preceded by the adjective ἑπτὰ, possibly to indicate the completeness of the spirits. The remaining four refer to the Spirit's capacity to possess/control individuals.	These show the Spirit's completeness and relationship with God. The Spirit's possessive ability aids the revelation of the Apocalypse. Hence para-protagonist.	
ἐν πνεύματι	Rev 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10					
ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου	Rev 1:4	Titular	Authorial Prescriptive	These names are in the genitive plural.	The first name depicts the location of the Spirit as being before the throne of God, relaying the Spirit's direct role and function from the throne room of God.	
τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν	Rev 22:6					

CHAPTER 6

THEO-ONOMASTICS AND THE NAMING OF THE PRIME EVIL AND HIS AGENTS

6.1. Introduction

The Book of Revelation presents a compelling narrative that portrays the cosmic conflict between good and evil. In this section, the complex and multifaceted nature of Satan as depicted by John in Revelation is explored. Through an in-depth analysis of Satan's various names and titles, the theological implications and the intricate roles of the adversary in the cosmic struggle is uncovered. From Satan's initial portrayal in the letters to the seven churches to the climactic battles described in later chapters, this examination reveals how John's literary techniques and theological insights depict the ultimate downfall of evil and the triumph of divine justice.

6.2. Characteristics of Evil in the Book of Revelation

The Apocalypse of John is frequently characterised as a narrative centred on the theme of war. Warfare serves as the primary metaphor that shapes the narrative framework of the book.[396] The terminology of warfare is prevalent throughout the text: 'army' (Rev 9:16; 19:14, 19), 'victory/conquer/conquest' (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 15:2; 17:14), 'kill/slaughter' (Rev 5:6, 9; 6:8–9, 11; 9:15, 18, 20; 11:7; 13:8, 10; 18:24; 19:21), 'make war/battle' (Rev 2:16; 9:7; 11:7; 12:7, 17; 13:4, 7; 16:14; 17:14; 19:11, 19; 20:8), 'sword' (Rev 1:16; 2:12, 16; 6:8; 13:10, 15; 19:15, 21).

In Revelation, the two primary forces of Good and Evil are split into the opposing camps of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Good and evil are defined in terms of their allegiance. Evil is opposed to God's reign. Revelation develops this concept by

[396] Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*; Siew, *The War Between the Two Beasts and the Two Witnesses*, 70; Pataki, "A Non-Combat Myth in Revelation 12"; Bauckham, "The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll"; Stubblefield, "The Function of the Church in Warfare in the Book of Revelation."

establishing oppositions that delineate and emphasise the differences between the conflicting sides.[397]

6.2.1. Literary Presentation of the Prime Evil

Within the book of Revelation, evil revolves around the figure "Satan."[398] He is the Prime Evil, whose character and nature can be pieced together from the linguistic data that describe him. The book's initial section shows signs of Satan's presence (chapters 1-11, particularly in the seven letters). However, his role becomes more evident in chapters 12–20. In these chapters, the manifestations of evil are fully revealed through a series of satanic names, demonstrating the fluidity of his literary-theological character and presence in other parts of the narrative, even when his name is not mentioned. For example, Satan's other names, such as ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος (The One Called Devil, 12:9) and ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην (Deceiver of the whole world, 12:10), predispose the reader to sense his participation in all acts that connote devilish inclinations or masks of deception.[399]

[397] Gregory Stevenson, "Perspectives on Evil in the Book of Revelation," in *Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig R. Koester, Oxford Handbooks Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 276.

[398] Trummer sees Satan as a "symbol" of Evil instead of a character who is actively involved in the scenes of the narrative; Peter Trummer, "Die Frau Und Der Drache: Skizzen Zu Offenbarung 12," in *Im Geist und in Der Wahrheit : Studien Zum Johannesevangelium und Zur Offenbarung Des Johannes Sowie Andere Beiträge : Festschrift Für Martin Hasitschka Zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Konrad Huber and Boris Repschinski, vol. 1 of *NTAbh* 52 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2008), 371. However, such a character with specific names and a crucial role in giving power and authority to other actors cannot be viewed as merely symbolic. See Wengst, "The Devil in the Book of Revelation," 68–74.

[399] Scholars like Aune see such guises of Satan in 9:11, which references a certain king, the angel of the bottomless pit, who in the Hebrews is Abaddon. For Aune, the name represents Satan. Heinz Geisen reads this differently, to the effect that Satan, who is kept in chains, cannot free himself to rule, thus refuting Aune's assertion. See Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 534; Heinz Giesen, *Die Offenbarung Des Johannes*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1997), 220. Besides the example above, others see an echo of Satan in 9:1 in the "fallen star". Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2009), 173; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 494; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 225. Despite the plausibility of this argument, the current study focuses on the less ambiguous names of the prime Evil (e.g. Satan, Devil, Serpent and Dragon.)

In the letters to the seven churches, for example, Satan is the anti-divine power par excellence, whose name is authoritatively prescriptive.[400] The opponent is explicitly named five times in verses 2:9, 2:13, 2:24, and 3:9, and referred to once as the devil in 2:10; his activities are detailed twice more. The devil sends certain Smyrnaeans into prison for testing (2:10), and Satan dwells among the believers in Pergamum (2:13). The term Satan is used three times to identify individuals in these churches. The most faithful in Thyatira are those who are ignorant of Satan's hidden things (2:24). In contrast to them, Satan's synagogue includes individuals in Smyrna and Philadelphia who falsely profess to be Jews (2:9, 3:9).

Twice in Revelation (12:9 and 20:2), the fivefold name ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας /ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος/ Διάβολος /ὁ Σατανᾶς/ ὁ πλανῶν is prescriptively given directly by the narrator, to reveal their nature and function. The names are anaphoric and carry many allusions to the Old Testament and the Qumran writings. Whereas Chapter 12 focuses on the dragon's defeat and subsequent removal from heaven, Chapter 20 emphasises his incarceration before his ultimate destruction. Both accounts emphasise the inevitable defeat of the dragon.[401] For example, in Revelation 12:9, the dragon who is also called Devil and Satan is cast out of heaven. His failure to prevail in the initial battle in heaven results eventually in his confinement to the bottomless pit, as described in Revelation 20:1-3, before his eventual destruction. The phrase "ἵνα μὴ πλανήσῃ ἔτι τὰ ἔθνη" indicates a restriction on his ability to deceive the nations until his final judgement, when he is ultimately cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). This

[400] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Words of Prophecy: Reading the Apocalypse Theologically," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise, 1st ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 10.

[401] The reading of the two chapters suggests that they are not parallel, contrary to the arguments of other scholars. See William Shea, "The Parallel Literary Structure of Revelation 12 and 20," *AUSS* 23.1 (1985); Kenneth Strand, "Chiastic Structure and Some Motifs in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS* 16.2 (1978). Instead, chapter 20:1-3 is a sequel to 12 when the cosmic conflict between them is concluded. Being cast into the bottomless pit is a second fall into a deeper defeat than the initial fall to the earth.

forms the foundation of Smalley's two-act interpretation of Revelation. In the second act, he refers to 12:1-22:17 as "Redemption by Judgement and new creation."[402]

Revelation 12:7 and 9 exhibit a parallel structure, with each repeating the key terms πόλεμος and ἐβλήθη thrice respectively. This repetition underscores their significance to the identity and strength of the dragons and of Michael. The insertion of the dragon's full name at the point at which he succumbs and is thrown down to Earth heightens the dramatic quality of the conflict and its ultimate conclusion. [403] Also, the names reveal the many faces of evil, thereby revealing the Literary-Theological Profile of the dragon as, in the words of Aune, "… John piles up synonyms for Satan to suggest that he is consciously attempting to expose the real role of this antagonist of God throughout cosmic and human history."[404]

It is worth noting how the chief evil character and his downfall are emphasised early in chapter 12. Thus, the war and the subsequent downfall of the dragon are important context prerequisites for a fuller understanding of the names and roles of the dragon, who is the prime evil in the story. A closer look at the names in 12:9–10 reveals a carefully structured pattern with striking similarities between them. The names are listed in parallel pairs that are similar in meaning and roles. For example, ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας (the great dragon) and ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος (the serpent of old) both refer to a wild snakelike animal connected by the attributive article ὁ, followed by a participle. The second and third pairs, Διάβολος (devil) καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς (Satan), refer to the Hebrew and Greek names for the prime evil, whereas the last pair ὁ πλανῶν (the deceiver) and ὁ κατήγωρ (the accuser) depict the role of evil in the world of believers. The literary flow of the dragon's names shows a pattern of decreasing power, from a great dragon to an accuser, similar to the downfall motif in this book.

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[402] Stephen S. Smalley, *Thunder and Love: John's Revelation and John's Community* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Lifestyle, 1994), 108–10.

[403] This shows the striking antithesis between heaven and earth and the rise and ultimate fall of evil. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, vol. 16 of *HNT* 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1926), 100.

[404] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 697.

Revelation 20:1-2 appears to be the culmination of Revelation 12:7-10. This final presentation of the dragon depicts a deeper descent into the abyss, a brief release, and a final destruction in the pool of fire—for instance, ἐβλήθη, the same verb as used in the war narrative of chapter 12 is used here. However, there is a slight difference in the structure of the names between the two episodes. The four stages of Satan's downfall involve a sequential progression: his inability to devour the male child (Rev 12:3–4); his defeat in heaven (Rev 12:7-9) and expulsion; his imprisonment to prevent him from deceiving the nations (20:2-3); and his ultimate destruction and condemnation as the leader of the earthly armies in the lake of fire (Rev 12:2-3). (v. 8-10). As his abilities gradually wane he can no longer represent Earth, deceive nations, coexist with God, or endure. Each decline constitutes another blow to Satan.

The many verbal intensives indicate more blows to him while on Earth, as follows: ἐκράτησεν, ἔδησεν, ἔβαλεν, ἔκλεισεν, ἐσφράγισεν, λυθῆναι. One difference between the two versions of naming is the omission of ὁ μέγας in Rev 20:2. Although the dragon's size is not repeated, the chain in the hand of the angel is large enough to capture him, regardless of his size. Again, ὁ καλούμενος is left out before Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, and the dragon's work, the deceiver (ὁ πλανῶν), is also omitted in the listing of the names in chapter 20. Although the name is omitted, the motif of deception is maintained as the core reason for his being chained for a thousand years (Rev. 20:3).[405] The dragon's name in Rev 20:1-3 is based on the name revealed in Rev 12. Thus, though the Satanic names come with adjectives like ὁ μέγας and ὁ ἀρχαῖος, which could the describe the weight and extent of his authority, the setting in

[405] Amillennialists like Beale, Kim Riddlebarger, R. Fowler White, argue the description of Satan's fall in Rev 20:1-3 is a recapitulation of Jesus' inaugurated victory over evil at the cross. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 995–1014; Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 213–15; R. Fowler White, "On the Hermeneutics and Interpretation of Rev 20:1–3: A Preconsummationist Perspective," *JETS* 42.1 (1999): 53–66; R Fowler White, "Agony, Irony and Victory in Inaugurated Eschatology: Reflections on the Current Amillennial-Postmillennial Debate," *WTJ* 62.2 (2000): 161–76. This author aligns with Neall's apt response to amillennialism, stating that Revelation 20:1–3 provides a conclusive description of Satan's fall, which began in Revelation 12. See Beatrice Neall, "Amillennialism Reconsidered," *AUSS* 43.1 (2005): 185–210.

which they are given raises a doubt about his supposed power. The Devil is portrayed as a weak force from the very beginning. Rev 12:1-10 focuses on the war between the dragon and Michael and the consequences of the dragon's descent from heaven.

Having compared the dragon's names in Revelation 12 and 20 and situated their contextual interdependence, we now focus on the individual names and how they help build the image of the dragon and the cosmic conflict theme in Revelation.

John's remarkable matching and arrangement of names, particularly their pairing on the list, are noteworthy. His names are in pairs, which are used only in chapter 12. The first pair is dragon and serpent. This pairing helps to develop the dramatic nature of the cosmic conflict. The next pair, Satan and the Devil, is mentioned earlier in the seven letters (Rev. 2:9, 10, 13). John uses these names to introduce the evil the churches face, drawing from terms they might have recognised from the Hebrew Scriptures. The capacity to elucidate the nature of evil is instrumental in revealing its various manifestations. The Greek terminology employed to depict the dragon's expulsion is exemplified in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Pattern Of Descent Of The Devil

Rev 12 Verse	Part A: War in Heaven	Transition	Part B: Cast To Earth
v. 7	Καὶ ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ Μιχαὴλ καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ τοῦ πολεμῆσαι μετὰ τοῦ δράκον τος. καὶ ὁ δράκων ἐπολέμησεν καὶ		

v. 8		καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσεν, οὐδὲ τόπος εὑρέθη αὐτῶν ἔτι ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.	
v.9			καὶ ἐβλήθη • ὁ δράκω ν ὁ μέγας, • ὁ ὄ φις ὁ ἀρχαῖ ος, • ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ • ὁ Σατανᾶς, • ὁ πλανῶν • τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην— ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ

6.3. Analysis of the Theo-Onomastics of the Prime Evil Character

This segment presents a theo-onomastic analysis to elucidate Satan's role in the narrative structure of Revelation. By applying this method, the function of his names within the cosmic conflict is identified and analysed, thereby illuminating the literary and theological strategies inherent in the text.

6.3.1. Types of Names

The theo-onomastic analysis of Satan in the Book of Revelation uses the methodology outlined in chapter 3.6. It begins with the systematic identification of the categories of names attributed to Satan and serves as the foundational step in this methodology. These

designations are classified into four types: titular, epithetical, participial and proper. Among these, the categories for naming Satan encompass three of the these four, reflecting the multifaceted portrayal of his role in the cosmic conflict narrative.

By examining the theological and literary functions of these names, it is sought to illuminate how Satan's identity is constructed and conveyed in the apocalyptic framework of Revelation. Each category contributes to a nuanced understanding of his attributes, agency, and opposition to divine authority, reinforcing his position as the central antagonist in the eschatological drama. By means of this analysis, the implications of Satan's nomenclature for the broader theological and symbolic structures of Revelation are explored in this chapter.

6.3.1a. Titular Names

ὁ δράκων

Among all the names for Satan, ὁ δράκων (the dragon) is the most prevalent, occurring 13 times in total. These occurrences are found in Revelation 12:3, 4, and 7 (twice), 9, 13, 16, 17, 13:2, 4, 16:13, and 20:2. Each instance highlights the devil's role as an adversary of God and believers. It first appears in chapter 12 with descriptions of it as μέγας πυρρός, having seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems (Rev 12:3).[406] The description of the dragon as πυρρός is similar to that of the second horse in Rev 6:4.

In both instances, the dragon and the second horseman function as vehicles of death and suffering and, as such, represent the trials, obstacles, and ordeals to be overcome at the end of time.

[406] In the New Testament, δράκων appears only in Revelation, but in Hellenistic Judaism it was one of several terms for Satan. In the LXX, it is the transcription of Leviathan (לויתן) in Job 40:25; Ps 73:13; 103:26; Isa 27:1 and as a translation of serpent (תן) in Job 20:16; 25:13; Ps 73:14 for example. The interchangeability of serpent and Leviathan terminology in Psalm 73:13-14 (MT 74:13-14) and Isaiah 27:1 (both translated δράκων) demonstrates the closeness of these figures in Judaism. For further discussion, see van den Kamp, "Leviathan and the Monsters in Revelation"; Howard Wallace, "Leviathan and the Beast in Revelation," *BA* 11.3 (1948): 61–68; Trębacz, "Apokaliptyczny Smok. Symbolika i Jej Znaczenie (Ap 12: 2–7)."

The meaning of πυρρός is not so much about the dragon's colour as its fury in its quest to destroy the male child.[407] In Lang's words, "Fire has a double character for man. It is both a beneficent and civilising power and a terrifying and destructive force."[408] The dragon's blazing red hue symbolises its cunning deceitfulness and fearsome destructiveness. From then on, it dominates the rest of the book as the primary opposing power of all evil characters in the book.[409] In Rev 20, the dragon appears only once, and other names are used thereafter. The name is used eight times in Rev. 12 and three times in chapter 13, showing the extent of the dragon's power, activity, and central role in the cosmic conflict that ensues in the rest of the book. In Jewish characterisation, dragons were arrogant, combative, and devoured the vulnerable, as in the context of war, which John described in Rev. 12 (cf. Ps. Sol. 2: 25; Add. Esth 11:6; Sib. Or 5:29; Jer 28:34; 51:34 LXX.)[410] It has been observed that the symbol and power of the dragon "derive from a variety of associations", which are not rehearsed in this

[407] Debate about the relevance of colour abounds among biblical scholars. For Urena, the colour language is "denotative or descriptive", with links to symbolism suggested by repetition of particular adjectives. Lourdes García Ureña, "The Book of Revelation and Visual Culture," in *Dreams, Visions, Imaginations: Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Views of the World to Come*, ed. Jens Schröter, Tobias Nicklas, and Armand Puig i Tàrrech, vol. 247 of *BZNW* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 487–504; Lourdes García Ureña, "The Book of Revelation: A Chromatic Story," in *New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation*, ed. A. Yarbro Collins (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 393–419; Lourdes García Ureña, "El Oro: Metal y Color En El Nuevo Testamento," in *Philological Studies in Honor of Professor Antonio Pinero*, ed. I Muñoz and D Romero, Nova et Vetera (Córdoba: El Almendro, 2015), 279–92. Thompson argues that this as an example of John's using an ancient rhetorical technique known as "homology" in which characters are tied to each other on the basis of their features as a way to blur boundaries otherwise considered hard and fast. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 78–79. Duff disagrees with Thompson and maintains that John uses "homology" as a comparative tool between characters rather than blurring boundaries. Paul B. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?: Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76–79. My contribution to this debate is that even though the use of πυρρός in Rev 12:3 could have rhetorical significance, from a theo-onomastic point of view, the author was advancing the furious nature of the cosmic conflict, and thus was comparing the anger of the dragon to that of ghastly fire that is about to devour not just the yet to be born male child but the entire offspring of the woman. This reading is supported by the combative context in which the dragon is introduced.

[408] Lang discusses how the word has been used from ancient times to the Greco-Roman times. Friedrich Lang, "Πῦρ, Πυρόω, Πύρωσις, Πύρινος, Πυρρός," *TDNT* 929. See also Iwan M. Whiteley, "Cataphora and lack of clarity in the Book of Revelation," *FNT* 21.41 (2008): 75–90.

[409] This scope of power of the dragon is manifested in adjectives like red, large, and the seven diadems and ten horns.

[410] Koester, *Revelation*, 544.

study because the focus is not on the name's etymology but on its theological and contextual use.[411] The dragon is a symbol of evil, deceiving humanity and opposing God.[412]

The dragon functions as the pivot around whom all other instruments and agents revolve, such that without him, the narrative would disintegrate and the text would have little impact on the reader. The dragon, identified as Satan in Revelation 12:9, has a tail that draws one-third of the stars from the sky but it cannot vanquish Michael and his angels in a cosmic battle. After being hurled to the ground, the dragon threatens the woman and her child. He gives the beast from the sea 'power, throne, and great authority' (13:2). He emits an unclean spirit (16:13), only to be defeated once more and infuriated. The dragon battles against the woman's progeny, transferring his power, throne and authority to the sea beast. The irony, however, is that despite the tremendous power he is described as wielding, one angel, in the end, can chain, seal, and cast him into an abyss to indicate that he is a defeated foe (Rev 20:3). Although the dragon's actions suggest that he is an independent anti-divine force, he does not operate independently; his role is predetermined by God, who names him, thereby restricting his influence and activities.[413]

ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος

In Revelation chapters 12 and 20, this name appears immediately after the name dragon and elicits comparable images of snake-like characteristics. However, their contextual

[411] Bauckham traces the possible background of the dragon imagery from Hebrew, Graeco-Roman and pagan origins. For others like Fisher, John relied heavily on rhetoric motifs from OT Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Ezekiel. However, even if these materials were available to John, the fact that he did not cite directly meant he re-interpreted and introduced his motifs. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 185–98. Cf Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 667–74. George A. Barton, "The Origin of the Names of Angels and Demons in the Extra-Canonical Apocalyptic Literature to 100 A.D.," *JBL* 31.4 (1912): 156–67; Thomas Wilson Fisher, "The Dragon/Serpent in Revelation: The Rhetoric of an Apocalyptic Motif" (PhD Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000).

[412] Gen 3:1-13; Isa 27. Cf. this motif in 4 Macc 18:8; 2 Cor 11:3.

[413] This aligns with Gulaker's assertion that Satan has been characterised to show his assigned role, in contrast to Labahn, who argues for an independent 'anti-divine' figure. Cato Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man: A Narrative Analysis of the Function of Satan in the Book of Revelation*, The LNTS 638 (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 123; Michael Labahn, "The Dangerous Loser: The Narrative and Rhetorical Function of the Devil as Character in the Book of Revelation," in *Evil and the Devil*, ed. Erkki Koskenniemi and Ida Fröhlich, LNTS 481 (London:T & T Clark, 2013), 156–89.

functions seem to differ. Whereas the dragon is used in the setting of power and struggle for dominance, the serpent's significance comes from the adverb that qualifies it: ὁ ἀρχαῖος.

To appreciate John's use of this name, one must factor in the adjective that indicates the intended type of serpent. The ὁ ἀρχαῖος seems to draw a link between the dragon here and the serpent that deceived Adam and Eve in Gen 3.[414] The name 'ancient snake' is used less often than 'dragon' and is confined to the book's second half. However, there is a unique variation in its use after its initial introduction. In Rev 12:14-15, 'the serpent' is used without any reference to 'old. However, these applications are closely linked to the dragon mythology. This is evident from the fact that the versions 'ancient serpent' and 'serpent' are consistently used in contexts where dragons are mentioned. This question becomes more pressing when one considers that in Chapter 12, the dragon is the primary name for God's archenemy.

The relationship between the names "serpent and dragon" in Revelation 12:12-16 is complex. The verses can be divided into two groups: verses 13 and 14 describe the dragon's pursuit of the woman, and verses 15 and 16 describe how the earth rescued her from the dragon. The names are employed with great care, with the first mention of the serpent appearing near the end of the sentence and the second serpent-related occurrence at the beginning of the next. This literary nuance makes the question of its significance intriguing and worth further exploration. In scholarly research, snakes are often explained in terms of literary traditions, particularly in Hebrew Scriptures.[415] The serpent plays a role in the

[414]This association is not unique to John as this had developed in Jewish interpretation of evil for example, 1 En. 69:6; Wis 2:24; Apoc. Mos. 16 [OTP 2:277]; Apoc. Ab. 23:1–11; cf. 3 Bar. 9:7. For Charles the old serpent is manifestly the serpent in Gen 3 that tempted Eve. The serpent passage is distinct from the rest of the animal creation. See Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 1:325; Koester, *Revelation*, 544.

[415] Richard Bauckham argues that in Asia Minor, serpents frequently represented divinity in the pagan cults of Asclepius, Dionysus, Sabazius, Cybele, and Zeus. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 196. These associations cannot be easily dismissed as irrelevant because, in the image of the snake, John appears to have chosen the most pervasive image of pagan divinity in his churches. Though John could not have been unaware

struggle between the faithful and the dragon, inciting rebellion against God and being responsible for the loss of the Garden of Eden. Some commentators link the passage to Psalm 18:5, 32:6, and 124:4-5, while others link it to historical events, such as Acts 8:1-3 and Pseudo-Cyprian's attempt to link it to the Decian edicts.[416]

Regardless of the background of the dragon-serpent name combination, its contextual usage reveals that John intends to direct readers and hearers to see them as the same character. John employs the article because he assumes that his listeners and readers are familiar with this figure from their traditions. The ancient serpent is the world's greatest deceiver. His deception of Eve in the Garden of Eden separated the world from its intended relationship with God (Gen 3). As punishment for this deception, God vows eternal hostility between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. When John describes the hostility between the dragon and the woman's children in Revelation 12:17, he uses a term *(sperma)* that usually refers to male offspring.[417] The conflict between the church and the dragon is the eschatological culmination of the primordial conflict sparked by the serpent's deception.

It is worth noting that the original target for the dragon was the child of the woman (12:1-6); the woman came into focus only when the child was 'caught up to God' (v. 6, 13). It seems to follow the pattern that the name 'dragon' is used when evil powers try to fight God's hosts in heaven.[418] However, the dragon fights under different names when the conflict

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of this, the author's original background would have been from Hebrew/Judaism rather than from the pagan which he decries in the Apocalypse. Hence, Bauckham's proposal seems overstretched.

[416] Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 159; Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, ed. James Moffatt, Moffat New Testament Commentary (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1940), 405–6; Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation*, 179.

[417] Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2009), 234–35.

[418] Evidence can be gleaned from how the term "dragon" is used in other parts of Revelation, as shown below. Rev 12:1- 6 uses the word "dragon" because the struggle was between the male child and himself; vs 7 uses the word "dragon" about the war with Michael the Archangel. The name, 'dragon' is used in vv. 13–17 to reveal Satan's next action plan. Again, the use of "dragon" in 13:2 and 4 indicates giving thrones and authority to the beast from the sea to accrue worship, which is due to God alone, another clear indication of the dragon's name pattern. Similarly, the dragon appears in 16:13, when he releases unclean spirits like frogs to equip his agents to gather the kings of the earth 'to the battle of God Almighty'(14). The only exception to the pattern is

is between the devil and other entities, such as women. For instance, in Chapter 12, after the dragon's defeat by the male child and subsequently by the woman, he fights as an ancient serpent (vv. 14–16).[419] Thus, the name "dragon" can be related to his courage, and "serpent" can describe his stealthy character.

6.3.1b. Epithetical Names

ὁ Διάβολος (the Devil) and ὁ Σατανᾶς

The next pair of names for the chief opponent of God is added in Rev. 12:9 and 20:2. Once again, their appearance in both passages points to the care with which John penned the vision. The use of these two names is surprising because devil is the Greek equivalent of Satan in the Septuagint. However, this pattern is not new to the readers/hearers of the Apocalypse because John also uses Greek and Hebrew names for other characters.[420] Unlike the names dragon and serpent, which appear exclusively in the second half of Revelation (i.e., 12-22), the two names Satan and Devil, besides appearing in Rev 12 and 20, are used earlier in the letters to Smyrna and Pergamum (Rev 2:9-10, 13).[421]

It is reasonable to assume that many members of the seven churches were of Jewish descent and thus familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures; hence, the term Satan is used frequently.[422] John associates Satan with Jews, pagans, and Christians, as evidenced by the pattern in his use of Satan in the letters. In the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia, "synagogue

20:2. Here, although it is an introduction to the angel who has keys to the bottomless pit, it seems to be a summary statement about the final incarceration of the prime evil. Hence, all his names are revealed for the last time.

[419] This reveals the direction of the devil's deception. His anger is always directed towards Earth and its inhabitants but does not deceive God and the angels in their fight against evil powers.

[420] For example, Abaddon (אֲבַדּוֹן,) or Apollyon (Ἀπολλύων, 9:11). The last battle is described uniquely in Revelation 20:8 as the gathering of Gog and Magog for battle.

[421] Satan is referenced five times in four of the seven letters to churches, specifically those addressed to Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, and Philadelphia—twice in the letter to Pergamum, once in each of the other three. The term "Devil" appears once in the epistle to Smyrna (Rev 2:10).

[422] de Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," 77.

of Satan" is applied "to those who say they are Jews and are not." The two instances are described below.

Rev 2:9

> Οἶδά σου τὴν θλῖψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτούς, καὶ οὐκ εἰσίν, ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ Σατανᾶ.

Rev 3:9

> ἰδοὺ διδῶ ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ Σατανᾶ, τῶν λεγόντων ἑαυτοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἶναι, καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ ψεύδονται—ἰδοὺ ποιήσω αὐτοὺς ἵνα ἥξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν σου, καὶ γνῶσιν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἠγάπησά σε

These are the two occurrences of the phrase, 'synagogue of Satan.' There are various interpretations about which Jews are characterised here.Some explain this term as applying to former Jews who abandoned their religion to take up Roman citizenship, others think it refers to Jewish immigrants from Palestine, while others interpret it as fuelling pre-existing antisemitic prejudice against Jews.[423] Aune and Tonstad construe the phrase as a metaphorical designation, signifying either the broader Christian community or, more specifically, Jewish Christians, rather than referring to Jews in a strictly literal sense within these passages.[424] Paulien also interpretes the "synagogue of Satan" as " a satirical term in tension with the Jewish claim to be "the synagogue of the Lord" (see LXX of Num 16:3; 20:4; 31:16 for the biblical root of this phrase)."[425]

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[423] Barr provides four probable interpretations for the phrase "Synagogue of Satan": a specific local hostile synagogue, Jews who had lost their identity as God's people, a rival gentile Christian society that purported to be Jewish, and Jewish synagogues that have grown too closely connected with Roman culture. See David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, The Storytellers Bible ; v. 1 (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1998), 86; Boxall takes a different view, interpreting the phrase as a referent for 'hostile members of the non-Christian Jewish Synagogue, who have rejected the claims of Christians to be 'real Jews." See Ian Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John* (London: A&C Black, 2006), 53–54. Despite the plausibility of these arguments, the John's primary purpose was to expose the ultimate power behind such opponents of the Christian church. Others see the description as an anti-Semitic slur towards Jews. See also A. T. Kraabel, "The Roman Diaspora: Six Questionable Assumptions," *JJS* 33.1–2 (1982): 445; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 164–65; Collins, "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation"; Jan Nicolaas Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World*, vol. 41 of *NovTSup* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 89–144.

[424] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 183.

[425] See Paulien's commentary on Rev 2:9 on page 29. Jon Paulien, "The Facebook Commentary on Revelation · The Battle of Armageddon," *The Battle of Armageddon*, n.d., https://www.thebattleofarmageddon.com/revelation-commentary-facebook/.

However, the context of the phrase in the two passages reveals what John intends to emphasise. In 2:9, the author follows the description of, those who τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτούς, with a warning of tribulation and imprisonment that will come to some in the church at Smyrna. Here, the real power is that of the devil. They are encouraged not to be afraid but to stand faithfully for their promised crown of life. In 2:13, the church in Pergamum is praised for its perseverance in retaining Christ's words and not denying his name. With both usages asserting a setting of faithfulness amid cultural persuasions, Jews who are here classified as false Jews possibly play a part in the actions against the Christians. Agitations against Christians at the time began in part with "Jewish allegations that they refused to give public tokens of allegiance to Caesar as Lord".[426]

The Devil/Satan is primarily characterised in the message to the congregation of Smyrna by his actions, role, and function in the congregation's testing. His activities include slander or defamation by those from the synagogue. Therefore, they are appropriately referred to as a 'synagogue of Satan', implying both their origin and the satanic characteristics of the testing process.[427] This characteristic is consistent with the overarching plot of the Book of Revelation, which divides humanity into distinct groups.
Thus, the designation "Synagogue of Satan" describes how the Jews of Smyrna allowed the synagogue that was to be saved to become a place of death for the "true Israelites", that is, Christians.[428]

In the letter to Pergamum, (Rev 2:12–17), "Satan" is used to identify the source of the opposition, in a way similar to the term "synagogue of Satan" in the letter to Smyrna. The

[426] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 242.

[427] Gulaker compares this style of naming to that found in Matt 16:33/Mark 8:33, where Jesus calls Peter "Satan" immediately after he has rightly identified Jesus as the Messiah. See Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 71.

[428] de Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," 78; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 165.

difference in this setting to that of Smyrna is that Pergamum is a place where 'Satan dwells' and has his 'throne': both the believers and their ultimate adversary live in the same locality. Satan wields great power in Pergamum, which is crucial because it highlights what the author perceives as a key trait of the Christians. Their steadfast faith in Jesus and refusal to deny Him after Antipas' death indicate that they could have abandoned their faith but chose not to. Little wonder that martyrdom begins in Pergamum."[429] The "throne of Satan" refers to the enforced imperial worship supported by the Roman opposition to Christians, which was prevalent in this region at the time.[430] The word θρόνος (throne) is used to refer to a chair of state or seat of office, with connotations of dominion and authority.[431]

The next mention of Satan in the seven letters is in the letter to the church in Thyatira (2:24). As in Pergamum, Thyatira faced the threat of compromise with false teachings. Here, the author praises the members for "οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ Σατανᾶ." This letter portrays Jezebel, the self-called prophetess, as an opponent of Christians despite her professed Christian faith. She leads the congregation astray, resulting in some engaging in fornication and idol-worship. Although Satan is not directly named, his name is used to denote Jezebel's teachings, which they call τὰ βαθέα τοῦ Σατανᾶ (2.24).[432] Evidence for this is the fact that Jezebel's teachings led to religious compromise in the congregation (πλανᾷ τοὺς ἐμοὺς

[429] Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 97.

[430] Aune gives eight probable interpretations of the term "throne of Satan", but he appears to favour those pertaining to Roman oppression and imperial/pagan cults, Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 182–84. See also Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series, 11 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 82–85; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 246–47; Koester, *Revelation*, 292–93; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 96–97; Osborne, *Revelation*, 140–43; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 68–69.

[431] Laszlo Gallusz emphasises the importance of the reference's antithetical function to the throne of Christ/God, Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation*, 206–9; David L. Barr, *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, vol. 1 of *The Storytellers Bible* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1998), 97; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 68.

[432] Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 207; Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 265–66; Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, 122.

δούλους), a trait that is identified several times in the Apocalypse in connection with Satan (Rev 2:9, 10, 14-15; 13:12–4; cf. 14:11– 12; 19:1– 2, 20).[433]

Satan's final direct mention by name is in the letter to the church in Philadelphia. Because they have kept Christ's words and not denied his name, their deeds pave the way to an open door leading to God (3:8). The contrast between the message to Thyatira and Philadelphia is striking because the two situations (on the brink of deliverance and judgement) are opposed. The 'synagogue of Satan' is an opponent of Christ who threatens to seize the congregation's crown.

Duff argues that the synagogue of Satan must refer to an external threat and not an internal one because of the lack of a call to repent in the messages to Smyrna and Philadelphia, the eschatological fate of this opposition, and the generally positive attitude towards Jews in Revelation.[434] This suggests that Satan's external role in opposition to the church is plausible, but his internal influence remains unchanged. Moreover, in the messages to Philadelphia and Smyrna Satan is not described expressly as playing a role in the temptation and sifting of the congregations. Nonetheless, this depiction of Satan is highly pertinent to this passage, as it confirms the origin and purpose of the final hour of the trial unleashed on humanity throughout Revelation. Satan, along with numerous other heavenly agents, is assigned various roles and responsibilities in separating the loyal from the disloyal, and those willing to confess Christ's name on the pain of death from those who are not willing to do this.

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[433] James L. Resseguie rightly asserts that the task of leading astray is an exclusive duty of evil characters in the book of Revelation: Satan leads the entire world astray (12:9; 20:3, 8, 10), the beast from the sea leads the inhabitants of the earth (13:14; 19:20), and the whore of Babylon leads the nations (18:23). See Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 174–99. Gulaker, thinking along the same lines, aptly concludes that this verbal thread is one of the motifs connecting the seven messages to the remainder of the book, and it validates the methodological choice of reading them as earthly aspects of the more vertical and prophetic portion of the book. See Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 125–29.

[434] Paul B. Duff, "The Synagogue of Satan: Crisis Mongering and the Apocalypse of John," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David L. Barr, SBLSynS 39 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006), 147–68.

He uses these agents as instruments to imprison, kill, or deceive Christ's followers under the guise of false love for God, while harbouring hatred for those who remain faithful to their faith. Actions against Christians can thus be traced back to the dragon, God's primary adversary.

In Revelation 12:12, three remarks are made about the Devil. First, his casting down is repeated (Rev 3:1, 12:10, 12). This time, it is not specified that the 'dragon' is cast down. It is noted that he is angry. Revelation 12:11 describes this anger in relation to the martyrdom of believers. The seven uses of the verb "ἔβαλεν" in chapter 12, in connection with the names of Satan, sets the stage for the cosmic conflict and Satan's imminent defeat.[435] There is a potential connection to the letter of Smyrna, where the devil is mentioned as the one who casts believers into prison (Rev 2:10).[436]

The link between persecution and afflictions is evident from these two examples of the use of the word devil outside the two lists.[437] Satan opposes the faithful and seeks their downfall. Ironically, he is the one who falls the furthest and deepest into the abyss.

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[435] The devil plays an active role in the war when he casts a third of angels to the earth Rev 12:4. The second act is in 12:15-16, where he casts/spews water meant to destroy the woman. In these instances, the verb is in the active voice (ἔβαλεν - Aorist, active, indicative, 3rd person singular). The rest of the uses are in the passive voice: God is the subject and Satan and his angels are the object of the verb in Rev 12: 9-10, and 13, (ἐβλήθη (aorist, passive, indicative 3rd person singular) and ἐβλήθησαν (aorist passive indicative 3rd person plural).

[436] That is when one considers the infinitive, βάλλειν in Rev 2:10 with its aorist counterpart in chapter 12 in relation to the devil's role.

[437] Since the groundbreaking work of Leonard Thompson, who argued that "It is conceivable that the Book of Revelation was written in response to an otherwise unknown crisis in Asian Christianity, in which Christians were being—or about to be—persecuted in large numbers," scholarly investigations have determined that there was no systemic persecution of believers at this time. Instead, the key issues during this period were accommodation and assimilation to the values and norms of the Roman Empire. See Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 172; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia, PA: John Knox, 1984), 84–99. This view notwithstanding, the lack of evidence for formalised persecution does not equate to evidence for its absence. In fact, a Christian's resolve to resist cultural assimilation could have led to a form of exclusion from fully participating in society, potentially resulting in experiences of hate and persecution. This seems to be at the core of the various situations described in each of the seven letters. Therefore, in this study it is posited that members of some of the churches likely faced some form of localized persecution, as evidenced by references to martyrdom (Rev 2:3; 6:9-11; Revelation 18:24 warfare (Rev 12), and the subsequent call to faithfulness within the text (Rev 2:10; 3:8; 12:17; 17:14; 19:11). For extensive discussion on the centrality of the

6.3.1c Participial Names

ὁ πλανῶν and ὁ κατήγωρ[438]

The names in Revelation 12:9-10 conclude with *Deceiver* and *Accuser*. The article before these titles indicates their roots in Jewish traditions. The idea of leading someone astray by way of deception, as implied in the name ὁ πλανῶν, is frequently alluded to in early Jewish and Christian texts and in Revelation itself.[439] The name ὁ κατήγωρ is a literal translation of the Hebrew שָׂטָן (Satan).[440] He is ὁ κατήγωρ, which indicates the devil's daily work (v.10). Blount suggests that Satan's name may be a pre-expulsion function, as he may have been appointed as a divine prosecutor to bring charges against humans, as described in Job 1–2 (especially Job 1:9–11; 2:4–5; and Zechariah 3:1).[441] However, this is far-fetched in the context of the Book of Revelation. The role of Satan as an accuser is comparable to the deception of those who called themselves apostles in the church in Ephesus (Rev. 2:2). Satan misinterprets and misrepresents God because of his intention to in deceive humanity and as prosecutor finds himself on the edge of collapse because of his battle with God (v. 7). For this reason, the cosmic conflict between Satan and Michael occurs both in the courtroom and on

persecution to the Apocalypse, see P. G. R. De Villiers, "Persecution in the Book of Revelation," *Acta Theol.* 22.2 (2002): art. 2, pp. 47–70, https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v22i2.5378; Asher Vittorio Oskar Ricardo Fiordaliso Marthin Tauran, "Christian Persecution in the Book of Revelation" (M.A., University of Wales Trinity Saint David (United Kingdom), 2024), https://www.proquest.com/docview/3143984284/abstract/FA3E92C95DD642D5PQ/1; John Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Pearson College, 1975), 50; Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 1–22.

[438] Whereas 𝔓[47] ℵ C P 046. 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2053. 2329. 2344. 2351 𝔪 ¦ *txt* A all prefer κατηγορος, the Codex Alexandrinus offers the more difficult reading κατήγωρ, which is more likely the correct one because of the small possibility that a scribe could have redacted it. For extensive discussion see M. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on Greek New Testament*, Second. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 747–48.

[439] Satan is named the 'Prince of Deceit' in *T. Sim* 3.5, T. *Jud. 19.4.* πλανῶν is used with Jezebel in Rev 2.20, the beast from the earth 13:14, and the false prophet in 19:20. See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 698.

[440] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 700.

[441] Blount, *Revelation*, 237. The LXX uses the name ὁ διάβολος instead of ὁ Σατανᾶς in these passages.

the battlefield. God's faithful people are the targets of Satan's prosecutorial ambitions.[442] According to Caird, God recognises the necessity of justice: so long as there are human sinners to accuse, Satan's presence in heaven must be tolerated.[443]

Although these two names do not reappear in the final listing of the names of Satan in 20:2, the motif of deception is the reason for chaining the dragon. After his release from the bottomless pit, he goes straight on to do just that to 'deceive' the nations (20:7-10). ὁ πλανῶν and ὁ κατήγωρ combine to portray the dual armoury Satan employs in the fight against the offspring of the 'woman' on the earth, the last battle seemingly undecided. On Earth, he masquerades as a god to deceive the world into believing and worshipping him in his own image. So far, the names listed in Rev 12 have been confirmed to be appropriate by the heavenly voice that vindicates God in Rev 1-12. In this way, the names Satan and Accuser encapsulate every adversarial agent, such as 'Jezebel' (2:20), the devil (12:9; 20:3, 8, 10), the beast from the land (13:14), also called the false prophet (19:20), and Babylon (18:23).[444] The fact that God and heavenly beings can fully reveal evil characters portrays their authority over evil. John does not pit God and the dragon against one another; rather, the dragon's character is weighed against Michael's.

In the same manner that the woman represents God's capacity to create things, Michael represents God's capacity to do battle. God is so powerful that the dragon does not battle him. God's subordinates are adequate to do so. Thus, God sends Michael to defeat the enemies.

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[442] G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 661.

[443] Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 154.

[444] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 698; Blount, *Revelation*, 235; Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 171. Rebekah Liu contends that the description of Babylon in Revelation 20 functions as a deliberate parody of Jerusalem, and there by highlights the text's use of literary contrast to underscore theological significance. See Rebekah Yi Liu, "The Background and Meaning of the Image of the Beast in Rev. 13:14, 15," *Dissertations* (2016): 232–33, https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dissertations/1602, https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/1602.

6.3.2. The Naming Techniques

The theo-onomastic methodology entails incorporating names into apocalyptic narratives. This process can be prescriptive, ascriptive, or both, encompassing authorial prescriptions, self-prescriptions, and audience ascriptions. This constitutes the second phase of our proposed methodology.

The conclusion drawn from the preceding discussion is that Satan is active in the seven churches and thus in the first half of Revelation.. Opponents, both within and without, are characterised as exhibiting Satanic traits, thereby meriting the label of Satan. In one instance, the name is combined with the Greek ὁ Διάβολος, whereas in other instances, only Satan is mentioned. John favours the name Satan when writing in the seven letters. Satan deceives the world and destroys God's creation. The book's famous exhortation to patient endurance must be understood in light of his opposition, which consists primarily of persecution itself.

In Chapter 12, where the real persona of Evil is revealed, it is God who does the naming, in contrast to the earlier chapters in which John describes the theophanic scenes he witnessed of the Ancient of Days and the Lamb with an equivalent human vocabulary. The naming style in chapter 12 portrays four targets for which the dragon seeks to fight to gain dominion: heaven, the child, the woman, and the woman's offspring. Battling these entities, the dragon attacks in forms akin to its name. His name, "dragon", is mentioned in the general outline of the battle levels of the war. In fighting heaven, the male child, and the woman, he is the 'dragon', but when he turns to the offspring, which is the final level, he operates through the progeny of beasts and the adulterous woman. His essential arsenals in this battle are deception and accusations, which align with his names mentioned above: Devil, Satan, and the Old Serpent (a justification for the proclamation of 'woe' to the inhabitants on earth

in 12:12). Thus, in fighting the offspring, the dragon hides and disguises itself behind kings and kingdoms to deepen its acts of deception.

6.3.3. Literary-Theological Profile

The third step is to engage in a theo-onomastic analysis to determine the literary and theological portrayal of Satan's names and their introduction within the literary structure of Revelation. This analysis presents Satan as the central antagonist in the narrative.

Thus, the dragon's magnitude and universal nature make it an adversary of God. John uses the name of Satan from the Hebrew Scriptures in his seven letters to address his audience, which would make sense in churches having a Jewish-Christian heritage. The entire deception is portrayed through a list of names, with the world and its nations serving as prey. His names demonstrate how the various manifestations of evil in the book can be traced back to a unified opposition to, and rejection of God. Behind the many guises of evil is a kingdom, a single force that opposes and seeks to destroy God's creation.[445] The book's ultimate message of consolation and hope is that evil in all its potent forms, evil as a violent force, cannot survive God's judgement. The earth is a sphere of deception and illusion as long as the devil and the beast rule. Truth is first observable in heaven and then descends from heaven to earth. Heavens open at 19:11, and God's Word, the truth, rides to earth at 19:13. At this point, the perspective of heaven prevails on Earth, dispelling the beast's lies.[446]

6.3.4. Relevance to the Cosmic Conflict

The names of Satan portray his role and function in the cosmic conflict as God's opponent, signifying the conclusion of the theo-onomastic analysis.

[445] de Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," 81.

[446] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 105.

The names δράκων, ὄφις, Διάβολος, and Σατανᾶς identify the adversary unambiguously. In John's vision, the primary adversary is the disordering opponent of God's design. The opponents are ancient Jewish and Mesopotamian mythical warriors. The names combine the different traits by which Satan has been known throughout history and is recognised in everyday life. Another pertinent characterisation is provided. This adversary wages war against both angels and humans, slandering the saints and misleading humanity in the heat of the cosmic conflict. The literary–theological profile of this archenemy is one of antagonism in both nature and function. Moreover, just as God's and Christ's names reveal their ultimate victory in the cosmic conflict, the names of the arch-enemy, the condescending nature of the introduction, and the contexts in which they are revealed point to the undeniable end of his reign. The only seeming victories he obtains are the removal of stars from the sky (12:4), but this is quickly followed by Satan's casting from heaven (along with its angels) after being defeated by Michael and his angels (12:7-9) and persecuting the "woman" about to give birth to a child. However, the mother and child are miraculously saved. Nevertheless, the woman is given eagles' wings to fly to the wilderness, where she is nourished while the serpent can only observe. The serpent spews water from its mouth like a torrent, but the earth consumes it instead. The Devil then leaves to wage battle against the remainder of the woman's children (12:13-17). Consequently, Satan's menace is consistently contained in his final defeat. Thus, "Evil has no independent existence. Its supposed power is only a counterfeit of the real power of the Lamb."[447] The theo-onomastics of the devil is illustrated in Table 9 below.

[447] Boring, *Revelation*, 129.

Table 9: Theo-Onomastics of the Prime Evil

THEO-ONOMASTICS OF THE PRIME EVIL[448]						
Name	**Bible Reference**	**Type of Name**	**Naming Technique**	**Characteristics**	**Literally-Theological profiles**	**Relevance to CosConf**
ὁ Διάβολος	12:9-10,12, 20:2,10	**EPITHETICAL**	Authorial Prescriptive	Satan is characterised by names that depict him as fierce and brutal. However, the context in which those names are revealed his imminent defeat.	Antagonist[449]	Unlike God and Jesus, who are presented with the opportunity to introduce their names, the names of Satan are predetermined, suggesting a fundamental weakness in his character from the beginning. Nevertheless, Satan's engagement in an actantial role from chapter 13, along with the attribution of names, intensifies the cosmic conflict, albeit temporarily.
ὁ Σατανᾶς	2:13, 12:9, 20:2,7					
ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας	12:3-4, 7(2x), 9, 13, 16-17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2	**TITULAR**	Authorial Prescriptive		Antagonist	
ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος	2:13, 12:9, 20:2,7					
ὁ κατηγορῶν αὐτοὺς	12:9-10	**PARTICIPIAL**	Authorial Prescriptive		Antagonist	
ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος						
ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην						

[448] It is important to note that the devil's names are presented directly and clarified by participial and titular names. The absence of epithets for Satan suggests that the narrator does not want to conceal its genuine character and role.

[449] Some argue that Satan in chapters 12–13 acts as the subject therefore he is the protagonist of the story instead of the antagonist. This assertion is true only when one considers the scenes in these chapters as a unit of its own. But in the face of the cosmic conflict, even where parades as a protagonist, his prime desire is to antagonise God, his cohorts and those who keep his commandment and have the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17). Thus, his veiled intentions in usurping the actant role from God is still clear in the mind of God and the believers on earth. See contra; Joseph Trafton, *Reading Revelation: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 118; Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 122.

6.4. Theo-onomastic Analysis of the Agents of Evil

Satan imitates God in several ways. The dragon, beasts, and false Prophet are satirical inversions of the trinitarian portrait.[450] God is the occupant of the heavenly throne, and Satan is the greatest pretender to the throne. The dragon, cast out of heaven, grants the beast its power, throne, and authority (13:2). Michael and his angels have already triumphed over the dragon, rendering any subsequent gestures of defiance ultimately inconsequential. Nonetheless, during a transient yet significant epoch in cosmic terms, Satan's fury is unleashed, resulting in substantial devastation while evil exerts its influence upon the Earth. While Satan possesses considerable power, it is essential to acknowledge that God remains Almighty (1:8). God warrants honor and reverence; however, the false prophet employs deception to compel individuals to worship the beast (13:12). These dynamic underscores the tension between divine authority and the manipulative tactics of evil, highlighting the necessity of discernment in matters of faith and devotion.

The relationships among the Satanic trio are indicative of the complexity of these associations. Court rightly notes that the bond between the dragon and the beast is more complex and intimate than that between the devil and the demon.[451] This is comparable to the blending of two distinct images or manifestations of the same objects. This is evidenced by the similarity of their descriptions (12:3, 13:1, 17:3), which describe it as a network of 'interrelated theriomorphic' symbols that seek to identify God's enemies in the language of Daniel 7.[452]

[450] While it is improbable that the author consciously contemplated the term or concept of "Trinity," a literary analysis of the text reveals a noteworthy connection to this concept, particularly in relation to the theme of cosmic conflict. See Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. (Michigan, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 78, 81, 105–6, 509.

[451] John M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: SPCK, 1979), 111.

[452] Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 319.

Within the narrative framework of Revelation, the antagonistic figures function as integral agents whose actions are both implicitly and explicitly depicted as operating under the sovereignty and, at times, the sanction of the omnipotent God. These adversarial entities are not portrayed as the ultimate recipients of eschatological judgment, but rather as instruments deployed to fulfil the narrative's overarching theological objectives.
The destinies of these agents are distinguished from those of the saints and the inhabitants of the earth primarily by their period of confinement and the absence of a formal adjudicative process. Notably, there is no explicit rationale provided for their punishment in the lake of fire, in contrast to the detailed explanations given for the condemnation of those whose names are not inscribed in the book of life, or who receive the mark of the beast and worship its image.

Revelation 12:13 and 17 illustrate the dragon's redirected wrath toward the woman and her offspring, underscoring his determination to continue waging war against the descendants of the woman—those identified as keeping the commandments of God and holding to the testimony of Jesus (v. 17).

The difference between the dragon's battle strategy in Chapter 12 and the subsequent one in Chapter 13 is the change in approach. Instead of fighting personally, as in previous war scenes, he chooses to fight through the proxy of beasts who personify and intensify his lethal weapons of deception. Ironically, the weapon in question is identified by the term ὁ πλανῶν, previously mentioned in Revelation 12:9. This choice of nomenclature underscores a long-standing intention to engage in battle against the descendants of the woman through deception. Consequently, the next phase of this research will involve an exploration of how proxy characters illustrate the interplay between naming and the overarching theme of cosmic conflict present in the Apocalypse.

6.4.1. Step 1: Type of Names

The Theo-onomastic method classifies the names of the evil cohorts in Revelation into four categories: Proper, Epithetical, Titular, and Participial. This section discusses the names of these categories.

6.4.1a. Proper Names

Jezebel

In the Apocalypse, Jezebel is introduced as the first γυναῖκα in Revelation 2:20. Notably, she does not take part in the unfolding events of the narrative; rather, she serves as an antagonist in the church in Thyatira. Her presence is primarily exegetical, as she is referenced and discussed as a benchmark for evaluating the faithfulness of the church's members. While her actions are explicitly detailed throughout the text, she is notably silent and absent from this later stage of the narrative. This allusion to Jezebel evokes various themes that resonate throughout the broader context of Revelation, illuminating the moral and theological challenges faced by the community. Those individuals in the initial audience, well-versed in the Old Testament, would likely have evoked powerful associations with the name “Jezebel.” Her public religious and political actions are notably condemned in biblical texts. As the wife of King Ahab and a foreigner, Jezebel played a significant role in undermining his authority. She fervently advocated for the worship of her deity, asserting its equal standing with Yahweh, the God of the Israelites. This subversion of divinely ordained leadership may have served as a strategic maneuver during the first century.

In the ninth century BCE, Jezebel, who held the position of queen of Israel, actively supported the prophets of Baal, both through financial backing and public endorsement. Her actions positioned her as a quasi-prophet of Baal, a direct result of her engagement in and promotion of Baal worship. Consequently, one might interpret John's allusion to Jezebel as a

reference to a significant figure—a woman who welcomed Nicolaitan prophets into her household, further reflecting the complexities of authority and religious fidelity within that context. She would support them in a way similar to the way others had supported John's mission.[453] The fervent devotion of Jezebel to Baal positioned her in direct opposition to the prophet Elijah, paralleling the confrontation faced by the Jezebel of Thyatira at the hands of John the prophet (Revelation 2:21). The remarkable triumph of Yahweh's prophets on Mount Carmel, as recounted in 1 Kings 18:17-40, underscores the stark contrast between the true-worthy object of worship and the unworthy idols prevalent in the first century. While John does not delineate the specific manner of demise for this first-century Jezebel, the harrowing fate of her biblical namesake, as detailed in 2 Kings 9:30-36, serves as a foreboding warning of her potential end.

Pippin challenges the prevailing misogynistic interpretations of the texts found in 1 Kings 16 through 2 Kings 9, as well as a specific verse from the Book of Revelation.[454] She contends that these interpretations portray Jezebel solely as a conflicting, domineering, sensual, and alien figure. Employing a postmodern framework to analyse these biblical passages, Pippin reveals a more nuanced portrayal of Jezebel, one that highlights her efforts to preserve her indigenous culture and identity. By reconceptualising Jezebel in this manner, Pippin invites a re-evaluation of her character, suggesting that she embodies complexity rather than the simplistic and negative archetype frequently ascribed to her.

John manipulates the symbol according to this line of reasoning. The narrator compares the adversary to an infamous woman who opposed Elijah and supported the prophets of Baal. He accuses her of being a false prophet and gives dire warnings, including striking her children dead (2:23).

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[453] David Arthur DeSilva, "The Revelation to John: A Case Study in Apocalyptic Propaganda and the Maintenance of Sectarian Identity," *SA* 53.4 (1992): 375–95.

[454] Tina Pippin, "Jezebel Re–Vamped," *Semeia* 69 (1995): 221–33.

In addition, John invokes God's authority as he does not have a warning to offer the people. This analysis emphasises the rivalry between John and another early Christian prophet, suggesting a human authorship of the text. It critiques interpretations that diminish God's authority while reducing the Revelation of Jesus Christ to the reflections of a misogynistic figure. However, it is worth acknowledging that certain interpretations may hold kernels of truth. These interpretations seek to explore deeper meanings beyond superficial readings; yet, the prevailing militant feminist approach often distorts the intended message.

Moreover, such interpretations struggle to effectively convey the fundamental dichotomies presented in the text, such as truth versus falsehood, life versus death, and the divine versus idolatry. By dissociating the narrative's textual worldview from its original context, they risk misrepresenting its core themes. Within the framework of the book, particular attention is given to the sins and subsequent punishment assigned to the false prophetess and her adherents. Thus, establishing a reliable narrator is essential for a critical examination and comprehensive understanding of the text.

6.4.1b. Epithetical Names

False Prophets

The string verbs that describe the land beast, combined with the brevity of its introduction in Rev 13:11, suggest that John's initial emphasis on introducing this agent to the scene focuses more on its role in the cosmic conflict than on its name. The beast from the land is introduced as the one who has (ἐξουσίαν) the authority of the sea beast on its behalf—insinuating that the land beast is the one who executes the blasphemous and deceitful attack on God and the command to kill those who do not worship the image of the beast (13:15). The seven peculiar usages of ποιέω exquisitely denote the function of a verb that evokes

thoughts of causality.[455] The consistent use of present-tense forms in the depiction of the land beast establishes Revelation 13:11–18 as a pivotal section within the text. This passage not only holds significant relevance for the book's audience but also serves as a crucial element in John's intricate portrayal of evil agency.[456] While John does not explicitly articulate the identity of the third member of the demonic trinity, the intricate descriptions of the γυναῖκα καθημένην ἐπὶ θηρίον κόκκινον in chapters 17 and 18, along with the function of the false prophets, implicitly connect to the land beast. This connection highlights its distinctive role in perpetuating the deception initiated by the beast from the sea, upon which the woman is depicted as seated. The interplay among these elements underscores a cohesive narrative of manipulation and influence within the text.

6.4.1c. Titular Names

The Harlot

The forehead of the great harlot bears the inscription μυστήριον ("mystery"). Within the framework of Revelation, such inscriptions on the forehead serve as markers of

[455] The verb ποιεῖ, which is in the present active indicative 3rd person singular form, appears four times in verses 12, 13, and 16. The present active subjunctive 3rd person singular form ποιῇ appears once, while the aorist active infinitive ποιῆσαι appears twice, and the aorist active subjunctive 3rd person singular form ποιήσῃ appears once.

[456] Osborn's interpretation is undoubtedly aimed at enhancing the vividness of the description of the ongoing work of the Antichrist and his false prophets. However, other scholars such as Dougherty and Porter find this approach either puzzling or indicative of subunits within the broader narrative. For those who perceive the vision as entirely fulfilled during the first century, including Matthewson and Blount, John's text appears to highlight the imperial cult of Asia Minor, contrasting the foreign authority of Rome with the local, land-based false prophet. The latter's influence is both localized and deeply entrenched in the populace and infrastructure of Asia Minor. While this interpretation may hold some plausibility, the context of the conclusion of the cosmic conflict renders it an implausible referent for first-century Roman consuls and proconsuls. Instead, it represents the culmination of the ongoing activities orchestrated by the dragon. It is a depiction of the crescendo of the ongoing work of the dragon. See the following for detailed discussion: Osborne, *Revelation*, 512–16; E. C. A. Dougherty, "The Syntax of the Apocalypse" (PhD Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1990), 438–39; Blount, *Revelation*, 257; David L. Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation: The Function of Greek Verb Tenses in John's Apocalypse* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2010), 148–49; Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: With Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek ; v. 1 (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1989), 197; Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 188; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 756; Heinz Giesen, *Studien Zur Johannesapokalypse*, Stuttgartes Biblische Aufsatzbände 29 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katolisches Bibelwerk, 2000), 32.

allegiance. The saints and those redeemed by God are sealed with the divine name upon their foreheads (Rev. 3:12; 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4), while the name and number of the beast are similarly marked on the foreheads and hands of its followers (Rev. 13:17). The harlot's name thus accentuates the symbolic dimension of her identity. Identified as "Babylon the Great" (Rev. 17:5, 17; 18:2, 21), she is portrayed as a dominant force over the monarchs of the earth (Rev. 17:17), and is further characterised as the "mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5).

Although the harlot's speech is limited, she commands significant attention in Revelation 17–19 through her audacious and immoral presence astride the scarlet beast. Her attire—comprised of purple and scarlet—stands in deliberate contrast to the white garments associated with Christ and those who share in his victory. The harlot's clothing is emblematic, evoking the dress of Roman, Asian, and cultic prostitutes, and is thus fitting for her role as a symbol of prostitution; her alluring appearance is both a consequence of her character and a manifestation of her seductive power. The distinction between the harlot's extravagant dress and the modest apparel of the bride is particularly striking: while the harlot adorns herself with jewels and worldly finery, the bride is clothed in fine linen, representing the righteous deeds of the saints (19:8). This juxtaposition underscores the interplay between appearance and action, illustrating the complex relationship between these figures and their roles within the narrative.

The portrayal of Babylon in Revelation is organised into two principal segments. The first, found in 17:1–18 (Babylon as a woman), establishes the identity of the woman seated upon the scarlet beast; the second, spanning 18:1–19:10 (Babylon as acity), interprets her judgement, culminating in the hymn of 19:1–10. Although Babylon's judgement is not overtly detailed, it is implicitly conveyed as both prophetic anticipation and retrospective

expectation. Among the various embodiments of evil within the text, Babylon stands as the most frequently referenced figure after the dragon.

Babylon is initially introduced by an angel who invites John to witness her τὸ κρίμα (judgement). During this revelation, the angel presents her initial titles: τῆς πόρνης τῆς μεγάλης (the great prostitute) and τῆς καθημένης ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν (the one seated on many waters, 17:2). Consistent with the narrative's established patterns, when John is transported in the spirit, he perceives this figure as bearing six further appellations. Her depiction in 17:4–5 encompasses the following names: τῆς πόρνης τῆς μεγάλης (the great harlot), ἡ γυνὴ (the woman), μυστήριον (mystery), Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη (Babylon the Great), ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν (the mother of prostitutes), and τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς (the mother of abominations of the earth). These designations presuppose the reader's familiarity with the character, even though this is her first explicit appearance in the narrative.

The term καθημένην (sitting) in verses 3, 9, and 15 indicates her control over the multitudes and the beast, symbolising her authority over water.[457]

This is a parody of the *Pantokrator* and the Lamb, who are also described as seated on thrones' (4:2; 5:13).[458] The woman sitting in many waters may also allude to historical Babylon in Jer 51:11–12, suggesting a purposeful and symbolic reference. The identification of the woman as Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη (Babylon the Great) in Rev. 17:5 (cf. 14:8; 16:19; 18:2, 10, 21) is a plausible one based on the analogy to the Babylon mentioned in the Old Testament.[459] This facet of her personality places her at the hub of the seven forms of the

[457] Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 848. This reading contrasts with Aune who prefers a translation of the preposition ἐπὶ +Gen as 'beside.' For him since the construction could be conceived spatially as 'on, upon', it is incredible for one to imagine the woman sitting on water. Such reading overlooks the metaphorical force in the phrase intended by John. Aune, *Revelation 17–22,* 907.

[458] Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation*, 223; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 427.

[459] The phrase, "Babylon the Great", occurs once in Dan 4:30, where it is part of Nebuchadnezzar's (the ruler of Babylon) self-glorification. Beale observes that "Rome became known as Babylon in some Jewish circles since it likewise destroyed the Jerusalem temple and deported Israel" (cf. Midr. Rab. Num 7.10; Midr.

word that characterise immorality in chapter 17 (πόρνης, ἐπόρνευσαν, πορνείας, πορνῶν, πόρνη, πόρνην, πόρνευω 17:1, 2, 4, 5, 15–16). The repetition underscores and encapsulates analogous references found throughout the narrative, including the fornication of Pergamum (2:14), the deceitful influence of Jezebel of Thyatira (2:20), and her acts and designation as a fornicator mentioned in other sections of the book (Rev. 17:2; 18:3, 9; 19:2).[460] Babylon is portrayed as a prototypical religious adulterant. This, along with the bloodshed of saints, is pictured as her worst offence (cf. Rev. 18:23, 24).[461]

The relationship between Babylon and the beast in Revelation 17, as well as the dragon and other entities within the Apocalypse, is elucidated by the depiction of the woman seated upon a scarlet beast. This beast exhibits characteristics and attributes analogous to those of both the earlier beasts and the dragon, possessing seven heads and ten horns (17:3, 7, 9; 12:3; 13:1). The recurrence of the epithet (17:3; 11:7; 13:1–18; 16:13), the motif of blasphemy (17:3; 13:1, 5, 6; cf. 2:9), martial actions (17:14; 11:7; 13:7; 16:13–16), and remarkable influence (17:3; 13:6), as well as their shared presence as key antagonists (17:8; 11:7; cf. 20:1, 3), underscores the complexity of their interrelationship. The woman herself is portrayed as a vast city wielding authority over the monarchs of the earth, further complicating the dynamics between the woman and the beast.

Pss 137.1, 8; cf. Tg. Lam 1:19; as well as 2 Bar. 11:1; 33:2; 67:7; 79:1; 1 Peter 5:13; Midr. Rab. Lev 6.6; 4 Ezra 3). See Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 755.

[460] Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 218.

[461] Rev 18:24 is the interpretive key to the entire sequence of judgments on Babylon, according to Fiorenza, because "the legal claim of the persecuted victims against Babylon is now granted. The powerful capital of the world is destroyed not just because it has persecuted Christians but also because it has unlawfully killed many other people" See Fiorenza, "Babylon the Great." This is consistent with W. Gordon Campbell's assertions, "The double metaphor [i.e., feminine-urban imagery] is a means of exhorting believers, who live out their Christian faith in the Churches and cities of Ephesus and its hinterland, to stand firm in the human city and to resist apostasy." The contrast between the "New Jerusalem" and "Babylon" provides the greatest explanation for the "Babylon" theme's expansive growth. Because it encompasses the entire narrative's rhetorical drive, the space created by the dichotomy between Babylon and New Jerusalem is significant. It is intimately related to the overall plot and finishes the narrative in a proper manner. See W. Gordon Campbell, *Reading Revelation: A Thematic Approach* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2012), 226, 243.

A perplexing aspect of this portrayal is the attribution of the name μυστήριον ("mystery") to the woman. The literary and theological significance of this designation invites a nuanced interpretation. Analogous to the rider on the white horse, the titular identity of the prostitute encapsulates her essential character and function within the narrative. Her initial transgression recalls the ancient offences of Babylon, notably its opposition to the people of God and the desecration of the Jerusalem temple. The implications of her name point to her pivotal role in sustaining global immorality and idolatry. As previously established, her identity and actions illuminate the dragon's primary strategy to escalate the cosmic conflict, chiefly through the deployment of deceit.

On both literary and theological levels, the figure of the prostitute presents compelling parallels with the victorious rider on the white horse described in Revelation 19:11–16. While both function as central figures in the cosmic struggle between the dragon and God, they represent antithetical dimensions of this conflict. The rider, emblematic of divine authority and martial power, is designated as the "King of Kings," whereas the prostitute is depicted as a seductive force astride a blasphemous beast. This juxtaposition accentuates the dichotomy between divine victory and the seductive, corrupting influence of evil.

The rider, characterised as a conquering warrior, embodies themes of victory and divine judgement, arriving to evaluate the state of the world. In contrast, the prostitute symbolises a figure emerging from the devastations of war, capable of ensnaring and misleading rulers. Significantly, the woman is already destined for judgement by the time the rider appears, underscoring her function as both a precursor to destruction and a personification of moral decay.

Furthermore, the designation of the woman as "Babylon the Great" serves as an intentional echo of the New Jerusalem, which is characterised as the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:13). This use of symbolic nomenclature invites readers to draw parallels

between the historical and the eschatological dimensions of Babylon. The reader is encouraged to contemplate the prophetic implications of the fall of eschatological Babylon through the lens of historical Babylon, thus enriching the understanding of this duality within the narrative framework.[462] The eschatological destiny of Babylon, shaped by the unwavering nature of the God depicted in the Old Testament, serves as a symbolic reflection of the historical downfall of the dragon. In this context, Babylon is represented as a woman, which further delineates the stark moral dichotomy between the adulterous prostitute and the pure virgin bride of the New Jerusalem. This duality not only highlights the contrasting ethical frameworks within the narrative but also underscores the theological implications of judgment and redemption in the overarching biblical discourse.[463] Thus, these names reveal the functions and spheres of the harlot's life. As the angel later reveals to John, her influence is worldwide, as indicated by her sitting in the waters of the sea.[464] The text presents charges against Babylon, a woman accused of various offences, including sexual misconduct and intoxication. She is made to drink from her cup, a symbol of God's wrath and retribution for her misdeeds. Babylon represents the earthly counterpart of the dragon, controlling rulers, nations, institutions, and ordinary people. Her throne is that of a beast with seven mountains and ten kings (Rev. 17:8-12). The metaphors of sexual misconduct and intoxication represent the horizontal dimension of her sin, balancing the vertical and horizontal dimensions of their

[462] Some scholars argue that the literal referent is to first-century Rome. See Aune, *Revelation 17–22,* 959; Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 184; Koester, *Revelation*, 683; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 307–8; Osborne, *Revelation*, 608–9, 628; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 429, 442. Others like Campbell agree with J. Massyngberde Ford's conclusion that in Revelation, "Babylon" represents not Rome but "none other than apostate Jerusalem, who assassinated the prophets, crucified the Lord, and left unburied the corpses of the witnesses (11:8)." Campbell, *Reading Revelation*, 234; Ford, *Revelation*.

[463] Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 180.

[464] Waters are frequently used as a metaphor for inhabitants in the Old Testament (Isaiah 8:7; 17:12–13; Jeremiah 46:2–3; 47:2), and the formula of universality derived from Daniel appears throughout Revelation. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 882; Osborne, *Revelation*, 625.

respective influences. Her many names depict her as a critical agent in the dragon's onslaught against the saints. She wields the most subtle yet dangerous weapon of seduction: her beauty.

Babylon functions as a symbol of religious infidelity and occupies a pivotal position within the broader cosmic conflict depicted in Revelation. Her conduct and defining attributes mirror those of Satan, while her dominion extends to the beast (17:9–14), which itself derives authority from the dragon (13:2). Furthermore, the deployment of various names throughout the text underscores the principle that God exercises sovereignty over evil, ultimately controlling and eliminating it at its source. Beneath the manifold expressions of evil present in the Apocalypse lies a central antagonist who both orchestrates and incites opposition to God. Notably, Satan is portrayed as the principal adversary and remains the final figure to be vanquished within the narrative. The multiplicity of names employed in Revelation thus illustrates the interconnectedness of the various manifestations of evil, all of which collectively represent a unified resistance to and repudiation of God. Behind the complex nature of malevolence lies the sovereignty and authority of God, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, who is revealed as the "ultimate good" and exercises control over all matters. The book offers the solace that evil, despite its apparent strength and ruthlessness, cannot withstand the power and judgement of the Almighty, who sits on his throne. John's style in naming this character is consistent. He uses *literary–theological profiling*, as explained previously, to define and identify the characters' scope and role on both sides of the cosmic conflict. Thus, one does not necessarily need to know the etymology of those names to understand their role in the conflict; hence, theo-onomastics, as used in this study, is an approach that yields many dividends. The names that followers of both the Lamb and the Dragon receive, and where they are written, contribute to the Apocalypse's character.

6.4.1d. Participial Names

θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον and θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς

Revelation 12:17 describes the dragon's disappointment with one word: ὠργίσθη, a word intrinsically oriented towards revenge or punishment.[465] This aligns with his obvious resolve to ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς. Thus, picking up a fight with the rest of the τοῦ σπέρματος of the woman is a form of revenge and retribution for the humiliating defeat suffered at the hands of God, the male child, the believers and the woman in chapter 12. Worthy to note are the dragon's specified targets: τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· He is selective even in whom to attack. Thus, the phrase rekindles the cosmic conflict that seemed over with Satan's earlier dramatic failures, already mentioned. The chapter concludes at verse 18, often found at the start of the next chapter or entirely omitted in most English translations: καὶ ἐστάθη[466] ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης.[467] This verse indicates the dragon's location and energy to stand by the seashore, corresponding to what appears in Chapter 13.

It is acknowledged that the dragon appeared on the seashore, possibly summoning the first beast from the sea. Satan exerts authority over the land and sea, commissioning corrupt agents to emerge from these domains to do his bidding.[468] Their collaboration seeks to

[465] H. Kleinknecht et al., "Orgḗ [Anger, Wrath], Orgízomai [to Be Angry], Orgílos [Angry, Quick-Tempered], Parorgízō [to Make Angry], Parorgismós [Anger, Wrath]," *TDNT* 5:382–447.

[466] The 𝔓47 א AC185423442351 supports this reading. A variant reading; ἐστάθην is found in P 046051 10061 1611 1841 2053 2329 M. The reading seems to have been crafted to reveal the first person mentioned in chapter 13:1, inviting us to delve deeper into its significance and context. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on Greek New Testament*, 673. The previous interpretation identifies the dragon as the one who stood by the seashore while preparing to summon the two beasts, laying the groundwork for expectations in the next chapter. Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 168; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 716.

[467] Examples include the following, omitted: ASV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, and NRSV. Others like NLT add the verse to chapter 13 because it is considered a bridge verse. See Giesen, *Die Offenbarung Des Johannes*, 30.

[468] Francis J Moloney, "Tracing a Literary Structure in the Book of Revelation," *CBQ* 84.4 (2022): 642–59.

corrupt all inhabitants of the earth, as the beast of the earth endeavours to ensure that everyone bears the mark of the sea beast on their foreheads (Rev. 13:16–18). This beast has many features: seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns.[469] With the first beast receiving τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ, τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ, and ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην, the dragon is depicted as instigating the course of events from here. The beast from the sea resembles the fourth beast in Dan 7:7, 23–25, with blasphemous names on its heads; it blasphemes against God, wages war on the saints and is given authority over the people of the earth for three and a half years. Daniel's fourth beast acts independently of its accord, whereas the sea beast of Revelation is presented as a subservient opponent whose power and authority are derived from the dragon. A mouth with which to speak and the ability to harm even the saints are ἐδόθη to him (13:5, 7).

The derivative authority to wage war against the saints, as indicated by the aorist passive of ἐδόθη, is commonly understood to denote an action originating from God, who is perceived as the source of the unfolding events.[470]

In contrast to the account in Daniel, where the sea beast appears to operate autonomously, the narrative in Revelation depicts the dragon as the one who bestows (ἐδόθη) its throne, power, and authority upon the beast. Consequently, the dragon is portrayed as an

[469] Dan 7:3 4 Esr 11,1s 17,3.7.9.12.16 Dan 7,7:2;12:3

[470] Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 498; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, Reprint edition. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 167; W. Gordon Campbell, *Reading Revelation: A Thematic Approach* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2012), 80; David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 743; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 377; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Revised. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 254; James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 184; Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (London: SPCK, 2005), 340; Ben III Witherington, *Revelation*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 182; Craig R. Koester, "Revelation's Visionary Challenge to Ordinary Empire," *Int.* 63.1 (2009): 572. Other scholars such as Fee, Prigent and Leithart understand it not to mean God's active involvement but his permission for the events or his silence over them. See Fee, *Revelation*, 181–82; Leithart, *Revelation 1–11*, 326, 527.

imitator of God. Furthermore, although both beasts receive worship from their adherents, Revelation clarifies that the ultimate recipient of this veneration is, in fact, the dragon. Thus, in Revelation, the beast from the sea is more 'subdued' in its power and status than the beast seen in Daniel 7.[471]

In John's account, as Gulaker argues, the beast from the sea is intended to resemble the Lamb rather than the fourth beast of Dan 7. The beast receive a throne and authority from the dragon, which mirrors the Lamb's taking the scroll from the one who sits on the throne, sharing the throne, and receiving worship from the heavenly host. The line ὡς ἐσφαγμένην from 13:3 is repeated in Rev. 5:6, with the sea beast mimicking the resurrected Christ.

In the text, the sea beast depicted by John bears a resemblance to a lamb, though this comparison is intricately nuanced. The imagery of the sea creature draws parallels not only to the Lamb but also to other Christological figures present within the narrative. Notably, both the "Son of Man" and the rider of the white horse serve as representations of Christ and exhibit certain characteristics akin to those of the beast (Revelation 1:9–20; 19:11–16). The title "Son of Man" signifies the resurrected Christ in a heavenly context among earthly congregations, while the designation of "Lamb" embodies Christ's divine nature. In contrast, the rider of the white horse emerges as an eschatological symbol of judgment. Throughout the text, the beast engages with each of these significant figures in complex and varied manners, highlighting the multifaceted relationships inherent within the narrative. In this regard, both beasts and dragons are similar. The sea beast and the dragon have ten horns and seven heads, but the sea beast's diadems are on its horns, while the dragon has crowns on its head (Dan 7:7–8).[472]

[471] Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 152.

[472] Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 422–33; Boring, *Revelation*, 163; Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 164; Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2:349–51; Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 83, 97; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 252; Witherington, *Revelation*, 176–77.

From the start, it is essential to note that John renders the beast as a Christ-imitator, and not vice versa. The beast is an impostor, and the Lamb is authentic. The author's assessment of the beast as a deceiver, as discussed previously, indicates this.

Literary arrangement is another method used to depict the beast as an impostor. Audiences first encounter the Son of Man (Rev. 1:12–20) and the Lamb (Rev. 5:1–14) before encountering the beast (Rev. 13:1–8). This sequence introduces two images of Christ that indicate authority (Rev. 1:18), resurrected status (Rev. 1:18; 5:6), and praise in the heavenly realm where he shares the throne of God (Rev. 5:9–14). This vision of Christ sets a standard for evaluating the beasts. [473]

A similarity has been observed in John's order of narration when introducing important characters in the book. Although one can argue that the beast coming out of the sea would indeed surface first with its horns, head, and body, the order may also serve another function, as it parallels the general description of the Son of Man (Rev. 1:9–20).[474] In his vision of the Son of Man, John follows a descriptive pattern that begins with the man's head, hair, and face (Rev. 1:14), followed by his feet (Rev. 1:15a), and then his voice and mouth (Rev. 1:15b–16). Similarly, the beast's horns, heads, and diadems are described before its bear-like feet and lion-like mouth. Including a lion image further evokes the Lamb introduced by the angel, 'the lion of the tribe of Judah' (5:5).

The most striking characteristic of this creature is its mouth, which closely resembles that of a lion. This anatomical feature is intricately connected to the creature's authority, and it is noteworthy for its association with "great and profane speech" (13:5). This depiction suggests a significant link between the nature of its speech and the exercise of power, highlighting the thematic implications of authority and communication in the given context.

[473] Robyn J. Whitaker, *Ekphrasis, Vision, and Persuasion in the Book of Revelation*, 1st ed., vol. 410 of *WUNT 2. Reihe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 193.

[474] Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 249.

Thus, the images of the lion-like mouth of the beast and the Lamb's name reflect the struggle over authority and kingship.

The fact that both the Lamb and the sea monster have fatal wounds is perhaps the most precise and theologically significant parallel (ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, Rev. 5:6; 13:3). The beast's wound serves as a parodic reflection of the Lamb, highlighting the unsettling similarities between their fates. John employs remarkably similar language to describe both injuries, drawing a direct connection between the two. This choice of words effectively underscores the violent acts that lead to their tragic deaths, inviting readers to contemplate the more profound implications of these parallels. The death of the Lamb because of his wounds is implied by references to his blood payment and the redemptive power of his blood (Rev. 5:9; 7:14; 12:11). As a Christ symbol interpreted through the lens of Isa 53:7ff, the lamb interprets and evokes Jesus' crucifixion. Simultaneously, his standing posture represents the theological assertion that Jesus rose from the dead after the crucifixion. Likewise, the Son of Man informs John that he has died (Rev. 1:18). In the message to Smyrna, he is described as one who "was dead but is now alive" (Rev. 2:8). Given the wounds inflicted on the Lamb, there is no doubt that natural, actual death was intended. The beast's fatal injury is mentioned twice to emphasise its severity (Rev. 13:3, 8).[475]

The repetition of the verb ὁ ζῶν in the present or past tense reinforces the idea that the Lamb has triumphed over death, which is implied by his posture as ἑστηκὸς (Rev. 1.18; 2.8). The world is astonished by the beast's fatal injury and subsequent recovery, which results in praise and a declaration of its merit.[476]

The Lamb and sea beast are similar in their respective power sources. The fact that the Lamb shares God's throne and heavenly worship proves that he derives his authority from the

[475] Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 353; Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 132.

[476] Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 74.

enthroned heavenly deity (Rev. 5:12–13). The transfer of the dragon's throne to the sea creature mirrors the *Pantokrator's* relationship with the Lamb (Rev. 13:2). In both cases, the transfer or recognition of power and authority was reversed.

Both the Lamb and the sea beast derive their power from external sources. The Lamb's authority comes from sharing God's throne and receiving worship in heaven (Rev. 5:12–13). Similarly, the dragon transfers its throne to the sea creature, symbolising the power transfer between them. The exchange of authority in Revelation 13:2 indicates the recognition of both entities.

The beast from the earth is described as having two horns resembling those of a lamb but speaking with the authority of a dragon (Rev. 13:11). The second beast's ability to speak like a dragon implies that it utilizes the first beast's authority to deceive the inhabitants of the earth into worshipping the first beast (Rev.13:12–13). The resemblance to a lamb may be interpreted as a parody of the messianic lamb of Revelation 5:6, but the two horns instead of seven may indicate an association with the evil ruler depicted as a ram in Daniel 8:3.[477] The earth beast, speaking like a dragon, assumes that it uses the first beast's authority to deceive the earth's inhabitants into worshipping the first beast (Rev. 13:12–13).

Similarly, the beast from the earth exercises the authority of the beast from the sea, coerces the world to worship, and creates an image of the first beast. It also gives breath to the first beast, performs deceptive miracles, forbids those without the image of the beast to participate in the economy, and even kills opponents (Rev. 13:11–17). The beast thus poses as the spokesperson for the seeming 'truth' about the first beast but is a false prophet and false teacher.[478]

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[477] G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John:* Reprint edition. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 302.

[478] Beale traces these roles to Christ's prediction in Matt 24:24 about the coming false prophets. But their nature and role extends beyond just false prophets. It is a replication of the role of the Holy Spirit. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 708–9.

To encourage worship and breathe life into the beast's image, the earthly beast was given (ἐδόθη) the power to perform signs and wonders on behalf of the first beast from the sea (13:13–14). This demonstrates that God retains control over the dragon and the two beasts despite their opposition. Regardless of their seeming power, their ability to function depends on God's allowing it. Thus, God's literary-theological profile is boosted as the ὁ παντοκράτωρ in naming the dragon and beast from the sea and land. As Aune states,

> This makes it clear that John does not see the conflict between God and Satan (as historically manifested in the conflict between Christians and the state) in terms of a cosmic dualism; rather, he emphasises the ultimate sovereignty and control of God over events that occur in the world.[479]

Klaus Wengst regards the display of God's sovereignty as contradictory.[480] He interprets the tension in Revelation as part of the dynamic monotheism of the Bible, where God's oneness is yet to be recognised by the world. He takes the divine endorsement of evil forces at its face value. However, the author pushes God's ultimate sovereignty forward in time. For him, John speaks of Satan as God. He refers to God as the coming God because he cannot accept injustice and violence, poverty, misery, and the tears that must be shed because of grief and rage. God has not yet achieved his objectives, but as a God who is coming, he does not allow those who trust him to fall into despair. However, Wengst's contradiction theory does not consider the endgame of God's sovereignty and his seeming permission to act given to the devil and his cohorts. A close reading from a theo-onomastic perspective reveals how God intends to, on the one hand, let the churches know why they may be going through difficult experiences and, on the other hand, why the Devil, symbolised in the various opponents, is already a defeated foe since God is the one who names and even enables them to be so.

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[479] See Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 743; Boxall, *The Revelation of Saint John*, 190.

[480] Wengst, "The Devil in the Book of Revelation."

The introduction of the two beasts reveals their interdependence, suggesting that they should be viewed as various manifestations of Satan's activities rather than three distinct entities acting independently. This interpretation of the two beasts in Revelation 16:13, 20:2, and 10 is supported by their shared activities and destinies, which resemble Satan's role.[481]

Revelation 13 describes two beasts emerging from another realm to serve the dragon. These beasts are believed to have originated respectively from the sea and the earth. Their origin indicates that their authority is derived from the dragon, whose status has diminished and is now restricted to the planet. Their origin below the heavens connects their source of authority to the dragon, who has lost his exalted status and is now confined to the planet. The ascent from below to above may be more significant than the exact location of these places. The beasts described in Revelation 13 are summoned from the underworld to serve a dragon that descends from the upper world. Consequently, the characteristics of these three adversaries resemble those of God, Christ, and the Spirit. Their overlapping names and traits, along with their converging actions and destinies, suggest that the dragon and the two beasts embody the name given by God to the dragon: "deception." They symbolise the three antagonistic facets of a singular adversary, thus forming an imitation of the Trinity. This challenge to divine authority is evident in Revelation 17, where the antithetical designation ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ([the beast who] was, and is not, and is about to ascend, Rev. 17:8) mirrors the divine title ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος (he who is and who was and who is to come, Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8).[482] Ironically, the three phases of evil introduced in

[481] Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 150;

[482] See Osborne, *Revelation*, 511; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 66; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 255; Koester, *Revelation*, 590, 602. Other scholars, such as Paul Barnet and Deissmann, view the parallelism between John's presentation of good and evil as analogies between the Book of Revelation and Roman culture, as opposed to a comparison between the literary texts. Paul W Barnett, "Polemical Parallelism: Some Further Reflections on the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 11.35 (1989): 111–12; Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (New York, NY: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 345–46. This argument is implausible since a close reading of the Apocalypse reveals the author's intention to explain the nature and characteristics of good and evil agents in the church's daily experiences.

Chapters 12 and 13 are removed in the reverse order in which they first appear, perhaps to symbolise the conflict's driving force.[483]

Mathewson makes a significant observation regarding the apocalypse's choice of verbal aspect. According to him, the prominence of Revelation is indicated by its verbal element. When the present tense is employed as opposed to the aorist, it is "used to indicate foreground information in the narrative … to introduce a new scene, to introduce significant speech or characters, or signal an important transition in the narrative."[484] The present tense describes the beast's actions from the earth in Revelation 13:12–16, whereas the aorist tense describes the beast from the sea in Revelation 13:5–7. This may indicate that the text places a greater emphasis on sea creatures. Perhaps this increased emphasis highlights the significance of the false prophet's actions on congregations regarding the spread of heterodox worship. This suggests that the false prophet is the most prominent aspect of satanic activity to which communities expect to be exposed to in the future.

By contrast, the naming pattern serves the literary theological profiling of God and the Lamb; the beast is revealed in his evil tracks.

6.4.2. Step 2: Naming Technique

The inclusion of the names of the agents of evil in John's Apocalypse follows the second stage of the Theo-onomastic method, which involves naming an actor in different ways. These can be prescriptive, ascriptive, or a combination of both. This process involves assigning or attributing names, actors choosing their names, or audiences attributing names.

John employs one naming technique to reveal the evil characters (i.e., the devil, the beast from the sea, and the beast from the land, Rev. 12–13) in the Apocalypse. All names

[483] de Villiers, "Prime Evil and Its Many Faces in the Book of Revelation," 59.

[484] Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, xxvi–xxvii.

are authorial and prescriptive, such that the characters are not given any opportunity to self-name themselves or have the privilege of being attributed a name through worship, as is common in the naming of God and Jesus Christ.[485] To characterise these actors, John shows and tells how they appear and what they do (visual description), revealing their traits, roles, and functions within the cosmic conflict and apocalyptic narrative.[486]

For example, in chapter 12, where the Devil is introduced formally to the scenes of the narrative, the author begins with a description of how the δράκων appears with the adjectives μέγας and πυρρός (vs. 3) prefiguring him as one with might and a propensity to rule over kingdoms depicted by his κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα (vs. 3b). He proceeds from there to tell what the dragon does as 'σύρει … ἔβαλεν' third of angels to the earth (v. 4),[487] his readiness to καταφάγῃ the male child (v. 4b). In this way John literally reveals the back story to Satan's pivotal role in the narrative through theo-onomastics.

The same pattern is followed in naming the beast from the sea (11:7 and 13:1–10; visua description). The beast is described as possessing some features of fearsome animals, such as leopards, bears, and lions. This agent also has seven heads, ten horns, crowns, and ὀνόματα βλασφημίας. This highlights the beast's human side and perverse nature, most notably signified by the symbolic number 666, as detailed in Revelation 13:18. What the

[485] The only recorded worship event for the beast and indirectly for the dragon is in Rev 13: 4, and even here, how they worship is only reported with the two rhetorical questions: "Who is like the beast?" and "Who can make war with him?" No names are attributed.

[486] Resseguie observes these characterisation techniques, of "showing" and "telling," that reveal traits through speech, actions, clothing, and physical description while telling comments on characters for readers' benefit as John's fond formula in revealing characters in the book. While this is true, the author's portrayal of the evil characters is restricted to his descriptors. See James L. Resseguie, "Characters and Characterisation in the Book of Revelation," in *Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig R. Koester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 37–52; Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary*, 38–42; James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 121–30.

[487] Whereas the act of drawing of angels with his tail echoes his later revealed names such as ὁ πλανῶν and ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, the second act of casting them to the earth forecasts his true fate of being cast to the earth after his defeat in the war with Michael (Rev 12: 4, 9).

beast does is not different from his appearance; he opened his mouth to "βλασφημίας πρὸς τὸν θεόν, βλασφημῆσαι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν αὐτοῦ, τοὺς ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ σκηνοῦντας" (13:6).

Similarly, the beast from the land (Rev. 13:11–17) has a deceptive appearance, resembling a lamb with two horns but speaking with the voice of a dragon. John uses a masculine participle to emphasise the beast's humanity and employs a contrast between what is seen and heard to reveal its true character. The beast's outwardly lamb-like appearance is a facade, only unmasked by its dragon-like voice when it acts, showcasing its deceptive nature.

In the letters to the seven churches, Satan is not named as an independent entity; instead, his name is used twice to refer to adversaries, similarly to the term "synagogue of Satan" found in Smyrna and Philadelphia (Rev. 2:13; 3:9), and manifests in persons like Jezebel (2:20).[488]

John emphasises these evil actors' deceptive and destructive nature through a theo-onomastic naming strategy that juxtaposes evil characters' appearances with actual actions that conform to their expected crucial roles in the cosmic conflict. This indicates a cosmic conflict between the evil and the good. It also tells of the quasi-divine and fallen nature of the evil powers. However, the manner in which they are named is authorial prescriptive and the contexts in which they are named evoke their destined defeat to follow.

6.4.3. Step 3: Literary-Theological Profile

The third step in Theo-onomastics is to examine the images that the types of names create and how such names are revealed. Through this process, the function of the characters in fuelling the cosmic conflict is explored.

[488] Gulaker, *Satan, the Heavenly Adversary of Man*, 55–96.

The literary-theological profile of the dragon's agents in Revelation can be described as secondary antagonists.[489] Their role is predetermined in Revelation 12:17, where the dragon resolves to wage war against the remnant of the woman's seed. Thus, after successive defeats in heaven[490] and on earth, the devil resorts to a new strategy of combat, involving proxies. These evil agents do not possess independent existence or purpose; instead, they fulfil the dragon's agenda.

Despite their subsidiary function in the cosmic conflict, these agents form a formidable combat force to further the dragon's objectives. Nonetheless, because their roles are intertwined with the dragon's, so are their ultimate fates. As the frontline in the war, they are the first to be destroyed, as is depicted in Revelation 19:20–21.

6.4.4. Step 4: Relevance to the Cosmic Conflict

The final stage of the theo-onomastic strategy involves evaluating the relevance of the preceding three steps to the cosmic conflict theme presented in Revelation.
Chapter 12 depicts the devil's three levels of waging war (i.e. warring in heaven v.7; his quest to devour the male child and his mother v. 4–5; and his resolve to make war with the offspring of the woman v. 17) and how he is defeated in all instances. This seems to have ended the conflict, but the chapter hints at Satan's fiercest combat yet to come. The deadly tool in the devil's hands to accomplish his wish is to change the medium of warfare itself. This time, he plans a proxy war through human agencies to deceive nations, as is evident from the name discussed above. In Revelation these agents serve as a lifeline for Satan's ongoing war. The places of origin of the sea beast and the earth beast indicate Satan's

[489] Aune describes such characters as eschatological antagonists within a context of combat myth historicisation. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 753–55.

[490] E C Shin, "The Conqueror Motif in Chapters 12–13: A Heavenly and an Earthly Perspective in the Book of Revelation," *VE* 28.1 (2007): 207–23.

resolve to court every possible earthly institution as much as possible to achieve his goals. Thus, the names “sea” and “land” suggest the entire planet. One may wonder why he relies on earthly instruments to fight in chapters 13–20. Perhaps it is because his heavenly exploits resulted in defeat, and he relied on his last resort: his earthly agents. Moreover, although his ultimate target is God, his being cast away to the earth with the opportunity of return not in sight, the easiest prey would be to ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς (Rev. 12:17), who are God’s cherished possession on the earth because they τῶν τηρούντων τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ· (12:17). Thus, even in his final onslaught, Satan is selective about whom to attack, which means he intentionally charts the agencies.

6.5. Summary

In this chapter the theo-onomastic method has been applied systematically to analyse the naming conventions associated with Satan and his followers in the book of Revelation. Examining the theological and literary significance of these names has provided a deep exploration of their implications.

Revelation authoritatively presents the names of evil forces, allowing no room for alternative self-descriptive options or euphemisms (17:6). These malevolent entities are depicted as comparable to God and dragons or Satan. In Revelation 17:3, the bride or New Jerusalem is associated with the names of saints and apostles, whereas the whore or Babylon bears the blasphemous names. The letters to the seven churches introduce the adversary of God without prior references. A summary of the consequences of Satan’s expulsion and brief confinement period preceding the conclusion is provided.

The naming pattern of the dragon demonstrates a progressive decline in potency, transitioning from a formidable dragon to a lowly accuser, mirroring the demise motif in the chapter. Satan is mentioned in the letter to the church in Thyatira (2:24). The letter to the

church in Philadelphia contains the most explicit reference to Satan. John's depiction of the beast from the sea is intended to resemble the Lamb rather than the fourth beast described in Daniel 7. The beast serves as an imposter, whereas the Lamb is genuine. The implication of the Lamb's death as being due to his wounds is suggested by references to his blood atonement and the redeeming efficacy of his blood (Rev. 5:9; 7:14; 12:11). Both the Lamb and the sea beast derive their power from comparable sources. This differentiation is based on the different categorisations of sin. The name inscribed on the harlot's forehead is 'Mystery'.

Table 10: Theo-Onomastics of Evil Agents

Theo-onomastics of Evil Agents						
Name	**Bible Reference**	**Type of Name**	**Naming Technique**	**Characteristics**	**Literally-Theological profiles**	**Relevance to CosConf**
Ἰεζάβελ	2:20	Proper	Authorial Prescriptive	The actors in this category are depicted as akin to mercenary soldiers whose primary objective is to blaspheme and deceive. Their names correspond to the character and function suggested by the dragon's various names, emphasising their commitment to waging war through deception and demonisation.	Antagonist[491]	These characters' names vividly capture their integral role in the cosmic conflict. They serve as the last arsenal of the Satanic onslaught on the offspring of the woman he failed to defeat in 12:17. Their introduction to the scene is thus essential for the development of cosmic conflict.
μυστήριον	17:5	Epithetical	Authorial Prescriptive			
τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον	13:1					
θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς	13:11, 14, 20:4					
τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδες ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν	17:8, 11					
τῆς πόρνης τῆς μεγάλης	17:1, 15–16	Titular	Authorial Prescriptive			
Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη	17:5, 18:2, 10, 16					
ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς	17:5b					
ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη	17:18					
θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον	13:1	Participial	Authorial Ascriptives			
θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς	13:11					

[491] The divine attack inherent in the blasphemous names of the agents of evil makes some categorise their profiles as 'eschatological antagonists',especially in their quest to usurp worship that is due to God and Jesus alone. See Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 755.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Concluding Statement

In this investigation the pivotal role that names and naming strategies play as literary and theological devices in the depiction of the cosmic conflict in Revelation have been explored. By developing and applying the theo-onomastic methodology, a four-phase analytical framework, this study demonstrates that names function as more than mere identifiers; they serve as integral structuring elements that shape theological meaning and narrative depth.

Through a systematic examination of names in Revelation, the investigation establishes that John employs specific naming techniques to characterise virtuous and malevolent figures, thereby reinforcing their roles within the broader cosmic struggle between divine and diabolical forces. The four-phase analytical approach consists of (a) identifying the types of names used, (b) assessing the techniques employed in their introduction, (c) constructing the literary-theological profiles that emerge from these elements, and (d) analysing their functions within the cosmic conflict theme. This approach has uncovered profound theological insights embedded in the text. These findings affirm that the names in Revelation constitute a conceptual framework that articulates theologically the ongoing battle between God, Satan, and their respective allies in the eschatological narrative.

Moreover, John's distinct characterisation strategies align with the theo-onomastic approach, demonstrating that names are not arbitrarily chosen but are deeply intertwined with the theological intent and narrative design. These findings show a more nuanced understanding of Revelation's theological message may be gained by paying close attention to names and naming conventions. The Theo-onomastic methodology developed here

provides a structured means to uncover these dimensions systematically, reinforcing the significance of names as a vital hermeneutical key for interpreting the text.

The findings reported here demonstrate that names in Revelation function as strategic elements that advance the cosmic war theme and deepen the literary and theological engagement with the text. By illustrating the indispensable role of names in shaping the theological landscape of Revelation, this study contributes to biblical scholarship by highlighting how naming conventions serve as conduits for conveying complex theological truths. Future research may extend this theo-onomastic methodology to other biblical texts, exploring its applicability to broader scriptural analysis and deepening our appreciation of the theological and literary power of names in the biblical corpus.

7.2 Perspective on Names in the Book of Revelation

In the Book of Revelation, the functions of names and naming are extensive and dynamic, moving beyond mere identification. Rather than strictly adhering to conventional proper names, the author employs a dynamic linguistic strategy by converting various parts of speech, such as verbs, adjectives and pronouns, into nouns. Consequently, John uses proper names infrequently, opting for titles, adjectives, and participial phrases to designate characters. In this study, a name is defined as a proper noun, adjective, participle, or phrase that refers to a particular object or actor.

This deliberate predilection for participial expressions, titular designations, and epithets is not merely stylistic but integral to portraying characters' roles and functions within the framework of the narrative. Phrasal names in Revelation serve a purpose that extends well beyond identification; they reveal the intrinsic nature and defining characteristics of their bearers. In effect, names in Revelation are inextricably linked to the reality they signify, reflecting an ancient Semitic mindset in which naming presaged the function or destiny of the named entity.

Furthermore, naming in this context emerges as a crucial narrative device that delineates plots and distinguishes between characters, while simultaneously expressing deep-seated literary and theological connections. The appellations conferred upon both benevolent and malevolent characters are densely laden with connotations, subtly alluding to the ongoing cosmic conflict underpinning the text's theological structure. The names of the divine and infernal cohorts encapsulate their distinct personalities and roles in a broader cosmic drama.

The construction of individual identities within narrative frameworks is frequently derived from variations in the naming conventions. Although the absence of formal names may initially appear to generate ambiguity, such uncertainty can be advantageous from an interpretive perspective. Theo-onomastic methodologies offer a systematic method for distinguishing between characters by focusing on alternative designations that serve similar theological purposes. This approach reduces interpretative challenges and improves our comprehension of the various functions of names in the narrative of Revelation.

The analysis of these naming practices not only enriches our comprehension of the text's narrative strategies but also invites further enquiry into how such linguistic innovations shape our interpretation of cosmic conflict and divine destiny in apocalyptic literature.

7.2.1 Naming Patterns in the Book of Revelation

Naming occurs at several levels and in different formats. The names are introduced to the scene through two main techniques: prescription and ascription. Both prescriptions and ascriptions can be divided into two subsets: authorial/self-prescriptions and authorial/audience ascriptions. A prescription occurs when actors reveal their names or the author/narrative to reveal them (e.g., Rev. 1:8; 5:5–5), whereas ascription refers to the author's/narrator's providing the names of actors or to the heavenly audience introducing the names (e.g., Rev. 4:8; 5:9).

7.2.1.1 Names for God

The names of God in Revelation can be categorised as either ascriptive or prescriptive names. The text inaugurates its apocalyptic narrative with a dramatic self-disclosure in which God identifies Himself in a self-prescriptive manner as "Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, λέγει κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ" (Rev. 1:8). This self-revelatory act establishes an a priori framework that informs the reader's perception of God's character. By using these prescriptive names, the text not only proclaims God's transcendence but also delineates His unparalleled majesty and supreme authority over the unfolding dramatic events, thereby constructing an enduring literary–theological profile within the context of a cosmic struggle. In this theological schema, any character that endeavours to contest this divine primacy is inherently designated as subordinate, a dynamic reinforced by the subsequent theo-onomastic naming practices used throughout the book.

In Revelation chapter 4, the portrayal of God's throne is further elaborated by the use of a participial epithet, ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος (4:2). This participial form situates God beyond the conventional constraints of temporal sequences, evoking the image of an originator engaged in an unceasing and uninterrupted act of creation. The designation τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ encapsulates His role as the eternal judge and sovereign, a figure whose permanent and immutable posture remains steadfast despite the vicissitudes of narrative events. In this manner, God is inductively presented as the de facto principal actor in the cosmic conflict, in full accord with the text's overarching theo-onomastic repertoire.

Beyond the authorial imposition of prescriptive names, the liturgical ascriptions offered by celestial worshippers, most notably the thrice-repeated Ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος (4:8), introduce an additional communal dimension to God's literary-theological profile. This ascriptive element is in stark contrast with the qualities ascribed to the dragon, which embodies all that is unholy. The dragon's attempt to replicate divine authority—its purported

ability to dispense power and merit worship (cf. Rev. 13:1– 4) may be interpreted as an effort to usurp the singular, absolute authority that is reserved unequivocally for God in the vision of the throne room.

Although the text does not depict God as directly confronting the forces of evil in the cosmic war, His intervention is implicitly mediated through the figure of the Lamb—identified as ἀρνίον ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον—whose prefigured death and resurrection are extolled in the heavenly court, thereby affirming His worthiness (Ἄξιος), as stated in Revelation 5:9–10. Regardless of the nuances of interpretation attendant to this scene, it remains evident that the nomenclature employed by Jesus is instrumental in clarifying the divine strategy for achieving the final victory in the eternal contest between Good and Evil.

A Theo-onomastic analysis of Revelation reveals that the motif of cosmic conflict is not an incidental narrative element but rather a persistent thematic undercurrent introduced through the naming conventions applied to Jesus in Chapters 1–3 and then markedly amplified in chapter 12 and beyond. This systematic deployment of divine and messianic names constructs a hierarchical framework that privileges the divine and articulates a broader eschatological vision. In summary, the sophisticated interplay between ascriptive and prescriptive names in Revelation is a critical mechanism for theological identity formation, delineating both the cosmic hierarchy and the narrative's eschatological resolution.

7.2.1.2 Names of Jesus

In the book of Revelation, Jesus Christ emerges as the preeminent figure, and his significance is underscored by thirty-two distinct names. These names have pivotal roles in the narrative and exemplify two principal naming strategies. First, self-prescriptive naming, primarily evident in the letters to the seven churches, illuminates Jesus' intrinsic nature, his divine attributes, and his essential character. Second, there is authorial and audience-

ascriptive naming, wherein the names are assigned either by the narrative authority or the worshipping community, affirming their status in the community.

A prototypical example of the interplay between self-descriptive, authorial, and audience-ascriptive naming is found in Revelation 5. Here, self-prescriptive designations, such as "ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὁ ζῶν, ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων" (Rev. 1:18) and "ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ" (Rev. 2:1), establish a continuum of existence that mirrors God's own literary-theological profile. These appellations evoke temporal transcendency from the past through the future while concurrently situating Jesus' authority in the earthly domain. Notably, Jesus is portrayed as intimately acquainted with the conditions of each church (cf., Rev. 2:2, 9, 13, 17, 19; 3:1, 8, 15) and as the authoritative voice dictating the messages conveyed by the phrase "Τάδε λέγει."

The dual function of these naming techniques is evident in their capacity to delineate Jesus' sovereign authority over the seven churches and simultaneously position him as the principal target of satanic opposition, thereby reinforcing the motif of cosmic conflict that is central to Revelation's apocalyptic vision. The authorial ascription seen in phrases such as "Τίς ἄξιος ἀνοῖξαι τὸ βιβλίον?" (Rev 5:2), along with the titles ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα and ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ (ascribed by the elder), juxtaposed with John's attribution of the appellation ἀρνίον in Rev 5:5–6, collectively engender a deliberate tension within Jesus' literary-theological profile in Revelation. One perspective emphasises his regal attributes and capacity for judgement, while the other foregrounds his redemptive sacrifice and the consequent acquisition of unparalleled authority, a duality upon which all subsequent nomenclature hinges.

The most recurrent appellation, ἀρνίον, employed to signify both worthiness (Rev 5:6) and triumph over evil through crucifixion, is an indispensable element in Revelation's theological configuration. The phrase "τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου" (Rev 7:14) constitutes a pivotal

symbol, theologically situating the cosmic conflict as one with an inevitable outcome in which God is victorious (cf. Rev 12:11). In this schema, the crucifixion is emblematic of both divine victory and satanic retribution, encapsulating the perpetual struggle between the two. Consequently, given its far-reaching implications for the text's eschatological trajectory, it is more apt to interpret this naming methodology as Lamb Theo-onomastics rather than merely Lamb Christology.

A closer examination of the term ἀρνίον, particularly as it appears in Rev 12:11, reveals a sophisticated dialectic contrasting life and victory with death and anticipated defeat. The phrase "they did not cherish their lives even when confronted with death" also intimates victory over humiliation, a motif reinforced by the recurring association of τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου with the Lamb's sacrificial death. This redemptive bloodshed is portrayed as the means through which believers ultimately overcome the great accuser, thereby confirming their eschatological triumph. Thus, the perilous circumstances faced by the seven congregations are inextricably linked to the Lamb's triumph, encouraging the fidelity expressed in the exhortation γίνου πιστὸς ἄχρι θανάτου.

The function of Lamb theo-onomastics is further elucidated through its strategic juxtaposition with other apocalyptic entities—the dragon, the beast from the sea and the beast from the land—each described with epithets that underscore their transient and inferior authority compared to that of the Lamb. The deliberate contrast between these figures and the Lamb underscores the author's narrative dexterity and the integral role of nomenclature in this cosmic drama.

Although the Lamb does not appear explicitly in the seven epistles, its theological essence pervades the texts. The theo-onomastic function attributed to the Lamb not only consolidates Jesus' authority to judge and direct divine operations but also serves as a unifying element that bolsters the superiority of the churches over their adversaries.

In sum, the intricate interplay of divine and messianic naming in Revelation, encompassing both the explicit naming and deliberate concealment of Jesus' names, constitutes a central mechanism by which John simultaneously reveals and conceals the identities of the ultimate victors in this cosmic struggle. This carefully orchestrated literary and theological naming strategy is crucial for understanding the eschatological framework of the Apocalyptic narrative. This warrants further scholarly exploration of its implications for the conception of divine sovereignty and cosmic order in the apocalyptic literature.

7.2.1.3. Names of Evil Characters

Unlike the names of good characters, evil characters' names follow only one pattern: authorial or ascriptive. In this style, the author/narrator assigns names to all evil characters in the book. This is in contrast with God and his cohorts, who have the liberty to self-prescribe names and other naming patterns.

In the sequence of the names of the principal evil character, the dragon, portrayed as, appears first (Rev. 12:3), followed by the two beasts (Rev. 13:1,11) and the harlot (Rev. 17:1–6) (dragon – beasts–harlot). In contrast, evil characters exit the narrative in the reverse order of their entrance. The harlot's demise occurs first, as described in Revelation 18:1–9 and 21–24. This is followed by the defeat of the two beasts in Revelation 19:17–21, and finally, the dragon meets its end in Revelation 20:7–10. This creates a reverse pattern of the harlot, the two beasts, and the dragon. The introduction of these main characters highlights the two beasts and Babylon as the central antagonists. It highlights their characters as proxies for the dragon, who is the prime evil and antagonist in the storyline. The narrative pages feature evil names that provide insight into John's cosmic conflict and creative dexterity.

The names ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος[492], ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος[493] καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν in (12:3, 9, and 20:2) are carefully structured to show a literary-theological profile, that is, the theological description of the dragon and its role is based on its naming within the context of cosmic conflict. The similarities between the names are evident when they are written. They are presented in a format where the first two names are parallel and equal in length, arranged as follows: noun-adjective-participle-adjective, with a continuous recurrence of ὁ. Together, these titles imply a wild, serpent-like animal. The third and fourth names are parallel, starting with ὁ and followed by a participle, and their meanings are similar. The importance of names highlights that the dragon has been carefully named in contrast to the unnamed mother and child (Rev. 12:1– 6).

The extensive naming of the prime evil, the dragon, has some implications for the theme of cosmic conflict. The concept of God or Jesus as the supra-addressor giving the dragon its name seems to have revived the traditional practice of subjugating the one who is named.[494] Thus God indirectly exerts control over the dragon through a theo-onomastic strategy. In addition, the explicit unveiling of the dragon offers hope of eventual victory for the reader/hearer of the book's messages, especially for its first recipients.

The narrative exposes evil's weakness forcing the antagonist to adopt indirect tactics in subsequent battles with the woman's offspring, as seen in his exploits with the woman and

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[492] Some witnesses change the nominative here to τον οφιν τον αρχαιον (e.g. ℵ 046. 051. 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2050. 2053. 2062. 2329.)

[493] In 20:2, some manuscripts omit the article to bring it in line with the anarthrous use of the previous name (e.g. ℵ 1611. 2050. 2053). Rev 9:11; 17:5; 19:11 offers a pattern which shows that in Revelation, a proper name in apposition to a noun in an oblique case is sometimes used in place of a proper name.

[494] Johnson's assertion in his study of the fourth gospel may also be true here in the Apocalypse; "In Biblical tradition, the act of naming is an exercise of power; it shows knowledge of an authority over another." Fred Blumenthal, "Biblical Onomastics: What's In a Name?," *JBQ* 37.2 (2009): 124; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM Press, 2010), 481; George W. Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?," *CBQ* 50.1 (1988): 24–35; Seymour, "Personal Names and Name Giving in the Ancient Near East."

with Michael. However, this is not a new weapon, since it is embedded in the names already revealed: ὁ πλανῶν and ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος.[495]

Although the dragon gives its power and throne to the surrogate from the sea (τὴν δύναμιν and τὸν θρόνον), it is not given the right to name them (Rev. 13:2). The beast's core mandate to fuel deception is further strengthened by his secret ὀνόματα βλασφημίας (Rev. 13:6). It is unlikely that the dragon even knows this mysterious name, since he did not create or call the beast into existence.[496] The land beast, only reinforces the agenda of deception when it imposes the stringent rule not to buy or sell unless one has received the τὸ χάραγμα, τὸ ὄνομα, and ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος.

Chapter 17 introduces the dragon's third agent. This agent is described as a woman sitting on a θηρίον κόκκινον (scarlet beast). Her name is revealed in Rev. 16:19: "καὶ Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη ἐμνήσθη ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ δοῦναι αὐτῇ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ·" However, her name is not immediately stated when John is carried into the wilderness. Instead the angel gives her the epithet, τῆς πόρνης τῆς μεγάλης (17:2). She is described as sitting on a scarlet beast filled with blasphemous names.[497] When this character is finally revealed, the names written on her forehead provide an expansive description of her nature and function in fostering the dragon's deception. She is 'ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ τῶν βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς (Rev. 17:5).

Her names and context seem to point towards her demise. For example, the name Babylon does not play any part in the interpretation offered by the angel (17:7–18) in which

[495] This observation becomes poignant when one considers that the ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος evokes the deception of the Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen 3). See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 193; Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation*, 179; Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John*, 405–6; Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 159.

[496] The Greek of Rev 12 ends in verse 18 that reveals that Satan, after all his rage, stood at the shore of the sea. Most English translations include the statement "And he stood on the sea" (RSV, ESV, REB), but include it as part of v17. The United Bible Societies Greek NT (1993) separates v18 from 17.

[497] We have encountered this beast already in the Chapter 13.

the primary focus is on her harlotry. However, it is a name that echoes the story of an ancient mighty city (Rev. 18:10, 16) that, despite its ancient magnificence, no longer existed when the Apocalypse was written. The naming of this third evil antagonist in the cosmic battle was not intended to evoke awe but to indicate God's containment of evil, no matter how ferocious its outlook might be. Here again, one can see traces of ancient name-giving to assert authority over the individual. The naming style is authorial and prescriptive, and the dragon is named in detail to reflect its core role in the scheme of the cosmic conflict in the book of Revelation.[498] God's adversary waged war against angels and humans, slandering saints and misleading humanity. The theological portrait and function of the archenemy are revealed through naming that presents the characters' literary–theological profiles as antagonists in the conflict and their fate to be defeat and destruction. Satan's ferocious appearance as a dragon is reduced to nothingness after his expulsion from heaven, being chained and cast into the bottomless pit and eventually into the lake of fire (Rev. 12:3; 20: 1–3, 10). The naming strategy in the Apocalypse is crucial for understanding the theme of the cosmic conflict.

[498] The above assertions about naming contradict the earlier scholarly position that holds that John employed vilification of evil characters to define the good characters, including himself. Freyne, for example, argues that a writer sometimes uses an opponent's failures and inadequacies as a means of warning his/her own community. Collins defines conflict in the Book of Revelation as 'a process whereby a particular group, Christians living toward the end of the first century in western Asia Minor, defined itself and determined the boundaries between itself and other social groups.' Hence, he sees vilification as John's tool in settling the conflict because 'vilification reflects a conflict over values, a clash of symbolic universes. One aspect of the conflict is a disagreement over where the boundary line should be drawn between church and culture, between religion and politics.' See Sean Freyne, "Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 117–44; Collins, "Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation"; Pippin, "Jezebel Re-Vamped." Such a reading of the naming and conflict in Revelation sounds too simplistic. The author does not vilify opposing actors of God to enhance his character. Through theo-onomastics, one can argue that the author intentionally builds the literary-theological profile of good characters by giving them a voice to name themselves, thereby revealing their true nature even before evil characters are introduced to the scenes of the story. Then again, the names of evil characters are not those that befit their roles, they are not made up to vilify but to represent their essence. Moreover, As demonstrated in this study, the conflict theme goes beyond a contest of values to include an opponent that does not contest its values. It is an imposter that presents itself as identical to the person and character of the good entities. Thus, the conflict is more cosmic than merely local and spans generations beyond the first century.

The theo-onomastic naming style applied to Satan and his cohorts indicates how God, in the face of the ongoing cosmic war, controls and ultimately removes evil at its deepest roots. Satan is the antagonist, the originator, who directs his subordinates, the two beasts and the prostitute. He lurks behind the many faces of evil that believers experience. The final opponent to be eliminated from the scene is the dragon, the embodiment of fundamental evil, who is annihilated (Rev. 20:10–15). These names signify that the myriad manifestations of villainy within the text may be attributed to rejection of and antagonism towards God. Behind the many faces of evil is an unmasked instigator: a dragon. He is a force that opposes, battles, and destroys God's followers, as stated in Revelation 12:17. In Revelation, the names of evil entities demonstrate that despite Satan's violent and persecuting nature, he cannot escape God's judgement and power. Despite Satan's various disguises, he cannot hide from the scrutiny of the ὁ παντοκράτωρ, who knows him deeply and has the superior authority to unmask him theo-onomastically. Names in Revelation reveal status, with many characters indicating a special status. The main characters of good and evil, believers and unbelievers, are often related by names (2:12–17).

The authority and influence of the sea beast and dragon overshadow those of the other evil entities. The sea beast is marked by blasphemous names that are deeply connected to its demonic essence and integral to its identity. In Chapter 17, the woman is depicted riding a beast covered with blasphemous names, although she bears only one name. Her title, "Great Babylon, Mother of Whores and Earth's Abominations", is described as a "mystery" and reflects the core of her identity and purpose. The Whore of Babylon contrasts with the victorious rider, showcasing the stark opposition between imperial power and divine power. While the rider, symbolising purity, sits astride a white horse, the woman rides a grotesque and blasphemous beast. The rider is a warrior figure; the rider embodies righteousness with his names, such as "The Word of God." The Harlot of Babylon serves as a symbolic

counterpart to the virtuous woman clothed with the sun. Through these two women, John crafts the literary-theological tension between good and evil.

The blasphemous names on the head of the sea beast hold dual significance in John's narrative: it is both a veiled reference to a real identity and a symbol that enables individuals to engage in trade and align themselves with the dragon's agenda. John's literary-theological naming gains polemical strength as the beast's followers mirror the practices of Christ's disciples in worshipping it (13:4). Thus, the beast imitates Christ's role and actions, creating an unsettling parody of divine worship and loyalty.

In this study there has been a focus on John's use of names and naming as a literary and theological strategy for portraying the cosmic conflict theme in Revelation. Revelation employs naming as a literary and theological strategy to convey profound truths and concepts, revealing layers of meaning and their implications.

The act of naming in Revelation underscores God's authority and sovereignty. The divine names used throughout the text, such as Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Rev. 1:8), serve three purposes: identifying, predicting, and evaluating God as the primary character among the good entities in the cosmic conflict drama theme in the book. To achieve these purposes, John uses prescriptive and ascriptive naming patterns in his naming system. In prescriptive naming, God makes a self-disclosure, whereas the ascriptive names are given by either the author or through the divine hymning of the heavenly hosts who sing praises of God and the Lamb. God's names and naming patterns display his literary-theological profile, portraying him as one with no contender in terms of power and strength. Despite attempting to identify God, John maintains a sense of transcendence that prevents him from portraying God as a human.[499] Thus, the One who sits upon the throne is theo-onomastically revealed in Revelation as the transcendent Lord, who is the transcendent centre of all, the transcendent

[499] Koester, *Revelation*, 368.

beginning and the end of all things.[500] This implies that in light of the cosmic conflict, God is bound to conquer the enemy, Satan, because he is the source of all acts in the Apocalypse.

John uses antonomasia instead of a proper name for God in the prologue to Revelation to reveal God's character and role in the drama and message of the entire Apocalypse. The term, "antonomasia", highlights the theological character, role, and nature of literary actors in the biblical narratives. John's strategies for contrasting the majesty of God and Christ with Satan and earthly rulers are evident when the same divine names are applied to Christ.

The highest theological significance depicts God as ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ruling over rivals such as the dragon and his allies. The book's content stems from God but is communicated through a long string of names, indicative of the distance between God and his created world. There is no direct action of God in the book's drama, and the mode of naming him is through appellative hymnody in worship, which is primarily ascriptive and self-prescriptive in nature. One can deduce that the primary grammatical function of naming God is to identify, predicate, and evaluate his character in a context in which he is incomparable to any other character. Rev. 6:9–11 is often regarded as the most vital scene for understanding God's role in the book of Revelation. It contains the opening of the fifth seal, where the souls of those slain cry out in a quest for God's timing to avenge their blood.

Moreover, God is depicted as passive and distant, with only a few sections in which he acts. This is because all the other characters in the scene have eternal or fixed poses, such as the four living creatures and the elders. This apparent passivity is seen as an intentional mystery that separates God from humans and the pagan gods. However, the Lamb's actions reveal that God, who appears to act passively, is the source of all activities in the book. Combat in the cosmic conflict between God and Evil is not about taking up arms but to conquer through sacrifice. This mode of warfare permeates the rest of the narrative, with

[500] Swain, "'To Him Who Sits on the Throne and to the Lamb.'"

Jesus depicted as wearing a bloody robe on a white horse, but the dragon is conquered by Jesus' blood and the testimony of his followers.

The literary-theological profile of God in Revelation is carefully crafted through prescriptive and ascriptive names and epithets, such as the *ὁ παντοκράτωρ*, the One sitting on the throne, and the One who is, was, and is to come. These images reveal God's absolute power, such that nothing occurs in the Apocalypse without his approval. The Dragon, the antagonist of God, appears to mimic the same background role played by God when it gives its power, throne, and great authority to the beast from the sea. Thus, God's nature can be inferred from the names that show his unique connections between being the Creator of all things and the Seated One, from whose sovereignty arise all the actions in the Apocalypse.

The naming of Jesus, Christ, and the Spirit follows the same prescriptive and ascriptive patterns. The concealment and suspense in revealing who is worthy of opening the scroll and the fact that there is no one else qualified to do so in heaven and earth except him (5:1–4) heighten the character's critical nature and function in the apocalyptic narrative. Thus, the setting ensures that the Lamb who will open the scroll is on God's right-hand side. This distinction was made before the Messianic names and deliverance acts were given. Thus, the relevance of his literary and theological profile is clear.

Various scholars have interpreted the contrast between the Lion and the Lamb. Some argue that the contrast is intentional, while others believe it combines majesty and meekness. Others interpret the lion/lamb imagery in a courtroom context as signifying acquittal. However, a combination of the two aspects of the same person was presented to achieve literary-theological profiling of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. The certainty with which the elder and John introduce their ascribing of a name to Jesus reveals the importance of the two names, though Lamb is John's favourite. The Christ of the promises of the Old Covenant and apocalyptic hope is revealed in terms of the fulfilment of the New Covenant.

The relationship between λέων and ἀρνίον is not acknowledged, but their combination creates a new symbol of conquest through sacrificial death.

The Book of Revelation features prominently the image of a lamb/lion in chapter 5, with Lion is signifying Christ as judge and the Lamb as sacrifice. John, a Seer, witnesses an open door (4:1) and hears a voice commanding him to ascend and observe forthcoming events. He sees God seated on a throne, surrounded by twenty-four elders and four living creatures. In 5:5 it is the conquering Lion who is deemed worthy by an elder to open the scroll and its seven seals. A scroll sealed with seven seals is held in the right hand of the one seated on the throne, and John observes a Lamb standing as if it had been slain. The juxtaposition of Lion and Lamb images has prompted significant scholarly discussions. Some interpret this as a jarring change in the visual imagery, while others view the Lamb's sudden appearance as serving a dramatic purpose. Understanding the relationship between these seemingly incongruous images is crucial for deciphering John's literary-theo-onomastic framework accurately.

The two perspectives merge to create a comprehensive picture of Jesus' character in and his role after his investiture in Rev. 5. The elder emphasises authority through Christ's sacrifice, while John emphasises worthiness through past atonement. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah symbolises power and royal strength, and the Root of David alludes to the Isaianic 'root of Jesse'.

The names of Jesus in the Apocalypse reveal his authority to decide who enters the kingdom (when he offers himself as the bridge), his authority in the kingdom, and his role as the ruler of the kings of the earth. The metaphor of Lamb in Revelation is often attributed to the Old Testament or to Jewish antecedents, with some suggesting that it could be interpreted as leadership or as fulfilling Jewish eschatological expectations. The Lamb's blood is expiatory in the Apocalypse, as it transforms saints into priests and makes them rulers. Cultic

imagery is also emphasised in Revelation's opening scene, where Jesus is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead. John's focus is on the exalted status of the Lamb rather than his sacrifice in the past. Other titles that align with the Lamb include "Son of God," "the living one," "the holy one," "the true one," and "the Amen." The name "The Beginning of God's Creation" (3:14) is the predominant role of Christ in the Apocalypse. The names of Jesus in Revelation collectively depict Jesus' character in the Apocalypse and his role after his investiture, with varying emphasis on his person and nature.

One significant observation is that in the book of Revelation the names given to Jesus are predominantly Christological. The Lamb, born of the tribe of Judah, performed a divine act of redemption, ransoming God's people through his blood and making them a kingdom of priests to God. This act of redemption makes him worthy to open the sealed scroll and deserving of worship due to God alone. The Lamb, is identified by his transcendent oneness and receives glory and honour from all creatures as he is included in the worship of God.

This theo-onomastic strategy depicts Jesus as the victor, who implements all that God seeks to achieve in redeeming humanity from the shackles of Satan. Thus, through the naming of Christ, we see him as an accomplished conqueror over "he who was and is no more" (Rev. 17:8). Furthermore, by utilising names and naming, the profound influence of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus on the cosmic war is made clear. He is the Lamb already sacrificed and has prevailed over Satan. The naming strategy for the evil characters in Revelation is authorial prescriptive. Evil actors are given names that reflect their actions. The dragon appears first, followed by the two beasts and the prostitute, and their introduction indicates the reversal of the order of their demise. This pattern of demise following introduction highlights the character and actions of the dragon, the prime evil and chief protagonist of evil in the book. The variety of names for the chief evil, the dragon, has

implications for the theme of cosmic conflict. The dragon's explicit unveiling offers hope of victory to the book's readers and hearers.

The dragon's desire to fight directly is thwarted, and he adopts a new more indirect strategy of deception in subsequent battles with the offspring of the woman. The second beast from the land enforces the to grant only those one receive the τὸ χάραγμα, ῾τὸ ὄνομα, and ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ὀνόματος the right to partake in trade. The third agent of the dragon is a woman sitting on a scarlet beast filled with blasphemous names. Her names and context point to her demise, indicating God's containment of evil. The theo-onomastic naming style used for Satan and his cohorts indicates how God controls and removes evil at its deepest roots, despite the ongoing cosmic war. The dragon represents fundamental evil and opposes, battles, and destroys God's creation.

The Apocalyptic narrative is filled with hidden names that fuel the theme of the cosmic conflict. The name of the beast, marked on the right-hand side of his followers, is mighty and nothing cannot be bought or sold without a mark. The prostitute also has a name written on her forehead, which is described as "a mystery; Babylon the great, mother of whores and earth's abominations." The rider on the white horse is given several names that reveal special status. The rider has a secret name that no one knows except himself, and no one has power over him. The sea beast and dragon surpass the other beasts and the dragon bear names associated with blasphemous demonic forces. In Chapter 17, a woman rides a beast adorned with blasphemous names and bears only one name. The harlot of Babylon serves as a literary counterpart to the victorious rider, contrasting imperial power with divine authority. The rider is positioned on a white horse, symbolising purity, while the harlot rides a grotesque beast filled with blasphemy. The hidden names in Revelation serve as powerful tools for understanding and addressing the cosmic conflict.

For instance, the contrast between the names of good entities, such as ἐνίκησα (Rev. 2:7; 3:21) or ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός (Rev. 1:5; 3:14), and those attributed to the forces of evil, such as θηρίον (Rev. 12:1–10) or δράκων μέγας πυρρός (Rev. 12:3), highlights the ongoing spiritual warfare and the ultimate triumph of righteousness over evil.

The use of names in Revelation reinforces the text's eschatological perspective and promise of a new creation. The names associated with heavenly Jerusalem, such as "the city of God" and "the bride adorned for her husband", evoke images of restoration, renewal, and reconciliation. These names symbolise the fulfilment of God's redemptive plan and the consummation of his kingdom, where God dwells with his people in eternal fellowship.

Furthermore, the act of naming in Revelation serves as a means of identifying and evaluating both primary and secondary names given to faithful individuals and communities throughout the text, affirming their status as God's chosen people and participants in the divine drama of salvation history. By embracing these names, believers are called upon to embody the virtues and attributes associated with their identity as children of God and co-heirs with Christ.

7.3 Results of this Investigation

This dissertation has examined the function of naming as a literary and theological strategy in the Book of Revelation. By analysing the intricate use of names and titles, this study elucidates their role in conveying the text's rich symbolism, the thematic concerns of cosmic conflict, and the overall narrative arc. It posits that the act of naming not only enhances the portrayal of God's sovereignty and the ongoing spiritual conflict but also instils hope in the promise of redemption for believers. Ultimately, this research asserts that the theo-onomastic elements in Revelation underscore God's victory over evil and the establishment of his kingdom, characterised by justice, peace, and eternal glory.

The Book of Revelation is a profound apocalyptic text replete with rich imagery and deep theological insights. Central to its narrative is the theme of cosmic conflict, embodied in the struggle between the divine authority and the malevolent forces. This thesis argues that the literary strategy of naming in Revelation is instrumental in understanding its theological dimensions. By analysing the significance embedded in the names of key characters, this study reveals the intentionality of John, the author, in articulating a narrative that emphasises divine triumph over evil.

This study establishes the foundational concept of theo-onomastics, the study of the significance of names in a theological context. It discusses how names in Revelation contribute to the reader's understanding of character identity and thematic development. The analysis reveals that the names attributed to Jesus, particularly the self-referential titles ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος and Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὦ, articulate his sovereign authority and preeminence, setting the stage for the conflict that unfolds in the narrative.

Exploring the central theme of cosmic conflict, this dissertation argues that the struggle between God and Satan is not merely abstract but is intricately woven into the fabric of Revelation's narrative. Through a theo-onomastic lens, it demonstrates how Jesus, as the divine protagonist, contrasts sharply with Satan, the antagonist. By analysing names such as ὁ πλανῶν, it reveals the underlying weakness and doomed fate of Satan, thereby reinforcing Jesus' ultimate victory.

The study further delved into the implications of naming strategies for believers. By presenting the identity of the faithful as participants in the divine narrative, it assures them of their role in the triumph over evil. The act of naming serves not only to categorise characters as protagonists or antagonists but also to engage readers in an eschatological narrative that promises the ultimate consummation of God's kingdom. The faithful are encouraged to remain steadfast, as their identification with God and Christ secures their place in the divine plan.

This thesis highlights the theological affirmations that arise from the theo-onomastic analysis of Revelation. This emphasises that naming functions as more than a literary device; it is a pivotal mechanism that communicates God's sovereign control over the cosmic conflict and proclaims his eternal reign.

The findings of this study position the act of naming in the Book of Revelation as a critical component for interpreting its theological and narrative dimensions. By employing a theo-onomastic approach, this thesis sheds light on the profound symbolic richness of the text, asserting that understanding the intricacies of character names is vital to grasping the overarching narrative of triumph and divine sovereignty.

The dissertation also proposes future research directions, recommending deeper exploration of specific named entities within Revelation to enhance the understanding of its theological and literary complexities. Future studies should continue to delve into this significant aspect of biblical literature, further enriching the field of apocalyptic studies.

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APPENDIX

• Unless otherwise noted, the Hebrew, Septuagint, The Dead Sea Scrolls, and Greek NT cited in this research are taken from the following:

a. Lexham Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012).

b. Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English, reprint. (Michigan, MI: Hendrickson Pub., 1986).

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e. Flavius Josephus, Josephus Complete Works of Flavius Josephus [Standard edition]. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1960).

f. Unless otherwise stated, all Bible references in English are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

CANDIDATE'S BIO SKETCH

Felix Opoku-Gyamfi has dedicated his career to serving the Seventh-day Adventist Church in undertaking roles such as district pastor, chaplain, resident hall manager, and lecturer in New Testament studies (Valley View University) in Ghana. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Theological Studies from Valley View University, Ghana, followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Missions from Newbold College, England. Additionally, he completed a Certificate in Clinical Pastoral Education at Westmead Hospital, Sydney, NSW, and earned a Master of Arts in Theology degree from the University of Wales, Lampeter (now University of Wales Trinity Saint David), United Kingdom.

An ordained minister of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Opoku-Gyamfi, is currently pastoring at the Greater Sydney Conference of the SDA Church, where he leads both the Ghanaian and Auburn churches. His commitment to the ministry is matched by his dedication to his family; he is married and the proud father of two sons and one daughter.