

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

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Title: *PANTOKRATŌR* IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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With ten occurrences of *Pantokratōr* in the New Testament (NT), Revelation has the highest with nine appearances. A study of the reason for John's frequent usage of the term explores *Pantokratōr* in the Septuagint (LXX), Intertestamental literature, Greco-Roman world and the NT. The findings reveal that John seems to follow the LXX where, in the context of threat to God's people, *Pantokratōr* revealed Himself as sovereign ruler and judge over His people and all nations.

The persecuted Christians of Asia minor as well as all Christians in similar situations are consoled that *Pantokratōr* rules sovereignly over all the kingdoms of the world. Although Satan, through his agents, is trying to destroy the church of God, yet in the end Christ comes in the power of *Pantokratōr* with vengeance against all who oppose His rule but brings vindication to all who, through suffering, await His appearing.

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A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

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Dedicated to my treasured wife, Evelyn Amoh, and
my cherished children, Ellen, Kerrol, Joan, and Theophany.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DDDB	Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible
EDNT	Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament
LXX	The Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NIDOTT	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OTT	Old Testament Theology
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Pantokratōr appears ten times in the whole of the NT. Apart from 2 Corinthians 6:18 where it once occurs,¹ the rest are found in Revelation.² This frequent usage in Revelation³ has fascinated a number of scholars in regard to the meaning and significance of the usage in the context of the entire book. Two positions have emerged as scholars endeavor to search for the meaning and significance of *Pantokratōr* in Revelation. The first position assumes that *Pantokratōr* has the same meaning for all its occurrences;⁴ the meaning as it is intended in Revelation 1:8.⁵ Ranko Stefanovic's comment explains the

¹Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, *DDDB* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 22; With reference to other part of NT this divine name does not seem to have had much significance for the believers before Revelation.

²John F. MacArthur, "Revelation 12-22," *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2000), 200; Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (United Kingdom: Casemate, 2013), 12; *Pantokratōr* is used in 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; and 21:22. Most scholars agree that 2 Cor. 6:18 is an OT quotation from Amos 4:13.

³David Emerson Wilson, *Let Daniel and Revelation Speak* (USA Inspiration Speaks, 2010), 257; Accessed 17 October 2016. <http://biblealive.com/let-daniel-and-revelation-speak.html>. In most of its use in the Book commentators almost agree that *Pantokratōr* is in reference to God the Father and His power.

⁴Holman Bible Staff, *Experiencing the Word New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible, 2008), 541; especially when the meaning of παντοκράτωρ is seen as a translation of the LXX "Yahweh tseva 'ot (Lord of Host) which stresses God's power over forces against Him and His people."

⁵Wilhelm Michaelis, "Pantokratōr" *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-1974), 4:914; *Pantokratōr* is characteristic title for God in Revelation; William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, vol. 2 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 195; Ferrell Jenkins, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Marion, IN: Cogdill Foundation Publications, 1978), 98; With *Pantokratōr* God is spoken of as a warrior with invincible power fighting evil.

position of these scholars: “Nine times⁶ in the book of Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22) it (Pantokratōr) refers to God’s supremacy; it is best defined in the acclamation: ‘Our Lord God Almighty began to reign’ (19:6).”⁷

The other school of thought holds that each reference in the book has some peculiar meaning and significance.⁸ Scholars holding this view overlap in their specific understanding; hence, three divergent sub-thematic views. First, Pantokratōr is studied under God’s role as Creator (4:8), Ruler (1:8; 11:17; 19:6; 21:22), and Judge (15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15).⁹ The second view interprets Pantokratōr in syntactical relationship with the words it immediately precedes or follows such as *ho theos ho Pantokratōr* (16:14; 19:15) or *kyrios ho theos ho Pantokratōr* ((4:8; 19:6).¹⁰ The third view looks for how *ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos* in 4:8 impacted the meaning of Pantokratōr in relation to God’s inaugurated and consummated reign. In the context in which *ho erchomenos* is added the reign is presumed to be in future. But the reign is seen as having begun when it is omitted.¹¹

⁶Boyd O. Gray, *Looking into the Revelation: The Countdown to Christ’s Return* (Bloomington: iUniverse LLC, 2013), 195; although most scholars see nine occurrences of *Pantokratōr* in Revelation few say it appears eight times.

⁷Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, second ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 70.

⁸Brian K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary*, Louisville, KY (Westminster John Knox, 2009), 221; In 4:8 God is the creator, He is ruler in 1:8; 19:6; 21:22 and judge in 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:17.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, *DDDB*, 22; The more detailed expression *kyrios ho theos ho Pantokratōr* is used seven times: five times in hymnic passages; the four beast sung when God was on the throne (4:8), 24 elders praised God for judging rightly (11:17), the multitude (15:3) and the altar (16:7) praised God for His redemptive work, and finally a great multitude acclaim him for having begun to reign (19:6). And lastly, when the Almighty Himself is the Temple of the city.

¹¹Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 227.

What most commentators seemed not to do is finding the meaning of Pantokratōr in the individual immediate context in which it appears. Therefore, finding the contextual meaning as well as the theological import will be given attention by this study.

Other area worthy of study about Pantokratōr is its identity. Notwithstanding the unanimity with which commentators agree that almost all references of Pantokratōr in Revelation is to the Father, 1:8 has become the center of scholarship debate. The verse reads, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty (NIV)." Scholars have argued relative to the identity of the speaker of this verse as to whether He is Jesus Christ or God the Father.¹² There are two main views on this argument. One group posits that God the Father is the speaker.¹³ These argue that the Father is the speaker because "the one who is, who was and who is to come," in v. 8 is authenticated by the identification of God in v. 4. Further support for God as the speaker relates to God as the Almighty, a term which in its eight other appearances in Revelation undoubtedly refer to God.¹⁴

¹²G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 49; Ben Witherington, *Revelation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28-29.

¹³David E. Aune, *Revelation*, WBC 1 (Columbia, SC: Word, Incorporated, 1997), 57; Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 79; William D. Barrick, "Review of 'The Book of Revelation' by Hindson." In Richard L. Mayhue, ed., *The Master's Seminary Journal*, vol. 13 no. 2 (Sun Valley, CA: The Master's Seminary, 2002), 284-286; Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with New International Version (EBCNIV)*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 423; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 199; William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976), 37-38; Laszlo Gallusz, *The Throne Motif in the Book of Revelation* (A&C Black, 2013), 129.

¹⁴Johnson, "Revelation," *EBCNIV*, 423; God himself spoke confirming with his own signature the proclamation of the second coming of Christ in verse 7.

However, other Scholars think the speaker is Jesus Christ.¹⁵ According to them, Revelation 1:8 is among most NT passages that allude to the divinity of Jesus.¹⁶ These proponents appeal to the immediate context of the text.¹⁷ They argue that all the preceding verses are Christ's centered and He spoke to confirm his divinity and authority as the savior of humanity.¹⁸ Also in the very context of chapter one the author identified Jesus as "the first and the last" which also is the interpretation of Alpha and Omega.¹⁹

Scholars unanimously agree that all reference to Pantokratōr titles in Revelation are used in description of God but much have not been studied as to why the term is used with such magnitude in the Book of Revelation. What also seems lacking is a more detailed interpretation of the term in each individual context. Moreover, less attention has been given to the theological significance of the term. Furthermore, there is much discussion about the identity of Pantokratōr in 1:8 and this study will attempt to identify the speaker of 1:8 in particular.

¹⁵Kenneth Matthews Jr. *Revelation Reveals Jesus* vol.1 (Greeneville, TN: Second Coming, 2012), 134-135; Joseph S. Excell, "Revelation," *The Biblical Illustrator* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 35-36; Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* vol. 6 *Acts to Revelation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 903. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Westminster John Knox, 1984), 69-73; Robert P. Lightner, "Theology Proper in the Book of Revelation," *A Hand Book to Revelation*, ed., Mal Couch (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 93; H. A. Ironside, *Revelation: An Ironside Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2004), 16; Ralph Earle, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10 (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1967), 474; Vince Inman, *Revelation: A Pre-Vision of History* (Xlibris Corporation, 2012), 21.

¹⁶William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church*, Downers Grove, IL (InterVarsity Press, 2009), 174.

¹⁸James D. Quiggle, *The Epistle of Jesus to the Church: A Commentary on the Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), 42.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Statement of the Problem

While some scholars assume the same meaning for all the occurrences of Pantokratōr in Revelation, others try to look for meanings in the passages it appears. Does Pantokratōr have the same meaning in each of the occurrences in Revelation? What necessitated the frequency with which John used Pantokratōr in Revelation? In other words, what is the theological import of the frequent use of Pantokratōr in Revelation? Who is identified as the Pantokratōr in Revelation 1:8 in particular? This study proceeds with the aim of providing answers to these questions in relation to the meaning and significance of Pantokratōr in Revelation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out the meaning and significance of Pantokratōr as it occurs in Revelation. The study also considered the being to which Pantokratōr is referred in Revelation 1:8.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant in two ways. First, the conclusion reached will contribute to the existing literature on the subject. Second it will help Bible readers understand the meaning and the significance of Pantokratōr in Revelation better.

Methodology and Procedure of the Study

This study was exegetical. The exegesis involved a background, lexical, historical, literary, syntactical analyses of the word as it occurs in Revelation.

This study is organized under four major divisions. Chapter one is the introduction to the paper. It discusses the background of the problem, the problem of the study, purpose and significant of the study, methodology and the procedure of study.

Chapter two which deals with the literature review discusses the views of commentators and scholars on Pantokratōr in 1:8, 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15 and 21:22. In this chapter the views of scholars on meaning and significance of Pantokratōr in Revelation will be discussed in a thematic fashion. These themes include Pantokratōr as Creator (4:8),” “Ruler (1:8; 11:17; 19:6; 21:22),” “Judge (15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15),” and “Redeemer (15:3; 16:7).”

In chapter three, we will take a look at the background study of Pantokratōr in Revelation. Under this section the emphasis will be on Pantokratōr in the Old Testament, the Intertestamental Literature, the Non-Jewish Literature, and the New Testament. This background study may help us appreciate the possible influence on the use of Pantokratōr in Revelation.

The exegetical study of Pantokratōr in Revelation will be considered under chapter four. This chapter will be divided into four sections. Section one will deal with literary and historical context of Revelation. Section two will present the literary analysis of the word in all the passages. Under this section the discussion will focus on the literary context, genre and literary analyses of the word. The third section of chapter four will present the Synthesis of all the analyses and draw out the theological implication of the study in the fourth section of chapter four.

The fifth chapter presents the conclusion of the study. In this chapter, a summary of the contribution of each chapter will be summarized. Finally, a conclusion of the study will be presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this review, our discussion will be grouped under three major headings. The first one will be general views on *Pantokratōr* as discussed in lexicons and commentaries. The second part will discuss *Pantokratōr* in the book of Revelation. Under this section, two main views will be espoused. In the first category, we discuss the view of scholars who believe that all references to *Pantokratōr* in Revelation should be understood in accordance with the meaning referenced in 1:8. Our discussion on this position will focus first on the meaning of the term in relation to Revelation 1:8. And then the meaning of *Pantokratōr* will be viewed in connection with appellations of God such as *Alpha and Omega* and *the One who is, who was, and who is coming*. Under these two attributes of God our attention will be focused on the views of scholars concerning the identification of the speaker in verse 8.

The second part of our review looks at *Pantokratōr* in reference to the context in which it appears. Each of such occurrences, according to scholars, is deemed important to reveal a particular attribute of God portrayed in that context.¹ Our discussion on the views of scholars will be surveyed under the contextual interpretation of *Pantokratōr* in 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14 19:6, 15; 21:22. After the review under above sections the studies review the position of authors to make conclusion on the finding.

¹Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 105.

General Views on *Pantokratōr*

We begin this search on the interpretation of *Pantokratōr* as given by Lexicons. Most Lexicons are almost in consensus and give “Almighty” as the meaning for *Pantokratōr*.² In this same line of interpretation, the Almighty may be explained as “He who holds sway over all things; the ruler of all.”³ According to the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, the meaning of *Pantokratōr* as “the Almighty” is in most at times used for the gods.⁴

In connection with Revelation, some scholars believe that the reference is to “God’s universal supremacy, but in a static sense as compared to the more dynamic sense of omnipotence.”⁵ But others interpret *Pantokratōr* as exhibiting “the omnipotence and absolute reign of God.”⁶ Appropriately, the title describes the immense greatness of God.⁷ Therefore, from the above, *Pantokratōr* in Revelation can either be interpreted as God’s universal supremacy, unlimited or the one in a static sense.

²F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. rev. Frederick W. Danker, (1979), s.v. “παντοκράτωρ.” Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 1300; Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 459.

³Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000. s.v. “παντοκράτωρ.”

⁴Wilhelm Michaelis, “*Pantokratōr*,” *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985: Reprinted in 2000), 4:914.

⁵Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 468; H. Langkammer, “παντοκράτωρ,” *EDNT*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 3:11; Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, Chattanooga, TN (AMG, 1992), 1094.

⁶H. Langkammer, “παντοκράτωρ,” *EDNT*, 3:12.

⁷G. Braumann, “κράτος,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 3:718.

Most commentators agree that *Pantokratōr*⁸ is a regular LXX rendering of “*Yahweh s^ebā’ôt*,”⁹ meaning “Lord of Host”¹⁰ and this became John’s favorite title for God in Revelation.¹¹ The meaning of *Pantokratōr*—when it translates “Lord of Host” in the OT context—is said to express “dominion over all” (2 Sam 5:10).¹² Thus, *Yahweh s^ebā’ôt* is believed to have a military character and stresses God’s power over forces opposed to Him and His people. Others also prefer that *Pantokratōr* translates the Hebrew *shaddai* (the Almighty). In that instance, “God’s power and authority over all things” is emphasized.¹³

Most scholars who think that *Pantokratōr* has the same meaning in each occurrence would want to vote for *Yahweh s^ebā’ôt* as the appropriate rendition for *Pantokratōr* in Revelation¹⁴ due to the book’s political character.¹⁵ The understanding behind this interpretation is that the context in which the word is used in the Old Testament (OT; 1 Sam 1:3, 11; 4:4; 2 Sam 5:10) suggested the Lord who would lead his

⁸Leonard L. Thompson, “Revelation,” *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 52; *s^ebā’ôt* in the Septuagint is associated with the warrior-God of the Ark of the Covenant (Jos. 5:14; 10:12-14).

⁹Leonard L. Thompson, “Revelation,” 52; John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MN: Kregel Academic, 2001), 24.

¹⁰Ethelbert Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation Or, the Apocalypse* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 17.

¹¹Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina Series 16 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 47.

¹²Ethelbert Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation Or, the Apocalypse*, 17.

¹³Holman Bible Staff, *Experiencing the Word New Testament*, 541.

¹⁴H. Langkammer, “παντοκράτωρ,” *EDNT*, 3:11; Rev 4:8 and Amos 4:13 appear to translate the divine predicate *s^eba’ot* as παντοκράτωρ. One could therefore assume that this was determinative for παντοκράτωρ passages as well.

¹⁵Leon Morris, *Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC) 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 56.

host to fight to establish his kingdom. And this same context is believed to be found in Revelation where Christ “the Captain of the Lord’s host is coming down as their judge and vindicator, to deliver them from the oppressors.”¹⁶ Then we ask; do all the contexts in which Pantokratōr appear in Revelation express the idea of a warrior-God?

There are other scholars though agree that Pantokratōr translates the Hebrew *sēbā’ôt*, differ as to which attribute of God’s power is revealed in such a rendition. While some prefer God’s omnipotence as the attribute stressed by *sēbā’ôt*,¹⁷ others believe that the word stresses God’s supremacy.¹⁸ Moreover, some scholars still argue that neither *sēbā’ôt* nor *shaddai* had its meaning referred to power as it has become the impression giving by the LXX’s translation. Accordingly both terms carry a passive sense of power rather than exercising power as in omnipotence.¹⁹ Does Pantokratōr carry with it active sense of exhibiting power or passive sense in terms of holding sway over or upholding ultimate order of things? So what is the meaning of Pantokratōr?

These meanings given above seem to be influenced by the OT root: *sēbā’ôt* and *shaddai*, from which our word is translated. *Sēbā’ôt*²⁰ occurs about 450 times. About 270 of these occurrences are connected to the divine title Lord of Host or Lord Almighty. The rest have a “literal or military connotation referring to the armies of Israel and those of

¹⁶E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics, 1984), 17.

¹⁷“Almighty” [Rev. 1:8], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), vol. 4, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 734.

¹⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 52.

¹⁹Ronald Greib, *Understanding God’s Love: A Study of the Misunderstanding and Misrepresentation of God* (Casco, MI: Christian Traditions, 1997), 56.

²⁰Saba, the singular form of *sēbā’ôt*, is rendered army, host, war (fare).

other nations.” Underlying the meaning of this title is the concept of Yahweh²¹ as the omnipotent divine warrior.²²

But shaddai in its forty-eight appearances is always used though not exclusively with *ēl* (God) to bring out the meaning God Almighty. While the term generally expressed the omnipotence of God, it however reveals a significant aspect of God’s sovereignty in other several contexts; this may include military.²³ Much of this will be discussed when we are discussing Pantokratōr in the context of the OT. Up to this point it seems that both *sēbā’ôt* and shaddai may have the same or different connotations depending on the context from which it is used. Although, both may have military inclination, it is *sēbā’ôt* which is mostly used with warring intent. And this prompts us to ask, do Pantokratōr contexts in Revelation present military view?

Pantokratōr in Revelation 1:8

Most commentators accept that the first eight verses of Revelation form the prologue for the entire book.²⁴ The prologue which climaxes in verse 8 is divided into three sections: the introduction (vv. 1-3), salutation and doxology (vv. 4-6) and the theme (vv. 7, 8). Stefanovic espouses that verse 8 closes the prologue and affirms the eternal existence of Yahweh.²⁵ For Osborne, it presents God as “ruler over all of history,

²¹Richard E. Oster, *Seven Congregations in a Roman Crucible: A Commentary on Revelation 1-3* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 65.

²²Stephen D. Renn, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 27;

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Stephen Smalley, *The Revelation to John: Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (London: SPCK, 2005), 38.

²⁵Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 71.

in control of this world and the next, with full authority over earthly and cosmic forces.”²⁶

Within this theme, and in the last verse of the prologue is the divine title the Pantokratōr which is cast among other two divine titles: *the Alpha and the Omega*, and *the One who is and who was and who is coming*, expressing the totality of God’s sovereignty. What understanding do these titles bring to the meaning of Pantokratōr? According to Beale in his *Shorter Commentary*, both phrases express God’s presence and ruling over the universe and revealing that God’s attribute is the Almighty.²⁷

The source of Pantokratōr for Revelation has been debated by scholars. Aune writes that the title is found frequently in the early Jewish sources, in the LXX as a translation of *sēbā’ôt*, in the magical papyri sometimes as a result of Jewish influence, and also in early Christian Magical papyri “where it is frequently applied to Christ.” The title is also found occasionally in pagan sources and “in other Jewish Greek literature.”²⁸ Its frequent use in the LXX is also supported by Mounce²⁹ and that seems to be the more probable source of the title in Revelation.

In this context, most scholars believe that Pantokratōr signifies an eternally existent God who is in charge of the whole course of history³⁰ and with this agree with Aune who expresses that Pantokratōr refers to “God’s supremacy over all creation.”³¹

²⁶Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 72.

²⁷G. K. Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 43.

²⁸Aune, *Revelation*, 1:58.

²⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 52.

³⁰Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 71.

And Morris accession seems appropriate: “The word denotes not so much the exercise of naked power as the all-embracing sovereignty that God exercises.”³² This implies that this context pictures Pantokratōr as God’s attribute of power in the sense of upholding ultimate order of things but not necessary expressing power as understood by His divine warrior attribute revealed in s^ʿbā’ôt.

Alpha and Omega

The phrase Alpha and Omega appears three times in Revelation (Rev 1:8; 21:6; and 22:13). It is believed that “the First and the Last” (1:17; 22:13) and “the Beginning and the End” (21:6; 22:13) are parallel expressions.³³ “The Alpha and the Omega” represent the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet,³⁴ and “denote properly the first and the last.”³⁵ Some scholars believe that it is these two expressions which are later united and translated in Revelation 22:13 as “the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end and the first and the last.”³⁶ Therefore, “the beginning and the end” and “the first

³¹Aune, *Revelation*, 1:57-58.

³²Morris, *Revelation*, 56.

³³Ekkehardt Mueller, “Christological Concepts in the Book of Revelation—Part 2: Christ’s Divinity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 22/1 (2011):66-83.

³⁴John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation: An Expository Commentary*, 23; Jesus is God’s alphabet. All accumulated wisdom, knowledge and understanding is stored in the alphabet and this is what Jesus represents.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 59. “I am the Alpha and the Omega in English parlance would be represented by ‘I am the A to the Z.’ When it is used with God it portrays God as the beginning and end of history and all that lies in between. The use of alphabet to portray the sovereignty of God was typical with the ancient world and it was adopted by the Jews. Keeping of the Law from aleph to tau meant keeping the law in its entirety.

and the last” are equivalent³⁷ and interpret the meaning of “the Alpha and the Omega.”³⁸ But does the meaning in the context of 1:8 apply to “the first and the last” as used in 1:17 and 2:8 in which instances the speaker identified himself?

Alpha and Omega is used to emphasize “God’s sovereignty over the universe and the course of history.”³⁹ And this can be used in application to no one else but the true God.⁴⁰ The phrase is seen as expressing the eternity as well as the infinitude attribute of God:⁴¹ “the eternal and omniscient God.”⁴² “Hence the title sets forth God as the sovereign Lord over everything that takes place in the entire course of human history.”⁴³ Then what is the source of this phrase?

Aune looks for the source under the influence of the magical papyri in which the seven vowels of the Greek alphabet “often function explicitly as a divine name.”⁴⁴ Others also look for the phrase from Hebrew origin and posit that John had in mind *Aleph* and *Tau*, which alludes to the sovereignty of God and also corresponds to “the first and the

³⁷Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 26.

³⁸Ibid. “Since Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek Alphabet, it is not difficult to see that ‘the Alpha and Omega’ is equivalent in meaning to ‘the first and the last’ and the beginning and the end.”

³⁹James L. Resseguie, *The Revelation of John: A Narrative Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 68.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 70; Among the Jews the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet was usually used to express the whole of anything from beginning to the end. So Adam was said to have transgressed the Law from Aleph to Tav and Abraham kept the Law in that same magnitude.

⁴²Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, 49.

⁴³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 52.

⁴⁴Aune, *Revelation*, 1:57.

last,” “the beginning and the end” as used for God in the OT (Isa 44:6; 48:12).⁴⁵

Similarly, the Greco-Roman source looks probable.”⁴⁶ But to whom is the phrase Alpha and Omega applied?

Scholars unanimously agree that all the titles in verse 8 are a description of a true God. In Revelation, both Jesus and God are identified as the Alpha and the Omega: God in Revelation 21:6 and Jesus in Revelation 22:13.⁴⁷ Although the God titles in Revelation can be used interchangeably between the Father and the Son, yet there has not been scholarship consensus as to who spoke in 1:8. Scholars give reasons why any of the two should be identified as the speaker.

Those who believe that the speaker is God the Father give the following reasons:

1. God spoke only twice in Revelation, in 1:8 and 21:16.⁴⁸
2. Revelation 1:4 forms an *inclusio* with verse 8, where verse 4 clearly identifies God the Father.
3. In all the nine appearances, Pantokratōr is used for the Father.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 445. The usage beginning and the end among the Greek typifies the eternity of the highest god. The usage in the NT identifies Jesus with God. Those who worship Him are assured that he is “the first and the last” (Rev 1:17).

⁴⁶Claig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 765. In the Greco-Roman world the supreme deity is often referred to as “the first,” but the Jews also knew the OT God as the “First and the Last. God’s name which emerged from Hebrew background is ‘emet’ (truth) and this is spelt ‘aleph-mem-tav.’ This represented God as the first, middle and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, making Him the eternal and ruler over all time.

⁴⁷Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 87, 88; It can be ascertained that the “I am” is the Father in OT (Exod 3:14) but the same “I am” is Jesus in NT (John 8:58).

⁴⁸Resseguie, *The Revelation of John*, 68.

⁴⁹Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 47.

But are all these reasons enough evidence to reject Christ as the speaker? Are all appearances of Pantokratōr in Revelation only in reference to the Father?

Those who believe that Christ is the speaker give these reasons as follows:

1. All the preceding verses are Christ's centered and He spoke to confirm his divinity and authority as the savior of humanity.⁵⁰ According to Walvoord, the salutation [vv. 4-8] closes with a reminder of Christ as the eternal One, the Alpha and the Omega.⁵¹
2. In the very context of chapter one (1:11, 17), the author identified Jesus as "the first and the last" which also is the interpretation of Alpha and Omega.⁵²
3. Christ is the dominant character of Revelation chapter one.

A third position posits that "The speaker is not Christ neither is it God the Father in contrast to Christ ..., but God in the undivided oneness of His being, without respect to the differences of persons."⁵³ But this position has not been able to canvass support to challenge any of the above two positions.

We conclude that, in the book of Revelation, the image of "the Alpha and the Omega" is used for both God and Jesus. From the above, it also seems that Alpha and Omega, as an attribute of God, reveals God's sovereignty as does Pantokratōr. The use of

⁵⁰Quiggle, *The Epistle of Jesus to the Church*, 42.

⁵¹John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook, 1983), 929.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg, *The Revelation of St John: Expounded for Those Who Search the Scriptures*, vol. 2, trans. Patrick Fairbairn (London: T. & T. Clark, 1851), 83.

this epithet during the NT period seems to have originated from Hebrew background.⁵⁴

From the synagogue, *Aleph* and *tau* were substituted for Alpha and Omega.⁵⁵ For who the epithet describes, the majority view seems to favor the Father.

The One Who Is, Who Was, and Who is Coming

This phrase appears in three places in the book of Revelation (1:4; 1:8; 4:8) and in the variation of “the One who is and who was” in 11:17 and 16:5.⁵⁶ It is believed to interpret the OT divine name YHWH which is associated with the verb *to be*, appearing only in Exodus 3:14. This divine name in the context of Exodus is translated as “I am who I am” or “I will be who I will be,” then simply as “I am.”⁵⁷ Later, Jewish interpretation expanded it into threefold manner,⁵⁸ and also understood its expression in Hellenistic tone; the one who is (*ho on*).⁵⁹ For most scholars, this phrase describes God’s power as it relates to the past, the present, and the future.⁶⁰ He cuts across all the ages of

⁵⁴Ethelbert Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation: Or, the Apocalypse*, 47-48; Ancient Jewish Commentators applied it to the beginning and the end of a thing. E.g. Adam transgressed the whole law from the “*Aleph to Tau*,” “Abraham kept the whole law from “*Aleph to Tau*.”

⁵⁵Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27.

⁵⁶Fee, *Revelation*, 6.

⁵⁷Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 28.

⁵⁸G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1089; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Tg. Ps.-J.) translates Deut 32:39 as “I am he who is and who was, and I am he who will be.”

⁵⁹The Palestinian Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) quoted Deut. 32:29 as ““I am who is and who was, and I am who I will be.””

⁶⁰Jack Hilliard, *Understanding Revelation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon, 2008), 37.

time.⁶¹ That the phrase refers to God is seen with its association with the divine title, the Almighty (1:8; 4:8).⁶²

In the Greek world, this threefold formula was usually used in celebrating the eternity and immutability of a deity. For instance, it was said that ‘Zeus was, Zeus is, and Zeus will be.’⁶³ In the NT era, the One who is and who was and who is to come is believed to have its root from the interpretation of the Jewish divine name YHWH.

The author’s usage of *ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos* to describe the name of God seems to have been influenced by the Greek culture. But usage of *erchomenos* depicts the future present (the One coming) in contrast to the Jewish / Greek portrayal of future of the verb to be (will come).⁶⁴

The Contextual Meaning of *Pantokratōr*

This section of our discussion focuses the review on the interpretation of *Pantokratōr* in the rest of the eight other contexts in which it appears. In each of the contexts, the term appears to reveal a significant attribute of God that portrays His might as a Ruler and Judge fighting to bring an end to evil. His might as a Ruler and a Judge to bring an end to evil may present the Almighty as either a Sovereign or a warrior God. Under the following discussion, the review focuses on the contextual interpretation of *Pantokratōr* in Revelation 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; and 21:22.

⁶¹Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, 27.

⁶²Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 63.

⁶³M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2011), 75.

⁶⁴Blount, *Revelation*, 38.

Pantokratōr in Revelation 4:8

Revelation 4:11 outlines that the Almighty is honored and worshipped in the context of chapter 4 because He is the Creator: “For You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being.” (Rev 4:11). This adoration of the four living creatures, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come,” (Rev 4:8 NIV) amounted to worship. And what makes God worthy of this adoration is that He is the Creator.⁶⁵

The above discussion seems to present God’s sovereignty as possible interpretation of Pantokratōr because of the Almighty’s attribute as the Creator who sits enthroned in this context. For Swindoll, the hymn in this context might be called a glorious hymn of creation because God is praised as the eternal and Almighty Creator (4:8).⁶⁶ Also Boring’s interpretation of verses 6b to 11 explained that these songs in this context represent a hymn emphasizing God’s attribute as the Creator of all things.⁶⁷ But there is another view.

Some scholars believe that the opening of the song of Isaiah’s seraphim; “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory (Isa 6:3)” is the same song that the four creatures of Revelation sung.⁶⁸ The belief is that John’s source is the LXX and substituted Pantokratōr for Lord of Hosts. Although *Kyrios ho theos ho Pantokratōr* is not found in Isaiah, because the translator of Isaiah preferred to

⁶⁵Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation: The Apocalypse Through Hebrew Eyes* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald 2002), 54; Kenneth E. Nissen, *Revelation: God’s Last Love Letter* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2014), 116.

⁶⁶Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 97.

⁶⁷Boring, *Revelation*, 107.

⁶⁸Aune, *Revelation*, 1:303; Morris, *Revelation*, 91; Smalley, *Revelation*, 122.

transliterate s^ebā'ôt rather than translate it, it is found in the LXX of Prophetic literature.⁶⁹ For Smalley, the use of Pantokratōr “suggests God’s absolute power in and over His creation.”⁷⁰

Therefore, we may conclude from the above scholarly discussion that the Almighty in the context of Revelation 4 seems to present God’s sovereignty as the Creator who sits enthroned. However, the Lord of Hosts looks to be the probable option if the Revelation’s intention was to present a warrior God who would stand and fight for His people in the time of trouble.

Pantokratōr in Revelation 11:17

In 11:17, God is being praised for the completed form of His Kingdom as shown in verse 18. This is made possible because of His final defeat and judgment of His enemies. Verse 17 gives a variation in how God has previously been designated as the “One who is and who was and who is to come” (1:4, 8; 4:8). This variation applies both to the pronouncement of the seventh trumpet (11: 17) and the seventh bowl (16:5). The “One who is to come” is replaced by the One who has taken up His great power and begun to reign. This change in time perspective enforces the thought that this section is narrating the actual establishment of the future kingdom and the final judgment.

The omission of “the One who is to come” is variously explained by most scholars. Beale asserts that the shortfall “specifically speaks of the end time.”⁷¹ Fee posits

⁶⁹Smalley, *Revelation*, 122.

⁷⁰Smalley, *Revelation*, 123.

⁷¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 613.

that it is God who is believed to have taken His power in Judgment.⁷² And Morris espouse that the dropping of this future element shows “the time of consummation.”⁷³ But for Doukhan it is the “*Parousia* which has already occurred,”⁷⁴ and this is further expounded by Stefanovic that the coming concerns the arrival of the Almighty at the Second Coming which is also the coming of Jesus to take power to reign.⁷⁵ And the position of The Expositor’s Bible Commentary is that John does not distinguish between the reign of Christ and God.⁷⁶

The praise as rendered in this context and directed to *the Lord God Almighty* is put in a vocative. The vocative address here makes difference grammatically, but scholars believe it does not change the meaning of the title. It is also believed that the title, Lord God Almighty is equivalent to *YHWH (the God) of (the) Hosts*. According to Aune, the phrase is believed to have military connotations. With respect to events that precede and follow verse 17, it seems probable to translate Pantokratōr as *the Lord of Hosts*. But there is much more to be discussed here. Whose reign is the verse talking about? Father’s or Son’s?

According to Beale, the emphasis here is on God’s reign rather than Christ’s due to the consummate nature of the kingdom.⁷⁷ But there seems to be other views concerning God’s reign in the context of 11:15-19. Mounce seems to explain that the

⁷²Fee, *Revelation*, 6.

⁷³Morris, *Revelation*, 153.

⁷⁴Doukhan, *Secrets of Revelation*, 100.

⁷⁵Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 368.

⁷⁶Johnson, “Revelation,” 509.

⁷⁷Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, 237.

dominion of this world has been transferred to God and His Christ, and both shall reign forever. Accordingly, Christ shares in this sovereignty because of the “successful completion of His messianic ministry.”⁷⁸ Although God takes preeminence, their reign should be seen as a joint sovereignty. Therefore, the omission of “is to come” in verse 17 should be explained as a present realization of the Almighty’s reign,⁷⁹ which may be explained as the reign of the Father and the Son.

We conclude the context of 11:17 that—with respect to events that surround chapter 17—it looks more probable to translate Pantokratōr with the warring attribute of God, s^ebā’ôt. Also, the reign described in this context is likely the one of both the Father and the Son.

Pantokratōr in Revelation 15:3

Revelation 15 introduces the judgment scene of the seven last plagues that take place in chapter 16. Verse three of chapter 15 in which Pantokratōr is cited is in a context where the redeemed praise God for His great deliverance acts on their behalf. “These redeemed are the martyrs who have overcome persecution: their proximity to the sea of crystal and fire, the mention of the Beast and his number, and the use of harps tie them to the 144,000 found in Revelation 14:1-5.”⁸⁰

As God’s people of old praise Him for their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, so the new covenant people in the last days praises Him for their ultimate deliverance

⁷⁸Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 226.

⁷⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 227.

⁸⁰Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts: The Use of Pantokratōr in the Book of Revelation,” (Master of Divinity Thesis, Regent University, Virginia Beach, 2014), 24.

from the defeating of the beast.⁸¹ The redeemed, a replica of the ones who came out of the great tribulation in 7:9-15 praise God for His great deliverance and for His judgment on their enemy. His greatness is seen in this context as the God who stand behind His people and fight against their oppressors and give them their due reward. Mounce intimates “That God is the Almighty is supremely appropriate in the present context of ultimate victory. ... His sovereignty is everlasting.”⁸²

The song of the redeemed namely, “the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb” (Rev 15:3), is believed by most commentators to be only one song.⁸³ Then the question comes, to whom is this song ascribed, God or Christ? Some scholars are of the view that it is God’s redemptive work that is accomplished through Christ hence the praise is directed to God.⁸⁴ Others see the song as being ascribed to both God and Christ.

Stefanovic agrees with this view and posits that this song is “sung by the redeemed in celebration of the great deliverance wrought by Christ on behalf of His faithful followers.”⁸⁵ Therefore, this song is sung not only to God but the Lamb as well. This song is the same as the new song of 5:9-14 and 14:3 where the Lamb is glorified for His great redemptive work (cf. 5:8; 14:2).⁸⁶ But there is also the third position that sees

⁸¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 285.

⁸²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 286-287.

⁸³Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 486; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 285.

⁸⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 285.

⁸⁵Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 486.

⁸⁶Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, 344.

the song (Rev 15:3-4) as revealing the absolute divinity of Jesus Christ.⁸⁷ If this song is about Christ, then why should not the content of the song equally applied to Him?

The redemption context of this verse shows that Pantokratōr seems to reveal the warring attribute of God hence be translated as Lord of Host, for He stands behind His people to fight for their deliverance in the time of trouble. Also the song which is ascribed to the Almighty seems to be equally applied to the Son.

Pantokratōr in Revelation 16:7

Both Revelation 15 and 16 likely present a judgment seen in which God is vindicated for avenging His faithful followers whose blood has been poured out by the wicked. Some scholars believe that the utterance of the angel in 16:5 echoes the song of the redeemed in 15:3. In this context “He (the angel) declares the appropriateness of God’s judgment on the wicked, echoing the song of the redeemed in Revelation 15:3.”⁸⁸ Pantokratōr in Revelation 16:7 is situated in an environment where the angel’s praise to God for His just and true judgment is echoed with a voice from the altar. Who or what the altar is has been debated by scholars.

According to Stefanovic, the altar here represents the altar in 6:9 under which the souls of the slain pleaded that the Lord avenges on their behalf: their plea, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until You judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev 6:10).⁸⁹ Smalley agrees with Aune that the altar and the voice represent

⁸⁷Ron Rhodes, *40 Days Through Revelation: Uncovering the Mystery of the End Times* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013), 193.

⁸⁸Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 490.

⁸⁹Ibid., 491.

one of those souls who spoke in 6:9.⁹⁰ It appears that the majority decision is that the voice could be one of the souls under the altar. Mounce sees a correlation between the voice under the altar (6:10) and the prayers of the saints. Thus, the altar and the voice personify the “corporate testimony of the martyrs in 6:9 and the prayers of the saints in 8:3-5.”⁹¹

God is here seen acting with great power executing judgment on behalf of the martyrs and against the persecutors, as a response to the martyrs’ call for judgment as referenced in chapter 6.⁹² If the martyrs of Revelation 6 are involved here, then the praise of God would involve the call for vengeance. “In this instance, the call for vengeance would make ‘Lord of Hosts’ an appropriate interpretation for *Pantokratōr*.”⁹³

Pantokratōr in Revelation 16:14

After the Almighty has been praised for His vengeance against the enemies of His people in 16:7, verses 8 to 12 continue the onslaught of God’s judgment against the wicked, and this appears in the form of scorching sun (vv.8, 9) and darkness upon the throne of the beast (vv. 10,11).

The sixth plague dried up the great river Euphrates which seems to have paved the way for the outbreak of the flog-like demonic spirits from the mouth of the dragon, the

⁹⁰The voice from the altar, according to Smalley, “could be one of the martyrs underneath the altar ... or (less probably) one of the intercessory saints, whose prayers ascend from the altar of incense. See Stephen Smalley, *The Revelation of John* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2005), 404; Aune, *Revelation*, 2:888.

⁹¹Mounce sees some resemblances and links between what takes place here in 16:7 and 15:3 and states, “Like the angel in charge of the waters, the voice of the altar echoes the song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3-5), whose judgment are true and just; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 295.

⁹²Osborne, *Revelation*, 584.

⁹³Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts: The Use of *Pantokratōr* in the Book of Revelation,” 35.

beast and the false prophets (vv. 12, 13). Their activity is “to gather (the kings of the world) for the battle on the great day of God Almighty” (Rev 16:14 NIV). Ladd sees this coming together as a political alliance of states; “John expects a coalition of human rulers, demonically inspired, who will do battle with Messiah.”⁹⁴

The gathering of these rulers is equivalent to the gathering of God’s enemies to fight against Christ. Smalley states that “similar language is used at 19:17, 19; and 20:8, with reference to the Dragon-Beast rallying the rulers to fight against the Messiah in the final eschatological battle.”⁹⁵ The time for this battle is herein reference as the great day of God the Almighty.

In most parts of the Bible, prophets have referred to this same day as the Day of the Lord (Ezek 38-39; Joel 3:2; Zech 14:2; Ps 2:1-2). Other apocalyptic literatures have also alluded to this day.⁹⁶ Aune states that Day of the Lord is “the day on which God defeats the enemies of His people, presumably in ... the eschatological battle anticipated in Ezekiel 38-39.”⁹⁷ Is it not this same day when Christ comes in the second time? For in the next verse (Rev. 16:15), John records that “Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” (Rev 16:15).

The one who is coming like a thief is Christ, the warrior-messiah on the Day of the Lord. This coming is shown in Revelation 19:11-21 to be on the day of the Great

⁹⁴George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 214.

⁹⁵Smalley, *Revelation*, 410.

⁹⁶4 Ezra 13:34-35; 1 Enoch 56:7; 90:16-19; 2 Apoc. Bar. 70:7-10; Sib. Or. 3.663-68; T. Joseph 19; LXX Esth 11:5-8; 1QM 1:10-11; 15:2-3.”

⁹⁷Aune, *Revelation*, 2:896.

War. The imagery here is associated with the military power that Christ will wield on that day.

It appears from the above that the setting of the vision concerns the coming battle taking place on the day of Pantokratōr. In this instance, the God who is fighting on that day in here is represented as the warrior God avenging on behalf of the saints. With this combatting idea Pantokratōr can be interpreted as “Lord of Hosts.”⁹⁸

Pantokratōr in Revelation 19:6

The heavenly host is rejoicing because, at this point in the narrative of Revelation, God has judged the great prostitute Babylon believed to be described in chapters 17 and 18⁹⁹ and has avenged the blood of His servants from her hands (19:2). The shout of the “hallelujahs” in verses 1, 3, and 4 is seen to point backward—to the destruction of Babylon—while the “hallelujah” in verse 6 points forward but to the reign of the Almighty¹⁰⁰ and to the anticipation of the wedding of the Lamb.¹⁰¹

Although Ireland sees the wedding banquet of the Lamb as the theme of this hymn—which looks to the inaugurated reign of the Father and the Lamb, and as such making God’s sovereignty an appropriate interpretation for Pantokratōr—he prefers to interpret Pantokratōr with “Lord of Host” because he thinks that “military imagery” is associated with the “theme of vindication and judgment.”¹⁰² But is there a military

⁹⁸Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts: The Use of Pantokratōr in the Book of Revelation,” 31.

⁹⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346.

¹⁰⁰Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 556.

¹⁰¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346.

concept attached to this context? Are the saints not singing because the final war has ended and the Almighty taking up His power to reign?

According to Mounce, the multitude shouted for joy because the Almighty has at last “established His universal reign in [on the] earth.”¹⁰³ This reign of the Almighty is a present reality rather than a future event to look forward to. At this point, the victory has been won, the end-time apostate power has collapsed, and the Almighty is reigning in the “fullness of His power and authority.”¹⁰⁴

Two positions may be noticed from the above review on 19:6. Those who would want to interpret the context with respect to how the battle was won would see a context of battle and as such Pantokratōr would interpret s^ebā’ôt. If it is about after the battle has been won, then God’s sovereignty seems to be the interpretation for Pantokratōr with the evidence that God is pictured in the context as a Ruler rather than a Warrior.

Pantokratōr in Revelation 19:15

“This part of chapter 19 chronicles the final battle that takes place at Armageddon.”¹⁰⁵ And “Now is to be completed the destruction of the end-time confederacy in the final conflict.”¹⁰⁶ The warrior on the white horse who has a sharp sword proceeding from his mouth to strike down the nations and ruling with iron scepter

¹⁰²Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts: The Use of Pantokratōr in the Book of Revelation,” 39, 40.

¹⁰³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346.

¹⁰⁴Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 556.

¹⁰⁵Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts: The Use of Pantokratōr in the Book of Revelation,” 40.

¹⁰⁶Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 566.

(v.15) is identified as Christ (19:21). These descriptions according to scholars have OT connotations.

The sword, according to Mounce and Smalley, “symbolizes the lethal power of His word of judgment.”¹⁰⁷ Stefanovic agrees with this and asserts that it is a weapon for executing judgment upon the wicked in the OT (Ps. 149:6).¹⁰⁸ Both Mounce and Stefanovic agree that the words of John in Revelation 19:15 is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s messianic prophecy (Isa 11:4) which indicates Jesus as the root of Jesse who “will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.” As He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (Rev 19:15), Christ is in this context playing the role of a warrior king whose power destroys the evil forces completely.¹⁰⁹ Treading the winepress according to Aune is “a metaphor for divine judgment.”¹¹⁰

We conclude here that Pantokratōr could probably be interpreted as Lord of Hosts because of the battle imagery of the passage. Also, the rider on the horse is Christ and He is exercising all authority of the Father and He (Christ) has become “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16). This is an indication of the “universal sovereignty of the warrior Christ in His eschatological triumph over all the enemies of God.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355; Smalley, *Revelation*, 494.

¹⁰⁸Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 565.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 566.

¹¹⁰Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1060; Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 201; Morris, *Revelation*, 231.

¹¹¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355.

Pantokratōr in Revelation 21:22

Revelation 21 is a description of the New Jerusalem. The city among other things has no sun or moon (v. 23). There is also the absence of a temple, and this is very significant because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb is the Temple of the city (v.22). Caird states that “The temple was therefore a symbol of God’s claim on the secular world and of His abhorrence of the unclean. But no such symbol is needed any longer.”¹¹² The temple had served as a symbol of God’s presence, but now the symbol has been replaced with the reality.¹¹³ And this shows that “in the age to come, there will be no need of a temple, for God himself will dwell among His people and direct unmediated communion.”¹¹⁴ For Christ, His own claim of bodily resurrection is also a representation of the temple (John 2:19-22).¹¹⁵

It seems probable to translate Pantokratōr in reference to God’s sovereignty due to the absence of military imagery in this context. “It is unlikely that Lord of Hosts is the connotation here because of the concept of the paradise. The only inhabitants of the city are God’s own people; there are no more opponents for God.”¹¹⁶

¹¹²G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 279.

¹¹³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 395.

¹¹⁴Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 284.

¹¹⁵Beale, *Revelation*, 1091.

¹¹⁶Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts: The Use of Pantokratōr in the Book of Revelation,” 43.

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review has shown that Pantokratōr may have been translated from s^ebā'ôt and shaddai. The two titles may have the same or different implications depending on the context. Although, both may express God's supremacy, shaddai appears to reveal His sovereign nature, while s^ebā'ôt portrays Him more as a Warrior. In connection with Revelation, most commentators agree that Pantokratōr, a regular LXX rendering of Yahweh s^ebā'ôt, expresses God's "dominion over all" (2 Sam 5:10). With the military character, the stress is on God's power over forces opposed to Him and His people. Others see Pantokratōr translating shaddai which emphasizes God's power and authority over all things. Alpha and Omega and the One who is who was and who is to come, as attributes of God, reveal God's sovereignty and His immutable power respectively.

We have noted from its use in Revelation that not all the contexts project military imagery, although most do. It appears that only one verse among the rest (21:22) does reveal God's sovereignty; hence, Pantokratōr may translate Lord of Host.

Furthermore, this review has shown that the reign described in the context of 11:17 is likely the reign of both the Father and the Son. Also, the content of the song of the Lamb (15:3) which is ascribed to the Almighty seems to be equally applied to the Son as well. Moreover, the Almighty imagery of 16:14 is associated with the military authority that Christ will exercise on the day of the Lord. Lastly, the rider on the horse who wields that authority of the Almighty is Christ, the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev 19:16).

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND STUDY OF *PANTOKRATŌR* IN REVELATION

The author of the book of Revelation probably did not write in a vacuum due to the belief of scholars that the Greek language of the book is interspersed with Semitic languages like Hebrew or Aramaic. According to Aune, “the Greek of Revelation is the most peculiar Greek in the NT, in part because it exhibits interference from Semitic languages.”¹ Also, Johnson’s assertion that “familiarity with the prophetic books of the OT, apocalyptic literature current during the first century, Dead Sea Scroll (DSS), and the Targums will help the reader grasp the message of the Apocalypse,”² informs us that the language of such documents might have influenced the language of Revelation.

This study focuses on how the context in which the author wrote had an influence on his use of the title Pantokratōr for God. Especially, the OT (LXX) context is believed to have been alluded severally by the author.³ The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary puts it this way, “A clear understanding of these citations and allusions in their historical setting in the OT is the first step toward understanding the passages where they occur in the Revelation.”⁴ While Pantokratōr is used repeatedly in the LXX and in

¹Aune, *Revelation*, 1:clxii.

²Johnson, “Revelation,” 399-400.

³David L. Barr, *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 45.

early Jewish writings, secular literature before and contemporaneous with Revelation have sparsely occurrences of the term.

The NT does not follow the trend of the LXX with few occurrences mostly in the Book of Revelation. The reason why the authors' usage of the term somehow deviates from the entire NT corpus is partly the reason for this research. This part of our study looks into the use of Pantokratōr in the OT, Intertestamental Literature, Greco-Roman World, and New Testament to help us make conclusion on how the meanings in any of these sources has had an influence to author's use of the term in Revelation.

Pantokratōr in the Old Testament

The translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek definitely demanded that all God's names should be translated as well. *Yahweh* and *'ēlōhîm* were translated *Kyrios* (Lord, Master) and *Theos* (God) respectively.⁵ The translators of the LXX seemed to have used four divine appellations in the Hebrew Text⁶ to translate the Greek Pantokratōr making it appearing about 181 times.⁷ Of this number, most of its use is found especially in the rendering of the divine names *Yahweh s'ēbā'ôt* and *El shaddai*. *S'ēbā'ôt* is the one utilized the most to translate Pantokratōr. It has great number of references in Jeremiah,

⁴"Theme," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Francis Nichol (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 723-25.

⁵Sean P. Ireland, "God the Almighty Lord of Hosts," 10.

⁶These epithets include *s'ēbā'ôt*, *shaddai*, *'ēlōhê* and *ādōnāi*; the last two found one each only in Zechariah.

⁷Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Rev., 459; Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 1054; Aune, *Revelation*, 1:58; *Pantokratōr* is used nearly 170 times in the LXX and in most at times as a translation of the divine titles *s'ēbā'ôt* and *shaddai*.

Isaiah 1-39, Haggai, Zechariah, and Amos but nearly absent in the books written during the post-exilic period.⁸

Although the phrase *Yahweh s^ebā'ôt* is the most frequently divine epithet used for God in the OT,⁹ yet its meaning is much disputed. It is usually translated “Lord of hosts” (NRSV, NAU, NKJ) and “Lord Almighty” (NIV) and it is associated with battle.¹⁰ The root, *sb* has both the meaning of a noun (army) and of a verb (to conduct war). “The (feminine) plural noun *s^ebā'ôt* is formed as a divine epithet, that is, as an attribute of *YHWH*.”¹¹ *S^ebā'ôt*’s attribution to Yahweh may be explained by “a development from rather concrete understanding to an abstract one, that is, from Israel’s hosts (armies) as the sign and means of the powerfulness of *YHWH* to this powerfulness as a divine characteristic.”¹² This understanding of the mightiness of Yahweh is reached because “hosts” is taking as “plural intensification or majesty, particularly in view of the LXX translation of hosts as Almighty.” But according to Fretheim, this view “lacks convincing evidence.”¹³

⁸Greifswald J. Zobel, “*S^ebā'ôt*” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 12:216–17. *s^ebā'ôt* is used solely as an appellation of God and it is used 285 times in the OT with the following distribution: 82 usage in Jeremiah, 56 in Proto-Isaiah, 53 in Zechariah 24 in Malachi, 15 in Psalms, 14 in Haggai, 9 in Amos, 6 each in 2 Samuel and Deutero-Isaiah, 5 in 1 Samuel, 3 each in 1 Kings and 1 Chronicles, 2 each in 2 Kings, Nahum, and Zephaniah, and appearing once each in Hosea, Micah, and Habbakuk.

⁹Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 144.

¹⁰Terence Fretheim, “Yahweh,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology (NIDOTT)*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 4:1297.

¹¹Horst Dietrich Preuss, *OTT*, 144.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Terence Fretheim, “Yahweh,” *NIDOTT*, 4: 1298.

The use of *s^ebā'ôt* in relation to Israel's host (army), heavenly host and the Ark of the Covenant "as a war palladium" seems to give the understanding that the mightiness of Yahweh is seen with His affiliation to *s^ebā'ôt*.¹⁴ This view is probably explained by the fact that "Yahweh's presence is symbolized by the ark of the covenant, which was present in the Holy of Holies except at times of warfare, when it is carried into battle."¹⁵ Therefore, this idea of mightiness seems to be a brainchild of the LXX. Although the host can be used to describe armies, Israel or other nations, and angels, Pantokratōr is never used to translate host in such instances. "A key feature of the use of *Pantokratōr* for *s^ebā'ôt* is that the Greek word is only used when describing God."¹⁶

As noted, Pantokratōr usually translates *s^ebā'ôt* and *shaddai*, but in some exceptional cases, it translates the *Tetragrammaton* and *'ēlōhê*—in Zechariah 9:14 and 11:4 respectively.¹⁷ In Zechariah 9:14, scholars believe that Pantokratōr might translate either *ādōnāi* or *Yahweh*. But it is more likely it translates *Yahweh* due to the order of the phrase in the LXX translation.¹⁸ It has also been noted that *Theos* usually translates words which belong to the *'ēlōhîm* family but here, in Zechariah 11:4, the contrast is found as Pantokratōr is used to translate *'ēlōhê*. This extensive use of Pantokratōr to translate names of God which in themselves do not reveal power appears to portray the LXX's own way of projecting the sovereign power of God.

¹⁴Horst Dietrich Preuss, *OTT*, 145–46.

¹⁵Tremper Longman III, "צבא" *NIDOTT*, 3:733.

¹⁶Sean P. Ireland, "God the Almighty Lord of Hosts," 13.

¹⁷Hatch and Redpath, *Concordance*, 1054-55.

¹⁸"Zechariah 9:14" *Septuaginta*, Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 554.

Apart from s^ebā'ôṭ, the next title that Pantokratōr translates the most is shaddai. Unlike s^ebā'ôṭ, it occurs mostly in the poetic books. Appearing as early as in Genesis 17:1, shaddai occurred about 40 times, and 16 of those occurrences are in Job. *El Shaddai* is the name God used to identify Himself to Moses (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3),¹⁹ and in Jacob's patriarchal blessing (49:25) it symbolized fertility and population growth.²⁰

The etymology of this title has been debated. Some scholars believe that its meaning is related to Akk (Akkadian Language) word *šadū* meaning "breast or mountain."²¹ Therefore, with this root, God of the breast has been suggested. And this is in reference to God's ability "to supply abundantly." The most common is its association with the mountain; hence, "God, (one) of the mountain[s]" and this is supposed to refer to "His majestic strength."²² This definition in connection with shaddai would present God as the comforter of His people. But that is not all about shaddai. Others see the meaning of the term in connection with the verb *shādad* meaning "to devastate."²³ With this meaning, God becomes a warrior who would destroy His unrepentant people.²⁴

It seems that there is no consensus with regard to issues concerning the etymology of shaddai, but the most widely accepted view is that shaddai equals mountain and therefore El Shaddai is the "God of the mountain" with its various nuances.²⁵ Although

¹⁹Terence E. Fretheim, "לש," *NIDOTT*, 1: 401.

²⁰Robert B. Chisholm, "שד," *NIDOTT*, 4: 47.

²¹David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 149.

²²Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 1983), 58.

²³F. Q. Gouvea, "God, Names of," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 506.

²⁴Cornelis Van Dam, "שד," *NIDOTT*, 4:49.

its certainty is not usually ascertained, yet its divine origin is saved because of its usual attachment with *el* (God).²⁶ “The translation God Almighty is based on the LXX; an abstraction of an originally concrete image.”²⁷ Therefore, from LXX, and the Vulgate’s *omnipotens, shaddai* has been understood in English as Almighty.²⁸

El shaddai is accepted as equivalent Hebrew word for omnipotence but it does not really project the omnipotent potency as revealed in *sēbā’ôt*. One would have expected that, because *shaddai* is usually translated as Almighty in the Hebrew, *Pantokratōr* would be the standard translation for *shaddai*, but that has not been the case. *Shaddai* appears about forty times in the Hebrew, only sixteen of those occurrences translated *Pantokratōr*.²⁹ The equivalence of *shaddai* and *Pantokratōr* is unique only to the book of Job. What is also unique is that *Pantokratōr* is only used when the compound title *El Shaddai* is present.³⁰

Further studies show that the LXX has other several instances where *Pantokratōr* is used which do not necessary appear in the Hebrew Text. This seems to suggest that the translators of the LXX emphasized God’s power³¹ as a way of “Jewish reaction to the

²⁵Würzburg Niehr, “Šadday,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 12:421.

²⁶Horst Dietrich Preuss, *OTT*, 150.

²⁷Terence E. Fretheim, “שָׁדַי,” *NIDOTT*, 4:401.

²⁸G. Parke-Taylor, (*Yehovah*): *The Divine Name in the Bible* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1975), 37.

²⁹George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 1237.

³⁰C. H. Dodd, *The Bible and The Greeks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1954), 14.

³¹Walter C. Jr Kaiser, *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 110; *the Greek Pantokratōr expresses the idea of power. It comes from pas, “all,” and kratos, meaning “power.”*

idea of a comprehensive global power, introduced by Alexander the Great and adopted by the Hellenistic monarchies and finally, by the Roman Empire.”³² This idea probably suggests that God should not be restricted to a lonely Warrior of the Jewish nation.

The LXX’s emphasis seems to be on God’s sovereignty. For example, this kind of emphasis can be seen in LXX—Amos. *Pantokratōr* is translated as *s^ebā’ôt* 10 times in Amos which is very consistent with how *s^ebā’ôt* is rendered with *Pantokratōr* (110 times in the LXX Minor Prophets), except in 5:8; 9:6 and 9:15 where it is an addition in the LXX. This addition shows the importance of how the translators use *Pantokratōr* to translate the basic meaning of *s^ebā’ôt*³³ as a warrior God to a more sovereign one.³⁴

Probably, the unique thing about *Pantokratōr* in the LXX is that it is only used when the divine title Yahweh appears with *s^ebā’ôt*. It has also been noted above that *Pantokratōr* is translated as *shaddai* only when it stands with *El*. And because both Yahweh and El are names which are only applied to God in the OT, it therefore implies that *Pantokratōr* is an attribute only attributed to a divine figure in the LXX. “The *Kyrios Pantokratōr* is a divine title; it cannot be applied to a great man, a general, a king, an emperor, or even a prophet. It is reserved for God.”³⁵

³²Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *DDDB*, 20–21.

³³J. Stafford Wright, “God, Gods, Emmanuel,” *New Testament Theology (NTT)*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 2:69; The basic meaning of God as *s^ebā’ôt* in the prophets is warrior God.

³⁴W. Edward Glenny, *Finding Meaning in the Text: Translation Technique and Theology in the Septuagint of Amos* (Boston, MA: BRILL, 2009), 186–87; This softening of the warrior God concept in Amos is seen in the LXX’s interpretation of 4:12. This verse is read in MT as “Prepare to meet your God” but it is rendered by the LXX as “Prepare to call upon your God.”

³⁵Iceland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts,” 13.

Therefore, we conclude that although *sēbā'ôt* in the Masoretic Text (MT) presented God as a Warrior who will fight to deliver Israel from her enemies, such meaning seems to have changed from the perspective of the LXX. Probably, in the LXX, God is seen as a universal sovereign God whose activity transcends the boundaries of Israel. This idea seems to apply to both *sēbā'ôt* and *shaddai*. His supremacy as well as His omnipotence seems to be emphasized.

***Pantokratōr* in the Intertestamental Literature**

The Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature followed the LXX in its concept of emphasizing the power of God as a way of counteracting the secular political dominance of the day.³⁶ In such situations, *Pantokratōr* became a favorite title in early Jewish sources as a designation for God.³⁷ It occurs in four Jewish inscriptions from Gorgippia and in a dedicatory inscription from the Sardis synagogue and occasionally in other Jewish Greek literature. Also, with some frequency, the title appears in the “magical papyri, sometimes as a result of Jewish influence ... but often clearly not.”³⁸

Among the literatures, Judith—believed to be dated about 150 and 100 BCE—mentions *Kyrios Pantokratōr* five times, always in the context of inimical threat and inimical repulsion (Jdt 4:13; 8:13; 15:10; 16:5, 17). Significantly, the final song of Judith ends with the expectation that *Kyrios Pantokratōr* shall overcome all the enemies of His people: “Woe to the nations that arose up against my people. The Lord Almighty will punish them on the day of Judgment” (Jdt 16:17).

³⁶C. L. Seow, “Almighty,” *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 1:105.

³⁷Wilhelm Michaelis, “*Pantokratōr*,” *TDNT*, 4:914.

³⁸Aune, *Revelation*, 1:58.

It is in this similar context of threat that Judas Maccabees spoke in 2 Maccabees 8:18 to arouse his people to call upon the God Almighty to fight their cause: “They ... trust both in weapons and audacity, but we rely on the God Almighty, who is able to overthrow our assailants and the whole world with the nod of His head.” During military confrontation the Almighty power was usually invoked by Maccabees as recorded in the Anchor Bible Dictionary.³⁹ Also, in 3 Maccabees 2:2-3, Simon the high priest invoked the name of God as the all-sovereign (Pantokratōr), to intervene and prevent Ptolomy IV Philopator from entering the temple. And as in all similar situations when the people were under the threat of the enemy, they invoked the name of God as Pantokratōr (3 Macc 5:7; 6:18, 28).

The contrast of this frequent usage of the term is found in Philo and Josephus. Philo uses the term Pantokratōr only twice but even such usages are presented as a formula. Some believe that such formulaic usages were employed due to influences of Stoic doctrine of *hegemonikon*.⁴⁰ Hence his preference was to use *panhegemon* instead of *Pantokratōr* for God.⁴¹ Even in such formulaic usages which also abound in other pseudepigraphical writings (Phil Gig. 64; Sarc AC. 63; 3 Bar 1:3; 4 Bar 1:5), what is noticeable is that God’s attributes as the Creator, Judge and Sovereign are almost retained.⁴²

³⁹Betty Jane Lillie, “Almighty,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 160.

⁴⁰David Skrbina, *Panpsychism in the West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 56; *hegemonikon* is form from two Greek words, *hege*, to lead and *mone*, singular and it is often translated “the leading part of the soul.” Skrbina presents Cleanthes argument which says that “the sun was the *hegemonikon* of the cosmos.”

⁴¹Wilhelm Michaelis, “Pantokratōr,” *TDNT*, 4:914.

⁴²Toorn, Becking, and Horst, *DDDB*, 22.

“Political implication” is believed to be the reason why Pantokratōr did not appear in Josephus. “The all-sovereignty of God in *Ant* 10263 is paraphrased ... as *to panton kratos echon*.⁴³ Although *Pantokratōr* may not be found in the writings of Josephus yet other contemporary writings accounted for it. An instance is this prayer of blessing to God found in 1 Esdras; τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ ὑψίστῳ θεῷ σαβαωθ παντοκράτορι (1 Es 9:46). The usage here seems significant because *Pantokratōr* is used not only as an attribution of the title Almighty to the Lord but also as a translation of *s^ebā’ôt*.⁴⁴

What seems running through this short survey is that God’s designation as the Pantokratōr can be found with amazing frequency in the Intertestamental Writings, especially in the context of enemy threat.⁴⁵ Although such a pattern follows the LXX to translate Pantokratōr by *s^ebā’ôt*, the meaning as intended in the intertestamental era and especially in the context of war seems to project the image of God as a Warrior.

***Pantokratōr* in the Greco Roman World**

Outside the biblical account, Pantokratōr is rarely accounted for in secular literature. But the fact remains that the few occurrences are used as attribute for the gods.⁴⁶ Our discussion here will be mainly based on the records of secular rendition of the term in Lexicons and Dictionaries.

Our first record is a reference made by Ireland from Liddell and Scott. A Greek-English Lexicon shows that Pantokratōr only shows up outside biblical texts in an

⁴³Toorn, Becking, and Horst, *DDDB*, 22.

⁴⁴Michael Bird, *1 Esdras* (Boston, MA: BRILL, 2012), 280.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶Wilhelm Michaelis, “Pantokratōr,” *TDNT*, 4:914.

epigram about Hermes that comes from Crete: “of Hermes; Epigr. Gr. 815 (Crete).”⁴⁷ The epigram read in Greek is as follows: “παντοκρατωρ Ἐριούνιε.” The same inscription is found in Moulton and Milligan and usually cited by commentators.⁴⁸

Ireland cites Avagianou’s comments about this Cretan funerary epigram dating from the 1-2 century CE: “Menas and his wife once forgot to bring their annual sacrifice to Hermes; this omission resulted in the death of Menas’ wife. ... The husband asked from the almighty Ἐριούνιε Hermes to keep him alive so that he can honor his precinct for the whole of his life.”⁴⁹ This epigram, which seemed to have been written at the same time as Revelation, shows that Pantokratōr describes a god, not a mortal.

Some other Pantokratōr word family forms also appear in few secular sources. In this example, it is its feminine form which appears in P. Oxy. 1380, and it is believed to be an Invocation of Isis:

ευφο- [συ]νην, σωτειραν, παντοκρατειραν [μ]εγιστην.⁵⁰

This short description is supposed to be an invocation for the Egyptian goddess describing Isis or Aphrodite. “Translators date this papyrus to the early second century CE. The usage here is also either contemporaneous or following Revelation.” It can be noted once again that the title is used for a goddess, not a mortal.⁵¹

⁴⁷Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts,” 7-8.

⁴⁸James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 478.

⁴⁹Aphrodite A. Avagianou, “Hermes Βρυχάλειος and Ἐριουνιος at Pharsalus,” *Kernos* 10 (1997): 211.

⁵⁰Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, ed., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Part XI*, (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1915), 196.

⁵¹Sean P. Ireland, “God the Almighty Lord of Hosts,” 8.

Another feminine form can also be found in one of the Orphic Hymns, which is dedicated to Φύσι or Nature. This hymn addresses the nature goddess as *Pantokratōr*.⁵² While some scholars look for an earlier date (about second century BCE) for this hymn, others maintained that the composition should be around third or fourth century CE.⁵³ But whichever date one chooses, certain things are very certain about this hymn: the hymns are written without Christian influence and therefore an earlier date seems possible. While the date may put the hymn after Revelation, their importance is certain because of the likelihood that they are originated from Asia Minor as portrayed by names of less named Asiatic gods.⁵⁴

Further studies show an inscription from Delos in Moulton and Milligan cited by Cumont, *Les Religions Orientales*: “Δι τῷ παντῶν κραττοῦντι καὶ Μητρὶ μεγάλῃ τῇ παντῶν κρατουσῇ.” This is believed to be an attribute assigned to Syrian and Phrygian deities.⁵⁵

All the evidences from the secular sources reveal almost the same pattern for the application of *Pantokratōr*. What is also noted is that these applications have not been influenced by Jewish or Christian writings. Furthermore, we have known that, although *Pantokratōr* is used sparsely in the secular literature, its occurrence is only attributed to a

⁵²Apostolos N. Athanassakis, *The Orphic Hymns* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar’s Press, 1977), 16; παντοκρατειρα, τετιμενεα πανυπερτατε πυσιν.

⁵³Matthew E. Gordley, *The Colossian Hymn in Context* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 164.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources* 478.

deity. In the above context in which the names of such deities are invoked, a supreme warrior god seemed implied.

Pantokratōr in the New Testament

Apart from Revelation, Pantokratōr can be found once in 2 Corinthians 6:18 which is believed to be at the close of a series of quotations from the OT.⁵⁶ At a first glance, one may think that 2 Corinthians 6:16c-18 is a single quotation, but scholars unanimously accept that it consists of a series of OT quotations. Although Paul did not identify the written sources from which these are taken, he believed that these as well as other writings of the scripture are the words of God.⁵⁷

The first part of the quotation is believed to be God's promise to dwell among His covenant people if they will obey His commandments. It is accepted that this part seems to have been an almost direct quotation from Leviticus 26:11-12⁵⁸ or a paraphrase from Ezekiel 37:27.⁵⁹

The second part of the quote in which Paul called on the people to consecrate themselves without touching the unclean with the promise of gathering them is believed to have been sourced from Isaiah 52:11. The historical context of this gathering could be the restoration from exile.⁶⁰ The final promise is authenticated by the Lord Almighty who has the power to accomplish all He has promised if the people will obey and do what He

⁵⁶H. Langkammer, "παντοκράτωρ," *EDNT*, 3:11.

⁵⁷Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 164–66.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 204-207.

⁶⁰Frank J. Matera, *II Corinthians: A Commentary*, 166.

is asking them to do. This is supposed to have been quoted from 2 Samuel 7:14 and Isaiah 43:6.

Although Paul does not say his source for all these quotations, commentators believe that the LXX is probably Paul's source. This is because of the similarities between 2 Corinthians 6:16c-18 and LXX of Leviticus 26:11-12 and Isaiah 52:11 and all the rest.⁶¹ Also, the Greek transcription, *s^ebā'ôt*, which occurs about 65 times in the LXX is twice used in the NT; once by Paul (Rom 9:29) and then by James (5:4).⁶²

Summary and Conclusion

In this background study, we have surveyed the use of Pantokratōr in the OT (LXX), Intertestamental Literature, Secular Literature, and the NT. In the LXX, we saw that Pantokratōr translated two Hebrew names for God: *s^ebā'ôt* and *shaddai*. But also, in an infrequent situation, it translated *Yahweh* and *El* once. Further, the LXX has several other instances where Pantokratōr is used which do not necessarily appear in the Hebrew text.

Apparently, the unique thing about Pantokratōr in the LXX is that it is only used when the divine title *Yahweh* appears with *s^ebā'ôt*. It has also been noted from the study that Pantokratōr translates *shaddai* only when it stands with *El*. The implication is that Pantokratōr is attributed only to a divine God in the LXX. We also noted that the frequent use of Pantokratōr in the LXX seem probably intentional to project the mightiness of God as a reaction to the comprehensive universal power introduced in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. The meaning as revealed in both *s^ebā'ôt* and *shaddai* appear to be the

⁶¹Ibid., 164–66.

⁶²J. Stafford Wright, "God, Gods, Emmanuel," *NTT*, 69.

meaning found in the LXX Pantokratōr. God is not only a Warrior but Sovereign as well. Probably, He is supreme overall and not in contention with any other god.

The Intertestamental Writings followed the LXX and with amazing frequency translated Pantokratōr by s^ebā'ōt, especially in situations where the people were under the threat of the enemy. Also, in these writings, the title is only applied to God, but as noted earlier, the meaning as intended in the intertestamental era and especially in the context of war seems to project the image of God as a Warrior.

What seemed peculiar to the LXX and the Intertestamental Writings also applies to the secular literature that Pantokratōr is used only in an application to a divine figure. But this application, though sparsely used in the secular literature, has not been influenced by Jewish nor Christian writings.

In line with the secular literature, the NT—with the exception of Revelation—has few occurrences of Pantokratōr. The only Pantokratōr title appears in 2 Corinthians 2:16-18 and the Greek transcription, s^ebā'ōt in both Romans 9:29 and James 5:4. In these instances, the LXX is believed to be the probable source. With this, Aune affirms that Pantokratōr is a borrowed title from Judaism.⁶³

Therefore, we conclude that this survey from LXX, Intertestamental Literature, Greco-Roman World, and NT has shown that Pantokratōr is only applied to deity and in the LXX, Intertestamental literature, and NT the title is applied to God. The meaning in the Intertestamental and the secular literature is probably equivalent to the meaning as intended in s^ebā'ōt in the MT. The NT seems to follow the LXX which gives the meaning of Pantokratōr in relation to God's supremacy, in terms of holding sway over all the

⁶³Aune, *Revelation*, 1:59.

powers that be as well as able to fight for His people. Moreover, the frequency with which the title is used in the LXX presents itself as the probable source for the NT and hence Revelation as well.

CHAPTER 4

THE EXEGETICAL STUDY OF *PANTOKRATŌR* IN REVELATION

Literary and Historical Context of Revelation

In this section of the study, the chapter is divided into two main segments. In the first part, we will be discussing the background to the study of the book of Revelation. There are two dimensions to this background study: the historical setting in which the author and his audience lived and the literary context that might have influenced the author's use of Pantokratōr in describing God. In the second segment of this block, the study will be focused on the exegesis of our term in each of the context it appears.

The historical environment in which John and his audience lived was the one in which the “imperial cult of worship to the emperor” was the order of the day.¹ The emperors conferred upon themselves the title “Our Lord and God” and demanded that they be worshipped.² Christians in the Asia Minor were persecuted for refusing to worship in the imperial cults. Majority view holds that the prevailing socio-political environment under which Revelation was written was one of persecution. But as to its intensity has become the bone of contention. Was it severe and widespread or just intermittent and localized?³

¹Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 6.

²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346.

³Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and the Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), 172.

Historical Context

Revelation was addressed to the Christians in Asia (1:4) who faced challenges.⁴ With the mounting pressures of persecution, the Christians might have found themselves on the verge of extinction. Revelation was written to encourage these believers to live morally, persevere, and fortify them against discouragement and despair.⁵ Generally, scholars are in agreement that there was some form of political tension against Christians at the time Revelation was written. How intense was the persecution? Was it a fully-fledged systematic imperial persecution, or a sporadic one? The intensity of the persecution has been linked to the time the Revelation was written.

The early Christian writers suggested four dates for the writing of Revelation.⁶ But most contemporary scholars argue for either during the reign of Nero or Domitian. The Domitian date is widely accepted.⁷ Some scholars don't see organized persecution as for the writing of Revelation. But there are both internal and external evidences that a lot of persecution took place during the reign of Domitian.⁸

⁴Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Chris*, 7, 8; Kenneth Matthews Jr. *Revelation Reveals Jesus*, 10, 11; these challenges include: Pagan opposition, imperial cult worship, persecution and their suffering due to the conflict with the Jews.

⁵D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament: In Three Volumes* (Waynesboro, GA: Gabriel, 2003), 258-259.

⁶Osborne, *Revelation*, 6–12; Claudius (A.D. 41-54, by Epiphanius), Nero (A.D. 54-68, by the Syriac versions), Domitian (A.D.81-96, by Irenaeus, Victorinus, Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, Origen), and Trajan (A.D. 98-117, by Donothus, Theophylact).

⁷Ibid, 6; The Church had believed at least from the 2nd to the 18th Century that Revelation was written at the time of Domitian. But those who argue for the time of Nero (pre 70 A.D.) do so on the grounds that: the only true persecution occurred under Nero; the “one who is” in 17:10 is either Galba or Nero; and the temple was still standing according to 11:1-2. But the persecution at the time of Nero was limited to Rome and did not extend to Asia. Also 11:1-2 is symbolic and does not require a literal temple.

⁸Ibid, Antipas was martyred in Pergamum (Rev 2:13). Also Christians in Smyrna and Philadelphia were threatened with persecution (2:10; 3:10). Historical attestation by Roman authors such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny confirm that Christians suffered a great deal under the authorities.

That persecution progressed from this period to under the reign of Emperor Trajan and beyond. It is reported in Pliny's account that the Christians were persecuted for worshipping Jesus as God.⁹ Some believe that this account from Pliny is a justification that Christ is the speaker in Revelation 1:8.¹⁰ What has been settled among most commentators is that Revelation was written at the time Christians were persecuted.

The author describing himself as a "companion in the tribulation" (1:9) gives evidence that Revelation was written during the era of persecution.¹¹ But the suffering believers expect God to exonerate them, punish the disobedient, and end evil.¹² But the authenticity of the apocalyptic writing somehow depends on its authorship.

The Authorship and Genre of Revelation

With much controversy over its canonicity,¹³ Church tradition at last accepted that the book of Revelation was authored by John, the writer of the fourth Gospel and the three Epistles.¹⁴ Most Church Fathers accepted this position.¹⁵ However, some scholars

⁹John Foxe and William Byron Forbush, *Fox's Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christian and the Protestant Martyrs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 6, 7.

¹⁰Saint Victorinus, *Latin Commentaries on Revelation: Ancient Christian Text*; Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, 47; Ben Witherington, *Revelation*, 28-29; Christians were persecuted because they worshipped Christ.

¹¹Steve Gregg, *Revelation Four Views: A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 10.

¹²Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 558.

¹³Boring, *Revelation*, 2.

¹⁴Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 11.

¹⁵Ibid, Some church fathers including Justin Martyr (c.100-165), Theophilus of Antioch (died c.183), Irenaeus of Lyons (died 202) unanimously agreed to this fact; Melito the bishop of Sardis (160-190) wrote a commentary on it. Boring, *Revelation*, 2.

have challenged John's authorship.¹⁶ Two basic reasons have accounted for this: differences in grammar of both books and the Dionysius' argument.¹⁷ The "grammatical irregularities" argument is unsustainable. For much discussion on these, see Stefanovic.¹⁸

Indeed, there are reasons to accept John's authorship. First, evidences from Church Fathers. Both books have similar mission themes. The two books argue for the Deity of Christ.¹⁹ The authorship of the book was settled before it was canonized.

John, the author of Revelation, used the three genres—apocalyptic, prophetic, and epistolary—in composing the book.²⁰ Yet, the book is usually considered first and foremost as apocalyptic.²¹ Revelation has a lot in common with apocalyptic literature which is believed to have its root linked to Hebrew prophecy.²² But there are seemingly dissimilarities between Revelation as a prophecy and apocalyptic literature in general.

Revelation is not only apocalyptic it is also prophetic (1:3). Unlike general apocalyptic writings where authors assume names of prominent people to achieve

¹⁶Boring, *Revelation*, 3; Gaius (ca. 210), argued that Revelation was written by Cerinthus, a gnostic heretic. Three possible John cited as authors.

¹⁷Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 2, 3.

¹⁸Ibid; the internal evidence shows that the fourth Gospel and Revelation have one author. John might have received editorial assistance when he wrote the Gospel in Ephesus, but on the lonely Island of Patmos he wrote Revelation all by himself.

¹⁹Osborne, *Revelation*, 3-5.

²⁰Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 37.

²¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 1, 3-4; In the contemporary mindset apocalyptic refers to a group of writing that flourished in the biblical world around 200 BCE and 100 CE. Apocalypse discloses God promises to intervene in human history to end trouble and destroy wickedness. The apocalyptic message is symbolic, apocalyptic, it assures that God will end Satan's opposition and the suffering saints are assured of victory in the end of the cosmic battle.

²²D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1964), 88; H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (New York: Association Press, 1963), 15; Morris, *Revelation*, 30-33.

recognition, the author of Revelation identifies himself clearly as John, affirming his authoritative stand with God.²³ Revelation actually predicts the future, while most apocalyptic are concerned about recounting the recent history.²⁴ Finally, the book was a letter addressed to a specific contemporary audience. It has the features of the epistles written by Paul and others in the NT.²⁵ The genre of Revelation appears more complicated and that makes it different from most apocalyptic literatures.

The Genre of Revelation 1:1-8: A Prototype of Revelation

Just complicated as the genre of the Book of Revelation, so is the genre of chapter one. The first verse of chapter one provides three words that appear to give alternatives for its generic consideration: these are “Apocalypse,” “prophecy,” and “signified.” With these three alternatives, chapter one can either be an apocalyptic piece, a prophecy or symbolic. But up to 1:1-3 the chapter can be considered more as prophecy.²⁶

Chapter one is not all about prophecy; verse 4 seems to present a new generic alternative. The chapter “begins to follow the conventions of a letter as it was developed in the Hellenistic world and modified by Paul.” The doxology in verses 5 and 6 is similar to the one found in other NT epistles (Gal 1:1–5).²⁷ Verses 7 and 8, however, contain two

²³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 6-7.

²⁴Gregg, *Revelation Four Views*, 12.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 9.

²⁶Barr, *The Reality of Apocalypse*, 28.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 29.

prophetic utterances (seems to base on Dan 7 and Zech 12) which appear to bring prophecy to the forefront than any of the other generic alternatives.²⁸

Literary Analysis

The title Pantokratōr occurs nine times in Revelation. The verses in which the title occurs include 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; and 21:22. Most of these contexts appear to be apocalyptic prophecy in which praises and adoration of the creatures or the elders or the redeemed are ascribed to God and the Lamb. It has been known from the Commentators, OT, LXX and NT that Pantokratōr can be interpreted as Almighty, revealing God's sovereign control over all His creation and history or understood as Lord of Hosts, disclosing the warrior God who fights against His enemies to give victory to the believer. In this section, the study is focused on the literary analysis in each literary milieu to determine the contextual meaning of Pantokratōr.

Literary Analysis of 1:8

The context of Revelation 1:8 is believed to be the prologue for the book. While some commentators take the whole chapter one to be the prologue,²⁹ others—like Stefanovic—take 1:1-8 as the prologue.³⁰ The prologue is deemed very important to the entire book.³¹

²⁸Barr, *The Reality of Apocalypse*, 29.

²⁹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 39.

³⁰Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 53-74; Smalley, *The Revelation of John*, 38.

³¹Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 53; According to Stefanovic, the prologue “explains how and for what purpose the book was written, introduces the book’s author, and describes the nature and main themes of Revelation.”

Some see 1:4-8 as the unit for 1:8 due to John's usage of the phrase "One who is who was and who is coming" in both verses 4 and 8. But it looks more probable to use verses 7 and 8 for the immediate unit because the two verses appear to form the theme for the entire book. It also appears that the genre of 1:1-8 determines that verses 7 and 8 should be considered as the unit because the two verses are considered as a prophecy. According to Osborne, the introductory term *Idou* is used about 26 times in the book "to highlight critical prophetic oracles."³² These prophetic oracles were addressed to Christians who suffered persecution under the Roman authorities. As noted earlier, Christians were persecuted for refusing to worship imperial cults which represented the authority of the emperors.

Revelation was written to Christians living in troubled times: Antipas had been martyred in Pergamum (Rev 2:13), John himself had been exiled to Patmos (1:9), a lot had been slain for the testimony (6:10) and the adulterous woman was drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6; 16:6; 19:2; 20:4; 18:24). But more persecution was coming. Smyrna and Philadelphia should expect imprisonment and trial times (2:10; 3:10) respectively. These saints were persecuted because they refused to worship the emperor who had usurped the authority of God and demanded worship.

Notwithstanding their plight, John and his audience knew only one incomparable God. He is the Almighty, "the Alpha and the Omega," and "the One who is, and who was, and who is coming" (1:8). The two titles, Alpha and the Omega and One who is, and who was, and who is to come first explain the authority of the speaker. In the OT, *first and the last* is the one God who has no competitor. "I am He, before Me there was no

³²Osborne, *Revelation*, 69.

God formed, and there will be none after Me” (Isa 43:10b cf. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). This usage has similar meaning to Alpha and the Omega (the beginning and the end) which among the Greeks typifies the eternity of the highest god.³³

Moreover, the phrase One who is, and who was, and who is to come is believed to have its root from the Jewish divine name YHWH—interpreted as “I am who I am” (Exod 3:14).³⁴ Its usage among the Greeks is comparable to the eternity and immutability of a deity.³⁵ Therefore, the two titles seem to set forth God as the sovereign Lord over the entire course of human history.

Revelation 1:7 is seen by most commentators as announcing the theme for the entire book. The literal and personal return of Christ has been the ultimate anticipation of all the saints. The coming Jesus to save the saints from the troubled times is also the coming warrior King against the wicked, especially those who have persecuted the saints. “The *parousia* of Christ is one of the primary foci of Revelation, culminating in the coming of the ‘King of kings and Lord of lords’ in judgment in 19:11-16.”³⁶ The warrior similes seem evident in the setting. *Meta tōn nephelōn*³⁷ appears to present “divine warrior” imagery in Revelation (14:14-16), portraying Yahweh’s war against the dragon

³³Ryken Wilhoit and Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 445.

³⁴Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1089; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Tg. Ps.-J.) trans. Deut 32:39 as “I am he who is and who was, and I am he who will be.”

³⁵Boring, *Revelation*, 75.

³⁶Osborne, *Revelation*, 69.

³⁷Morris, *Revelation*, 50; For Morris, on the clouds can also mean Christ’s coming in divine majesty and triumph.

and his followers.³⁸ “All the peoples of the earth will mourn” (Rev 1:7) when they see Christ coming in the glory of the Father.

Scholars present different views on the meaning of mourning. While some say “mourn” could refer to godly sorrow and repentance,³⁹ others see two possible meanings: conversion and weeping.⁴⁰ But the context appears to speak otherwise. His coming is against all the tribes of the earth. The phrase, “all the peoples of the earth,” appears only once in Revelation. But a similar phrase, “the inhabitants of the earth” (NIV) or “all (people) who dwell on the earth” (NKJ), is used about eight times with reference to people who have stood in opposition to God and Christ. They are described as people who do not have the seal of God (13:8, 14), their names are not in the book of life (17:5), they persecute the saints of God (17:2; 11:10) and they will be condemned (8:13; 6:10).

These people whose names have not been written in the book of life can be contrasted with the saints whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (21:27 cf. 3:5). While Christ’s coming will reward all who have their names in the Lamb’s book of life, “the inhabitants on the earth” will mourn because the warrior King is coming for vengeance (19:11-21).⁴¹ The image of the portrayal of Christ in this context is a universal sovereign King appearing as a Warrior.

³⁸ Morris, *Revelation*, 70.

³⁹Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 319–22; Bauckham sees the conversion of the masses because of Israel’s mourning imagery in Zechariah (Rev 14:6-7; 15:4 21:24-26).

⁴⁰Osborne appears to say that mourning is seen as referring to the conversion of some people but also to weeping and mourning because Christ comes as the savior and judge; Osborne, *Revelation*, 70–71.

⁴¹Morris, *The Book of Revelation*, 50; Morris sees mourning and piercing imagery in Zechariah applying to “manifestation of the Lord to his foes” For Barclay, Christ’s coming has two implications: To the Christians it strengthens them in times of difficulty. But His return is a threat to His enemies. William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, vol. 1, 36-37.

Although the meaning of Pantokratōr may imply sovereignty, it appears that, with the coming king imagery, Lord of Hosts is the possible meaning for Pantokratōr. Therefore, the theme Revelation 1:7, 8 reveals the coming of a warrior King who will destroy all His enemies who persecuted Him, rejected His offer of salvation, and persecuted all His followers. Is it possible that the coming Messiah of verse 7 is the same person who spoke in verse 8? The following analysis gives the impression that Christ is the speaker in verse 8.

The Speaker of Revelation 1:8

This part of the study focuses on the translation of the passage, the analysis of the structure of verse 8, inclusio structure, and descriptive-speech pattern. This section is important in order to establish especially within the context of Revelation 1 the speaker of verse 8.

Translation: Revelation 1:8

The most common translation for 1:8 is the NIV's "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1:8). The KJV's addition of "the Beginning and the End" has not received much contemporary support. My translation is as follows:

The Lord God says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the One who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty."

John seems changing the flow of thought from Christ's accomplished salvation for humanity (vv. 5-6) to what He is going to do with respect to His second coming in verse 7. This change is clearly seen in the change of the main verb from aorist indicative (ἐποίησεν) in verse 6 to the present indicative (ἔρχεται) in verse 7. Verse 8 presents no

significant change; John uses the same present indicative (**λέγει**) mood as in verse 7. The structure for the two verses probably indicates that there is no signal of transition from verse 7 to verse 8. There seems to be no change in the main verb or mood. There is no indication that the time or setting has changed. Therefore, the person John spoke about in verse 7 appears to be the same person who spoke in verse 8.

Syntactical Structure: Revelation 1:8

The syntactical analysis below gives more explanation to how verse 8 connects the flow of thought from the preceding verses.

κύριος ὁ θεός λέγει	
Εγώ εἰμι	τὸ ἄλφα
<u>καὶ</u>	
	τὸ ὦν
	ὁ ὢν
<u>καὶ</u>	
	ὁ ἦν
<u>καὶ</u>	
	ὁ ἐρχόμενος
ὁ παντοκράτωρ	

Both the Lord God and the Alpha and Omega appear to play similar role, the main clause. The rest of the passage probably functions as the subordinate clause creating a link between verses 7 and 8. Within the *Alpha* clause, *I* (Εγώ) stands as the subject (S) and *am* (εἰμι) is the verb. Then “Alpha and Omega” (τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦν) becomes the predicate nominative (PN). When the S and PN are joined by the equative verb (**εἰμι**), the PN functions as the subject. The rest of the structure seems standing in apposition explaining who “Alpha and Omega” is. This implies that τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦν is equivalent to “the one who is (**ὁ ὢν**) and who was (**ὁ ἦν**) and who is coming (**ὁ ἐρχόμενος**).” Then

Pantokratōr can also stand in apposition to Alpha and Omega. Therefore, to identify Pantokratōr, the main task is probably to identify Alpha and Omega in chapter one.

As stated above, the S/PN construct of the passage reveals a clue to identify the speaker. It is understood from the passage that Alpha and Omega stands as the PN. The First and Last is equivalent of Alpha and Omega and God's name in Isaiah.⁴² It appears that John wanted his audience to know that the "Alpha and Omega" in Revelation 1:8 is the "First and Last" in 1:17. Pantokratōr appears to be an appellation of God describing Jesus as the "First and the Last" (1:17) and the "Alpha and Omega" (22:13). Therefore, if Alpha and Omega is Christ, then He is the Almighty in Revelation 1:8. But the argument for the Father as the speaker, because of the *inclusio* in verses 4b to 8, needs to be attended to at this point.

The *inclusio* structure: verses 4b to 8

According to some scholars, John's presentation of God as "the One who is and who was and who is coming," (vv. 4, 8) shows that he thought of verses 4 to 8 as a unit.⁴³ This has been cited as evidence that God is the speaker in verse 8. But most scholars also believe that the usual traditional greetings in verse 4b turn into praise and adoration of what Christ has done. The change from normal greetings (4b-5a) to what Christ has done and will do (5b-7) seems obvious. Also, as noted earlier, the genre appears to present verses 7 and 8 as a separate unit.

⁴²Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27.

⁴³Blount, *Revelation*, 33.

The sudden change of person from a second person plural pronoun (ὁμῖν) in verses 4 and 5a to first person plural pronoun (ἡμεῖς) in verses 5b and 6⁴⁴ gives the impression that John ended his greetings to the churches at verse 5a. Such a change presents an “apparent lack of unity in this section.”⁴⁵ With this analysis, it looks probable that verses 4 to 8 do not present one unified thought, implying that the argument of inclusio appears not justified in this context. Although scholars believe that the same component that begins the unit also ends it⁴⁶ in an inclusion—just as how the “One who is who was and who is coming” functions in verses 4 and 8—it is also believed that “everything that is found between the two occurrences should be included in the unit.”⁴⁷ Inclusio is used to mark the limits of the literary unit or highlight the motif or both. An external inclusio is often used ... to set off material that is peripheral to the course of the argument.⁴⁸ In other words, an inclusio is used to indicate the main theme of that section.⁴⁹ It can be argued from the preceding analysis that the function of inclusio is to:

1. Demarcate the borders of a literary unit,
2. Enclose various component parts into a single unit, and

⁴⁴Aune, *Revelation*, 1:29.

⁴⁵Ibid., 28.

⁴⁶George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (The Netherlands: BRILL, 1993), 15.

⁴⁷Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 323. The inclusion delimits a poetic unit, providing a strong sense of beginning a closure.

⁴⁸Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 63.

⁴⁹Alison Lo, *Job 28 as Rhetoric: An Analysis of Job 28 in the Context of Job 22-31* (The Netherlands: BRILL, 2003), 87.

3. Give the unit appearance of continuity and uniformity.⁵⁰

We can conclude at this point that though the borders of verses 4 and 8 may be demarcated with the use of “the One who is, who was, and who is coming,” the components in these verses cannot be formed into a single unit because of the change in thought. This does not probably give the section an appearance of continuity and uniformity.

Description-Speech structure in Revelation 1

In Revelation 1:5-8, we see a descriptive and speech pattern in which a description of what Jesus has done (vv. 5b-6) and will do (v. 7) is followed by a divine speech (v. 8) to authenticate this description. A similar pattern is presented in verses 12 to 18. From verse 12b to 17a, we notice a description of Jesus by John, then Jesus spoke to confirm His identity in verses 17b and 18. Because of the similarities between the two units, the second unit gives us a clue as to how to identify the speaker in verse 8. Also, the Alpha and Omega in verse 8 is interpreted in verse 17 as the First and the Last. And the speaker here is probably Jesus Christ.

Let us sum up a few arguments from the above analysis. We have argued that verses 4b to 8 cannot form a unit because John presented two different thoughts: greetings (4b-5a) and Christ’s doxology (5b-6). Because the content of verses 5 to 7 is likely in reference to Christ, he spoke in confirmation to what had just been said about Him. If verses 7 and 8 form a unit, then the coming Messiah in verse 7 is likely the speaker in verse 8. Also, the use of personal pronoun supports the argument that the

⁵⁰Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 295.

speaker appears to be identified in verses 5 to 7. Moreover, the similarities in the units of vv. 5-8 and vv. 11-19 conclude that what vv. 11-19 identifies gives a clue to identify the speaker in v. 8. And lastly, the S/PN construct identified the Alpha and Omega as the First and Last, and Pantokratōr appears as an appellation of Alpha and Omega.

Literary Analysis of 4:8

Revelation 4 is believed to be the beginning of “the things which must take place after these things” (4-22:5), after the “things which are” that is, messages to the seven churches (1:19-3:22). Chapters 4 and 5 are treated as a unity because of the centrality of God’s throne room experience and the sealed scroll. Beginning from chapter 4, the scene on earth shifts to the heavenly throne room where the whole emphasis is on among other things the exaltation of the glorified Christ.⁵¹

The unit (Chapters 4, 5) appears to begin with the summary statement of the seven churches: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev 3:21 NIV). With this, one can understand that “the central themes of Revelation 4-5 are the Father’s throne (chapter 4), Christ overcoming (5:5), and His joining the Father on His throne (5:6-14).”⁵²

The four living creatures around God’s throne (4:2-3) who ascribe onto the Lord God “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:8) do so with the sole reason that He created all things (vv. 10-11). When Christ took the sealed scroll from God (vv. 6-7), He was accorded similar honor of worship (vv.

⁵¹Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 164.

⁵²Ibid., 165.

8-13). They described him as the one worthy “to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise” (Rev 5:12). Then both the “One who sits on the throne” and the “Lamb” appeared to be worshipped and honored equally (5:13b-14).

If 3:21 is taken as the springboard text⁵³ for the throne room experience, then the content of 3:21 appears to say that the whole experience seems to be a playback of an event that had happened prior to John’s visionary ascension to heaven. This is because of Christ statement, “I overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne.” Overcame and “sat down” are an experience at a point in time. That the experience seems to be a past one is also supported by the fact that the Almighty was seated on His throne before John saw Him (Rev 4:2). And that God has always been on the throne as the Creator is explained as the reason for the worship by the “host” of heaven (Rev 4:11). Stefanovic quoted Beasley-Murray as saying, “victory of Christ has already taken place in His cross and resurrection, that He has ascended the throne of God, and that His reign has begun.”⁵⁴

The visionary experience appears to suggest that the genre can probably be apocalyptic. John only previewed the state of God’s throne room and the exaltation of Christ which appears to have taken place before it was revealed to him. Also, the symbolic presentation of the whole event support that the genre is apocalyptic. It is in this apocalyptic generic context that Pantokratōr together with the divine appellation—who was, and is, and is to come—is described.

In the immediate unit (chapter 4), Pantokratōr appears to describe God’s sovereignty because of other phrases used to describe God in the context. The title—who

⁵³Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 164.

⁵⁴Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 167.

was, and is, and is to come—expresses an idea of divine infinity and sovereignty over history.⁵⁵ The same sovereignty of God is expressed by the phrase “Him who sits on the throne.”⁵⁶ Probably He has been seated enthroned as the Creator and Ruler of the universe since time began: He is the “Him who lives forever and ever.”⁵⁷ The phrase, *is to come*, seems to explain how this splendor of majesty will be revealed to the entire saints when Jesus comes in the second time. It looks more probable to see these appellations describing God’s sovereignty in a context that appears to say that God is worshipped because He is the Creator.

With this understanding and the fact that the scene is not one of judgment, Pantokratōr in this context more likely reveals God’s supreme sovereignty. The warrior attribute of *sēbā’ôt* does not appear to be present.

Literary Analysis of 11:17

“With the taken of the scroll, Christ was installed on the heavenly throne and received all authority and right to rule over the universe as co-Ruler with the Father” (5:7-14).⁵⁸ Then Christ broke the seals to recount the history of the church through persecution (6:10), from Pentecost to the Second Coming. While the seals reveal the history of the church through suffering, the trumpets present God’s preliminary judgment

⁵⁵Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, 105.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 231, 234; It was at Pentecost that Christ was enthroned on the throne of universe.

against those who have persecuted the believers and have “rejected the gospel and have failed to receive the seal of God on their forehead.”⁵⁹

It is in the context of the seventh trumpet that voices in heaven proclaimed that the kingdom of the world now belongs to “the Lord and of His Christ (11:15).” The twenty-four elders then worshipped God and proclaimed, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign” (Rev 11:17).

In the unit (11:15-18), it is the Father and the Son who are first honored as co-Rulers of the world (v.15b). Then in 11:17, God is praised for the completed form of His kingdom as shown in: “because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign” (Rev 11:17). Then in verse 18, those who have disobeyed and therefore do not have God’s seal on their forehead are judged (9:4). And finally, those who have heeded to His call for repentance are rewarded (v.18b). The reality of God’s reign and rewarding of the saints appears to be possible when He has defeated all His enemies, which probably refers to the end of the world (19:11-16).

Evidences in the unit show that the seventh trumpet refers to the end of the age. The designation “One who is and who was and who is to come” is how God is known in 1:4, 8 and 4:8. But in 11:17 the designation for God is the “One who is and who was,” no more “who is to come.” This variation appears to apply to the breaking of the sixth seal, the pronouncement of the seventh trumpet (11: 17), and the seventh bowl (16:17), making these scenes concurrent events happening at the second coming of Christ. Moreover, replacing *One who is coming* with the *One who has taken up His great power*

⁵⁹Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 285.

and begun to reign appears to say that this section is narrating the actual establishment of the future kingdom and the final judgment. The *coming* probably concerns the arrival of the Almighty at the Second Coming which is also the coming of Jesus to take power to reign.⁶⁰

The genre of this unit may be classified as an apocalyptic prophecy, for the reasons that the trumpet judgment seems to have been prompted by the cry of the persecuted saints (6:10). The trumpets are God's intervention judgments cast in symbols. It is also a prophecy because the seventh trumpet plague is a prediction that concerns the end time when the Pantokratōr, the "Lord of Hosts," condemns the wicked and reward the saints (11:17b-18). But whose reign is the verse talking about; the Father's or the Son's?

"Lord God Almighty ... You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign" in Revelation 11:17 also appears to be in reference to Revelation 5:12 when Christ after His enthronement received "power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise." This looks probable because both Christ and God were jointly worshipped after Christ's exaltation (5:14) and this seems to be the trend in some parts of the book. From the moment Christ received His power of authority, both He and God became custodian of judgment (6:16) and the source of our salvation (7:10). This seems to explain why the kingdom of this world became the Kingdom of God and Christ's (11:15) after Christ overcame Satan and his host on the cross of Calvary and was enthroned as the King of the universe (5:7-14).

⁶⁰Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 368.

Accordingly, Christ shares in this sovereignty because of the “successful completion of His messianic ministry.”⁶¹ Although God takes preeminence, their reign should be seen as a joint sovereignty. Therefore, the omission of “is to come” in verse 17 should be explained as a present realization of the Almighty’s reign,⁶² which may be explained as the reign of the Father and the Son.

We conclude the context of 11:17 saying that, with respect to events that surround this verse, it looks more probable to translate Pantokratōr with the warring attribute of God, s^ebā’ôt. This seems to happen in the end of time when God through the Son descends mightily to fight against the host of evil and reward His saints. Also, the reign described in this context likely belongs to both the Father and the Son.

Literary Analysis of 15:3

Revelation 12 and 13 present Satan’s systematic plan to destroy the faithful followers of God from the first coming of Christ to the second coming. Chapter 13, in particular, focuses on the time of the end when the beast will intensify his attacks to destroy God’s holy people. God warned that an end time judgment was inevitable (Rev 14:9-10):⁶³ The saints are saved (14:14-16) but the wicked are punished for their persecution against the saints (14:17-20). Then the saints sang the victorious song of redemption (15:2-4).

⁶¹Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 226.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 227.

⁶³“If anyone worships the beast and his image ... he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury. ... He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.”

Revelation 15 appears to serve two purposes: it first introduces the seven plagues and also reveals the outcome of the long struggle between the saints and the satanic tripartite confederacy by projecting those who would overcome (15:2 cf. 6:17). The overcomers appear to be the saints who sang the victory song of redemption, namely, “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Rev 15:3-4).

This victory song appears to be sung in recognition of God’s judgments appearing at earth’s harvest (reward for the saints; 14:14-16) and winepress trampling (punishment for the wicked; vv. 17-20). This probably refers to the last judgment because it rewards the saints and punishes the wicked. Also, it is in the final judgment that the wicked are destroyed outside the city (20:8-9; 21:8, 27; 22:15); hence, the winepress trampled outside the city finds meaning (Rev 14:20).⁶⁴ The seven last plagues (Chapter 16-18) are God’s judgment but only against the wicked, and the seventh plague culminates into the end with the final judgment (16:17-19).

Another evidence why the setting constitutes consummation is because the song is about God’s great deliverance acts. First, they were rescued by the “King of the ages” (v. 3). He seems to have battled with another perceived king and defeated him. Moreover, all nations can give their allegiance to God (v. 4b) only after God has destroyed all his enemies. Further, the opening temple of God’s testimony (Law) appears to emphasize that the setting is judgment because “In Revelation it is also the place (temple) from which divine judgment emanate.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴Joel records that it is in the valley of Jehoshaphat out of Jerusalem that God will judge all nations (Joel 3:2, 11-12, 14). Here too Revelation seemed modeled after Joel with the use of grains harvest and grape harvest trodden with winepress as indicative of God’s judgment (v. 13).

⁶⁵Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 487; “The seven angels having the seven plagues emerge from the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary ‘to show that no person or nation can with impunity defy the Law of God.’”

The song also appears to be sung in anticipation of the bowls of plague about to be unleashed upon the wicked. Because it appears that with the idea of recapitulation the seventh bowl plague (16:17-21) like the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) and the seventh seal (8:1) “narrates the very end of history.”⁶⁶ The song appears to be sung concerning the end time reality: the establishment of God’s final kingdom.

The genre appears to be more of an apocalyptic prophecy because it describes an end time reality that is the last battle when the victors will sing. The rescue comes only when the saints have gone through persecution. Then, Jesus standing in as the warrior Messiah punishes the wicked and rewards the saints (14:14-20 cf. 19:11-16). In this context, it appears more probable to translate Pantokratōr with s^ebā’ôt due to the combatting nature of the context and to bring out God’s power with which He punishes the wicked and saves His people from the hands of the evil one.

Then the question comes, who is this song ascribed to? God or Christ? The praises can be directed to God because it is His redemption that comes through Christ.⁶⁷ It could also be ascribed to both God and Christ because God has always worked with Christ to achieve human’s salvation. But for the following reasons it appears more probable to ascribe the song to Christ than to the Father to reveal His absolute divinity.⁶⁸

The content of the song appears to be the song of the Lamb, and it is only one song. Like the song that was sang by the Israelites after their delivery from the Egyptian bondage,⁶⁹ this song praises Christ for His redemptive work on behalf of humanity (cf.

⁶⁶Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 611.

⁶⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 285; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 486.

⁶⁸Rhodes, *40 Days Through Revelation*, 193.

⁶⁹Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 792.

5:8; 14:2).⁷⁰ Moreover, the song appears to be the same as the new song of 5:9-14 and 14:3 where the saints sang to praise the Lamb for His work of redemption.⁷¹

Therefore, Pantokratōr is found in a cultic context where the redeemed laud the redemption that has been wrought on their behalf by Christ and vengeance against the enemies of God. This scene appears to take place at the end of the dragon/beast persecution of the church (Chapters 12-13) and the ensuing judgment in 14:14-20. Although the reference to worship reveals God's sovereignty, yet the idea of redemption comes with combatting nature. This implies that Pantokratōr is the warrior God who fights to redeem His people.

Literary Analysis of 16:7

Both Revelation 15 and 16 present a judgment scene in which God is vindicated for avenging His faithful followers whose blood has been poured out by the wicked. It is chapter 15 that introduces the preparation for the outpouring of the seven last plagues. The warning for the pouring of God's wrath has been sounded from 14:10 as "the wine of the wrath of God." The wicked refused to adhere to these warnings and now the saints have been sealed and, as probation closes (15:8 appears to say that God's glory filled the temple and no one could enter), God in the full fury of His wrath pour these plagues (Rev 16) on all the wicked.

⁷⁰Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*, 344; Stefanovic agrees with this view and posits that this song is "sung by the redeemed in celebration of the great deliverance wrought by Christ on behalf of his faithful followers." Therefore, this song is sung not only to God but the Lamb as well; Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 486.

⁷¹Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 793, 792; this song is about much greater deliverance accomplished through the Lamb's work.

The Holy One is lauded by the angel for executing just judgment (Rev 16:5). Then this praise of the angel seems replicated by the altar (16:7), but this time directed to the God Almighty. The altar is probably one of the martyrs under the altar who had earlier cried out and pleaded for vengeance (6:9). Their prayers in verse 10 was probably heard and answered by God in 8:3-4. In 16:7, the altar praising God probably represents these saints whose prayers are answered.⁷²

The genre of this context appears to be an apocalyptic prophecy because God is here seen judging the wicked as a response to the martyrs' call (6:9). If the martyrs of Revelation 6 are involved here, then the praise of God would involve the call for vengeance (6:11). "In this instance, the call for vengeance would make 'Lord of Hosts' a probable interpretation for *Pantokratōr*." God appears in this context standing behind His own people to fight against their enemy.

Literary Context of 16:14

In this same context of unabated God's onslaught against the wicked in the form of scorching sun (16:8, 9) and darkness upon the throne of the beast (vv. 10, 11), the sixth plague dried up Euphrates which paved way for the kings from the East (v. 12). Then comes the outbreak of the frog-like demonic spirits from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophets (vv. 12, 13) which gathered the kings of the world for "the battle on the great day of God Almighty" (Rev 16:14). Immediately after the gathering of the kings of the earth by the evil spirit, then Christ announces His unexpected return (v.

⁷²Stephen Smalley, *The Revelation of John*, 404; Aune, *Revelation*, 2:888; Mounce see the altar and the voice as personifying the "corporate testimony of the martyrs in 6:9 and the prayers of the saints in 8:3-5."

15). The gathering of these earthly kings for battle took place at a place called Armageddon in Hebrew.

These kings from the East appear to be heavenly agents because it is an act of God (sixth plague) which dried up Euphrates for their passage (v.12). In Revelation, Jesus is the Morning Star (the Sun rising from the east; Rev 22:16). In Revelation 7:2, the angel having the seal of God came from the east: “from the east” is rendered by New American Standard Bible with Codes (1995) as “the rising of the sun.” Jesus’ return is portrayed in Matthew 24:27 as a lightening from the East. Therefore, these kings from the east appear to be the “armies of heaven” following Christ (Rev 19:14) to make war against the “beast and the kings of the earth and their armies” (Rev 19:19).

Probably, those who were not sealed by God will be at the side of the dragon and will fight against the Messiah in the end-time battle. “John expects a coalition of human rulers, demonically inspired, who will do battle with Messiah.”⁷³ This battle according to Smalley is in reference to 19:17, 19; and 20:8, where the Dragon-beast will rally the rulers of the earth “to fight against the Messiah in the final eschatological battle.”⁷⁴

This battle appears to be scheduled on a special day called the “great day of the God Almighty” (v.14b).⁷⁵ The phrase appears to be a metaphor pointing to the day of the coming of Jesus Christ. The evidence seems to appear in verse 15 when Christ announced that He was coming. If the one coming in Revelation 19:11-21 is Jesus—as the warrior

⁷³Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 214.

⁷⁴Smalley, *Revelation*, 410.

⁷⁵In most parts of the bible prophets have referred to this same day as the Day of the Lord (“Ezek. 38-39; Joel 3:2; Zech. 14:2; Ps 2:1-2).

Messiah on the Day of the Lord—then the day of the God Almighty is probably used symbolically in reference to the day Christ comes to judge the wicked (16:15).

The terms used in the execution of the sixth plague seem to portray the whole account in a symbolic form. Phrases like drying up of Euphrates, the kings from the East, the great day of God Almighty appear to be symbolic.⁷⁶ It also appears that the imagery here is associated with the military power that Christ will wield on that day. It appears to be a context of war and vengeance, justice and reward against Satan and his followers and Christ and the saints respectively. In this setting, the above explanation appears to suggest that the genre is an apocalyptic prophecy; hence, the day of the God Pantokratōr may be interpreted as the day of the Lord of Hosts when Jesus comes in the power of the Almighty to condemn all enemies of God.

Literary Analysis of 19:6

Revelation 19 opens with great joy and celebration in heaven (vv. 1, 3, 4) because God has judged and condemned the great prostitute, Babylon, and has avenged on her the blood of His servants (v. 2). This act of judgment began in chapter 16 and ended in chapter 18. There is another reason for this celebration which is recorded in verse 6: “For the Lord God Almighty reigns.” It also points to the fact that “the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready” (Rev 19:7). This unit ended with a promise that “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” (Rev 19:9).

This celebration seems to allude to the final celebration of the redeemed and the whole heavenly host when Satan and his host have been defeated and destroyed. The

⁷⁶Stefanovic, 493-495.

reason for this submission includes the following: the celebrants confirm that “Salvation and glory and power belong (now) to our God” (Rev 19:1) because “He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries” and “He has avenged on her the blood of His servants” (Rev 19:2) and the “Lord God Almighty reigns” (Rev 19:6) because the Lamb and His bride has been united (Rev 19:7).

Although the kingdom does not seem to have been fully established, John appears to present an eschatological reality: a song which is sung when all the battle has ended. Also, this song appears to be the last song recorded to have been sung by all the hosts in heaven and the redeemed from the earth (19:4-6). No other song seems to have been recorded by John from this point to the end of the Book. Therefore, this song is probably sung in anticipation of the consummated Kingdom. According to Mounce, the multitude shouted for joy because the Almighty has at last “established his universal reign in [on the] earth.”⁷⁷

Moreover, the setting probably refers to the ultimate end because the wedding supper of the Lamb has taken place. “This joining of Christ with people whom He has purchased on the cross is the focus of the entire book of Revelation.”⁷⁸ And this union can probably take place when sin and all evil have been abrogated. While the wedding supper of the Lamb does not seem to be the actual wedding ceremony, Ladd says “it is a metaphorical way of alluding to the final redemptive fact when the dwelling of God is with men.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 346.

⁷⁸Ibid., 557.

⁷⁹Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 248.

Therefore, in this setting which seems to allude to the future point in time when the Almighty will have taken His great power to reign with no other power contending with Him and His dwelling is finally seen among the redeemed, it is His ultimate supremacy that appears to be revealed. Although the combatting nature appears to be at the background, it is God's sovereignty that appears to come to the foreground and the interpretation for Pantokratōr with the evidence that God is pictured in this context as a Ruler rather than a Warrior.

Literary Analysis of 19:15

The context of Revelation 19:15 in which Pantokratōr is found (19:11-21) appears to describe the war between the rider on a white horse and his armies (v. 14) and the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies (v. 19). At the end of the war, the beast and the false prophets were captured and “thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur” (v. 20) while the rest were killed and their flesh were given to birds to devour (v. 21).

The setting of this unit appears to be war and vengeance. Most of the terms and phrases used in this section appear to attest to this fact. The rider on the horse is described as judging and making war with justice (v. 11). According to Stefanovic, the imagery of “His eyes are like blazing fire” and “many crowns” on His head (v.12) symbolizes “Christ’s ability to judge” and “His royal power and His authority to exercise judgment”⁸⁰ respectively. The robe dipped in blood (v.13) appears to present Christ as a Warrior fighting to avenge the blood of His servants to give them victory.⁸¹ The sharp sword which He used to strike down the nation (v. 14) is an OT imagery (Isa 11:4) that

⁸⁰Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 563.

⁸¹Ibid., 564.

presents Christ as the “warrior Messiah.”⁸² The same imagery in the form of a sharp double-edged sword (Rev 1:16; 2:12) is used to make war against the Nicolaitans (2:16).

Revelation 19:11-21 appears to narrate the final battle that takes place at Armageddon. Christ as the Warrior on the white horse (19:11) rules “with an iron scepter” and treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (Rev 19:15). “To rule with an iron scepter is to destroy rather than to govern in a stern fashion”⁸³ while treading the winepress is “a metaphor for divine judgment.”⁸⁴ The act of Jesus in Revelation 19:15 fulfills Isaiah’s messianic prophecy (Isa 11:4) and He, as the root of Jesse, appears here to judge the wicked.⁸⁵ Therefore, Christ is “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16): the executioner of the fury “wrath of the God Almighty” (v. 15) on His enemies. This is an indication of the “universal sovereignty of the warrior Christ in his eschatological triumph over all the enemies of God.”⁸⁶ Pantokratōr may probably be rendered as the Lord of Host because Christ exercises God’s authority to fight against the host of Satan.

One may also argue that because the dragon is not seen physically participating in this war, it cannot be concluded that the war is ended. But what seems evident of the dragon’s involvement in this final war is that the frog-like demonic spirit which gathered the kings of the earth to fight the Messiah came from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Rev 16:13-14). Therefore, it appears that, indirectly, the defeat of

⁸²Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355.

⁸³Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 355.

⁸⁴Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1061.

⁸⁵Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 565.

⁸⁶Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 356.

the armies of evil included the dragon himself. It looks probable that it is his power that fueled them; therefore, their defeat is also his defeat. Moreover, it looks as if it is because of this defeat that the dragon showed no resistance when the angel came to chain him (20:1-3).

Literary Analysis of 21:22

Revelation 20 seems to paint the picture of the end of sin and death: Satan is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (20:10); the dead are judged (vv. 12-13) and thrown into the lake of fire (v.15); and death and hades are thrown into the lake of fire (v. 14). Then the New Jerusalem as described in Revelation 21 descends out of heaven from God (21:10). The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. But the city among other things has no sun or moon (v. 23) because night will be no more (22:5). What appears as an important aspect about the description of this city is that it has no temple because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb is the Temple of the city (21:22).

The whole picture about the city seems to reveal why there should not be the need for any temple. A temple appears to be needed to remind us about the presence of God among His people when Satan seems to be ruling on the whole world. Satan and sin have been eradicated from the city (Rev 20:10) and God is in control. Another evidence that does not make the presence of a temple necessary in the city is what seems to be the absence of impurity and people who do what is shameful and deceitful (21:27).

Caird states that “The temple was therefore a symbol of God’s claim on the secular world and of His abhorrence of the unclean.”⁸⁷ The temple was a symbol of God’s presence, but now the symbol has been replaced with the reality. “God Himself

⁸⁷Caird, Revelation, 279.

will dwell among His people and direct unmediated communion.”⁸⁸ The resurrected Christ is the temple in the City (John 2:19-22).⁸⁹ Now that New Jerusalem is free from Satan and all evil doers, it appears more probable to translate Pantokratōr in reference to God’s sovereignty because the battle has ended. The earth has become a true sovereign state and there appears to be no interference from any quarters. This condition of God’s people and the city has been the anticipation of the whole creation throughout Revelation. Their songs have always portrayed this fact. The prophecy about His coming has been fulfilled, God’s presence is felt among His people, and the Lord Pantokratōr reigns.

Summary and Conclusion

We conclude this literary analysis with the understanding that, in 1:8, Pantokratōr is the coming Lord of Hosts with vengeance to destroy all His enemies. The analysis has shown that because verses 7 and 8 are the immediate unit, the person John presented in verse 7 is likely the same person identified in verse 8. The same is the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty who appeared as the First and the Last in 1:17. In 4:8, Pantokratōr is probably the Creator God and, as such, His sovereignty as the Ruler is intended. The warrior attribute does not appear to be present. The trumpet plagues reveal God’s judgment which saw the warrior Pantokratōr ending Satan’s rule with the sound of the seventh trumpet to usher in the reign of God and Christ (11:15-18).

As the redeemed sang in 15:2-4, it is Pantokratōr who appears as the warrior God to fight for their redemption. Pantokratōr is likely the “Lord of Hosts” (16:7), who pours out the bowl of plagues in vengeance (6:11) against the enemies of the saints. The fight

⁸⁸Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 284.

⁸⁹Ladd, *Revelation of John*, 284.

on the day of the God Almighty (16:14) is probably used symbolically in reference to the day Christ comes in vengeance to fight against all the hosts of Satan.

Then the redeemed sing again when the sovereignty of the ruler God is revealed as the Pantokratōr reigns after He defeated the hosts of Satan (19:1-10). This song also appears to be sung in anticipation of the final war (19:11-21) in which Christ appears exercising all authority of the warrior God and as the “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16) brings destruction on Satan and all his allies. Then the war ends, the sovereignty of Pantokratōr is revealed, the whole universe is under His control, and God and Christ reign among Their people (21:22 cf. 19:6, 7).

Synthesis of the Analysis

John appears to convince his suffering audience that Christ, for whose testimony they suffer, is now co-Ruler with the Father (5:7 cf. 3:21) and, therefore, has the power to deliver them. As the coming Messiah, He is the “Alpha and Omega” (1:8) which is immediately interpreted as “the First and Last” (1:17). All the other appellations of God like Pantokratōr are intentionally used to describe Christ in 1:8 as He will be seen throughout Revelation acting in the power of God. Two uses of Pantokratōr, “great day of God Almighty” (16:14) and “the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty” (19:15), are probably used figuratively, representing the day Christ comes in judgment and His act of executing Pantokratōr’s wrath on His enemies respectively. All the other six occurrences appear explicitly to be used for God.

All contexts of Pantokratōr appear to point to the time of the end when the saints are vindicated and the wicked are condemned, and they can as well be viewed from two different perspectives. The first one is based on the interpretation of s^ebā’ôt when Christ,

the captain of the Lord's hosts, descends in the might of Pantokratōr as a Judge to rescue the saints and to destroy Satan and all evil. The second interpretation looks to the sovereign reign of God when Satan and sin happen to be no more and God and Christ rule in the entire realm of His Creation. This picture is probably revealed in the context of 4:8 and 21:22: Just as Pantokratōr reigns in His sovereign power among all His creation from the beginning, so it will be replicated after Satan and sin are exterminated. In the end, the redeemed sing to praise Pantokratōr after Satan and his hosts have been defeated. In this context of 19:1-10 and other contexts of 4:8 and 21:22, God is pictured as a Ruler rather than a Warrior. Hence, it is His sovereignty that appears to come to the forefront.

The warrior image seems evident in the Pantokratōr settings of 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 16:14, and 19:15. The contexts appear to portray judgment scenes that represent the end time when the Lord of host brings vengeance on the host of Satan. The trumpet plagues appear to be God's preliminary warning judgment and vengeance on the wicked. With the sounding of the seventh trumpet the end probably has come (11:15-18). The redemption song of victory (15:2-4) appears to take place at the end of the dragon/beast persecution of the church (chapters 12-13) and the ensuing judgment in 14:14-20. The seven bowls of plagues are poured on those who refuse to adhere to God's call and warning for repentance (14:9, 10). Though the plagues came (16:7) the wicked refused to repent and gathered themselves to fight against God (16:14). Then on that almighty day of vengeance, the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev 19:16) fought and triumphed over all the enemies of God.

Theological Implication

Christians in Asia Minor are being persecuted under the authorities of the Roman Empire who claimed for themselves the ultimate power that only belongs to God. John and these Christians expected more troubled times. They also understood Satan's systematic plan to work through these authorities to exterminate the church of God (Rev 12, 13). John's frequent usage of *Pantokratōr* does not appear to be accidental but to remind all Christians that in their suffering they should remember that God is the sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe (4:8-11). Not only is He a sovereign God, He is also a warrior God who comes through Christ in the end to fight and defeat all enemies of God, ending the rule of Satan and all his agents (19:11-21). Meanwhile, they should continue to sing with all the saints the victory *Pantokratōr* song of the Lamb (cf. 15:3) with the belief that the battle has already ended and, with Christ on their side, they are victorious.

As Christians of John's day suffered under the authorities of the Roman Emperors, in the same vain, Revelation reveals that Satan will influence political as well as religious leaders to persecute Christians throughout the ages. In their suffering, Christians are to remember that they are not alone in this warfare. Christ is fighting for them and He is able to deliver them from the oppressors. But if they are to endure, they must know that the KING OF KINGS, fighting in the full power of *Pantokratōr* will vindicate them in the final war and destroy Satan and all his allies who persecuted them.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are three parts to this summary and conclusion section. In the first part, the summary section, we summarize all the major themes of the study. This will be followed by suggestion for further areas where more studies can be done. Then we conclude that Pantokratōr in Revelation reveals God's sovereign rule over all His creation and history and His vengeance against all His enemies.

Summary

The appellation Pantokratōr was probably understood by the suffering Christians of Asia Minor in reference to the same OT Yahweh s^ebā'ôt who, in His power, would triumph over their enemies to give them victory. But not only is Pantokratōr a warrior God, He is also a sovereign God who rules as the Creator over His entire creation and over all physical and spiritual powers. He is the Alpha and Omega and the One who is who was, and who is to come.

The review under the contextual interpretation of Pantokratōr revealed that all the contexts, except 21:22, project combat imagery. Nonetheless, our analysis has revealed that God's sovereignty appears more prominent in settings such as 4:8 and 19:6 where God appears reigning and not combatting the enemy threat. Thus it happens that, in all the other contexts such as 1:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14, and 19:15, Jesus would be seen as coming in the power of the Almighty with vengeance against His enemies. This appears

to be the reason Jesus seems wielding the authority of the Father: Jesus shares in the reign over the universe with the Father (11:17 cf. 3:21); the song of the Lamb whose content concerns the Almighty (15:3) also applies to Him, then the great day of the Almighty which is likely the day Christ comes in His might as the “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16) to destroy Satan and all evil.

In the background study, it was revealed that the two Hebrew epithets, s^ebā’ôt and shaddai, that translate Pantokratōr in the LXX reveal God’s nature as a Warrior and Sovereign respectively. Meanwhile, the LXX has other several instances where Pantokratōr does not necessary appear to translate neither s^ebā’ôt nor shaddai in the Hebrew Text. It was concluded then that meanings of both s^ebā’ôt and shaddai are likely intended to be Pantokratōr, in the LXX. God is not only a Warrior but a Sovereign as well.

The Intertestamental Writings probably saw God more as a Warrior and translated Pantokratōr by s^ebā’ôt especially in situations where the people were under the threat of the enemy. In line with the LXX and also with the Intertestamental Writings, Revelation appears to interpret Pantokratōr with both s^ebā’ôt and Shaddai. God’s supremacy is revealed not only as a Warrior fighting on behalf of His people but also His sovereignty as the Creator and the Ruler of the whole universe. As part of what Revelation reveals, God in Christ has overcome the dragon and all his agents fighting against all God’s people.

Conclusion

The study of Pantokratōr in Revelation could have covered the usage after Revelation to ascertain how persecution could influence the term’s rampant usage, but

this is left for further studies. This study concludes with the understanding that the analyses of the usage of Pantokratōr by LXX, Intertestamental Literature, Greco-Roman World, and NT have shown that Pantokratōr is only applied to deity or God. The study has shown that the meaning of Pantokratōr in terms of God, holding sway over all the powers, fits the respective literary contexts and, hence, reveals God's supremacy. However, it has been observed that Pantokratōr can be interpreted as Almighty which from certain quarters can mean God's sovereign control over all His creation and history.

In its military context, it is understood as Lord of Hosts, revealing that the Almighty is a warrior God who fights against His enemies to give victory to the believer. Revelation presents the journey of the church from the first century AD up to the second coming, even until the post-millennial time. The devil, though, who has put forth all his effort to destroy the church will be destroyed at the end. John's usage of Pantokratōr reveals that ultimate power belongs to God. He works through Christ to bring vengeance on all who oppose His rule over the universe. But for all Christ believers who obey the commandments of God (14:12 cf. 12:17), Christ is the coming Messiah (1:7 cf. 19:11-21), the "Alpha and Omega" (1:8; 22:13) the "First and the Last" (1:17) and the "Almighty" (1:8). As the Pantokratōr takes His great power to reign (11:17), it is He and Christ who will reign forever among all the saints (11:15 cf. 21:22).

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