



A doxology to Christ (Rev. 1:5e-6)

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Abstract

A doxology to Christ (Rev. 1:5e-6)

Revelation 1:5e-6 is a doxology, an eulogy on the characteristics (attributes) of Christ. Christ's churches celebrate the enduring love of Christ, who by a once-and-for-all historical act redeemed them from enslavement to sin. Through this redemptive achievement Christ obtained royal and priestly prerogatives for believers in the present. The meaning of this doxology is investigated from a "heilgeschichtlich" and covenantal context. The acts of Christ are framed by the acts of God; God thus is the "Principium Essendi". The point of departure in this article is that an ontological relationship exists between the theologia naturalis and the theologia supernaturalis in the final phase of God's kingdom.

Opsomming

'n Doksologie aan Christus (Op. 1:5e-6)

Openbaring 1:5e-6 is 'n doksologie, 'n lofprijsing oor die eienskappe van Christus. Christus se kerke besing in hierdie verse sy ewigdurende liefde, omdat hy hulle deur 'n eenmalige historiese daad uit die slawerny van hulle sonde verlos het. Deur hierdie heilsdaad het God, deur Christus, vir gelowiges in die hede koninklike en priesterlike voorregte bewerkstellig. Die betekenis van hierdie doksologie word binne die konteks van die "Heilsgeschiede" en van die verbond ondersoek. Die doksologie en die daad van Christus word deur die daad van God omraam; God is dus die "Principium Essendi". Christus se eenmalige verlossingsdaad is die stukrag van al God se beloftes. Die vertrekpunt in hierdie artikel is dat 'n ontologiese relasie tussen die theologia naturalis en die theologia supernaturalis in die finale fase van God se koninkryk bestaan.

1. Introduction

Revelation 1:5e-6 is a confessional doxology, a response from Jesus Christ's churches (1:4b) to his acts of salvation as spelled out in 1:5a-d. Revelations 1:5e-6 is the first in a series of doxologies in Revelation. This doxology is part of, flows from, and follows directly on the *salutatio* in Revelation 1:4-5d (Aune, 1997:43). This article attempts to indicate that the mentioned first doxology constitutes an introduction to the Christology and soteriology of Revelation as contained in the *salutatio*.

Christology is the science that has as its subject of investigation the Person and work of Christ. The word *Christology* is a compound of two Greek words, namely *Cristos* (Messiah/Anointed) and *Logos* (teaching; Robbins, 1996:121; Engelbrecht, 1980:2; Cook, 1962:20). *Soteriology* is the concept used to depict the transformation of existential circumstances by God, a transformation that affects both mankind and cosmos (Du Rand, 2005:471).

1.2 The meaning of a doxology to Christ

The term *doxology* originates from the same word as "dogma", the ancient form *doxa*, which is a form associated with the uttering of praise (Douglas, 1974:312). According to Aune (1997:43-45), a doxology is a short liturgical formula usually consisting of four elements:

- it addresses God (in the dative, "to whom");
- it indicates the attribute of glory (*δοξα*) – usually in the nominative case;
- it indicates the unending validity of the ascription of glory ("forever"); and
- it consists of a concluding "amen", that may be augmented by the inclusion of a number of other attributes as well (for other functions and elements see Aune, 1997:44, 45).

Doxologies frequently occurred in early Christian texts (Aune, 1997:43; Boring, 1989:77; Schillebeeckx, 1989:741).

1.3 Hermeneutical methods

This article intends following an *a-priori* strategy entailing the use of discourse analysis that is based on the findings of linguistics. This kind of analysis applies the model designed by the New Testament

Society of South Africa with reference to the findings of J.P. Louw (1978:1).¹ Cognisance is also taken of useful insights from the social sciences (Malina & Pilch, 2000).

Epistemological issues, such as socio-historical context, dating, authorship, prophecy, apocalypse, genre, symbolism and so on, are taken into account in the analysis.²

1.4 Classification and context of Revelation 1:5e-6 within the macro-context of Revelation

Revelation 1:5e-6 is the first of five doxologies in Revelation (1:6; 4:9; 5:13, 14; 7:12; 19:1), and the first in a series of songs of praise: 5:2-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-17; 12:10; 14:3-7; 15:2-4 (Boring, 1989:77). Linguistic and content analysis indicate that 1:5e-6, with its important Christological information, forms an integral part of the macro-context of Revelation.³

2. Exegesis of Block 5e-6

2.1 Introductory remarks

The phrases, *ej̄ tacei* (1:1d) and *kairo;" eġġu!* (1:3e), are important for the interpretation of Revelation and for the interpretation of Revelation 1:5e-6. These phrases are interpreted in relation to Daniel 2. That which is revealed in Revelation (1:1a; 1:1b and in the book in its totality) is the long-awaited final phase of God's kingdom in the end times and God's counsel on his kingdom (De Smidt, 2004b:108). Revelation 1:1-6, 8 refers to acts of the *theo-sanctorum* (God, Spirit, Christ) and the *communio sanctorum* (his churches) in the final phase of God's kingdom (De Smidt, 2004a:196).

1 Cf. also Du Toit (2004:207); Desrosiers (2000:100); Deist (1986:129).

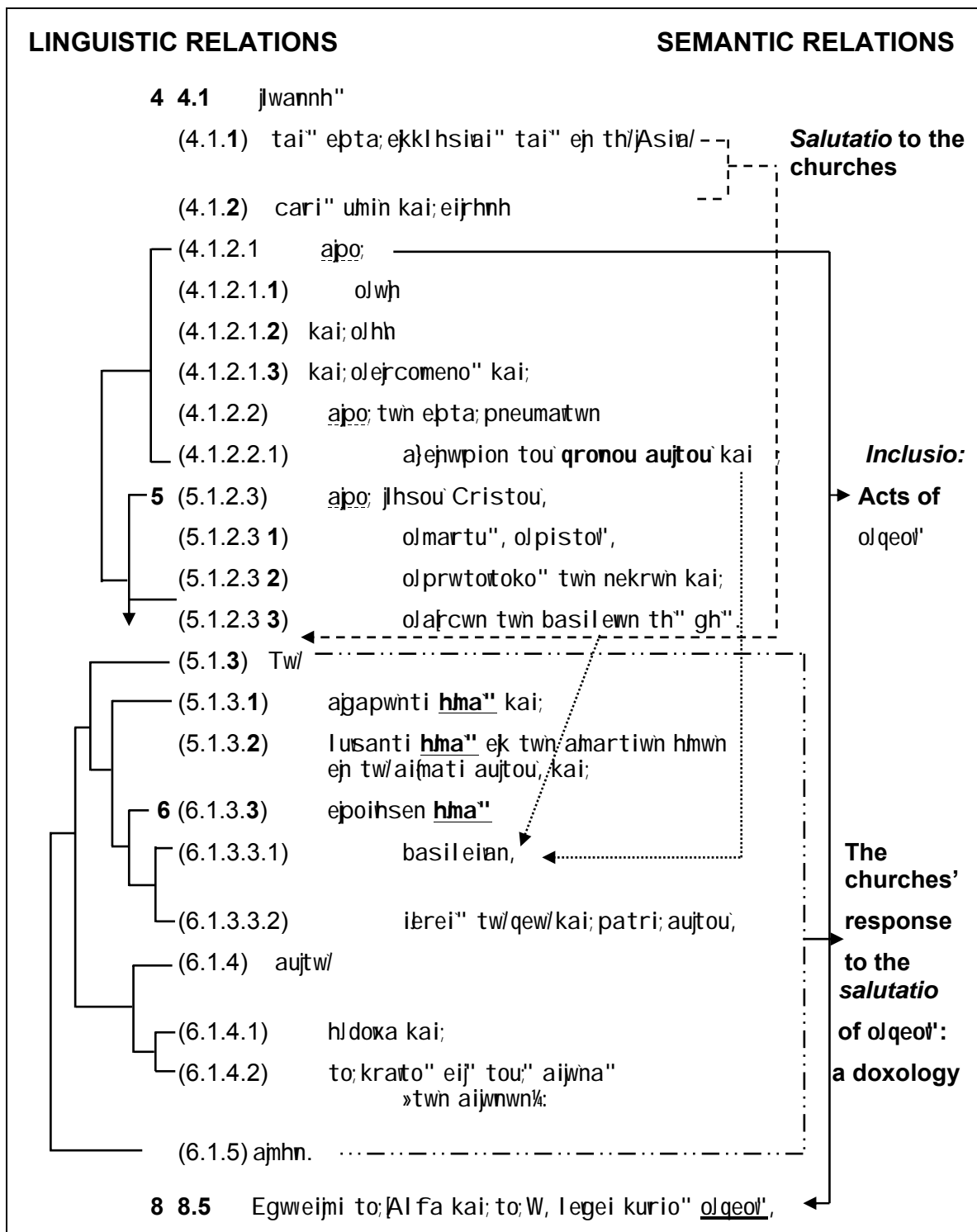
2 Wilson (2005:163); Slater (2003:258; 1998:232); Koester (2001:42); Beale (1999:37-43); Schnelle (1998:519-524); Aune (1997:6, 12; 1989:240); Bauckham (1993:1); Linton (1993:142); Du Preez (1992:2); Boring (1992:335); Rissi (1968:4).

3 Aune (1997:12); Bandstra (1992:15); Coetzee (1990:272, 274, 287); Engelbrecht (1980:12); Schlüssler Fiorenza (1968:561); Charles (1975:xxiv); Swete (1911:xlvi-lvi).

In the New Testament doxologies are usually focused on God in particular. In Revelation Christ is the subject of worship (Du Rand, 2005:471; Van de Kamp, 2000:60).

2.2 Discourse analysis

Block 5e-6



2.3 A linguistic and semantic (synchronic) résumé of verses 5.1.3-6.1.5

Following the three attributive descriptions (titles) of God, the Spirit and Christ (4.1.2.1-5.1.2.3.3), the implied author presents a threefold doxology on the acts of Christ, a doxology that represents the churches' answer (1:4) to the *salutatio* (4.1.2) of the triune God.

The doxology begins with *twl agapwnti* (5.1.3-1) and culminates in 6.1.4 with an inscription of *doxa* (6.1.4.1) and *krato*" (6.1.4.2) to Christ. According to this analysis verses 5.1.3 to 6.1.5 form a unit (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1998:41).

The definite article (*twl*) refers to Christ and introduces a new unit of thought, the doxology (5.1.3-6.1.5). The definite article (*twl*) in the dative (*dativus commodi*) links 5.1.2.3 and 5.1.3.1-3 and shows that 5.1.3.1-3 is a legitimation of 5.1.2.3. Christ's salvific acts are listed and elaborated on in this part (5.1.3.1-3).

The phrase *twl agapwnti hma*" (5.1.3) is in the praesence and indicates duration; thus stating Christ's continuing love for his churches – also for present-day churches. The word *kai* is used as a copulative and is bound (5.1.3.1-2).

The present participle *agapwnti*, substantiated by the article *twl* is particularly striking because it is directly followed by two aorists: *lusan*ti (5.1.3.2) and *epoi*hsen (6.1.3.3; Coetzee, 1990:298). The one article (*twl*) that governs both participles (*agapwnti*, *lusan*ti; 5.1.3.1-2), and the aorist (5.1.3.2) express the one act of one person freeing the churches from all their sins (Du Rand, 2005:471; Thomas, 1992:70; Lenski, 1963:45).

The durative force of the present participle heightens the significance of the act of freeing – in contrast with the aorist participle-dative expression *lusan*ti *hma*" (5.1.3.2), that directly follows upon the participle (Thomas, 1992:70). The two participles emphasise the contrast between the abiding *agapaw* (5.1.3) and the completed act of redemption (5.1.3.2; Swete, 1911:9). The two participles in the aorist (*lusan*ti, 5.1.3.2) and praesence (*twl agapwnti*; 5.1.3.1) imply that Christ has already demonstrated this love through his death and resurrection (5.1.2.3.2). The aorist participle, *lusan*ti (5.1.3.2), refers to Christ's once-for-all act of love.

The word $\epsilon\eta$ (5.1.3.2) is instrumental in the phrase $\epsilon\eta$ $\tau\omega$ $\alpha\iota\eta\mu\alpha\tau\iota$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\tau\omicron\upsilon$. It was “by means of his blood” that Christ provided this great benefit for believers. In this phrase $\epsilon\eta$ denotes the price for which something is bought (Rev. 5:9; Isa. 7:23; Thomas, 1992:70; Charles, I 1975:16).

As the implied author continues his doxology in 6.1.3.3, he varies the construction, changing from a participle in the dative case ($\tau\omega$ $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\omega\upsilon\tau\iota$; 5.1.3.1) to a finite verb ($\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$; 6.1.3.3). This change in construction is not a solecism, as syntactical peculiarities in this section are typical of the author.

$\tau\omega$ $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\omega\upsilon\tau\iota$ is the subject of $\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$. The implied author has chosen to construct 6.1.3.3 as an independent clause, contrary to the normal Greek form (Aune, 1997:42). $\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$ in the indicative mood marks a parenthetical statement, because the dative construction of 5.1.3 is resumed in the reference $\tau\omega$ $\lambda\upsilon\tau\omega$ in 6.1.3.3.2; 6.1.4 (Aune, 1997:42). “Parenthetical” is to be taken in this respect as meaning emphatic, because the finite verb $\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$ (6.1.3.3) carries more emphasis than a participle. By formulating the third statement ($\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$; 6.1.3.3) as a finite verb instead of a participle, the implied author elevates this third statement above the participial ones (5.1.3; 5.1.3.1). Thus, by using the aorist for the second time (5.1.3.2; 6.1.3.3), the implied author emphasises the statement.

The parallel use of the aorist $\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$, together with the accusative, indicates that Christ has destined believers to act in the *present* (6.1.3.3.1-2; Beale, 1999:194). The finite verb $\epsilon\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$ linked to the participle $\tau\omega$ $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\omega\upsilon\tau\iota$ (5.1.3.1) by $\kappa\alpha\iota$; (5.1.3.2) is a Hebraism (2:20; 7:14; Aune, 1997:42; Thomas, 1992:75; Charles, I 1975:14).⁴

The threefold pattern of repetition often appears in the structure of 1:1-6. The pronoun $\eta\mu\alpha\iota$ (5.1.3.1-6.1.3.3) is repeated three times (the three attributes of Christ [5.1.3.1-3]). Three is a symbolic number indicating the fullness and love of the triune God for his churches. The utilisation of this symbolic number and its implied meaning emphasises the personal tone of the doxology (Van de Kamp, 2000:60; Thomas, 1992:70; Lenski, 1963:45).

4 For text critical variants see Aune (1997:42); Thomas (1992:74-75).

It is also interesting to note the three descriptions of Christ (5.1.3.1-6.1.3.3). The churches sing praise to Christ in a God-given trilogy or triad as indicated in 5.1.3.1-6.1.3.3. The number “three” is probably used here to describe Christ’s unity with God and the fullness of his being (Coetzee, 1990:298). The repetition of threes accentuates the fact that God orders this world (and his churches) through Christ, despite the world apparently being disorderly (Resseguie, 1998:167).

The completed work of Christ results in making his believers a *basileiā* (6.1.3.3.1) and *ībrei*” (6.1.1.3.3.2). The combination of the two nouns *basileiā* (6.1.3.3.1) and *ībrei*” (6.1.3.3.2) is not a *hendiadys* (Thomas, 1992:72); *ībrei*” (6.1.3.3.2) stands in apposition to *basileiā* (6.1.3.3.1; Mounce, 1998:50; Aune, 1997:42; Coetzee, 1990:298). For the purposes of interpretation the preferred option would be to see the dative as modifying both *basileiā* and *ībrei*” – as in Revelation 5:10 – to indicate that one office is meant. The implied author does not use the abstract concept “priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9), but the concrete plural “priests”. Both kingship and priests imply one office.⁵ (Also see the linguistic and semantic relation between 5.1.2.3.3, 6.1.3.3.1 and 4.1.2.21).

In verse 6.1.3.3.2 *auj̄tōu* is to be construed with both nouns: *tw̄/qew̄* and *tw̄/patri*; (6.1.3.3.2): God is Christ’s God and Father (Swete, 1911:9; Lenski, 1963:47; Charles, I 1975:17). This dative of reference or advantage implies that Christ has enabled believers to serve as kings and priests in the service of his Father (Beale, 1999:194).

With the use of the personal pronoun *auj̄tw̄* (6.1.4) the implied author returns to the dative case that he used at the outset of the doxology in 5.1.3. The antecedent is Christ, the same as the antecedent of *auj̄tōu* at the conclusion of 5.1.3.2. Christ is the object of the phrase *h̄l̄ dōxa kai; to; kratō*” (6.1.4.1-2; cf. 5:12,13) (Thomas, 1992:72).

As the glorified Christ, the *ārcwn* (5.1.2.2.3) of the kings of the earth, Christ’s salvific acts (6.1.3.3-6.1.5) are framed by the acts of *ol̄ qeol̄*” (see *inclusio* 4.2.1-8.5). God is the *Principium Essendi*, the ultimate cause of salvation.

5 See in this regard Van de Kamp (2000:61); Beale (1999:193); Coetzee (1990:280); Lenski (1963:47).

The victorious (εἰσα; 4.1.1; 1:3) churches celebrate the fulness of Christ's *salutatio* in their kingdom identity (6.1.3.3.1; see 1:1c, d; 1:3e) (For unusual New Testament features of this doxology see Aune, 1997:45-46).

3. Detailed exegesis of verses 5.1.3-6.1.5

- (5.1.3)-(5.1.3.1) Tw ἄγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς kai;

The above-mentioned part represents the churches' answer that follows directly on the *salutatio* (4.1.2) of God. The confession of the kingship of Christ *and his royal seed* (in relation to Ps. 88, 89) are the reasons for this doxology (see Moyise, 2003:246; Decock, 1999:373 on inter-textuality).

The praesence durative force ἄγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς (5.1.3.1) of the doxology categorically states that Christ loves his churches (the *familia Dei*) *constantly* (ἡμᾶς; three times⁶), and this love upholds his churches in the present. This is the only instance in the New Testament where Christ's love for his own is described in this way (Thomas, 1992:70). The praesence indicates that eschatology is realised eschatology and not the subject of the future (Kistemaker, 2001:84). Even though the present time implies suffering (and persecutions) for Christians, Christ's love for them exists also in the now or the present time (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1974:225; Bandstra, 1992:14).

The theme of *love* or *loving* seldom appears in Revelation; the concept *love* is rather depicted in the light of the act of Christ's death and the slaughter of the Lamb (5.1.2.3.2): Christ's death portrays love. For this reason it is interesting to note that the motif of love appears as early as Revelation 5.1.3.1 and that it is one of the first descriptive titles for Christ in the churches' songs of praise in answer to God's *salutatio* (Coetzee, 1990:287).

Christ's constant love for his churches implies far more than mere involvement or a feeling of love for us. Christ's love implies the ongoing loving service of his salvation blessings that were earned through his death and resurrection (5.1.3.2; Coetzee, 1990:298). The fact that is central in this respect is that Christ, as the only mediator (5.1.3.2), ministers God's love to his churches.

6 For the importance of group identity in the Mediterranean worldview see Malina (1993:65).

• (5.1.3.2) **lʉsanti hma'' eḵ twŋ amartiwn hmwn eḵ tw/ aifmati aujtou, kai;**

The above-mentioned part is the second statement of the churches' doxology to the *salutatio*, and is the only place where the phrase, *lʉsanti hma'' eḵ twŋ amartiwn*, occurs in the New Testament (Aune, 1997:47). Christ's unceasing acts of love in the salvation of his churches (4.1.1) rest on, and are based on the unique way in which he – in the course of history – saved all believers in a once-for-all act of perfectly giving himself (5.1.2.3; Lenski, 1963:44). *Lubin* means "to release, to rescue" in the literal sense of setting free after being tied up, enchained, or imprisoned (Louw-Nida, 1996:LN 18.18; Aune, 1997:47). The word (*amartia*) may imply the meaning of missing the mark (Louw, 1996:LN 88.118). According to Arndt (1996:43) *amartia* (5.1.3.2) may also be translated as deviating from the way of righteousness. God has effected righteousness, and man has to make it his own. *Amartia* thus includes both divine and human implications.

These two possible meanings depict sin in the role of slave-master (Thomas, 1992:70). Revelation maintains that believers are fundamentally liberated from sin (Rev. 2:6, 22; 18:4), whereas Paul maintains that believers are threatened by sin and should struggle against it (Roloff, 1993:26; Boring, 1989:77).

The phrase *eḵ tw/ aifmati aujtou* functions instrumentally, that is, in the meaning of "by means of his blood" (Beale, 1999:192; Ladd, 1972:26). *Blood* can be regarded a sacrificial metaphor (for metaphors see Van der Watt, 2000:6). Throughout the New Testament *blood* refers not to the actual substance, but rather to Christ's death as an act of salvation. His life was the purchase price: the establishment of a covenant between God and humankind *through blood* had been unavoidable since the Fall (in this respect, think of Abraham [Gen. 15, 17]. A prominent motif in Revelation is the slaughter of the paschal lamb [Ex. 12; Coetzee, 1990:299]).

In this part of the doxology the implied author glorifies Christ for pardoning his own and his readers' sins.⁷

7 In this regard see Thomas (1992:71); Coetzee (1990:300); Lenski (1963:45); Knight (1999:35).

• **(6.1.3.3) epoihsen hma''**

In the third verse of the doxology the blessed results of Christ's ever-active (tw/ agapwnti), once-for-all, finally accomplished (Iusanti) act of love are celebrated. The aorist epoihsen means that the raising of the faithful to nobility (6.1.3.3.1) has been completed. This aorist implies the proclamation of an accomplished fact ("He has made us"). Not only a future event is meant, but also a present one (Beale, 1999:193; Van de Kamp, 2000:60).

Christ's death and resurrection (5.1.2.3.2) establishes a twofold office for believers.

• **6.1.3.3.1 basileian**

In the above-mentioned part a very particular *ecclesiological perspective* comes strongly to the fore: the implied author affirms that Christ has given the members of his churches a new dignity, epoihsen hma'' (6.1.3.3; past tense) a basileia and a iereu'' (one office). The churches jubilantly profess this creative power of Christ (Coetzee, 1990:300).

The sequence of the doxology is of cardinal importance. In the *salutatio* Christ's exaltation to ol a'rcwn tw'n basilewn th'' gh'' (5.1.2.3.3) is mentioned directly after mentioning his death and resurrection (5.1.2.3.2). In the doxology the sequence can be indicated in the case of Christ's churches. Christ's once-for-all act of love firstly has to be concretised in history. His love and salvation for believers first had to become a reality; the sins of his followers had to be cleansed with his blood. Only then could believers be regarded as his kingdom on earth. Those for whom Christ is King, are his kingdom, and they also *have* to live from within the framework of a kingdom mentality (Rev. 1:3).⁸

The term basileian (a status metaphor) may be interpreted in this context in a "dynamic" or "active" mode, that is, "to be a royalty or kingship for God" and thus "to rule in his name" (Bandstra, 1992:17). The reference made here points to people, hma'' (5.1.3.1), and the term basileia occurs without the article. The churches are not called "kings" but a basileia (Coetzee, 1990:302). The term basileia occurs nine times in Revelation (1:6, 9; 5:10; 11:15; 12:10; 16:10; 17:12, 17, 18; Bandstra, 1992:18).

8 Also see Beale (1999:192); Bandstra (1992:14); Coetzee (1990; 300; 302) and Morris (1989:49) in this regard.

This verse counterbalances the “not yet” of the future by affirming that “already now” Christians rule in Christ’s name on earth (Rev. 5:9,10; 20:6; 22:5; Bandstra, 1992:22). This aspect of Christian rule is placed in a *heilsgeschiedtlich* context: that which God had promised Israel in Exodus 19:5-6 was fulfilled through Christ (Aune, 1997:47; Bandstra, 1992:16; Groenewald, 1986:36). Christ awarded the position that Israel was intended to have – that of kings and rulers – to his churches.⁹ Even though the churches sometimes experience difficult times (throunte"; 1:3d), in the final phase of the kingdom of God (1:2, 3) they already share in Christ’s kingship. Salvation implies an initial transcendent origin in God through Christ, and an earthly accomplishment. Salvation is not to be seen as an escape from this world to a different plane, but should rather be interpreted as meaningful engagement on a social level (Du Rand, 2005:468).

The King establishes his own kingdom (see the semantic relations 4.1.2.2.1; 5.1.2.3.3) in which Christ, not Ceasar, is the ultimate authority (cf 1:9). The basilewn th" gh" (5.1.2.3.3.) and their kingdoms (political and in other domains) are mere shadows of what believers see in Christ’s kingdom. Christ cannot be dethroned (Lenski, 1963:46). The part relating to Christ’s epoitsen hma" basileian (6.1.3.3-1) for the believers does not imply many separate insignificant kings, such as the kings of the earth, each in his separate, selfish kingdom or domain and often in conflict with one another. Basileia equals unity, the *Una Sancta*, one body and only one (Lenski, 1963:46; Morris, 1989:50). While the implied author sees the churches as a kingdom, this does not mean that it is identical to the kingdom of God.¹⁰

How do the churches reign in this context (1:1-5a)? They, as human beings, reign through *inter alia* the written Word (1:1a; 2a,b; 1:3c), God, His Spirit and Christ (4.1.2.2; De Smidt, 2004a:198; 2004b:104; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1974:220). The Word and the Spirit are theirs. Their kingship exists in that they glorify God, mediate his royal (and priestly) authority and are focused on service in the kingdom (for semantical relations see 4.1.2.2.1 qronou aujtou; 5.1.2.3.3 and 6.1.3.3.1; Mounce, 1998:50). Through the church he exercises his sovereignty over the nations (Bandstra, 1992:24;

9 See Lenski (1963:46); Mounce (1998:50); Schüssler Fiorenza (1974:220); Coetzee (1990:301).

10 Botha (1965:47); Wall (1991:59); Johnson (1990:422); Lea (1988:20).

Caird, 1973,297; Lenski, 1963:46). Like Christ's situation, such a reign does not safeguard the churches against suffering.

The God of the covenant reigns through Christ: Christ acquired the kingship (5.1.2.3.3), and through his resurrection Christ became the functional equivalent of God's kingship.

Revelation is a royal manifesto of Christ (1:1d) and his struggling churches (throunte"; 1:3d). The implied author looks behind the veil of the qronou aujtou` (4.1.2.2.1) and then announces the invisible kingdom of God and the blessings that the believers share (1:3). The exemplar of Christ should thus lead to imitation.

• **(6.1.3.3.2) i`brei" tw/qew/kai; patri; aujtou`**

Other evidence of Christ's ongoing love for believers is his appointment of a kingdom of i`brei" (a sacrificial metaphor) (Van der Laan, 1992:17). In the present a new experience (Christ's love) already exists, a new relationship (redemption by Christ's death), and a new and equal status before God, and among the people of God (kingdom of priests; Kistemaker, 2001:86). The term i`breul' occurs just three times in Revelation (1:6; 5:10; 20:6), and in each instance is used in the plural to describe the status of Christ's followers (Aune, 1997:48).¹¹

The expression, "kingdom of priests", implies a holy kingdom; all members of this kingdom are regarded as priests (Rev. 5:10; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1998:43; Lenski, 1963:47). Kingship and priesthood are inextricably linked in Revelation (Coetzee, 1990:280).

As with kingdom, the priesthood that is portrayed in Revelation has its roots in the Old Testament and in the establishment of the covenant at Sinai (Ex. 19:6).¹² What God promised Israel (Ex. 19:5-6) is fulfilled by Christ (Groenewald, 1986:36). This verse unites the church and Old Testament Israel (*church* of the Old Testament) in a bond of continuity. The church is the new and true Israel, inheriting the spiritual privileges of the Old Testament people of God (Ladd, 1972:27).

11 In the Mediterranean world honour was seen as the main social value – see Malina (1993:28); DeSilva (1998:82).

12 Also see Aune (1997:48); Thomas (1992:71) and Groenewald (1986:36) in this regard.

Precisely how the church is to exercise these functions is not explicit. Possibly the answer lies in understanding how Christ himself functioned in these two offices and how Christians share in his ministry.¹³ According to the context of Revelation 1:1-6, their priestly functions include, *inter alia*, to be God's *toi'' douloi''* (1:1c), Christ's churches (*epta*; 4.1.1) in the world; to read, listen and live (*throunte''*, 1:3d) the written word; and to apply the values of God (1:3d) in the final phase of the kingdom of God (1:1d;1:3e). It is not always necessary to preach, but one should be an example of God's kingdom mentality, his kingdom identity in the world (De Smidt, 2004b:105;1:3e). This attitude also assumes that the *basilewn th'' gh''* (5.1.2.3.3) has to be won for the kingdom of God (*throunte''*, 1:3d).

Believers' opportunity to perform priestly service is a continuing theme in the remainder of Revelation (Thomas, 1992:71; see 5:10; 20:6; Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Christ is king, priest and prophet (5.1.2.3); likewise are the believers of the church (Busto, 1992:219).

By being endowed with this status, Christ places believers in his churches in a position to minister in the service of God his Father: *tw/ qew/ kai; patri; aujtu'* (6.1.3.3.2).¹⁴ The latter *aujtu'* is to be construed with both nouns: *tw/ qew/* and *tw/ patri*. This word *aujtu'* is a dative of reference or advantage; implying that Christ has made it possible for believers to serve as kings and priests in the service of his Father (Beale, 1999:194). In Revelation God is never called our Father, but always the Father of Jesus Christ (Coetzee, 1990:287; 2:28; 3:5,21; 14:1).

Oi qeol' (4.1.2.1; 8.5) is the *pathr* of Christ. God is mentioned first as Christ's God and Father (6.1.3.3.2). In this verse Christ is also praised as the only accomplisher of our priestly kingship. God is and remains the eternal King of the entire cosmos, the *Principium Essendi* (Coetzee, 1990:271). With reference to the Old Testament alliance (Dan. 7) the emphasis in this part is on God, the Father of his covenant people, the covenant that was realised in Christ (Coetzee, 1990:272). Van de Kamp (2000:61) regards kingdom and

13 See Beale (1999:193); Aune (1997:49); Roloff (1993:26); Bandstra (1992:10); Boring (1989:78); Lea (1988:20).

14 For metaphors on family see Van der Watt (2000:437); Lassen (1997:114).

priests as one privilege, and being priests for Christ's God and Father a second privilege.

In the words of the *trinitarian* formula (5.1.2.3) Christ is mentioned last. He is the *satisfacio vicaria* of God: in God's acts of salvation (1:1a; see *inclusio* 4.1.2.1, 1:8) Christ is central, Christ is the active revealer of God.

The view that Christ is the active revealer of God, however, does not imply a *christomonism*: Christ alone without the Father and the Spirit (4.1.2.2). The doxology of the faithful churches (1:1c, 3d) is purely trinitarian-christological in nature (Coetzee, 1990:262).

- **(6.1.4) aujtw/**

As indicated, the antecedent of *aujtw/* is Christ – he is the object of 6.1.4.1-2. He alone is worthy of receiving honour and praise for accomplishing the redemptive history in which God's glory is the goal (Beale, 1999:194). This kind of Christology, according to which Christ was worshipped as God in a monotheistic way, seems to have occurred in the earliest contexts of worship (Hurtado, 2003:50; Bauckham, 1993:148).

The particular attributes used in this praise are *doxa* and *krato*".

- **(6.1.4.1) h|doxa kai;**

The concept of *doxa* implies the following nuances of meaning: lustrous, sparkling, sublime, majestic and glorious. From *doxa* the word "doxology" was derived, and eventually became the word associated with eulogies. *Doxa* can also be used as a synonym for "honour" (DeSilva, 1998:91; Robbins, 1996:107, 130). The climax of 1:1-6, as well as the entire chapter, involves the giving of glory to God (Beale, 1999:194). This single voice becomes increasingly stronger in Revelation, until it eventually becomes the doxology of a heavenly choir (19:1-4). This doxology gives voice to a demand that God should be glorified by all churches (Lenski, 1963:47).

- **(6.1.4.2) to;krato" eij' tou;" aiwna" »twn aiwnwn¼**

The same is true with regard to *to;krato*" (6.1.4.2). Power is an all-conquering superiority (Van de Kamp, 2000:61; Lenski, 1963:47). The implied author's thoughts about Christ are varied in nature, but the characteristic that is articulated is the power of God in Christ. Revelation places strong emphasis on power.

The strongest expression for “forever” is *eiĵ' tou, aijwna »twn aijwnwn*^{1/4}, that is, “for the aeons of the aeons”. In Greek its greatest term for time, aeon, is pluralised in this phrase, and then multiplied by its own plural. Definite articles are even added to this word, giving aeons the status of definite times (Lenski, 1963:48).

The little churches are to be in no doubt at all that Christ is mighty and that he will do his will, whatever the tyrants of the earth may do. His great power means that, basically and finally, the tyrants of earth are helpless (Morris, 1986:295).

- **(6.1.5) *ajmhn***

Amhn (Rev. 5) is the transliterated Hebrew word for “truth”, or “verity”, that is set at the end of a doxology as a seal of confession and solemn assurance (Lenski, 1963:48).

Amhn is used this way another six times in Revelation (cf 1:7; 5:14; 7:12 [twice]; 19:4; 22:20; Thomas, 1992:73). In addition, in Revelation *ajmhn* is, for the first time, no longer a community response, but rather an immediate conclusion to a formula of praise (7:12; 22:20; Roloff, 1993:26; Groenewald, 1986:36).

4. Conclusion

This article attempted to indicate that the doxology in Revelation 1:5e-6 forms part of an introduction to the Christology and soteriology in Revelation as a whole. This first doxology in Revelation is addressed to Christ and framed by the acts of God. It is a confessional formula that emphasises the enduring and loving activity of Christ that commenced at the very beginning of Christian existence and is still present today (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1998:43). The community is already the locus of God’s dominion, if this dominion is acknowledged and attested (Bandstra, 1992:10; Schrage, 1988:333).

A doxology to Christ may be described in this context as an eulogy highlighting the details of Christ’s attributes. Christ cannot be described in human language and therefore the implied author uses detailed, attributive descriptions and extolment of praise to describe and laud him (Morris, 1986:294).

This doxology contains strong soteriological (5.1.3.1-2), ecclesiological (5.1.3.3) and eschatological (6.1.3.3.1; 6.1.4.2) elements (Coetzee, 1990:297). Three important aspects can be distinguished in the doxology:

- the historical fact of salvation (5.1.3.1);
- the interpretation of the historical fact (6.1.3.3); and
- the ecclesiological consequence of the historical fact (6.1.4).

The core message is that Christ is “the Eschatos” of his churches (Coetzee, 1990:297).

The basic line of Christology and soteriology in Revelation is embedded in this doxology in Revelation 1:5e-6 (Cook, 1963:60; Engelbrecht, 1980:10). Revelation 1:5e-6 makes a *sui generis* contribution to the theological discussion of Revelation and to theology in general.

From a particular Christological angle, the doxology is a consolation manifesto, a royal manifesto and a covenantal manifesto of Christ for his churches in the final phase of God’s kingdom (De Smidt, 2005:187).

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Kernbegrippe:

Christologie (in Openbaring)

diskoersanalise

koninkryk van God: finale fase

Openbaring: daad van God en Christus in die kerk(e)

Openbaring: doksologie van die kerk(e)

Key concepts:

Christology (in Revelation)

discourse analysis

Kingdom of God: final phase

Revelation: acts of God and Christ in the church(es)

Revelation: doxology of the church(es)

