

Abstract for the general public

“Prevailed? O heavenly music of the word!” Like the cry of astonishment and delight of the heroine of F. Schiller’s tragedy (*The Virgin of Orleans*), so the first readers of the last book of the Bible could have exclaimed. The reason for their disbelief would not have been a completely unexpected change of their situation nor an unexpected intervention of God, ultimately deciding about the history of the world and their fate. Since the early Christians, like the followers of Judaism during the Second Temple period, shared the same faith in God who would rule the earth as he now reigns in heaven, and cherished the same hope of being part of his kingdom – not in a very distant age and not in an aeon of another world.

Many of the first readers of the Apocalypse of John must have been impressed by the usage of the word that signifies God’s final actions of breakthrough importance for the definitive course of history. This word is the verb “to conquer”. In the earlier NT books, the term having a similar rank and meaning, affecting the history of the community and the history of individuals, is the verb “to save”. In the Book of Revelation, the second term does not occur even once! The noun “salvation” appears only three times and exclusively in the hymns. Yet, the reason for their amazement was not the mere replacement of the second verb by the first.

The use of the first term, along with its metaphors, in the specific and concrete historical context of the origin of the Apocalypse, namely the Greco-Roman world, is of particular significance. Although this way of calling God’s action is familiar to the Old Testament, and even more so to its rereading made in the writings of the Judaism of the Greek and Roman periods, the meaning of the term “to conquer” and its frequent and regular use in the Book of Revelation becomes much more expressive in the background of the great narratives about the victories of Rome – just then reaching the peak of its power. These powerful metaphors of victory must have appealed very profoundly to Christians who saw statues of sports heroes or who admired the speakers-winners in political or court disputes. In all these areas of competition, among the winners there were no Christians – recipients of the Revelation. If they appeared there, they were among the defeated: persecuted, ridiculed or simply silenced and ignored. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, readers of the Apocalypse, upon hearing the message of Christ’s victory, were not so much amazed at what they had heard, but convinced that they could proclaim their participation in this victory.

Is this the significance of the occurrence of the concept of victory in the Apocalypse? Which elements of the Judaism of the Second Temple and in the Greco-Roman world lead to an affirmative or negative answer? The implementation of the project should provide reasonable answers to both questions. The project assumes four stages: study of the texts of the Apocalypse in their literary and historical context; study of Jewish literature of the Greek and Roman period; examination of the testimonies of the Greco-Roman world in the first century; synthesis of the analyses carried out through previous three phases. The results will be disseminated in one monograph and several papers written in English and will be discussed in one presentation in Polish.