

## CHURCH, KINGDOM, AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TEMPLE

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When the Book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse, speaks of the Temple, it uses the words *skēnē* and *naos* exclusively and never the other expressions found in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> It describes the Temple of which it speaks, in terms and images that refer to the Temple of Jerusalem. If we follow the attractive hypothesis put forward by M. E. Boismard, the Temple was still standing when St. John wrote these descriptions.<sup>2</sup>

But the Apocalypse speaks of two temples: one heavenly, the other earthly. In one whole section of the visions, there is a Temple in heaven and events take place there while the history of the world continues, and there is even a Temple on earth, in which also certain events occur. On the other hand, at a given moment, the end of history is proclaimed and John sees the judgment of the nations (Rev. 20: 11–15), a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1) and the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven (Rev. 21:2). An entirely different situation is then inaugurated as regards the Temple or dwelling of God. There is a city, Jerusalem, but John declares: “I saw no Temple in it; its Temple is the Lord God Almighty, its Temple is the Lamb” (21:22).

Thus, in a *literary* form which is a combination of two texts placed side by side rather than fused into one, somewhat as a Galician and Roman text have been juxtaposed in the ordination ritual, we find in the text of the Apocalypse as it is presented to the meditation of the faithful, a real division corresponding to two moments in the history of God’s dwelling among men. We shall divide our study of the text by reference to these two moments.

### *The Temple in History*

In the first moment, we are concerned with earthly events. The Apocalypse offers us a view of history entirely dominated by the reality of heaven, and also the image of a Church still on earth and entirely ruled by the virtue of him who is in heaven and is ultimately shown to us as her Bridegroom. It is because Christ, having

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1 *Hieron* (Rev. 11:2 however, does provide an equivalent), and *oikos* never appear. *Topos* is used, but not in the sense of “a holy place.” On the other hand, *naos* occurs fifteen times: Rev. 3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 2, 19; 14:15; 17; 15:5, 6, 8 (twice); 16:1, 17; 21:22 (twice). *Skenē* occurs three times (Rev. 13:6; 15:5; 21:3) and in its verbal form, four times (Rev. 7:15, in which the meaning is simply “to spread a tent”; Rev. 12:12; 13: 6; 21:3).

2 See M. E. Boismard, “L’Apocalypse’ ou ‘les Apocalypses’ de S. Jean” [“The Apocalypse” or “the Apocalypses” of St. John], *Revue Biblique* 56 (1949): 507–46.

obtained the victory, has taken his place by his Father on the Father's throne, that the faithful are kings reigning with Christ and priests also entering with him into the very presence of God.<sup>3</sup>

The Church of the Apocalypse is a community of kings and priests, that is, of the faithful who share in the dignity and activity of Christ as king and priest.<sup>4</sup> As kings, they share in the Kingdom of God and its struggles throughout history, and they will share God's eschatological reign in the world to come. As priests they share in the worship of thanksgiving and in the praise offered to God in heaven by the elect, but which begins in the Church on earth (Rev. 1:6); they surrender themselves to the work of purification which God wishes to accomplish in them ("He has proved his love for us by washing us clean from our sins in his own blood" Rev. 1:5); their voices ring out with the *Amen* that stands for the inmost substance of worship and sacrifice and is at the same time the final word of every doxology and blessing.<sup>5</sup>

The Apocalypse sees the historical and earthly life of this royal and priestly Church as an extremely bitter struggle between the reign of God and the reign of God's adversary. To expound and explain all that this prophetic book tells us in this connection would be tantamount to providing a complete commentary. Here we can only confine ourselves strictly to what concerns the Temple.

First of all we are shown "the beast," which symbolizes the Roman Empire, and through it, all the powers which fight against the Kingdom of God, uttering "blasphemy against God, blasphemy against his name, against his dwelling-place (*skēnē*), and all those who dwell in heaven (*tous en tō ouranō skēnountas*)" (Rev. 13:6). There is an obvious resemblance between the beast blaspheming against God's dwelling-place, that is God himself in his heavenly transcendence, and the adversary of 2 Thessalonians 2:4 "lifting himself above every divine name, above all that men hold in reverence." But the similarity, although it indicates a connection, does not imply a rigorous identification. We should note also, the role assigned by the Apocalypse to the "false prophet."<sup>6</sup> Under the guise of a lamb, he speaks in fact the language of the "dragon," that is, of Satan. He works wonders and labors to bring the world to the worship of power.

The Church herself is represented under the image of the Temple of God (*naos*), that is, the Temple of Jerusalem (Rev. 11:1). John is commissioned to measure

the Temple and the altar and to count the worshippers who are there, so that he may number and make a record of those who are to be spared from punishment. "But leave out of your reckoning," John is told, "the court which is outside the Temple; do not measure that, because it has been made over to the Gentiles, who will tread the holy city under foot for the space of forty-two months" (Rev. 11:2).

John here uses imagery that has a reference to the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanius, which had become the type of all persecution of the faithful by a hostile ideological and political power. Hence the period of forty-two months. But the point that interests us here is the image of the Church as Jerusalem, or rather, as the sacred area the evangelists call the *hieron*, which includes the terrace and the courts of the Temple. In this area John observes two zones—one, exterior (*tēn aulēn tēn exōthen*), is more or less given over to the Gentiles who will tread it underfoot, as they did the holy city during those three years and a half which are the "type" period of persecution.<sup>7</sup>

It is in this city of Jerusalem where too "their Lord was crucified" (Rev. 11:8), that the beast will slay the two faithful witnesses, that is, in this sacred area given over to the pagans so that they may tread it underfoot.<sup>8</sup> The other zone is a protected one. It is represented by the Temple of God, the altar, and the worshippers in the building—that is, the true faithful, those who conquer the seductions, threats, and violence of the dragon and his ministers. The Apocalypse often speaks of those who conquer, using terms which awaken a great desire to be among their number.<sup>9</sup> In particular it utters this promise:

Who wins the victory? I will make him a pillar in the Temple of my God, never to leave it again. I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city my God has built, that new Jerusalem which my God is even now sending down from heaven, and my own new name (Rev. 3:12).

7 This "treading underfoot," therefore, is not of exactly the same kind as that mentioned in Luke 21:24, where it is above all providential and beneficial. The Gentiles' adoration will, in a sense, replace that of the Jews who have refused Christ. In the Apocalypse, they tread the courts underfoot, not as they come to adore, but in order to trample upon and destroy the worship of the true God.

8 It seems to us that, under these conditions, "there, too, their Lord was crucified" does not indicate the geographical Jerusalem, but the spiritual Jerusalem given over to the hostility, the persecution, and the temporary victory (forty-two months) of the beast. This does away with the chief difficulty that has been raised against the interpretation which takes the two witnesses to be Peter and Paul martyred at Rome under Nero ("Their bodies will lie in the open street, in that great city which is called Sodom or Egypt in the language of prophecy" Rev. 11:8). John is simply combining a direct reference to Jerusalem (v. 8), indicating the section of the Church (the Temple) which the Gentiles are allowed to tread underfoot, with another symbolizing the actual city of Rome.

9 See, for instance, Rev. 2:7, 11, 17 (and esp. Rev. 2:26); 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11 (and, in particular, Rev. 15:2); 21:7. We have emphasized the passages that are most interesting from the point of view of our theme. Compare Rev. 14:1–5 and, as far as Wisdom is concerned, Wis. 10:12–14.

3 See Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1899), 215. Heb. 8:1 is the basis of Rev. 3:21.

4 Rev. 1:6; 5:10 (compare 1 Pet. 2:9); Rev. 20:6 (the reign of a thousand years).

5 See Heinrich Schlier, "Amen," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, 10 vols., eds. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1932–1979), 1:339–342. Eng. trans.: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1985).

6 Rev. 13:11–17; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. See the discussion in Yves Congar *The Mystery of the Temple* (London: Burns and Oates, 1962), 193–196.

This promise has in view the final reward and membership of that Jerusalem from on high of which we shall have something to say later. But there is a continuity between the Temple on earth, the Church, and the Temple on high. Further, if the victor is to be a pillar in the Temple of God, it is above all in reference to the Church, for in the heavenly Jerusalem there is no Temple.

We therefore retain two points in connection with this passage (Rev. 11:1). First, the Temple of God is the Church, as in the other apostolic writings, and it is made up of the faithful themselves in their fidelity and unity.<sup>10</sup> Then, in the center of an area, sacred in itself but trodden underfoot and profaned by the pagans, a Temple of God remains in being and is composed of the true faithful, the pure whom John sees later (Rev. 14:1–5) accompanying the Lamb wherever he may go. Since they have kept true “to God’s commandment and the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12), since they have refused to worship the beast, that is, to serve God’s adversary (Rev. 20:4), they are not only sharers in the kingship of Christ, but also have the privilege of attending him, wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4). As in the prophets, God’s presence is linked with his reign, and friendship with him in his Temple to faithful observance of his commandments (compare John 14:23).

### The Liturgy of Heaven

While on earth the struggle unfolds between God’s reign and his adversary, in heaven there is a Temple. Sometimes St. John calls it the *naos*,<sup>11</sup> occasionally adding “in heaven,” at others the *skēnē*.<sup>12</sup> Both words indicate the same reality and the term might be translated “the tabernacle that bears record in heaven” (Rev. 15:5).<sup>13</sup>

For John the heavenly temple is modeled on the Temple of Jerusalem. He even sees in it the Ark of the Covenant which appears when the Kingdom of God is about to be reestablished.<sup>14</sup> He sees an altar which is both that of the burnt-offerings and the altar of incense, but chiefly the latter.<sup>15</sup> Under the altar, John sees

<sup>10</sup> This is clearly stated in Rev. 3:12 and is implied in Rev. 11:1.

<sup>11</sup> Rev. 7:15; 11:19 (in heaven); 14:17 (which is in heaven); 15:5 (in heaven) 6, 8; 16:1, 17.

<sup>12</sup> Rev. 13:6; 15:5 (the temple of the tent of witness); compare Rev. 21:3.

<sup>13</sup> This is how J. Comblin translates it in his, “La Liturgie de la Nouvelle Jérusalem (Apoc. 21:1–22:5)” [The Liturgy of the New Jerusalem], *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 29 (1953): 5–40, at 21, n. 41. He observes that in Rev. 21:3 the two words have the same sense.

<sup>14</sup> The source here may be the legend revived in 2 Macc. 2:5–8 according to which Jeremiah hid the Tabernacle, the Ark, and the altar of incense in a cave on Mount Nebo when Jerusalem was captured in 586 B.C. The belief was that God would reveal the whereabouts of these sacred objects when he had gathered his people together again and shown his mercy towards them.

<sup>15</sup> The majority of the exegetes distinguish between the two uses of the altar of which the Apocalypse speaks—its use as an altar of holocausts and as an altar of incense. But they do not always agree. (For a fuller discussion, see Congar, *Mystery of the Temple*, 208, n. 1.) It is no doubt true that the evidence is inconclusive. It is impossible to distinguish clearly two altars, an altar of holocausts and an altar of incense. Moreover, we should note that if we turn to the Hebrew equivalent of these expressions, the altar of gold in Heb. 9:4 and in Rev. 8:3; 9:13, is identical with the altar of incense (in Luke 1:11, for instance). It is not due to a slip that Heb.

the “souls of all who had been slain for love of God’s word and of the truth they held” (Rev. 6:9 see also Rev. 8:3; 6:7): we shall shortly see what role these martyrs play and with them the altar from which their prayer rises like incense (Rev. 8:3).<sup>16</sup> If John thus sees the heavenly Temple in the shape of the Temple of Jerusalem, it is not so much because he imagines the sanctuary on the model of the sanctuary he had seen on earth at Jerusalem, it is principally because the latter, as the successor of the Mosaic tabernacle, had been constructed according to the heavenly prototype shown to Moses on the mountain.<sup>17</sup> If the Apocalypse sometimes mentions “a tent of witness” at the same time and with the same meaning as “Temple,” it is, in our opinion, to recall the Exodus on the one hand, and so to demonstrate the continuity of God’s divine purposes and the continuity of the mystery of his dwell-

9:4 puts the golden altar, which is the altar of incense, in the Holy of Holies. It is because, as in Rev. 8:3, the Temple in question is the heavenly Temple, where all the faithful enter and go to the throne of God. In the Mosaic liturgy, only the high priest did this. And, generally speaking, we ought not to look for a rigorously accurate succession of images in the Apocalypse. John is not copying from a model, he is seeing a vision. But above all, Robert H. Charles, whose knowledge of the apocalyptic literature was unrivaled, has shown that in this literature only one altar is intended and that the word “the altar” (Hebrew: *hammizbah*) which elsewhere means the altar of holocausts, here indicates rather the altar of incense. See his *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 1:172, 227–30. The Apocalypse has “the altar” (*to thysiastērion*) and when it adds a clarifying detail, it mentions that this is the golden altar standing before the throne (Rev. 8:3; 9:13). The exegetes then admit that the altar of incense is meant, and in fact this is clear enough. But we think, with Charles, that it is impossible to distinguish clearly between this altar and another, namely, the altar of holocausts, and that there is in reality one altar with certain characteristics of the altar of holocausts, and others, much more clearly marked, of the altar of incense. Further, as Charles remarks, since there are in the heavenly Temple no more animal sacrifices of the type offered in the Mosaic ritual but only the offering of the spiritual sacrifice which is that of man himself, it is normal that there should be only the one altar of incense, from which the praise, thanksgiving, and prayer of the saints rise like the smoke of incense (*thysia* is derived from *thyō*, meaning to smoke or to cause smoke to rise): Rev. 8:3; 5:8; 6:9; see also Ps. 141:2. It is also noteworthy that previous Jewish apocalyptic literature mentioned only one altar in heaven. Certain rabbis even held that after the messianic restoration, expiatory sacrifices would cease and the sacrifice of praise alone remain. See Joseph Bonsirven, *Le Judaïsme Palestinien au Temps de Jésus-Christ*, 2 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1935), 1:456; Eng. trans.: *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ*, trans. William Wolff (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964). In the context of Christianity, this view is essential. See Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater (Westminster: Newman, 1957), 72.

<sup>16</sup> Some explain the presence of the martyrs under the altar (and they make it clear they think it is the altar of holocausts) by the fact that the soul is in the blood and the blood flows under the altar (see Ernest-Bernard Allo, *Saint Jean: L'Apocalypse*, Études Bibliques [Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1933], 103). We should be better advised with Charles (*Revelation*, 1:29) and Allo to think rather of the Jewish concept of the souls of the just as beneath the throne of God. With Joachim Jeremias, we may also bear in mind the ideology which held that the rock of the Temple was the highest point on earth and contact was made there not only with the heavenly world but also with the subterranean world of the souls of the dead. See his “Golgotha und der Heilige Felsen eine Untersuchung zur Symbolsprache des N. T.” [Golgotha and the Holy Rock: An Investigation of New Testament Symbolism], *Angelos* 2 (1926): 74–128.

<sup>17</sup> Exod. 25:40.

ing among his people from the time of the Exodus, in the earthly Jerusalem, in the Church, and finally in heaven;<sup>18</sup> and, on the other hand, it is because the oracles of God were revealed in the tent of meeting and now his judgments are pronounced from within his heavenly Temple.

Once more, this heavenly Temple assumes into itself the presence of God in the historical life of his people in their passage through time. This is why, at the moment of final consummation, we shall again meet the themes that have occurred throughout the process of biblical history: “He will dwell with them, and they will be his own people” (Rev. 21:3) and “I will be his God, and he shall be my son,” with a reference to the prophecy of Nathan (Rev. 21:7; compare 2 Sam. 7:14).

Who will be the celebrant in the heavenly Temple? The Apocalypse nowhere calls Christ priest or high priest as does the Epistle to the Hebrews. Yet he makes his appearance as a priest, clothed with a long robe and wearing a golden girdle. Thus he who makes us kings and priests is himself priest and king.<sup>19</sup> But the image in which Christ chiefly appears in the Apocalypse is that of the Lamb (this name is given to him twenty-nine times). The word reveals him in his character of victim, but as a victim who is alive again (Rev. 5:6; Rev. 1:18).

He is, therefore, the Christ of Easter, the Christ who said: “Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up again,” and who called himself the stone rejected by the builders but precious in the sight of God and so made the cornerstone.<sup>20</sup> The Lamb of the Apocalypse is therefore not merely the paschal lamb as *immolated*. Already as the immolated paschal lamb, he is revealed as the victor, for it is by his blood that the faithful are separated from the unfaithful and rescued from the plagues God sends upon the world.<sup>21</sup>

However, it may be admitted that, either on the strength of the double meaning of the Aramaic word for *arnion* (“lamb”), or even by reference to a certain number of uses of the word “Lamb” in Jewish apocalyptic literature, where it implies triumph, the term can bear the meaning of Christ’s sovereignty dominating history and the world.<sup>22</sup> It is a fact that, in the Apocalypse, “Lamb” is the name of

Christ as associated with God in the exercise of his sovereignty and in the glorification of the elect.

Heaven, where the Lamb sits upon the throne, is a palace as well as a Temple.<sup>23</sup> A liturgy is celebrated in which the angels have their part to play<sup>24</sup> together with the elect and the mysterious twenty-four elders. We are given frequent glimpses of this heavenly liturgy.<sup>25</sup> It is a liturgy of praise and prayer, with no sacrifice save that of “the tribute of lips.”<sup>26</sup> J. Comblin has shown fairly convincingly that the liturgy celebrated in heaven while the history of the world unfolds (Rev. 7:9) is the same as the liturgy of eternity (Rev. 21–22), but that this liturgy is conceived on the model of the liturgy of the great Jerusalem pilgrimages, and on the model, too, of the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles. Thus, the image we are given of the heavenly Church is that of a great host of pilgrims who have reached the Temple at Jerusalem and are in God’s presence. With palms in their hands, they acclaim with vibrant voices the royal and saving power of God: “To our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, all saving power belongs” (Rev. 7:9–12).

### Heaven in History

One of the most remarkable features of the Apocalypse is the connection it reveals between events on earth and events in heaven. In the Epistle to the Hebrews also, the Christian liturgy which is both earthly and heavenly, is that of a great assembly (*panegyris*) in which we join with the angels, and of a joyful feast, whose center is the living God (Rev. 12:22).

From one point of view, heavenly events determine the great events in the earthly history of God’s people. It is from the heavenly Temple that the decrees

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“Lamb” in fact does stand for the suffering Servant as risen, victorious, and henceforth reigning with God.

23 Rev. 4; 7:9–10; 11:16–17.

24 See Jean Daniélou, *The Angels and their Mission according to the Fathers of the Church*, trans. David Heimann (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1988 [1956]); on the idea of the monastic life as angelic, see Jean Leclercq, *La Vie Parfaite: Points de Vue sur l’Essence de l’État Religieux* [The Life of Perfection: Viewpoints on the Essence of the Religious State] (Paris: Turnhout, 1948); L. Bouyer, *Le Sens de la Vie Monastique* [The Meaning of the Monastic Life] (Paris: Turnhout, 1951).

25 See Rev. 4; 5; 7:9–12; 14:1–2; 19:1–2.

26 Wenschkewitz, “Die Spiritualisierung,” 217. On the sacrifice of praise, see Ps. 50:14, 23; Hosea 14:2; Isa. 57:19; Heb. 13:15. The messianic-eschatological Temple of the prophets was a place of thanksgiving and not of expiation: see Jer. 33:11; Ezek. 20:40–41; 37:27–28; compare Isa. 51:3. The fact that in heaven there can be only the sacrifice of praise, may be explained in the light of the magnificent prospect described by St. Augustine below (see n. 88). We may then say with Florus of Lyons, a ninth-century ecclesiastical writer, that there is “a sacrifice of praise” at the precise moment when “*nulla nostra merita agnoscimus, sed solam Dei gratiam collaudamus*” [we recognize that our worth is nothing, but we praise highly the singular grace of God] (*Opusculum De Expositione Missae* [Explanation of the Mass], 53. Text in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne [Paris: Garnier and J. P. Migne, 1844–1864], 119, 48C.) Hereafter, *PL*.

18 See Rev. 15:3, where those who have triumphed over the beast sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb; compare Exod. 15:1.

19 Compare François-Marie Braun, “In Spiritu et Veritate” [In Spirit and Truth], *Revue Thomiste* 52 (1952): 494 and also *Revue Thomiste* 52 (1952): 258. The long robe was the High Priest’s vestment (Exod. 28:4; 29:5; Zech. 3:4. The golden girdle is one of the insignia of royalty, compare the golden clasp in 1 Macc. 10:89; 11:58. Christ has made us kings and priests: Rev. 5:10; 1:6.

20 John 2:19; Matt. 21:42.

21 Rev. 5:6, 9, 12. Notice how, once again, the “type” event in Exodus, the lamb that is slain, is here “recapitulated.”

22 See Hans Wenschkewitz, “Die Spiritualisierung der Kultusbegriffe Tempel, Priester und Opfer im N. T.” [The Spiritualization of the Notions of Temple, Priest, and Sacrificial Victim in the New Testament], *Angelos* 4 (1932): 70–230, at 214–215, who refers to Friedrich Spitta regarding the Jewish apocalyptic literature and to C. F. Burnay for the two meanings of the Aramaic word corresponding to *arnion*, namely, lamb and child or servant (of God), *pais*. In the Apocalypse,

ordering the execution of God's judgments are promulgated.<sup>27</sup> John sees the seven angels who are to bear the seven plagues come out from the heavenly Temple. They have been given golden cups full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever (Rev. 15:5–8). It is from the heavenly Temple that a voice cries to these seven angels: "Go and pour out the seven cups of God's vengeance on the earth" (Rev. 16:1), and then, when the last cup is emptied, the voice cries: "It is over" (Rev. 16:17). When history has come to an end, it is once more from the heavenly Temple that an angel goes forth, sickle in hand, to "gather the grapes from earth's vineyard" (Rev. 14:18).

But from another point of view, the carrying out of God's judgments and the decision to begin the harvesting of the grapes are in part determined, or in any case, hastened, by men, by the faithful and the elect who in their turn are assisted by the angels. It is from the altar whence the prayer of the saints rises like the smoke of incense that the angel takes the burning coals which he throws upon the earth (Rev. 8:3–5). Again, it is from the horns of the heavenly altar that there comes a voice ordering the release of the four destroying angels "who were waiting for the year, the month, the day, the hour" (Rev. 9:13–16). And when the angels with the golden cups have poured all the wrath of God upon the earth, it is also the altar which John hears saying: "Yes, the judgments you do pronounce, Lord God Almighty, are true and just" (Rev. 16:7).

The altar which speaks these words is the same as that which asked for the just punishments of God to be unleashed, the same again from which the angel took the fire of justice and of final purification. It is the altar of prayer and praise, of supplication and thanksgiving, and under it those who had been slain for God's Word and the witness they had borne, cried out with all their might: "Sovereign Lord, the holy, the true, how long now before you will sit in judgment, and exact vengeance for our blood from all those who dwell on earth?"<sup>28</sup> It is clear that the voice of the altar was the very voice of the martyrs and the faithful witnesses (compare Rev. 19:1–3). The judgments of God are therefore hastened and, in part, set in motion by the prayers of the saints.

But the Church militant, the Church on earth, herself has her part in the decrees of Providence. It seems very likely that the invitation to gather the grapes and harvest the corn comes from two angels who go forth from the earthly Temple of God—that is, from the Church (see Rev. 14:15, 18, where the "Temple" is clearly distinct from that in heaven, Rev. 14:17). Angels from heaven gather the grapes and harvest the corn (Rev. 14:14, 17), but they are invited to do so by the angels who are given charge over the Church militant, God's earthly Temple. Should we be

justified in thinking that some angels follow the progress of the Church, that is, the growth of the body or the building-up of the Temple,<sup>29</sup> and then tell the angels serving God in heaven that "the crop of earth is dry and the time has come to reap it" (Rev. 14:15), that it is time to gather the grapes from earth's vineyard for "its clusters are ripe" (Rev. 14:18)?

Such a theme need cause no surprise if we remember the prospects opened up by the Epistle to the Ephesians.<sup>30</sup> In our opinion, the theme is not out of key with the context of the Apocalypse in which both the Spirit and the bride say "Come" (Rev. 22:17). The prayer of the Church seeks to hasten the Second Coming. The sacraments, in a sense, "desire" to be swallowed up in the reality they mediate, and the Temple of time "desires" to be engulfed in the Temple of eternity.

### *The New Heavens and the New Earth*

Beginning with Revelation 20:11, we enter the purely heavenly order: the order of eternity. The order of the present creation has passed away. Heaven and earth have vanished without a trace (Rev. 20:11; 21:1), the sea and hell give up their dead (Rev. 20:13), the books are opened, and the dead are judged in the light of their contents, each man according to his works (Rev. 20:12). It is at this point that St. John, in Revelation 21 and 22, offers us the astonishingly beautiful vision of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The passages that concern us here are Rev. 21:1–4, 9–11, 22–24, 27; 22:1.<sup>31</sup>

29 In the vocabulary and imagery of the Apocalypse, we should say: "until their companions in God's service and their brethren who are to be slain as they were, have reached their full number" (Rev. 6:11) and join them "beneath the altar" (Rev. 6:9). See also Rev. 22:11–12.

30 Because of its ideas on the growth of the body (or building) until it reaches its perfect stature (see Eph. 2:21; 4:13, 15–16) and on the manifestation of the mystery of salvation made to the heavenly principalities and powers by the apostolate and by the life of the Church (see Eph. 3:18–19; compare 1 Pet. 1:12). Then there are the angels of the churches in Rev. 1:20.

31 We shall consider these passages as a single, complete whole, without prejudice, however, to the problems of literary criticism and their solution. Our two chapters obviously give two parallel descriptions and this fact is one of Boismard's arguments in favor of distinguishing "two Apocalypses" in St. John ("L'Apocalypse" ou "les Apocalypses"). According to Boismard, the first text (written in Domitian's reign) follows Rev. 20:13–15 and comprises Rev. 21:9–22:2, plus Rev. 22:6–15; the text (written in Nero's reign) follows Rev. 20:11–12 and comprises Rev. 21:1–4, plus Rev. 22:3–5; 1:4, plus Rev. 21:5–8. We are quite willing to accept this scheme, but we cannot agree with Boismard when he interprets it as showing that Rev. 21:9–22:15 is a description of the messianic Jerusalem and therefore of the Church in her state of pilgrimage on the earth, and not of the heavenly Jerusalem which is described in Rev. 22:1–8. We do not deny that some details in Rev. 21:9–22:15 refer to the Church on earth, but those instanced by Boismard are not all very clear and in some cases can be otherwise explained. Does Rev. 21:10 make it essential that the earth should still be in existence? Rev. 21:24–6 may be understood eschatologically. Also, with Henry Barclay Swete (*The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* [New York: Macmillan, 1906]) and Allo (*L'Apocalypse*), we may note that the Church in her earthly phase and the Church of eternity are fundamentally identical (compare St. John's concept of eternal life): Rev. 21–22, taken as a whole, describe the new creation ("the new aeon in time and in eternity" [Allo, *L'Apocalypse*, 339]), but more particularly, the eschatological

27 Isa. 66:6.

28 Rev. 6:9–10. There is a parallel passage in Luke 18:7: "Will not God give redress to his elect, when they are crying out to him day and night?" We have to remember, too, that the apostles had been promised that they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30), and that it is written that we shall judge even the angels (1 Cor. 6:3; compare Wis. 3:8; 1 Cor. 2:15), and that in the Apocalypse itself, the faithful sit upon thrones and receive the right to judge: Rev. 20:4.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65:17). The old heaven, the old earth had vanished, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw in my vision that holy city which is the new Jerusalem, being sent down by God from heaven, all clothed in readiness, like a bride who has adorned herself to meet her husband. I heard, too, a voice which cried aloud from the throne, "Here is God's Tabernacle pitched among men; he will dwell with them, and they will be his own people, and he will be among them, their own God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes (Isa. 25:8), and there will be no more death, or mourning, or cries of distress, no more sorrow; those old things have passed away." ...

And now an angel came and spoke to me, one of those seven who bear the seven cups charged with the seven last plagues. "Come with me," he said, "and I will show you that bride, whose bridegroom is the Lamb." And he carried me off in a trance to a great mountain (Ezek. 40:2), high up, and there showed me the holy city Jerusalem, as it came down, sent by God, from heaven, clothed in God's glory (Isa. 60:1). The light that shone over it was bright.<sup>32</sup> ...

I saw no Temple in it; its Temple is the Lord God Almighty, its Temple is the Lamb. Nor had the city any need of sun or moon to show in it; the glory of God shone there, and the Lamb gave it light. *The nations will live and move in its radiance* (Isa. 60:3); the kings of the earth will bring it their tribute of praise and honor. ... Nothing that is unclean, no source of corruption or deceit can ever hope to find its way in; there is no entrance but for those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

He showed me, too, a river, whose waters gave life; it flows, clear as crystal, from the throne of God, from the throne of the Lamb.

All the details in this description are borrowed from the Old Testament or the Jewish apocalyptic literature. This fact shows once again the continuity be-

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conditions of life, while they include some details that are relevant to our present condition or perhaps with the reign of a thousand years. But we have no wish to enter here into the question of the meaning of this latter mysterious fact. Finally, some details at least in Rev. 21:9–22:5 are relevant to the heavenly Jerusalem, such as Rev. 21:10, 20; 22:3, 4, 5.

32 Here follows a description of the city, with its twelve gates on which were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (v. 12) and a great wall resting on twelve foundation stones each bearing the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (v. 13); the length, breadth and height of the city are equal (v. 16).

tween Christianity's fulfillment of the prophecies and the promises or hopes which preceded it. We shall briefly review these themes, but the passages we have quoted prophecy a new state and a transcendent consummation as complete as were the assumption into and the accomplishment by Christianity of the Old Testament prophecies. We shall therefore attempt later to show clearly what is meant by this new state and this transcendent consummation.

### *The New Jerusalem Is Identical with the Church*

The vision we are studying returns to the theme of Jerusalem, linked with the whole pattern of the history of salvation and with the messianic hope since the time of David.

In this general restatement, a number of details are combined in a remarkable way. Since the days of Ezekiel and the third section of Isaiah,<sup>33</sup> Jerusalem had been considered as the place and the realization of Israel's hopes at the end of the world. It is, therefore, this hope as a whole which is taken up into the idea of a new, glorious, fruitful Jerusalem at peace with itself and secure from all evil. The commentators point out the parallels in the Old Testament and the Jewish apocalyptic literature for all the details in this description. Even the changeover from the image of a city to that of a woman and a bride was common.<sup>34</sup> For St. John, the whole city is seen as a sanctuary. This is clear from the measurements, which are odd and baffling if taken as referring to a building existing in space,<sup>35</sup> but they in fact represent a cubic space such as that of the Holy of Holies (compare 1 Kings 6:10).

The city is truly the city of God, the city in which he reigns, the holy city. It is in direct contrast to Babylon, the courtesan,<sup>36</sup> the city of the reign of the adversary, the city of Antichrist. On the one side is the bridal city, on the other the harlot city. The harlot city is also the persecuting city, Babylon. It is made up of the worshippers of the beast who blasphemes the name of God, his dwelling-place, and those who dwell in heaven (Rev. 13:6). The bridal city is made up of those whom

33 See Ezek. 40 and the chapters that follow; also Isa. 60:1–6, 14; 65:18–25. On the biblical theme of Jerusalem, see Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 83–90.

34 The extra-biblical book, 4 Ezra 10 (25–7), which dates from the late first century A.D., is a classic example. (It is quoted, for instance, by Allo, *L'Apocalypse*, 335). See also, the *Sibylline Oracles* (Bk. 5, 420–425), which dates to the late first or early second century A.D. Texts in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:403, 547. For the Bible, see Gen. 2:22 (in the Septuagint translation, the creation of Eve is worded literally as "he built her as a woman"). St. Augustine had already noted this expression (*The City of God*, Bk. 22, Chap. 17); Gen. 16:2; 30:3; Ruth 4:11; Jer. 31:4 (the "virgin-Israel is built"); Isa. 62:5 ("thy builder shall wed thee"); compare Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9–14.

35 Nevertheless, Allo attempts to do this, *L'Apocalypse*, 347, 349. The language of the Apocalypse is symbolical rather than "plastic." We must not succumb to the repeated use of the word "vision." John sees yes, but spiritually, and he uses the imagery of symbols.

36 In biblical language, the words "adulterous" and "prostitute" or "courtesan" (harlot) indicate infidelity to God. See Rev. 2:14; 14:4–5.

the Lamb gathers on Mount Zion—here John returns to a traditional theme of messianic hope<sup>37</sup>—the souls whose faith is undefiled (Rev. 14:4–5), who are always with the Lamb and with God and serve him day and night—that is, always—in his Temple.<sup>38</sup> Thus revelation comes to an end as it brings together the themes which had inspired the preaching of the prophets—the themes of the bride, the city, the reign, the persecutor and, finally, the Temple.

John sees the bridal city coming down from heaven. He thus returns once again to a theme which, if not found in the Old Testament, at least belongs to the Jewish apocalyptic literature. But he treats it in so novel a fashion that the parallelism or the borrowing is very slight indeed. But the aim of Jewish apocalyptic writers is very different; their aim is specifically Old Testament and Jewish in character. The city in question is a material one and the Temple is one of stone, even though the stones are precious.<sup>39</sup> In the Apocalypse, external imagery is used only to give expression to a spiritual reality. The city is identical with the Church—that is, with the community of the faithful, and its foundations are the apostles.<sup>40</sup> Once again, the bridal city is made up of faithful men, while those who are impure are excluded (compare Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:15). The theme of the purity of the city as Temple and Church is also restated in the Apocalypse and with exactly the same meaning we have met in St Paul.<sup>41</sup>

Besides these restatements of more or less traditional material, we should note that in the new Jerusalem of the Apocalypse, major themes of the Old and the New Testament are brought to fulfillment. There is a complete recapitulation, as Comblin observes:

The introduction of Jerusalem, as the type of the final stage of God's work, involves also the introduction of the covenant, the chosen people, the inheritance, the twelve tribes, the divine espousals, God's dwelling among his people. Everything is given a new meaning.<sup>42</sup>

But we must confine ourselves to the question of the Temple. The great promise found throughout the times of the old dispensation now becomes a complete

reality. It is the promise that God will have his dwelling among men, that he will be God-with-them, and so make of them his own people.<sup>43</sup> But John is so imbued with the idea that all the nations are to enjoy the presence of God and communion with him and so become Jerusalem,<sup>44</sup> that he breaks with the traditional formula and writes: "he will dwell with them and they will be his own peoples (the Greek is plural: *laoi*)."<sup>45</sup> We shall shortly see how genuinely and how fundamentally this central promise in the history of our salvation is to be realized in the kingdom of the life to come.

### *The Davidic Messiah and the Temple of the Church*

The promise is quoted again a little later on (Rev. 21:7) in a slightly different form which it is important to note: "Who wins the victory? He shall have his share (inheritance) in this; *I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*" In the Old Testament, God calls his people his sons on more than one occasion.<sup>46</sup> But the passage referred to here is from the prophecy of Nathan, that decisive moment in the story of the Temple theme and the source of the whole Davidic theme of the Messiah.

The Apocalypse makes specific reference to these themes, by echoing Psalm 89:34–37 (Rev. 1:5) or Isaiah 11:1, 10 when it calls the victorious Christ "the offspring of David's race" (Rev. 5:5; 22:16). The victorious king seated on the throne of God is, in his ultimate reality, that royal lineage which God had promised David would last forever in his sight. But if this "offspring" is associated with God's own royal estate, so too the faithful, who have conquered also, are associated with his royal estate and his kingship.<sup>47</sup>

The title "Son of God" goes with this royal dignity. As with Abraham's lineage in St Paul (Gal. 3:16), so that of David issues in one and in several simultaneously. There is only one heir, one man who fulfils the promise made to David, just as there is only one heir, one man who fulfils the promise made to Abraham, but in both cases the faithful are included in him. The Temple of God is this unique person, both Son and King, Jesus Christ, and ourselves in and with him.<sup>48</sup>

In actual fact, therefore, the whole meaning of the Temple as it is understood by the Gospel and the apostles is restated in the Apocalypse. The Gospel meaning

43 The principal texts in order of importance are: Ezek. 37:26–8; Zech. 2:14–17; Lev. 26:11–12; Exod. 29:45; Zech. 8:8; Jer. 31:33. For the theme of "God-with-us," see Isa. 7:14; 8:8; Matt. 1:23.

44 Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 15:3–4; 21:26; 22:2.

45 Compare Isa. 45:22.

46 See Hos. 11:1; Jer. 31:9; Isa. 43:6.

47 See Rev. 2:26–8; 3:21; 5:10; 22:5.

48 It is worth noting that the words of 2 Sam. 7:14, which are here applied to the faithful Christian are used in Heb. 1:5 to show the divine sonship of Christ and are quoted in 2 Cor. 6:18 as proof of the fact that we "are the Temple of the living God."

37 2 Kings 19:30–31; Joel 3:5–7, 20–21.

38 Rev. 14:4; 7:15 (which is a restatement of Isa. 4:5–6).

39 Ps. 122 is often quoted. See Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* [Commentary on the New Testament in Light of the Talmud and Midrash], 5 vols. (München: Beck, 1922–1956), 3:573, 852 (on the Temple).

40 As in Eph. 2:20—one more instance of the similarity between the two books.

41 Rev. 21:7–8 should be compared with 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:50; Gal. 5:21.

42 Comblin, "La Liturgie de la Nouvelle Jérusalem," 19.

is that Christ (immolated and risen from the dead) is the Temple. The meaning in the teaching of the apostles is that the Temple is the community of the faithful. The synthesis provided in 1 Peter combined these two statements.<sup>49</sup> The Apocalypse, in its own key and with its own resonances, repeats the same theme.

Christ in the Apocalypse is the Christ of John's Gospel—the Lamb slain and victorious, from whose side flows, as from the new Temple, the water of life, that is, the Spirit, the specific gift of the new and definitive covenant.<sup>50</sup> The community of the faithful, represented as militant on earth and in heaven as the liturgical assembly of those whose pilgrimage has ended in joy, is now God's dwelling-place.

This idea could not be more strikingly expressed than in Revelation 22.<sup>51</sup> John sees the bridal city coming down from heaven—sees the new Jerusalem—and the voice (of an angel?) which explains what is taking place, does so in very significant terms: "Here is God's Tabernacle pitched among men; he will dwell with them" (Rev. 22:2–5). Yet, as in 1 Peter and Ephesians, the Church is the Temple only through Jesus Christ; likewise the faithful are victors, kings and priests, only through him who, before them, offered himself, won the victory, and now reigns;<sup>52</sup> they are purified and made strong only by his blood.<sup>53</sup>

As we shall see in a moment, the whole Church lives her own pasch of death, resurrection, rejection, glory, and does so in union with and through the pasch of the Lamb that was slain, but is now victorious (Rev. 1:18; 2:8; 5:6). This is another image which expresses exactly what is heard in the words of our Lord and read in the writings of St. Peter, when they used the image of the stone once rejected which has become the chief stone, the first cell, of the new Temple of God.<sup>54</sup>

### *Eschatological Cosmic Restoration*

Finally, the Apocalypse includes and fulfils the cosmic aspect of the mystery of the Temple. In it, as in the epistles of the captivity, Christ is the source of a new creation.<sup>55</sup> The final prospect is that of a new creation (Rev. 21:1, 5; 22:1–2) whose

source is the kingship of God (Rev. 21:5) which is shared by the Lamb who sits upon the same throne (22:1; 3:21). While in the past the Church lived under conditions of struggle and affliction due to the serpent of the primal age and to sin,<sup>56</sup> God will now wipe away all tears<sup>57</sup> and make the brightness of his own glory shine in the new Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup> The fact that the word *doxa* (glory), is closely connected with the theme of God's presence or dwelling among his people, already justifies us in suspecting that the eschatological cosmic restoration—corresponding to the "new birth" in Matthew 19:28 or to the "time when all is restored anew" in Acts 3:21—is the fruit not only of the perfect reign of God, but also of his perfect presence; if, that is, a distinction between the two can have any meaning.

But there is no need to make suppositions or deductions, since in Revelation 21:3–5 it is expressly stated that there is a link between the establishment of God's dwelling<sup>59</sup> among his people or his presence, and the creation of a new, reconciled and glorious universe. At the root of all this, obviously, is the theology of the prologue to St. John's Gospel.<sup>60</sup> The key-word to that prologue ("Word" [of God]) appears in Revelation 19:13. And the longing for cosmic redemption is only fulfilled in the concrete economy of the incarnate Word, the Cross, and Easter.

In the new state and the transcendent consummation, the new Jerusalem comes down from on high, from God. This idea is not found in the Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>61</sup> St. John, however, sees the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, from the home of (her) God (Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 12). We must note that he *sees* it. In this life, the true dimensions of God's Temple remain unknown to us, yet this Temple is being built in the souls of men. But, at the last day, these dimensions will be clearly revealed to give joy to God's friends. And his work transcends all our reckoning. John *sees* the new Jerusalem coming down from God's home, when all that has been built in the field of creation by grace from on high at length becomes manifest. And this Jerusalem *comes down from heaven*.

<sup>56</sup> Rev. 12:2, 6, 9, 13.

<sup>57</sup> Rev. 7:17; 21:4.

<sup>58</sup> Rev. 21:11, 23; 22:5. Swete (*Apocalypse*) refers also to 2 Cor. 3:8, an evocative verse. There is also a parallel between Rev. 21:1, 5 and 2 Cor. 5:17.

<sup>59</sup> *Skēnē*; there is perhaps an allusion here to the cloud of the divine presence, the *Shekinah*. See Swete, *Apocalypse*, 278.

<sup>60</sup> See John 1:14.

<sup>61</sup> See Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 3:796. The idea is nonexistent among the ancient rabbis and is rare in more recent midrashim. It is found in apocalyptic literature only in writings dating from the end of the first century A.D., such as 4 Ezra (7:26). Compare also Comblin, "La Liturgie de la Nouvelle Jérusalem," 10–11, n. 12. He makes it quite clear that we are dealing here with something very different from the restoration of a former reality, or something from the "religionsgeschichtlich" [history of religions] theme of a city preexisting in heaven. The latter theme, in any case, appears at a relatively late date.

<sup>49</sup> See 1 Pet. 2:4–10.

<sup>50</sup> Rev. 21:6; 22:1–2, 17; see also Rev. 2:7; 7:17. Compare these passages with John 4:10–15; 7:37–39; 19:34.

<sup>51</sup> In Rev. 19:8 the linen of shining white in which the bride of the Lamb clothes herself is "the merits of the saints"; compare Rev. 7:9, 14, where the robe of the bride is made from those of the martyrs and of the faithful.

<sup>52</sup> Rev. 1:6; 5:10 (kings and priests); Rev. 2:27–28; 3:31; 17:14; 22:5.

<sup>53</sup> Rev. 12:11; 7:14–15: "They have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. And now they stand before God's throne, serving him day and night in his Temple."

<sup>54</sup> Mark 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:4, 7.

<sup>55</sup> See Rev. 1:5, where Christ is called "the firstborn from the dead" (*prōtotokos tōn nekron*); compare Col. 1:18.



No “*religionsgeschichtlich*” [history of religions]<sup>62</sup> parallel or so-called parallel can explain this original idea—an idea given to us by revelation, by the Word of God, and whose profound meaning must be sought in the Word of God itself.

The first value expressed in this concept is that of the gratuitous nature of the gift. During the Exodus, or under David or Ezekiel, no human initiative could force God to be present among his people. His presence remained his mystery and a gift of his grace. The new Jerusalem comes down from God because it is composed of “those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). True, if our names appear in this book it is because of our deeds (Rev. 20:12), but our names may be blotted out (Rev. 3:5) and, at the very root of the fidelity and heroism which have earned a place for our names, there is a movement on God’s part which we must call gratuitous predestination (see Rev. 13:8; 17:8). In one sense, there is a celestial Jerusalem because, “ever since the world was made”<sup>63</sup> the elect have existed in God’s thought and predestination. The preexisting Church of which some authors have written genuinely exists only in this way.

The second value expressed in this concept is that of the absolute purity demanded by God’s Temple. All the ritual, all the regulations with which the Mosaic Law surrounded everything that concerned the Temple and the worship of God, were figures of the true, interior, spiritual purity, as a quality in man himself that was to be required in the new spiritual Temple of which John tells us “nothing that is unclean ... can ever hope to find its way in” (Rev. 21:27).<sup>64</sup> John tells us this just after he has shown us the kings of the earth bringing their treasures into the city whose gates therefore always remain wide open.

Some time ago, we ourselves showed that the catholicity of the Church assumes into itself—“recapitulates”—all that is of value in the unlimited evolution

of the energies of the first Adam.<sup>65</sup> We also noted above that the dimensions of the spiritual Temple which are unknown to us include, in a certain sense, the entire world and a multitude of men who in their own little lives have had no explicit knowledge of Jesus Christ, his Church, or even of God himself.

What then shall we say of the “good deeds,” the “merits” of the faithful and of the saints themselves, those deeds out of which are woven the robe of shining white that clothed the bride for her wedding feast, as St. John showed us, (Rev. 19:8)? If we turn to the prophet Isaiah, we hear him say, “We were all of us like those that are impure, and all our acts of justice were like filthy linen.”<sup>66</sup> We can only cleanse ourselves in a spring from on high, by receiving something that comes from God who alone is holy. This is the biblical idea of sanctity:<sup>67</sup> it comes from God and belongs to God. In the Mosaic system, a thing was from God and belonged to God through an act of consecration, that is, by being set apart. Under the dispensation of the incarnate Word and of the Holy Spirit as given to man, man comes from God and belongs to him because of the communication of a genuinely “spiritual” gift.<sup>68</sup>

Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit because he himself came from on high (John 3:13, 31) and the Holy Spirit came down and rested upon him (John 1:32–3). The New Testament can indeed link together the words “spiritual,” “pleasing to God,” and “not made by man’s hands.”<sup>69</sup> The dispensation of the new and eternal covenant is that of a truly heavenly and specifically divine gift of grace, a dispensation where circumcision is not the work of man’s hands (Col. 2:11; Eph. 2:11). Nothing that is not heavenly can enter heaven, as St. John declares in the Apocalypse. But the Church, the new Jerusalem, is wholly compounded of heavenly grace, of gifts that have truly come from on high.<sup>70</sup> Our high priest purifies us within, from the

62 Hence the celestial city is given twelve gates, not by deduction from geophysics as is the case in modern Cambodian or Burmese symbolism, or in that of Muslim Baghdad with its twelve palaces. No, it is because there were twelve sons of Jacob, twelve tribes of Israel; and also twelve foundations since there were twelve apostles of the Lamb: Rev. 21:12–14. A genuine cosmic value is implied and parallel teaching can be quoted from the study of the history of religions, but in the Apocalypse, this value is incorporated into the positive facts of the history of salvation, itself dependent on a free act of God’s will, by which, moreover, the world has been created as an ordered and measured whole.

63 Rev. 13:8. It is erroneous to translate this image as that of the “Lamb slain in sacrifice *ever since the world began*.” The words in italics do not refer to the Lamb, but to the names written in the book of life, as is made clear in the parallel passage, Rev. 17:8. The notion of the Church as preexisting is explained in the Fathers by that of predestination; compare Heb. 12:23; 2 Tim. 1:9. On the Church as coming down from heaven because she is a free gift of grace, see St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Bk. 20, Chap. 17. Text in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 436–437.

64 See also Rev. 21:8; 22:15. Compare Isa. 35:8; Ezek. 44:9. For the new form of purity according to Christ, see Matt. 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23.

65 See Yves Congar, *Chrétiens Désunis, Principes d’un “Oecuménisme” Catholique* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1937); Eng. trans.: *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, trans. M. A. Bousfield (London: G. Bles, 1939). See esp. Chap. 3.

66 See the Septuagint translation of Isa. 64:6 (*ōs rakos apokathēmenēs pasa he dikaiosynē emōn* = like the soiled sanitary towel of a woman [compare Lev. 12:2; 15:19–20]). In Rev. 19:8, the word used is *dikaïōmata tōn hagion* (“righteous deeds of the saints”). Swete rightly draws attention to the wedding garment in Matt. 22:11. See also, Pope St. Gregory the Great (*Morals in Job*, Bk. 17, 15, 21): “*Humana quippe justitia auctori comparata injustitia est*” [Man’s righteousness when compared to his Maker is unrighteousness.] Text in *Morals on the Book of Job by St. Gregory the Great*, 3 vols., trans. James Bliss (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1844–1850).

67 See Otto Procksch, “*Hagios*,” in *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, 1:88–97.

68 For this contrast, see John 1:17 and 6:31–3; compare Gal. 3:1–4; Heb. 3:1–66.

69 See C. F. D. Moule, “Sanctuary and Sacrifice in the Church of the New Testament,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1950): 29–41.

70 “*De coelo descendere dicitur ista civitas, quoniam coelestis est gratia qua Deus eam fecit, propter quod ei dicit etiam per Isaiam: Ego sum Dominus faciens te (45:11).*” [This citizenship is said to

Holy of Holies he has entered and which is the sanctuary of God himself, not made by man's hands.<sup>71</sup>

### *The Easter of the Church and of the World*

These ideas lead us back to the theme of the spiritual Temple brought into being by Christ's Easter experience.<sup>72</sup> And indeed, the fundamental significance of the fact that the new Jerusalem must be sent down to us from on high is identical with the fundamental significance of Easter. And what we are saying of the new Jerusalem, we must—and in this we are following St. John—also say of the whole creation, of those new heavens and that new earth which the visions of the Apocalypse link with the appearance of the new Jerusalem. We must say it of all that the Apocalypse and the whole of the New Testament call "new."<sup>73</sup>

The idea of restoration, of making anew what has been overthrown or profaned, was frequent in the Old Testament and in Jewish thought. But for the latter, it was most often simply a matter of recalling to life what had previously existed.<sup>74</sup> During his pasch, Christ passed through death; the body which came out of the tomb is a Temple not made by human hands. It is the source of a truly new creation, of a truly new man. The whole of St. Paul's thought is relevant here. So also is the whole theology of the new covenant, made as it was in the blood of Christ and in his pasch. This new covenant is the very act by which the new Jerusalem is founded.<sup>75</sup>

What the Apocalypse proclaims is, therefore, the Easter of the Church and of the world. "The Most High does not dwell in temples made by men's hands."<sup>76</sup> It is not merely each man's individual body which will be given back to him from on high ("not made by human hands") to be his everlasting dwelling-place (2 Cor. 5:1);

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descend from the sky because heavenly grace is made in the same manner in which God makes them, wherefore, indeed, he says through Isaiah: "I am the Lord, your Maker." Primasius of Hadrumentum (circa 540 A.D.), *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, Bk. 5. Text in *PL* 68, 921. The passage is repeated verbatim by St. Bede (d. 735), *The Explanation of the Apocalypse* (*PL* 93, 194). Compare James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

71 Heb. 9:11–28, where the expression "not made by human hands" occurs twice, vv. 11, 28.

72 Compare Mark 14:58; John 2:19–22.

73 Heaven and earth (Rev. 2:1, 5; 2 Peter 3:13; Isa. 43:19; 65:17). Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2). Wine (Mark 14:25 and parallels). Name (Rev. 2:17; 3:12; compare Isa. 62:2; 65:15). Song (Rev. 5:9; 14:3; compare Isa. 42:10; Ps. 95:1). See also 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15 (new creature); Rom. 5:12–14; 1 Cor. 15:21–22; Eph. 2:15 (man). See also, Johannes Behm, "Kainos" [New, Renewal] in *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, 3:451–2.1.

74 See Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 3:840.

75 Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; compare 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8–9; 9:15.

76 Acts 7:48 (Stephen); 17:24 (Paul); compare Heb. 9:11, 24.

it is the whole spiritual Temple, the Church as the Body of Christ, which will be restored from on high, made anew in the image of the Lord who, in his own pasch, was its first stone.

In short, we are here confronted with the decisive mystery of the identity of the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13), of the identity of the mysteries of Easter and the *parousia*, or "coming" of the Lord.<sup>77</sup> John is describing for us the final Easter of the Church and of the world which, in its own way, is to be modeled on the Easter of Jesus. He who, by his pasch is the source of a new creation is indeed Jesus, son of Mary; but he has had to pass through death—the death of all in him which belonged to the former world for which he "took birth from a woman, took birth as a subject of the law" (Gal. 4:4) "in the fashion of our guilty nature" (Rom. 8:3). So, in the same way, all which in the Church as God's Temple is in the fashion of our guilty nature, must die, for "the Kingdom of God cannot be enjoyed by flesh and blood."<sup>78</sup>

The Church must have her pasch, she must pass through death, as did Christ, and a body wholly pure must be given back to her so that she may be united to God and receive him as the Temple and bride described in the Apocalypse. She cannot be the perfect bride unless she is perfectly virginal in the deepest sense, as we find it in the New Testament, the Fathers and the monastic tradition—unless, that is, she lives entirely by a life from on high and not from below, unless she is wholly heavenly, not earthly. "Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail" (John 6:63).

It is only after she has passed through the death of the flesh that Christ can take to himself his bride "in all her beauty, no stain, no wrinkle, no such disfigurement ... holy ... spotless" (Eph. 5:27). But if this is accomplished first of all in baptism, which is the principle and the very substance of our Easter, it will only be perfectly accomplished, as will also our baptism and Easter, through an actual

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77 On this point cf. F. X. Durrwell, *La Résurrection de Jésus, Mystère de Salut: Étude Biblique* (Paris: Cerf, 1954); Eng. trans.: *The Resurrection, A Biblical Study* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960). See also, Yves Congar, "Le Purgatoire" [Purgatory], in Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, *Le Mystère de la Mort et sa Célébration* [The Mystery of Death and its Celebration], (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1951), 279–236.

78 See Jacques Benigne Bossuet, "Assumption" (1660 A.D.): "Such flesh (*caro peccati*: Rom. 8:3) must be destroyed, even, I say, in the elect; because, as sinful flesh, it does not deserve to be united to a blessed soul or to enter the kingdom of God: *Caro et sanguis regnum Dei possidere non possunt* [flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God] (1 Cor. 15:50). So it must change its first form in order to be made new, and it must lose entirely its first being in order to receive a second from the hand of God." Text in *Bossuet on Devotion to the Blessed Virgin: Being the Substance of all the Sermons for Mary's Feast throughout the Year*, trans. F. M. Capes, introd. William T. Gordan (New York: Longmans, Green, 1899), 141. But it is St. Irenaeus (early second century A.D.) still more than Bossuet, who should be quoted in this connection. See *Against the Heresies*, Bk. 5, Chap. 9, 4. Text in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 535.

death, through an actual purification from the flesh, through an actual and total resurrection according to the Spirit; in a word, at the last day. We have previously attempted to look at the fact of Purgatory from this paschal point of view, and in so doing we believe we have been faithful to the thought of the Fathers.<sup>79</sup>

The purification prophesied by Malachi (3:1) and wrought by Jesus by means of an act which was prophetic and therefore both real and symbolic in its proclamation of a spiritual truth (John 2:13–18), is to be fully accomplished in the mystery of the *parousia*, which the Apocalypse, after the Gospels, describes as follows—judgment, hell giving up its dead, the new heavens and the new earth, the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven and from God, adorned like a young bride for her husband (Rev. 20:11; 21:2).

The Fathers here as elsewhere show a remarkable understanding of the mystery of the Scriptures. Tertullian shows us Christ in the glory of his second coming, no longer the stumbling-block but the keystone crowning the completed Temple.<sup>80</sup> Origen, commenting upon the episode of the cleansing of the Temple, in the context of this eschatological theme of judgment, wrote:

The Church is a Temple built of living stones. Among her children, there are some who live as though they were not in the Church. They fight their battles in human strength (2 Cor. 10:3). These make the house of prayer, composed of living stones, into a den of thieves ...

Origen then explains how it is that some men make the Temple into a den of thieves through the selling and buying of doves and the like. He goes on to warn them to beware when Jesus comes into the Father's house of prayer, for he will drive them from their seats.

When I examine this passage of Scripture, I ask myself whether Jesus will not bring all this to pass when he comes for the second time, the time of that long-awaited divine judgment. Then he will enter the Temple wholly, the Church now complete ... and he will drive out all those who, though they are reputed to have

79 See Congar, "Le Purgatoire."

80 See Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, Bk. 3, Chap. 7. In his second coming "he shall no longer remain 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense,' but after his rejection become 'the chief corner-stone,' accepted and elevated to the top place of the Temple, even his Church, being that very stone in Daniel (7:13–14), cut out of the mountain which was to smite and crush the image of the secular kingdom." Text in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, 326.

their place in the Temple of God, in reality behave as mere traffickers.<sup>81</sup>

If we call to mind what was said above about the dimensions of the Church as Temple, of the mixture of the pure and the impure within her, if we remember all those who apparently live beyond her bounds but in reality belong to her, we shall then understand something of the pasch through which the Church as Temple must pass. She will be purified and united, built at last of living and precious stones and completed in the fullness of her dimensions only when she has been gathered together from the whole earth and when God takes her to himself from on high, recreated as she will be according to the Spirit, and able fully to be the bride because, by grace, she will be made utterly virginal.

Does all this mean there will be no kind of continuity between earthly life and the life of the world to come? Will there be an entirely new creation in which a body, a Church that is wholly new is to take in some sort the place of the body, the Church which has struggled in the mire and suffered in the night of this earth? We are more and more inclined to think<sup>82</sup> that all of divine revelation and the Apocalypse, its final chapter, are against such a supposition.

To confine ourselves to the Apocalypse, we see that the continuity between the earthly and heavenly phases of the Church's existence is clearly and abundantly obvious. The holy city which comes down from God is the bride adorned for her wedding-feast. But her robe, as we have seen, is woven from the good deeds of the saints (Rev. 19:8), for their deeds go with them (Rev. 14:13). Those who are clothed in white robes—whom God will lead to the living waters and from whose eyes he will wipe away all tears (Rev. 7:13–17)—are also those who have come through great tribulation. If we bring together all the promises made to the "victor" in the seven letters to the churches (Rev. 2:1–3:21), we see that they correspond to the bliss that is given to the new Jerusalem which comes down from God's home, and whose name, moreover, is written upon this "victor" (Rev. 3:12).

And thus every effort made in time and within the framework of earthly history is taken up into heaven. The new song does not do away with the Song of Moses (Rev. 15:3; Exod. 15:1). Here, as in the rest of the New Testament, the theme of the Exodus is always present.<sup>83</sup> We are shown a liturgical pilgrimage reaching its climax in the Temple in the celebration of the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles.

81 See Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Text in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Garnier and J. P. Migne, 1857–1866), 13, 1444 and 1452–3. Hereafter PG.

82 More and more, that is, in relation to what we have already written in *Lay People in the Church*, 56–61, 81–102.

83 See the thought-provoking note by Jeremias in "Golgotha," 123, n. 1. For St. Paul, see Harald

But we are shown equally, at least, a final Exodus across the Red Sea and the desert. As with the first Exodus, the time of trial is also the time of betrothal. The Church clothes herself with her fine robe of white linen so that when she celebrates her eternal wedding-feast she finally fulfils the ideal of the Exodus, the ideal of love and fidelity in the midst of poverty.

It is clear, therefore, that the new life given from above is not a creation discontinuous with what was already in existence. Moreover, in the New Testament, whenever something new is given gratuitously, we are never dispensed from the effort to retain possession of it and to make it bear fruit.<sup>84</sup> The view we have put forward above and which we share with Swete and Allo, is particularly favorable to these ideas. The new Jerusalem is also the Church in time. Already in time, she comes down from heaven, as new, as from God. In her activity she is a reality in the order of grace. What she does depends entirely upon what has been *given* to her. But at the last day, all impurity in her actions will be eliminated, or washed clean and transfigured. In the Temple, there will remain only what has been built in gold or in a substance that resists decay (1 Cor. 3:10–15). The city which is both Temple and bride is composed entirely of precious stones (Rev. 21:11, 18–21).

#### “I Saw No Temple In It”

In eternity there is no Temple other than God himself. When he was shown the new Jerusalem in its glorious state (Rev. 21:10–11), St. John was astonished, for he had visited every part of it, yet he wrote, “I saw no Temple in it” (Rev. 21:22). For a Jew this was inconceivable—Jerusalem without a Temple! This enables us to sense how new was a “revelation” which incorporated so many elements from the Old Testament or from Judaism, but which also went beyond them.

Condren makes a pertinent comparison. He reminds us of Isaac’s astonishment when he saw no victim for the sacrifice his father was about to offer on the mountain. God was to provide for the sacrifice, and become himself the victim.<sup>85</sup> The answer here is similar: *Its Temple is the Lord God Almighty. Its Temple is the Lamb* (Rev. 21:22). This, then, is the final word of the revelation given to the Church concerning the mystery of the Temple and of God’s presence. We must do our best to hear and understand it.<sup>86</sup>

Sahlin, “The New Exodus of Salvation according to St Paul,” in *The Root of the Vine: Essays in Biblical Theology*, ed. Anton Fridrichsen (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 81–95.

84 Behm (“Kainos,” 452), says it well: “Für den einzelnen ist der neue Mensch Gabe und Aufgabe zugleich” [For individuals, the “new man” is a gift and, at the same time, a task]. See Eph. 4:24. Compare Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17.

85 Charles de Condren, *L’Idée du Sacerdoce et du Sacrifice de Jésus-Christ* [The Idea of the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ] (Paris: Douniol, 1901), 127. Compare Gen. 22.

86 The commentators we have consulted are not very satisfactory. Swete, excellent though he is, has

The first point to note is that the words are used of the Lord (*kyrios*) God Almighty (*ho Theos ho Pantokratōr*) and of the Lamb. The title *Pantokratōr* occurs nine times in the Apocalypse, although it appears only once in the rest of the New Testament and then as a mere rider to a quotation.<sup>87</sup> These uses of the word show that in the Apocalypse the writer is not so much concerned with stating an attribute of God for its own sake (as is done in theodicy) as with revealing his royal sovereignty. In fact, the title *Pantokratōr* is very clearly linked either with the character of absolute existence dominating time as a whole from beginning to end (see Rev. 1:8; 4:8); or with the affirmation of the power God possesses and exercises in order to establish his kingdom (Rev. 11:17; 15:3; 9:6) and to execute his judgments (Rev. 16:7, 14; 19:15). In two places the word also includes an act of praise of God’s transcendent holiness (Rev. 4:8; 15:3). We may therefore conclude that the eternal Temple of the faithful is God in his sovereign reign. The fact that the name of the Lamb is added after the word *Pantokratōr* does not alter this conclusion, since it indicates Christ precisely as associated with the sovereign and saving reign of God.

For the prophets, God was present where he reigned. The first meaning of the passage we are studying is that in eternity there will be no Temple other than God himself and his holy will. God is in his Temple because he dwells in himself and in his own holy will. There is also a sense in which he is in his Temple in the believer and the people who love and do his will (compare John 14:21, 23).

By the same token, the believer is in God just as God is in him.<sup>88</sup> In the Temple of God’s presence and God’s will, the believer or the people—it is not

little to say (*Apocalypse*, 295); Allo (*L’Apocalypse*, 348) confines himself to a reference to the final phrase in Ezek. 48:35. This is a valid reference but leads him to remark that the whole city is a temple. But John did not say that; instead his words were: God is the Temple. Wenschkewitz (pp. 148–9) senses the novelty of the statement but sees in it an example of “spiritualization”. Finally, Boismard (in his introduction to the installment version of the Jerusalem Bible; see *La Sainte Bible, Traduite en Français sous la Direction de L’École Biblique de Jérusalem* [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1961]) limits Rev. 21:9 to a description of the messianic Jerusalem (the Jerusalem before the *parousia*) and gives to the text above a commonplace meaning: there is no longer any temple, since the Church is the Temple. Once again, this is not what St. John says at this point.

87 See 2 Cor. 6:18. *Pantokratōr* is the usual Septuagint rendering for “*Yahweh Sabaoth*” in the Hebrew text. (Hence Rev. 4:8 compared with Isa. 6:3.) According to J. N. D. Kelly (*Early Christian Creeds* [London: Longman, Green, 1950], 132) the word should not be translated by “Almighty,” but by “All-Ruling,” or “All-Sovereign.”

88 “*Cum vero habitationem ejus cogitas, unitatem cogita, congregationemque sanctorum: maxime in coelis, ubi propterea praecipue dicitur habitare, quia ibi fit voluntas ejus perfecta eorum, in quibus habitat obedientia.*” [And when you think of his indwelling, think of the unity of the gathering of saints, especially in heaven, where he is said to dwell in a unique manner, because his will is done there by the perfect obedience of those in whom he dwells] St Augustine, *Letter 187*, 14 (PL 33, 848). Eng. trans. in St. Augustine, *Letters (165–203)*, trans. Wilfrid Parsons (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1964), 254.

possible to differentiate between them, and the Apocalypse speaks at times of the victor as a person and at others, with obvious preference, as the people, as the “*tota redempta civitas*” [whole redeemed city], in the words of St. Augustine<sup>89</sup>—are like priests at the altar: “And now they stand before God’s throne, serving him (*latreuosin autō*) day and night in his Temple” (Rev. 7:15). “God’s throne (which is the Lamb’s throne) will be there, with his servants to worship him.”<sup>90</sup> The liturgy of the Apocalypse is essentially a liturgy of loving and enthusiastic obedience to God’s royal will for our salvation.<sup>91</sup> It may be summed up in the *Amen, Alleluia!* (Rev. 19:4) and as a commentary upon it, we may take these words of St. Augustine: “They shall say Alleluia! Because they shall say *Amen!*”<sup>92</sup>

There is, therefore, no need to pause to consider Comblin’s remark, perfectly correct though it is, that in the new Jerusalem the elect are no longer called “priests” but are simply said “to reign” (Rev. 22:5).<sup>93</sup> The only conclusion that need be drawn from this is that the elements of outward ceremony, of preparation and of mediation in the worship and the priesthood of the messianic Temple have

89 *The City of God*, Bk. 22, Chap. 17. See n. 63 above.

90 Rev. 22:3. St. John uses exactly the same expression as in Rev. 7:15, *latreuosin autō*, to denote the public worship given to the living God by his people, Israel. Therefore, as was said in Rev. 21:3: “He will dwell with them, and they will be his own people, and he will be among them, their own God.” Compare Acts 26:7; Phil. 3:3; Rom. 12:1. Note that in all these passages worship is offered before the throne of God and of the Lamb; the Temple is a palace; God *reigns* there—an absolutely essential fact—and the worship offered is the worship offered to the sovereign will from which grace comes.

91 Rev. 4:8–11; 5:8–14; 7:9–12; 14:1–5; 19:1–5.

92 “... *Tota actio nostra, Amen et Alleluia erit ... Quid est enim Amen? quid Alleluia? Amen est verum; Alleluia, laudate Deum. Quia ergo Deus veritas est incommutabilis. ... Quam ergo insatiabiliter satiaberis veritate, tam insatiabili veritate dices; Amen ... amore ipsius veritatis accensi et inhaerentes ei dulci et casto amplexu, eodemque incorporeo, tali etiam voce laudabimus eum et dicemus; Alleluia. Exultantes enim se ad parilem laudem flagrantissima charitate invicem et ad Deum, omnes cives illius civitatis dicent Alleluia, quia dicent Amen!*” [Our whole activity will consist of Amen and Alleluia. ... What does *Amen* mean, and what is *Alleluia*? *Amen*, “It is true”; *Alleluia*, “Praise God.” So now, God is unchangeable truth. ... When we say this, we shall of course be saying *Amen*, but with a kind of never satisfied satisfaction. ... We shall be fired with love of this truth and cling to it with a sweet and chaste embrace—a non-bodily one, of course; and so we shall also praise him with the same kind of voice, and say, *Alleluia*. All the citizens of that city, you see, will be urging each other to equal heights of praise with the most ardent charity toward God, and so they will be saying, *Alleluia*, because they will be saying, *Amen*] *Sermon* 362, 29 (PL 39, 1632–1633). Eng. trans. in: *The Works of St. Augustine: A New Translation for the 21st Century*, 3:10 (Sermons, 341–400), ed. John Rotelle (Brooklyn, NY: New City, 1995), 265–266. On the Alleluia as the canticle of the heavenly life, see the splendid pages of Augustine in his *Exposition of the Psalms*, 148, 1 (PL 37, 1938); *Sermon* 243, 8 (PL 38, 1147); *Sermon* 252, 9 (PL 38, 1176–7); *Sermon* 255, 1, 5 (PL 38, 1186, 1188); *Sermon* 256 (PL 38, 1190).

93 See Comblin, “La Liturgie de la Nouvelle Jérusalem,” 25, n. 53: “All idea of offering and sacrifice has disappeared; similarly the idea of priesthood has been removed from the traditional formula *basileian hiereis* and is now changed to *basileusousin*.”

disappeared. There remains only the ultimate reality of worship, sacrifice, and priesthood—namely man’s perfect and filial surrender of himself to God,<sup>94</sup> of which these elements were the sign. But this is the quintessence of sacrifice and of priesthood.<sup>95</sup> At the same time it explains the royal character of our priesthood in the sense of 1 Peter (2:5, 9).<sup>96</sup>

As they adore the throne of God and of the Lamb, that is, their royal will for our salvation, the elect, God’s servants, are with him; they are his people and he is their God. By the same token, they see his face, his name is on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4), his dwelling in them, becomes a fact (Rev. 21:3); and this priestly service, this wholly spiritual sacrifice of obedience and union which they offer, is a royal sacrifice. By obedience to him as reigning, they share in his reign and are themselves kings of glory:

The Lord God will shed his light on them, and they will reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 22:5)

Who wins the victory? I will let him share my throne with me; I too have won the victory, and now I sit sharing my Father’s throne (Rev. 3:21).<sup>97</sup>

They are in full partnership with Christ as king, and with him share the kingship of God, for they are sons not only after the manner of David (2 Sam. 7:14), but through and in Jesus Christ, the Son in the absolute and perfect sense. Hence, they are sons in the way David’s Lord is Son, the Lord of whom David himself said: “The LORD said to my Lord: Sit on my right hand” (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:42–44). Henceforth, if the Temple is the will of God, that is, his throne, it is not enough to say that the elect are in him as worshippers or as celebrating priests. We must recognize that there is a sense in which they themselves are the Temple and no

94 Rev. 21:7. The final and communal perfection of the Church, as such, is to say “*Pater noster*” [Our Father] and to end by uttering Christ’s own *Amen*.

95 See Chap. 4 of Congar, *Lay People in the Church*. It is self-evident that the sacrificial worship of sinful men and of the Church during her earthly pilgrimage must have expiatory value and a visible, collective, sacramental character. In heaven, says St. Thomas, there will no longer be anything but “*gratiarum actio et vox laudis* [the act of thanksgiving and the voice of praise] (compare Isa. 51:3).” See *Summa Theologiae*, Pt. 1a-2ae, Quest. 101, Art. 2; Pt. 1a-2ae, Quest. 103, Art. 3. In *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas: First Complete American Edition*, 3 vols. (New York: Benzinger, 1947–1948), 1:1052, 1085.

96 See *Mystery of the Temple*, 178.

97 Compare Georges Bernanos’ novel, *Journal d’un Curé de Campagne* (1937), the scene in which the countess who is quite willing to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” but not “Thy will be done”: “The kingdom whose coming you have just prayed for is both yours and his.” See *The Diary of a Country Priest*, trans. Pamela Morris (Garden City, NY: Image, 1954), 134.

longer merely as the community of the faithful, as the Temple in which God dwells, but in the very sense in which in eternity there is no more Temple because the Lord God Almighty is the Temple, as is also the Lamb. *God himself* has become truly a house of prayer for all nations (Mark 11:17).

Not that we are to imagine some kind of fusion of existences, a confusion in the order of being. The victor, God, and the Lamb, are, in the Apocalypse, persons with well-defined characters. It is not a question of fusion but of communion, a communion divinely real and profound. We cannot study here the reality of this communion as taught by the New Testament as a whole, by St. John ("life") and by the Apocalypse. A whole book would be needed. But one short text sums it all up: "What is it, this fellowship of ours? Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). All we have to do is to consider the reality and the depth of this communion from the point of view of the truth that God himself is eternity's Temple.

### *God Becomes the Temple of Humanity*

This communion is, first of all, a mutual exchange. This is already implied in the very notion itself of a covenant and in the theme that is constantly repeated: *I will be their God and they shall be my people. We live in God. He is our dwelling-place. But we, too, are his dwelling-place and he lives in us.*<sup>98</sup> "*Templum hominis Deus, templum Dei fit homo.*"<sup>99</sup> Between God and ourselves there is, we may venture to say, reciprocal hospitality and indwelling, because there is between us both communication and communion (*koinonia*). It is not for nothing that Jesus has described our final bliss under the image of a meal<sup>100</sup> and that the Apocalypse returns to this image—not only to point out that all hunger and thirst will forever be satisfied (Rev. 7:16–17) but to insist on this intimate communication and reciprocity:

See where I stand at the door, knocking; if anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I will come in to visit him, and take my supper with him, and he shall sup with me. Who wins the victory? I will let him share my throne with me; I too have won the victory, and now I sit sharing my Father's throne. (Rev. 3:20–21)

There is a reciprocal presence. The friends enjoy one another's company, they entertain one another, one in his cottage, the other in his palace. And this is in imitation of the relations between the Father and the Son, for the Father is in the Son and the Son in the Father (John 10:38). And where the Son is, he wishes that those should be with him who have been given to him by the Father (John 17:24). But it is clear that, in this mutual interchange, it is we who receive and are filled. God is no richer for possessing us. He receives nothing he did not already have. Yet he delights in giving, for he is good, and in communicating himself to us, for he loves us. But for us to possess God is to be filled and filled to overflowing.

That God is our Temple means that there is between him and ourselves a mutual indwelling, a communion, an intercommunication in which we find our hunger satisfied and our joy filled to the uttermost.<sup>101</sup> What is true in eternity of the relations between the Father and the Son, "all I have is yours, and all you have is mine" (John 17:10), is henceforth true also and eternally of the relations between the Father and his sons by adoption. It is they who return to their Father's house and are filled. They know the truth of that familiar relationship which Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son expressed in these words: "My son, you are always at my side, and everything that I have is already yours" (Luke 15:31).

In this way then, our inherent desire for a complete inward life, a desire which corresponds exactly to God's plan of grace, will at last be satisfied. If there is one obvious direction in the great story of God's presence to his creatures as it has been made known to us by revelation, if this story has one overall movement, it is surely this—it begins by momentary contacts and visits, then passes through the stage of external mediations that draw God ever nearer to mankind, and finally reaches the state of perfectly stable and intimate communion. Whether it be through the Temple, the sacrifice, or the priesthood, God's plan moves towards a communion of such intimacy that the duality between man and God, and therefore their external separation from one another, are both overcome in so far as this is possible without a meaningless confusion of beings or pantheism.

98 This is shown by the New Testament uses of the verb *menein*, to remain, and the noun *monē*, a dwelling. For the latter, compare the two (only) examples in John 14:2: "There are many dwelling-places in my Father's house"; and 14:23: "If a man ... and make our continual abode with him." For the verb, compare on the one hand, God (1 John 4:16) and Christ (John 15:4–7; 1 John 3:24) dwelling in the faithful and, on the other, the faithful dwelling in God (1 John 2:24; 4:16) and in Christ (John 6:56; 15:4–7; 1 John 2:6, 27–28; 3:6, 24).

99 [And so God becomes the Temple of man and man becomes the Temple of God]. St. Peter Damian (d. 1072), *Letter 49*, 16 (PL 144, 265). Text in Peter Damian, *Letters (31–60)* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1989), 280.

100 Luke 14:15–24 (Matt. 22:2–24); 22:29–30 (where we find the same connection between a meal and kingship). The same image occurs as far back as Isa. 25:6. For the idea of the messianic banquet in rabbinical circles, see Joshua Bloch, *On the Apocalyptic in Judaism*, Jewish Quarterly Review Monograph Series 2 (Philadelphia: Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1952), 96–100.

101 "*Ipse Deus erit electis aeternae beatitudinis praemium, quod ab eo possessi possidebunt in aeternum.*" [The chosen gift of eternal happiness will be God himself, and in his possession they will dwell in eternity] St. Bede, *The Explanation of the Apocalypse*, 21, 3 (PL 93, 194). This fact was already indicated in the image of the betrothal, so closely allied to the theme of Zion and its Temple.

In harmony with this divine plan, the religious soul has always longed that God himself should be all in all to her, that he should be her light,<sup>102</sup> that he himself should be her guide,<sup>103</sup> that he should utter within her, beyond all the ideas of our human mind, one of those creative words that are strength and sweetness, certitude and light<sup>104</sup>—“May the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit speak in us. May he sing hymns in us unto thee!”<sup>105</sup>—that he should be her peace (Eph. 2:4), her justice, her holiness,<sup>106</sup> her strength and her refuge,<sup>107</sup> that he should be her prayer—“Do thou thyself pray in the depths of my being!”<sup>108</sup> May the *opus Dei* [work of God] which I perform be above all *Operans in me Deus* [the work of God in me]!, that he should love in us, that he should set his love in us in the place of our hard, self-centered hearts.<sup>109</sup>

If only we could love through his will present in us.<sup>110</sup> This is the profound meaning of St. Thérèse of Lisieux’s act of consecration to the merciful love of God<sup>111</sup>—that the whole city lying within us should, like the Jerusalem of Ezekiel, have no other name but “Yahweh-is-there” (Ezek. 48:35). Not only may God dwell in us and fill our being, may he also himself be our Temple, and the place of our prayer as he was for the exiles in Babylon! (Ezek. 11:16). Beyond his dwelling in us by faith and by love, may we have no other dwelling but that wherein he dwells himself!<sup>112</sup>

102 2 Sam. 22:29; Isa. 60:20; Rev. 21:23.

103 Ezek. 34:11, 15; 37:22.

104 See Thomas á Kempis (d. 1471), *The Imitation of Christ*, Bk. 1, Chap. 3, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987); St. John of the Cross (d. 1591), *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk. 2, Chap. 32, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979).

105 The anaphora or eucharistic offering-prayer of Serapion (d. 364 A.D.). Text in *Springtime of the Liturgy*, ed. Lucien Deiss (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1979 [1967]), 194.

106 Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; compare Isa. 43:25.

107 2 Sam. 22:2; Isa. 28:6 and the entire theme of “Yahweh my Rock” so frequent in the Bible, especially in the Psalter. Refuge: Ezek. 17:17.

108 Rom. 8:26–7.

109 Rom. 5:5. Compare, in the life of St. Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), the episode in which she “exchanged hearts” with Christ. See her *Dialogue*, trans. Suzanne Noffke (New York: Paulist, 1980), 4.

110 See St. John of the Cross, *The Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 37, in *The Collected Works*.

111 On St. Thérèse of Lisieux’s “Act of Oblation to the Merciful Love of God” (June 9, 1895), see her *Story of a Soul*, 3d. ed. trans. John Clarke (Washington, DC: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1996 180–181; 276–277 (text of the Act). See the analysis of this act of consecration by André Combes, *The Spirituality of St. Thérèse; An Introduction* (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1950), Chap. 5.

112 St. Thomas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Chap. 14, Lect. 1, 1853: Com. in Ev. Joann., c. 14, lect. 1: “Deus autem habitat in sanctis ... per fidem. ... Duplex est ergo domus Dei. Una est militans Ecclesia, scilicet congregatio fidelium. ... Inhabitat Deus per fidem. ... Alia est

triumphans, scilicet sanctorum collectio in gloria patris; Ps. 64:6: replebimur in bonis domus tuae. Sanctum est templum tuum, mirabile in aequitate. Sed domus patris dicitur non solum illa quam ipse inhabitat, sed etiam ipsemet, quia ipse in seipso est. Et in hac domo nos colligit.” [Now God dwells in his saints ... by faith. ... Accordingly, God has two houses. One is the Church militant, that is, the society of those who believe. ... God dwells in this house by faith. ... The other is the Church triumphant, that is, the society of the saints in the glory of the Father: “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, thy holy temple” (Ps 65:4). Yet the house of the Father is not only where he dwells, but he himself is the house, for he exists in himself. It is into this house that he gathers us.] Eng. trans.: *Commentary on the Gospel of John, Part 2: Chapters 8–21*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher (Albany, NY: Magi, 1998).

