

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF THE HYMNS IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN

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One can state unequivocally that, except for the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apocalypse of John is the most liturgical book in the NT canon. This is obvious from its frequent references to the temple or sanctuary, once to the ark of the covenant, to the altar, to the lampstands, the libation bowls, the thurible, incense¹ and its smoke, and the trumpets. The liturgical character can also be seen in the cultic words and phrases that John uses, e.g., "Glory and dominion, . . . Amen" (Rev 1:7); "on the Lord's day" (Rev 1:10).² However, it is above all in the hymns that we find the most interesting and dynamic of the liturgical elements.³

All the hymns occur in the main body of the text (Rev 4-20); they are Jewish-Christian in character and are placed at most strategic positions in the structure of the Apocalypse. Most of them are located in heaven and are sung by heavenly beings. In fact, Rev 6:10, the cry of the martyrs under the altar, appears to be the only prayer offered by human beings who do not enjoy eternal felicity. Hence it is somewhat misleading to speak about

¹ Incense *per se* is only mentioned in the list of commercial goods in Rev 18.

² See S. Läubli, "Eine Gottesdienststruktur in der Johannesoffenbarung," *TZ* 16 (1960): 359-378, especially 359-366; and Jon Paulien, "Hebrew Cults, Sanctuary, and Temple," *AUSS* 33 (1995): 245-264. Paulien argues that there are important detailed allusions to the Hebrew cultus in Rev 4-5, probably in the service of inauguration; in 8:2-6 (the *tamid* services); in 11:19 (the ark); in 15:5-8 (the language of "de-auguration"); in 19:1-10 (the throne, worship, the Lamb); in 21:1-8 (God's immanence). The implied reader shares this symbolic world with the author.

³ See J.-P. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Rev 16, 17-19, 10* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 184-189; for further reflections on the liturgical characteristics of the Apocalypse see Ugo Vanni, "Liturgical Dialogue as a Literary Form in the Book of Revelation," *NTS* 37 (1991): 348-372. For example, he suggests as follows: Lector 1:4-5a; Hearers 1:5b-6; Lector 1:7a; Hearers 2:7b; Lector 1:8. He proposes that liturgical dialogue is the literary form of the Apocalypse.

the earthly liturgy *per se* in the Apocalypse.⁴ As we shall see below, our author directs our attention, not to an earthly synagogue or Christian community center, but to the heavenly sanctuary. The hymns are often antiphonal and sometimes accompanied by liturgical gesture(s) and music. Most are addressed to God but some—and this is most significant—are addressed to the Lamb. As I hope we will see in the following essay, the hymns carry the “story line” of the Apocalypse, and through them the work gradually moves into a crescendo and reaches a climax which becomes the proclamation of the establishment of the Kingdom of God and the enthronement of the Lamb.

*The Setting of the Hymns*⁵

The liturgy which the author of the Apocalypse shows us is no ordinary worship, either in the Temple of Jerusalem, the synagogue, or the Christian assembly. John has revealed to us a situation similar to the *Merkabah* mysticism of Jewish apocalyptic and the *Hekhalot* literature.⁶ Gruenwald conjectures the process of the mystical experience of the *Merkabah* vision. The mystic sits on a bench with ten chosen persons sitting in front of him and the rest of the people standing behind them. Only the mystic who is “a sort of public emissary on behalf of the other mystics” can explain the throne vision and God’s revelation. The scribe writes down his words. The focus of the session is mission on behalf of the congregation.⁷

Similarly John is invited to ascend to the throne and is told to commit his experience to writing. In this way he communicates with the seven churches, and they, on their part, participate in the hymns and some of the dialogues.

The Heavenly Liturgy

The Qumran Texts

“As the liturgy above so is the liturgy below,” states Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba.⁸ The earthly and heavenly worship are inextricably bound together.

⁴E.g., M. H. Shepherd, *The Paschal Liturgy in the Apocalypse*, Ecumenical Studies in Worship, 6 (London: Lutterworth, 1960); L. Mowry, “Revelation 4-5 and Early Christian Liturgical Usage,” *JBL* 71 (1952): 75-84.

⁵David Aune finds a number of affinities between the ceremonies associated with the imperial court and the throne scenes in the Apocalypse (“The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John,” *Biblical Research* 28 [1983]: 5-26).

⁶Classical works on the subject include G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Traditions* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965).

⁷I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkabah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980); 172-173.

⁸*Shemoth Rabbah*; text from F. W. Weber, *Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und*

In the Hebrew Scriptures where we hear of the heavenly liturgy; it is always performed by angels and takes the form of praise or intercession but never expiation (Ps 29; Pss 103; 148; Isa 6; Zech 1:12; Job 33:23-24 and Tob 12:12). However, the Qumran texts that shed considerable light on the heavenly liturgy as follows.⁹ Eight manuscripts concerning heavenly worship¹⁰ were found in cave 4 (4Q 400-407), some fragments in cave 11, and a fragment in Masada.¹¹ They comprise angelic praises to God and "imply the simultaneity of the heavenly and earthly worship."¹² Strugnell says:

Of great significance for the study of postbiblical liturgies is the manner in which the motif of the angelic cult in the Heavenly Temple is, to say the least, meditated upon in the context of the Essene Sabbath liturgy. This is no angelic liturgy, no visionary work where a seer hears the praise of the angels, but a *Maskil*'s composition for an earthly liturgy in which the presence of the angels is in a sense invoked and in which . . . the Heavenly Temple is portrayed on the model of the earthly one and in some way its service is considered the pattern of what is being done below.¹³

The fragments show the heavenly sanctuary, the throne and various angelic groups; some words of blessing are also included.¹⁴ They are heavily influenced by Ezek 1-10 and 40-48 and, to some extent, Isa 6.¹⁵ Vermes, Strugnell, and Schiffman date these fragments to mid-first century B.C.E.¹⁶ In 4Q 400 we read of "ministers of the Presence in his glorious innermost Temple chamber"; they are to offer expiation for those who repent. Strugnell avers that there is no explicit reference to heavenly, priestly, or sacrificial cult before the

verwandter Schriften, 2 ed. (Leipzig: Dörfeling & Franke, 1897), 203, cited by A. Cody, *Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (St. Meinrad: Grail, 1968), 50.

⁹ See J. Strugnell, "The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran-4Q Serek Širôt 'Ôlat Haššabbât," *VT* 7 (1959): 318-345. L. H. Schiffman, "Merkavah Speculation at Qumran: The 4Q Serekh Shiroth 'Olat ha-Shabbat," in *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians*, ed. J. Reinharz and D. Swetschinski (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), 15-47. Both authors print the text and translation of 4Q SI 39 and 40. They also give a detailed commentary.

¹⁰ Strugnell opines that there might have been a belief in the existence of seven heavens, but this is not explicit (328). However, there was probably speculation about this.

¹¹ Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3 ed. (New York: Penguin, 1987), 223-225.

¹² Vermes, 221.

¹³ Strugnell, 320.

¹⁴ It is comparatively rare to find the actual words of the angelic liturgy recorded in texts.

¹⁵ Strugnell observes that the influence of Isa 6 is slight (343).

¹⁶ Vermes, 221; Strugnell, 319, 343; Schiffman, 46.

Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse of John.¹⁷ However, at Qumran, where the community members disdained the sacrifices offered in the Jerusalem Temple, there was an interest in the celestial sacrificial cult,¹⁸ the priestly role of angels, and the structure of the heavenly temple.¹⁹

More importantly, these beings praise the *kingship* of God. Indeed, the theme of God's *majestic kingship* runs throughout the fragments, as do the references to the Holy of Holies and the innermost Temple, e.g., 4Q405 20 ii 21-22, which says, "The cherubim bless the image of the throne-chariot above the firmament, [and] they praise [the majes]ty of the luminous firmament beneath his seat of glory."²⁰ Q400 2 speaks of "marvelous psalms" which they sing; 4Q403 1, i mentions different forms of songs of praise which are arranged in groups of sevens. The throne itself and its entourage are described as follows:

And as the *wheels* move so do the holy angels of the sanctuary return and there come forth from amid His glorious *hubs* as it were an appearance of fire, the Spirits of the Holy of Holies. Round about there is an appearance of *rivers* of fire in the likeness of Hasmal²¹ and shining creatures, in gloriously variegated and wondrously dyed garments *salted* and pure, the Spirits of the Living God walking continually beside the glory of the wondrous chariot.²²

Strugnell suggests that the clothing of the angels indicates that they are priests.²³

Schiffman summarizes the importance of these documents as follows: They have themes and expressions which show affinity to the *Hekhalot* literature—the belief in the seven archangels and in regular angelic praise in heaven and the notion of God's glory,²⁴ the heavenly sanctuary with its cult, the association

¹⁷ Strugell, 335.

¹⁸ See also Schiffman, 18, note 25.

¹⁹ Strugnell, 335. Compare Yigael Yadin, "The Excavation of Masada-1963/4, Preliminary Report," *Israel Exploration Journal* 15 (1965): 107, n. 84. Yadin identifies the Chief Princes (4Q403 1, i, 1-29 = Masada Fragment) with the seven archangels and opines that this fragment pertains to sacrificial worship in the heavenly temple.

²⁰ Cf. Exod 24:9-11. Note, however, that there is a tradition which speaks of silence in the throne room; see Schiffman, 37.

²¹ Electrum.

²² Strugnell, 337.

²³ Strugnell compares Exod 39:29; 1QM 7:11; Ezek 9-10 (340). Cf. the angels with the bowls in Rev 15-16.

²⁴ The members of the Qumran community believed that there would be a vision of God's glory in the eschatological period (*Discoveries in the Judean Desert*, 1, 154; cf. Isa 40:5). Schiffman remarks: "This is in consonance with tannaitic traditions regarding the splitting

of angels with fire, and the military aspect of the heavenly hosts.²⁵ The Qumran texts may provide a better—or, at least, complementary—background to the liturgy in the Apocalypse. They tend to be overlooked in favor of OT texts.

I emphasize this heavenly worship, which in these texts is centered on God alone. At the conclusion of the Apocalypse we see that the Lamb shares these privileges.

The Apocalypse

The heavenly hymnic liturgy in the Apocalypse falls into two parts: (1) hymns celebrating delivery from temporal evils (4:6-11; 5:6-14; 7:9-12; 8:3-5; 11:15-17; 14:1-5; 15: 2-4; 19:1-5; 19:6-8) and (2) worship in the eschatological age (21:1-22:5).²⁶ The catastrophes—namely, the seals, trumpets, and bowls—occur through the command of God or one of his entourage and the agents of these chastisements are angels and/or cosmic bodies. It is the Lamb who inaugurates them. The consequence of the sins of humankind is the disturbance of the celestial bodies: the sun is darkened, the moon becomes bloody, the stars deviate from their fixed courses. The presence of God manifested through these phenomena is clearly dynamic, not spatial; it constitutes the realization of judgment and salvation. Hence it is not surprising that *all the major events* in the Apocalypse are accompanied by heavenly *hymns*. They are usually sung in the heavenly court, although some of them are joined by beatified mortals. Like the Greek choruses, the hymns of the Apocalypse are essential to its very plot. They occur at key points within the drama. They are a commentary on the events which are implemented,²⁷ the affirmation by spirits and humankind that God's justice has been executed and the eschatological events have reached their climax. Most importantly, they show how the author of the Apocalypse has added a christological interpretation to Jewish traditions.

of the Sea of Reeds and the theophany at Sinai" (28).

²⁵ Schiffman, 45.

²⁶ Some scholars cannot discern any liturgy here, but Comblin argues that this portion of the text must be seen against the background of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, when the pilgrims go to Jerusalem; "La liturgie de la nouvelle Jerusalem, Apoc 21:1-22:5," *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses* 29 (1953): 5-40. But, although this material reflects Isa 60, John shows the nations walking *in*, not *towards*, the light; the sacrifices of Isa 60:7 are omitted; and the "priesthood is ignored for the concept of royalty" (Apoc 22:5). The themes of water and light are consonant with the Feast of Tabernacles. See also E. Peterson, *Le Livre des anges* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954), 65.

²⁷ For the interweaving of visionary material and historic events, see Daria Pezzoli-Oligiati, *Tauschung und Klarheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

Hymns in the Apocalypse

There are no hymns *per se* in the prologue of the Apocalypse, in Rev 2-3, or the epilogue—precisely, I think, because these do not narrate the *magnalia Dei*.²⁸ The main hymnic portions are as follows: (1) Rev 4:8b, 11, which constitutes the climax of the seer's *merkabah* vision; (2) Rev 5:9-10, 12, 13b, which heralds the Lamb as the one worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll; (3) Rev 7:10, 12, 15-17, which occurs after the sealing of the twelve tribes; (4) Rev 11:15, 17, 18, which ushers in the seventh trumpet; (5) Rev 12:10-12, which celebrates Satan's expulsion from heaven; (6) Rev 14:3 (or 3-5), where the followers of the Lamb sing a new song; (7) Rev 15:3-4, which is a prelude to the outpouring of the bowls of wrath; (8) Rev 16:5-7, after the third bowl; (9) Rev 18:2-3, 4-8, 10, 14, 16, 19-23, which triumphs over the destruction of Babylon; and (10) Rev 19:1a-8, which comprises the celebration of the final eschatological victory of God over evil forces so that he reigns supreme. It must be noted that references to the Lamb/Messiah occur in sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10. The only exceptions are section 1 before the Lamb has appeared, and sections 8 and 9, which are focused entirely on the destruction of Babylon.

Although the hymns may not be in chronological order, one can trace a developing Christology through these hymns if one considers them in the light of the various eschatological figures anticipated by different Jewish groups in the second-temple period. These include: (1) a Davidic Messiah, (2) a priestly Messiah, (3) one like a Son of Humanity, (4) a prophet like Moses, (5) Elijah *redivivus*, (6) Melchizedek, (7) a Teacher of Righteousness, (8) the Servant of the Lord. The title "The One Who Comes" could comprehend these "messianic" figures and I think it can be shown that the Lamb fulfills the role of most of these personages. I shall try to show this in the second part of this paper.²⁹

1. *John's Merkabah Vision and Its Hymn* (Rev 4:8b, 11)

The hymns in Rev 4 and 5 have the same setting—that is, the throne room. God on the chariot-throne is the center of attention and the Lamb stands nearby, in the midst of the courtroom (Rev 5:6). Our author obviously wishes to place his seer not only within the classical prophetic tradition but also within the apocalyptic and, more especially, the mystical tradition. The seer, being granted a throne vision, is admitted, as it would seem, into

²⁸ Läubli argues for liturgical elements in these chapters (361-366), but not hymns as such. He lists the actual hymnic material on p. 367. See also J. J. O'Rourke, "The Hymns of the Apocalypse," *CBQ* 30 (1968):399-408. He refers briefly to the liturgical details of the prologue (399-400).

²⁹ For the varied expectations in the Scriptures, Qumran material, and Pseudepigrapha, see J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

the heavenly council, which appears to include both angels and beatified human beings. The hymn in Rev 4 originates with the living creatures, who are described as giving ceaseless praise to God, and is sung antiphonally with the twenty-four elders. But what is of greatest significance in this context is the liturgical gesture executed by the 24 elders. They prostrate themselves and cast off their crowns before God. This action, which is not repeated elsewhere in the Apocalypse, is important because it dramatically symbolizes that all sovereignties will submit to the Divine Sovereignty. Jörns observes that this action is unique in the NT. He finds the origin of the custom in Oriental courts of the Greco-Roman world.³⁰ Tacitus records Tiridates performing a similar gesture.³¹ The conflict between the two kingships, that of God and the kings of the earth together with the harlot who has sovereign sway over them (Rev 17:18), forms the core of the Apocalypse.

This casting down of the crowns is the pivotal point in Rev 4, but elements in the hymnic material elaborate on this theme. The author has redacted the *trisagion*, which we know from both Jewish and Christian liturgies.³² The words are, of course, taken from Isa 6:3, but John has redacted them in an important way.³³ The hymn is addressed ONLY to God under two special titles, the "Lord God" and the "Omnipotent."³⁴ *Pantokratōr* (almighty)

³⁰ Klaus-Peter Jörns, *Das Hymnische Evangelium* (Gotersloh: G. Mohn, 1971), 33. David Aune gives a number of references to the bestowal of crowns on gods and men but not actual casting of one's own crown before a dignitary (*Revelation*, WBC 52a [Dallas: Word, 1997], 308-309).

³¹ See Lohmeyer, 49; Grundmann, 530, note 82; Aune, 13-14. The pertinent passage reads: "It was then arranged that Tiridates should lay the emblem of his royalty (*insigne regium*) before the statue of the emperor, to resume it only from the hand of Nero. . . . After a few days' interval, came an impressive pageant on both sides: on the one hand, cavalry ranged in squadrons and carrying their national decorations; on the other, columns of legionaries standing amid a glitter of eagles and standards and effigies of gods which gave the scene some resemblance to a temple: in the centre, the tribunal sustained a curule chair, and a statue of Nero [*sic*]. To this Tiridates advanced, and, after the usual sacrifice of victims, lifted the diadem from his head and placed it at the feet of the image; arousing among all present a deep emotion increased by the picture of the slaughter or siege of the Roman armies which was still imprinted on their eyes." (Tacitus *Annals* 15.29.2).

³² In Isaiah and in the *Merkabah* texts it is the angels, not human beings, who recite these words. For a discussion of the Jewish and patristic texts with reference to the *trisagion*, see D. Flusser, "Sanctus und Gloria," in *Abraham Unser Vater*, ed. O. Betz, M. Hengel, and P. Schmidt (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 129-152.

³³ Similar adaptation is seen in the *Targum of Isaiah*: "Holy in the heavens of the height, his sanctuary, holy upon earth, the work of his might, holy in eternity is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is filled with the brilliance of his glory" Another redaction is found in 1 Enoch 39:12-13: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of the Spirits; the spirits fill the earth; . . . blessed are you and blessed is the name of the Lord of the spirits forever and ever."

³⁴ Delling thinks that the second title comes from Hellenistic Judaism, and this would

is found in the NT only in the Apocalypse, except for 2 Cor 6:18, which is a quotation. It denotes sovereignty over all other divinities and earthly rulers. The second line of the hymn is vital for the plot of the drama. God is addressed as "Who was and is and is to come." The first ("Who was")³⁵ and second ("Who is") appellations are relatively easy to explain.³⁶ It is the phrase "who is to come" which is arresting. The present participle has a future sense³⁷ and points to a new theophany. One notices that not only *erchomenos* has a future meaning but the future tense is found in *dāousin* (v. 9), *pesountai*, *proskunēousin* and *balousin* (v. 10). One could argue that these futures replace the subjunctive after *hotan*.³⁸ However, the future tenses are exceedingly meaningful as one sees the drama developing. Jörns thinks that they augur a special moment in the future. He cites patristic texts to support this.³⁹ Lohmeyer interprets *ho erchomenos* as the Jewish paraphrase of the name of God used eschatologically. He avers that it looks forward to the eschatological coming of Christ. He finds 36 similar examples.⁴⁰ Further, Jörns compares *ho erchomenos* to Isa 24:23 (the Apocalypse of Isaiah), which describes God's coming to judge and punish the kings of the earth (this exact phrase occurs eight times in the Apocalypse).⁴¹ God will reign in Zion (cf. Rev 14:1-5) and be glorified before the elders. The message of the Apocalypse of Isaiah is directed against those who have transgressed the law, and it warns them that God will visit ills upon them. However, God will safeguard the righteous, and "They will celebrate new 'prodigies' of redemption which are as marvelous as the events surrounding the exodus" (vv. 14, 16, 18; cf. 10:22, 26, Chilton, 47-48). Moreover, according to Isa 24, a new song of thanksgiving will be sung to celebrate the eschatological events when God's kingdom will be established (cf. Rev

be consonant with the Asia Minor audience and with Aune's theory of the heavenly court counterbalancing the Greco-Roman imperial cult ("Zum gottesdienstlichen Stil der Johannes-Apokalypse," Gerhard Delling, "Zum Gottesdienstlichen Stil der Johannes-Apokalypse," *NovT* 3 [1959]: 127-134.

³⁵ "Who is" may refer to Exod 3:14.

³⁶ Cf. Targ. Jer. Dt 32:39, which reads: "See now that I AM HE WHO IS AND WHO WAS and I AM HE WHO WILL BE" (M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, Analecta Biblica, 27 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966], 111).

³⁷ For a discussion of the tenses, see Jörns, 28-30.

³⁸ Or they may represent the Hebrew imperfect in the sense of "whenever they give."

³⁹ Jörns, 28.

⁴⁰ Cited by Jörns, 27. I was unable to procure a copy of Lohmeyer's commentary.

⁴¹ Rev 1:5; 6:15; 17:2; 18:3, 9; 19:19 and 21:24; there are also variations of this phrase, e.g., just "kings" or "kings of the universe."

5:9 and 14:3). Thus the title *ho erchomenos* is exceptionally portentous.

The ominous future is continued in the antiphonal response of the elders in v. 11. They profess God worthy⁴² to receive glory, honor and power. They declare this on account of his unique creative power. Jörens claims that we have only one other example of a strophe being introduced by *axios*, namely, the *Hymnos Epilychnios* 3,9f of the Greek church.⁴³ *Axios* is found to be an acclamatory cry from the people.

Thus Rev 4 sets the stage for the coming drama. Is there another who is intimately related to God and perhaps worthy of equal laud? If so, who is this One who comes?

2. *The Lamb as Davidic Messiah and Redeemer* (Rev 5:9-10, 12, 13b)

When we consider the complex, symbolic figure of the Lamb, we may remark that "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (v. 5) is comparatively easy to explain. It points to the Davidic Messiah. The epithet "Lamb" may be understood against the background of the *Animal Apocalypse* (1 Enoch 85-90), where kosher animals symbolize the Chosen People, non-kosher the Gentiles. The head of the flock is the belligerent bellwether. However, the Lamb "as though slain" appears to reflect the Isaian Servant Songs, but it is the seven horns, eyes, and spirits indicating omnipotence, omniscience, and plenitudes of spiritual powers which arrest our attention, as does the repetition of "worthy" (v. 2) already predicated of God (Rev 4:11). This seems to augur a supernatural being.

Prior to the discoveries at Qumran, scholars had little or no evidence of the expectation of a supernatural eschatological figure. However, among the Qumran scrolls are several fragments of interest.

1. 4Q 243 (4 Qps Dan. Aa), an Aramaic fragment, which Fitzmyer translates:

[But your son] shall be great upon the earth, 8 [O King! All (men) shall] make [peace], and all shall serve [him. He shall be called the son of] the [G]reat [God], and by his name shall he be named. Col II 1 He shall be hailed (as) the Son of God, and they shall call him Son of the Most High.⁴⁴

⁴² See Foerster, "*axios*," *TDNT*, 1: 379-380, literally "bringing up to the other beam of the scales," "bringing into equilibrium." This meaning might be significant when one considers the proclamation that the Lamb as "worthy."

⁴³ Jörens 34; 35, note 67.

⁴⁴ J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament." *NTS* 20 (1974): 382-407; this quotation, 393. I have not quoted the whole of Fitzmyer's translation. The part quoted may be compared with the words of Gabriel to Mary (Lk 1:32-35) (*ibid.*, 394). See also E. Puech, "Fragment d'une Apocalypse en Araméen (4Q24b = pseudo-Dan⁴) et le Royaume de Dieu," *RB* 99 (1992): 98-131; and J. A. Fitzmyer, "4Q246: The 'Son of God' Document from Qumran," *Bib* 74 (1993) 153-174.

In discussing this text Collins summarizes five interpretations: The text refers to a historical king (*Milik*), to the Messiah in his relationship to God (Cross cited by Nock), to an enthroned Jewish king (Fitzmyer and Kim), to the Antichrist (Flusser); and to the figure elsewhere designated as Melchizedek (Martínez). Collins himself would favor an interpretation in the light of Dan 7.⁴⁵

2. Some scholars have asked whether 1QS_a 2:11 should read: "When [*Adonai*] will have begotten the Messiah among them" rather than "when [*Adonai*] will have led forth the Messiah among them."⁴⁶

3. 11 QMelch certainly regards Melchizedek as a supernatural (but not divine) figure. Thus there might be some suggestion that the Qumran community or some Jewish traditions looked for a supernatural eschatological figure. He would not necessarily be "Messiah" or divine.

However, on account of this complexity of eschatological expectation and the symbols employed therein among the Jews, it is convenient to use the appellation "He That Cometh" of the Designated Figure whom God would send in the last days.⁴⁷ In the light of this it should not cause too much *admiratio* if we find in the figure of the Lion/Lamb in Rev 5 a fulfillment of the title "He that cometh" in the threefold appellation of God in Rev 4:8, "Who is and was and is to come." "He that cometh" is the title used in Ps 118:26 (117:25; cf. Matt 21:9 and Lk 19:38) and is also used of the Expected One by John the Baptist (Matt 11:3; Lk 7:19-20). It could certainly be used in an eschatological sense of the coming of God or the Anointed One,⁴⁸ either prophet or Messiah (cf. Rev 1:7).⁴⁹ I suggest that the Lamb is the One who Comes. He stands "in the midst" of the throne surrounded by the living creatures and the 24 elders (Rev 5:6) and approaches the right hand of God. He is thus in a position of high honor. We may compare the One like the Son of Humanity in Dan 7:13-14 and to the Elect One in *1 Enoch*. The Lamb's role is introduced with considerable panache. The concept of "worthiness," predicated of God, is taken up immediately from Rev 4:11 by the mighty angel, who asks who is worthy to open the scroll which the Enthroned One holds in his right hand. The mourning over the absence of one who is worthy

⁴⁵ Collins, 154-164.

⁴⁶ See Collins, 164-165, for a discussion of this text and of 4Q 369, "you made him a firstborn son to you."

⁴⁷ Cf. S. Mowinckel, who selects his title to avoid using "Messiah." *He That Cometh*, ed. and trans. G. W. Anderson (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954).

⁴⁸ See the discussion in J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, vol. 1, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 666.

⁴⁹ See Schneider, "*erchomai*," *TDNT*, 2: 666-684, esp. 670.

is accentuated in vv. 2-4, where there is a strong rhythm in 5:3 with the threefold *oude . . . oude . . . oude*, the division of the universe into three, and the echo of the wailing throughout these regions (v. 4). There follows a rather fulsome description of the Lamb, which includes an implicit reference to his death. When he takes the scroll, an egregious act occurs (contrast Rev 19:10 and 22:8-9). The elders prostrate themselves before him and accompany this with music and incense. At this point they sing the "new song." This new song declares the Lamb (cf. God as worthy, in v. 9) to be worthy. It appears to be the christological interpretation of the new Exodus events. As the Passover Lamb was slain and its blood was used apotropaically to render the Israelites immune from the death of the firstborn in Egypt and thus to be redeemed from slavery and formed into a new kingly-priestly people (Exod 19:6), so the Lamb effects a new "exodus" and redemption with his own blood. This Lamb brings universal redemption rather than just that of only the Chosen People. Those who are redeemed will gain sovereignty (v. 10, future).⁵⁰

This hymn to the Lamb is antiphonal. The first part (vv. 9-10) is sung by the living creatures and the 24 elders; the second part by angels (vv. 11-12); a third chorus takes up the last refrain, which is sung to both God *and* the Lamb (vv. 13-14). This is followed by the affirmative "Amen" of the living creatures and a second prostration of the elders (vv. 13-14). Aune has pointed out the importance of antiphonal hymns, of vast throngs, acclamations, and sacrificial offerings in the cult of dignitaries and argues that this may account for similar features which appear in the Apocalypse.⁵¹

The hymn to the Lamb is characterized as a "new song." It is egregiously "new" in that it predicates divine attributes of the Lamb. Just as God is *axios* in his capacity of Creator, so, correspondingly, the Lamb is *axios* because of his role in redemption.⁵² Just as the hymn to God the Creator was prefaced by the gesture of casting down the crowns, so here the hymn in honor of the Lamb is preceded by the prostration of the elders (5:14b), their music from the lyre (harp), and their offering of incense—that is, the prayers of the saints (cf. Rev 15:3 and contrast Rev 8:3-5). It ascribes seven elements in praise to the Lamb and four elements to God and the Lamb together.

So the drama has moved to another stage. The Lamb is now declared "worthy." The whole multilevel choir of angels, living creatures, and elders confirms this. Further, it is to be noted that the content of this hymn to the Lamb corresponds very closely to the prologue to the entire book of Revelation (Rev 1:4-8). The common elements are:

⁵⁰ Although some variants give the present and some versions have "we will reign."

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Aune, 16-20.

He that cometh (v. 4, cf. 7),
 the freeing from sin (v. 5b),
 the making of kings and priests (v. 6),⁵³
 and the giving of power and glory to Jesus (v. 6b),
 who is to come (v. 8).⁵⁴

So far the drama has moved swiftly. In Rev 4 God alone receives honor and glory. In Rev 5 the Lamb shares in these attributes and appears to be placed on the same level as God.⁵⁵

3. *The Lamb as Mosaic Figure and Shepherd* (Rev 7:10, 12, 15-17)

Rev 7 opens dramatically with the four angels holding back the noxious winds. The atmospheric tension is accentuated by the fourfold repetition of *tessarás* and by the same persistent, plangent rhythm which occurred in Rev 5.

Rev 5:3	Rev 7:1
neither in heaven	not on the earth
nor earth	not on the sea
nor underworld	not on the trees

The same sequence is repeated in v 3 with *mē . . . mēte . . . mēte*.

The mood gathers strength with the rigid and exact enumeration of the persons sealed from each tribe. This list is enclosed in an *inclusio* (*esphragismenoi*). The list itself has an unrelenting rhythm. However, significantly, there is no hymnic celebration at the end of the list of tribes; rather, John delays this until he has introduced what would seem to be the Christian element. The tribes cannot sing the "new song" *per se*, for only those who also acknowledge the Lamb can learn the new melody. The sealing is obviously based on Ezek 9:4, which is set in the context of protecting the faithful when Jerusalem falls to Babylon in the sixth century B.C.E. Jörns asserts that the tribes must be on earth. Otherwise their sealing would be meaningless, whereas

⁵³ On this see the detailed study of E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Priester für Gott: Studien zum Herrschafts- und Priester motive in der Apokalypse*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen 7 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1972).

⁵⁴ On the quotation from Zech 12:10 O'Rourke observes: "The traditional nature of the material and the parallelism of the line based on Zech are both indications that a poem of the Semitic pattern was used in a community expecting the second coming of Christ. The eschatological orientation is futuristic" (400).

⁵⁵ O'Rourke avers that if "to the Lamb" were omitted from Rev 5:13, the "resulting doxology would be a recasting of Ps 47(46), 8b.6; 48(47)" (10).

the innumerable crowd is in heaven. Perhaps this is another reason why they cannot sing the new song⁵⁶.

Rev 5 hinted at the redemption wrought by the Lamb. It is brought into full play in Rev 7, which gives a (proleptic) vision of the achievement of the Lamb—that is, salvation for all his people. Bornkamm sees the sealing of the twelve tribes as the climax to the catastrophes provoked by the breaking of the seals. It spans the whole period from the beginning of judgment to the perfecting of the redeemed. He compares it to an overture. Indeed, this vision is obviously an answer to the question at the end of Rev 6:17: “Who can stand before their wrath” (or his wrath)?⁵⁷ In Rev 7 we find people who can “stand,” who need not fear the wrath of God and the Lamb: They are not destroyed but win the fullness of life.

The christological element is introduced by a further reference to the Lamb. The international⁵⁸ crowd who stand before the Throne (God) and the Lamb sing a victory song in which the Lamb is praised and saluted together with God.⁵⁹ The phrase “Salvation to God” is Hebraic (cf. Ps 3:9); it expresses praise to God, who comes to people's aid in times of distress. There is a certain parallel in 1 QM 4:13, where eight attributes are noted.

When they return from battle, they shall write on their standards: Salvation of God, Victory of God, Help of God, Support of God, Joy of God, Thanksgiving of God, Praise of God, Peace of God.

Pss Sol 10:8 and 12:5 speak about the salvation of God being on the faithful. In Rev 7 the salvation is predicated of God *and* the Lamb, although the attribute is usually reserved for God. The fact that “salvation” is not anarthrous seems to point to a particular occasion, namely, an eschatological crisis or the event of the cross and resurrection.⁶⁰ This seems readily apparent in the light of the role of the Lamb.⁶¹ There is another important aspect to this hymn. It is the first time in the Apocalypse that the author has shown humankind joined with the heavenly community, and this accounts for the dialogue between the seer and the elder (vv. 13-14). The innumerable crowd does not

⁵⁶ Jörns, 77.

⁵⁷ I am inclined to accept the plural *autōn*, for the author's intent is obviously to link the Lamb with God.

⁵⁸ Compare Dan 7:12-14.

⁵⁹ Compare the Son of Humanity in Dan 7:13-14.

⁶⁰ Jörns, 82.

⁶¹ In the Greek there is indication that preexisting material is used here, for *arniō* could be the object of *epi* although obviously the author intends that it be taken as parallel to *theō*. Thus there is an indication that the reference to the “lamb” was added to a praise of God. The use of *sōteria* as a translation of *yešū āb* is an obvious Semiticism (O'Rourke, 401).

seem to be only martyrs. Jörns notes that the white robes are a symbol of perfection, not of martyrdom *per se*, and that the "great tribulation" could be the eschatological conflict in general rather than martyrdom.⁶² This is an important statement in the light of the demolition of the Domitian persecution theory. It is generally accepted now by scholars that Domitian had no organized persecution of the Christians and did not directly demand veneration as a god.⁶³

In the hymnic material in Rev 7, in contrast to Rev 4 and 5, the song is begun by the glorified righteous and then joined by the angels; then the angels of the presence, the elders, and the living creatures all prostrate themselves. The prostration is important because so far only the elders have performed an act of prostration. They give seven attributes⁶⁴ to God, ending with an "Amen." The Lamb is not included in this hymnic portion in v. 12, but vv. 14-17 form an intercalation which celebrates the redemptive work of the Lamb. In this way his power is given a special emphasis. These verses appear to be a poem by one of the elders. They are introduced by an explanation of the innumerable multitude and the expiatory character of the blood of the Lamb. They then blend together the theme of redemption in the Hebrew Scriptures by the use of the Exodus motif and Isa 49:10. The righteous now worship in the heavenly sanctuary, and God "tabernacles" over them (Exod 13-14) and they will be saved from hunger, thirst, and scorching heat. This is an allusion to God's giving of the manna and quails, the water from the rock, and the cloud protecting the people by day, although the quotation is actually from Isa 49:10. Further, it is the Lamb like a second Moses who leads them to the waters of life, and God takes away their sorrow.

So the antiphonal hymn functions as the climactic point of the praise for the eschatological work of the Lamb (vv. 14-17). We note that he is in the midst of the throne (v. 17). The opening of the seventh seal occurs only after the acknowledgment of the work of the Lamb. Jörns observes that the hymn shows partial realization of salvation but also is proleptic in nature.⁶⁵ The fight against the evil powers begins, but the faithful are apprised that the Lamb will secure the victory.

⁶² Jörns, 78.

⁶³ For the most recent discussion of this see Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation, Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), esp. 9-114. See also the informative article by A. A. Bell, "The Date of John's Apocalypse," *NTS* 25 (1978): 98.

⁶⁴ Cf. 4Q403 li, 1-29 = Masada Fragment (Vermees, 223-225).

⁶⁵ Jörns, 89.

4. *The Establishment of the Kingdom.*

The Lamb as Co-regent (Rev 11:15, 17-18)

Our author has now shown both the salvific and castigating aspects of the judgment of God and the Lamb. His main intention in Rev 11 is to show that the Kingdom of God has been established. This coincides with the blowing of the seventh trumpet⁶⁶ (Rev 11:14). It may not herald a sudden, single event but a series of events of long duration. The hymn associated with 11 (vv. 15-18) is antiphonal, sung first by loud voices in heaven and then by the elders. Once again we have the liturgical gesture of prostration (v. 16). The themes of the hymn are: kingdom, reigning, judgment, and reward. It resumes the theme of the wrath of God and the Lamb found in Rev 6:17.

This hymn intensifies the drama. The proclamation (v. 15) falls into two parts: (1) what has been accomplished already (aorist *egeneto*, v. 15c); and (2) what is yet to come (future *basileusei*, v. 15d).

In this hymnic material we note:

a. The kingdom of this universe (*kosmos*) which has been established belongs to God and his Anointed One. In other words the unique sovereignty jealously portrayed in Rev 4 is now shared.

b. The third person singular with the future tense seems to have the Anointed One as its antecedent. It may point to future activity on his part, but the emphasis might also be on “forever and ever”—that is, the Anointed One's reign will be in perpetuity like God's.

c. Our attention is drawn to the epithet *pantokratōr*⁶⁷ again, but this time the crucial phrase “who is to come” is omitted; only “who is and who was” remains. Presumably God has come in the Anointed One, the Lamb; thus the participle is unnecessary. Paulien suggests the context of the parousia: “The dropping of ‘is to come’ [*ho erchomenos*] indicates that the consummation has arrived.”⁶⁸

d. We note also the perfect (*eilēphas*) “you have assumed your power” and “begun your reign” (*ebasileusas* inceptive aorist) and the aorists again in v. 18. Jörns points out that our author (v. 18) does not use a *hoti* clause with consecutive aorist but a threefold infinitive corresponding to a Semitic structure and emphasizing the dependence of the infinitive phrases on the events of the coming of the wrath of God and eschatological compensation.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ For a study of the first four trumpets, see Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987).

⁶⁷ R. Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 58.

⁶⁸ Paulien, 333.

⁶⁹ Jörns, 101.

Kairos in the same verse is nominative and stands as the common subject of the sentence, a time of judgment for both the good and the wicked. The time has come, but the judgment is not yet implemented. Jörns points out that already in Exod 15:18; 1 Sam 12:12; Ps 145:11ff.; 146:10 past and future are brought under the reign of God⁷⁰. Most importantly, we note that the (Lamb) Messiah is Co-regent with God.

A portentous sign from heaven follows the hymn. It is twofold: The sanctuary or tent of meeting and the ark of the covenant, part of the war paraphernalia of the Divine Warrior and symbols of his immanent and dynamic presence within the Exodus tradition, appear. This is complemented by the symbols of the theophany on Mount Sinai when the Covenant was given: thunder, lightning, rumblings (*brontai*), earthquake, and hail.

Thus the seventh trumpet ushers in the rest of the eschatological events. In the Hebrew Scriptures trumpets were associated with the Day of the Lord (Isa 27:13; cf. Joel 2:1; Zeph 1:16; 4 Esdr 6:23; cf. also *Apoc. Mos.* 22; *Sib. Or.* 8.239), the election of a king (2 Sam 15:10ff., cf. also Ps 17:6; Zech 9:14),⁷¹ and important liturgical feasts, especially the Day of Atonement.

5. *The "Incarnation" and Spiritual Combat of the Lamb* (Rev 12:10-12)

This hymn, uttered by a great voice from heaven, takes up the theme of the *kairos* (v. 12d) in Rev 11:18, for it is now time to glimpse the salvific work of the Anointed One. It is placed after the defeat of the dragon by Michael and within the context of the Christ's work for humankind, and it lauds his authority (v. 10). The hymn in Rev 12 elaborates the themes of 11:15b, the Christ will reign, and of 11:17-18, the presence of the Christ which brings judgment with it. Its Jewish background is clear.⁷² The mother of the Anointed One is the Jewish community. An important parallel is found in the *Hymn Scroll*:

For the children have come to the throes of Death,
and she labors in her pains who bears a man.
For amid the throes of Death
she shall bring forth a man-child,⁷³

⁷⁰ Cf. Isa 24:23:33:22; Mich 4:7; Zeph 3:15 Ob 21; Zech 14:16f, where this is still expected.

⁷¹ We might also note the use of trumpets in the eschatological war described in the *War Scroll* from the Qumran documents.

⁷² Rev 12 does not have a pagan background, *pace* A.Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in Book of Revelation*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 9 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976).

⁷³ In the sense of *gbr*, warrior.

and amid the pains of Hell
 there shall spring from her child-bearing crucible
 a Marvelous Mighty Counselor
 and a man shall be delivered from out of the throes. (1 QH III)

Through him God implements his plan of salvation.⁷⁴

It may be significant that Rev 11:15 uses “Anointed One” instead of “Lamb”⁷⁵ and states that he will reign, that is, in the future—forever and ever. The first indication of this is found in Rev 12:10, where his authority is realized. The Anointed One is probably to be identified with the male-warrior child who is snatched up to heaven (Rev 12:5). Whether he was involved in the overthrow of the dragon is not entirely clear, but his authority is celebrated in connection with this in 12:10. The fourth noun in the hymnic material in v. 10, “authority,” is associated only with the Anointed One. It is important that it is not anarthrous. It is not authority in general but the authority won through his blood and which inspires the martyrs (v. 11). The authority of Christ and the fall of Satan are closely connected. They complement the vision of the seer in 5:5 (the victory of the Lamb; cf. 7:14), but from these texts we see that the victory and authority of the Anointed One are not limited to victory over Satan but are also a victory over the first and second death.⁷⁶ Importantly, this hymn shows that close union of the martyrs, the church, with the Christ: Their victory should be celebrated by the entire universe.

6. *The Lamb as Warrior-Messiah* (Rev 14:3-5)

This hymn takes up the victory theme just mentioned (Rev 12:11)⁷⁷ and would seem to celebrate the victorious wars, or Messiah under the symbol of the Lamb. It is a proleptic victory paean sung either on earth by the followers of the Lamb; on Mountain Zion (v. 1); or in heaven, before the living creatures and the elders (v. 3). It is definitely christological because the cantors have the names of both the Lamb and his Father on their foreheads. As their number is 144,000, they may be identified with the sealed tribes of Israel from Rev 7. The actual content of the “new song” is not revealed, and this may be significant because in the Apocalypse there is only one hymn attributed to human beings (Rev 18). However, as a victory hymn Rev 14:3-5 may well point toward Rev 19. Jörns finds the following parallels:

⁷⁴ Jörns sees Rev 12 as a Christianization of Rev 11:15, 17-18 (120). However, the events are still in the future, and the community is warned that the devil is in their midst.

⁷⁵ “Anointed One” is found only in Rev 1-3 and from Rev 11 onwards.

⁷⁶ But the hymn is also paranaetic—that is, a warning to the community.

⁷⁷ It is difficult to decide whether vv. 4-5 should be counted as part of the hymn. If they are, again we have the theme of redemption and the close association of the Lamb with God.

14:1-5 with 19:1-8;

14:6-12 with 15-18; and

14:14-20 with 19:11-21 (cf. also 14:2f. with 5:9f).⁷⁸

This means that the concept of the Warrior-Messiah reaches its climax in Rev 19 and that this verse anticipates the theme. There is also an implicit contrast between the virgins (male) in Rev 14 and the harlot in Rev 17-18. It is important to observe that this pericope shows a close correlation between events on earth (Mount Zion) and events in heaven. The new song receives a great deal of emphasis. Whereas the hymn in Rev 12 is sung by a "loud voice" (v. 10), this hymn is sung by a voice like many waters and like loud thunder and is, apparently, accompanied by a chorus of harps. The rhythm is noteworthy:

hōs phōnēn hudatōn pollōn kai

hōs phōnēn brontēs megalēs, kai

...

hōs kitharōidōn kitharizontōn en tais kitharais autōn.

The Lamb's comilitants are chaste on one level because they observe military continence; on the other, because they are innocent of the deceit of Satan and his followers (cf. Apoc 7:17).

7. *The Lamb as the New Moses* (Rev 15: 3b-4)

Rev 15 is an exceptionally long prelude to the pouring out of the bowls of wrath, which is the last chastisement by God (v. 1). The author of the Apocalypse presents the scene as an elaboration of the Song of the Sea in Exod 15, which celebrated the first redemption, from the Egyptian slavery. However, here the sea is the heavenly sea, and the song is predicated of the Lamb as well as Moses. The cantors are those who have conquered the beast and his image. The sea that the seer witnessed is the sea in the heavens but, of course, it reminds us also of the Reed Sea. Those who maintained their faith, even in the face of the beast, his image, and the number of his name, have taken up their stand by the sea and hold the harps of God. Similarly, Moses, the agent of God, delivered the chosen people from the bondage of the Egyptians and God "got himself glory" at the Reed Sea; so the Lamb redeems those enslaved by the beast. The song praises the *magnalia Dei*⁷⁹—that is, the great deeds of God, of which the most important is the delivery from Egypt. We note again the use of the phrase "Lord God Omnipotent" (*kurie ho theos ho pantokratōr*). But God is now seen as King, not only of the Jewish

⁷⁸ Jörns, 124.

⁷⁹ Cf. Exod 15:11; Ps 92:5; 111:2; 139:14.

people, but of the nations. This phrase *ho basileus tōn ethnōn* occurs only in Jer 10:10 (Theodotion) and in Tobit 13:7, 11.⁸⁰ This theme is elaborated in v. 4, which mentions the fear and glory of God and predicts that all nations will come and bow down (*proskunēsousin*) before him. Rev 14-15 imply that the Lamb is the Teacher/Counselor and Mosaic Prophet.

8. *After The Third Bowl* (Rev 16:5-7)

This section forms a prelude to the dirge over Babylon and is sung antiphonally by the angel of the waters, presumably on earth, and a voice from the altar, presumably in heaven. It is an affirmation by heaven and earth that God's judgment is just.

9. *The Destruction of Babylon* (Rev 18:2-3, 4-8, 10, 14, 16, 19-23)

We have an abrupt and arresting change of tone in the hymn in Rev 18, which precedes the collapse of Babylon. It exhibits a powerful crescendo in that it is sung first by the angel with great authority (vv. 1-2),⁸¹ then by another voice from heaven (v. 4), then by the kings of the earth (vv. 9-10) then by the merchants and seafarers (vv. 17-19) and finally by the angel who hurls the great stone (vv. 21-24).⁸² Ruiz proposes that the hymn comprises three "dramatic monologues."⁸³

This hymn differs from the others in the Apocalypse in that its cantor descends from heaven (v. 1), it is an audition rather than a vision,⁸⁴ and it does not presuppose a liturgical setting.⁸⁵ Most importantly, it is the only hymn which is explicitly said to be sung on earth. Further, it forms a contrast to the former hymns in that it is a dirge rather than a song of praise. Mounce compares it to a prophetic taunt song and quotes Moffat, who proposes a Jewish Vespasian source which "breathed the indignant spirit of a Jewish apocalypticist against the proud empire which had won a temporary triumph over the city and people of God."⁸⁶ This was taken over by John. Minear notes that this dirge begins and ends with angels who possess great power. With the exception of vv. 4-8 and 20,

⁸⁰ Cf. also *1 Enoch* 9:4; 25:5; 27:3.

⁸¹ The earth filled with his "glory" is a clear reference to Ezek 43:2, where God's glory returns to the Temple.

⁸² Strangely Jörns does not include the hymns in Rev 18 and Rev 19 in his analysis.

⁸³ Ruiz, 393.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 392.

⁸⁶ R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 321.

the prophet utilizes a dirge-like rhythm, in vss. 2, 3 stressing by six lines of synonymous parallelism the accusations against the city, and in vss. 21-24 describing her desolation in terms of five parallel couplets followed by the repetition of the basic charges which justified her destruction. Between are the poignant laments and curses of those groups who have been polluted by the city's adulteries.⁸⁷

One would certainly agree with this. Verses 3-4 are a dirge and take up the themes: (1) of Rev 10:11, the prophet commissioned to preach against nations and kings; (2) of Rev 11:14, the third woe; and (3) of Rev 14:8, the fall of Babylon, the great harlot. Ruiz points to the affinity between Isa 21:9 (MT) and Rev 18:2;⁸⁸ both texts use the language of lament,⁸⁹ but it is important to note that they also contain victory songs. Further, Ruiz states: "Both 14,8 and 18,2 relate eschatological visions of events that have not yet occurred, but which can be spoken of in the 'proleptic past' because of the inexorable certainty with which God's purpose is to be accomplished."⁹⁰

"Babylon" may not be a historical reference but rather a symbolic use of the name to encompass in general the enemies of Israel. Our author is influenced by the prophetic oracles in Isa 13-14; 21; 47 and Jer 50-51, where Babylon is the symbol of a world hostile power against Israel.⁹¹ The impurity of Babylon is in direct contrast to the purity of those who were on Mount Zion with the victorious (Rev 14) and to those who are qualified to enter the New Jerusalem.⁹² Our author has combined the oracles against Babylon from Isaiah with the Ezekiel oracles against Tyre. Ruiz calls this a "reactual-

⁸⁷ P. S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth* (Washington: Corpus, 1968), 145.

⁸⁸ Ruiz, 382.

⁸⁹ Cf. K. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, ed. and trans. H. White (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 169-205.

⁹⁰ Ruiz, 384.

⁹¹ In my Anchor Bible Commentary on Revelation I argued that the harlot might well be identified with Israel rather than Rome (*Revelation* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975]). This is the constant tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures and of the Qumran community. A. J. Beagley is sympathetic to my interpretation, although most scholars have rejected it, without, however, examining thoroughly the Qumran material (*The 'Sitz im Leben' of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church's Enemies* [New York: de Gruyter, 1987], 93-102). I should be prepared to follow the argument of C.H. Hunzinger, who sees Babylon as the symbol of a decadent society in general ("Babylon als Deckname für Rom und die Datierung des 1 Pt.," in *Gottes Wort und Gottes Land*, Festschrift W. Hertaberg, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht], 1965, 67-77).

⁹² Ruiz, 387; cf. Rev 21:8.

ization by recombination."⁹³ The dirge or taunt⁹⁴ uses the metaphors of sexual license and drunkenness to describe Babylon's sins. Three groups of people participate in them: the nations, the kings of the earth, and the merchants. The guilt of Babylon lies in the fact that she glorified herself rather than God (18:7).⁹⁵

10. *The Lamb as Enthroned Bridegroom and Victor* (Rev 19:1-8)

One might ask why the author of the Apocalypse has spent so much time and space on the prostitute and the fall of Babylon. None of the hymns pertaining to this section have christological material. Yet from a dramatic stance John's emphasis here throws all the next theme into the highest relief.

Rev 19:1-4 comprises the victory song over the righteous judgments of God. It is characterized by the threefold proclamation of "Alleluia," similar to the use of that acclamation in the Hebrew psalms (e.g., Pss 113 and 147-150). Deichgräber observes that it is the first Christian occurrence of this word.⁹⁶ Indeed, Rev 19:1, 3, 4, and 6 are the *only* occurrences of "Alleluia" in the New Testament, and this is the *first* reference in the Apocalypse. So our author has reserved this cry of salvation until the last antiphonal hymn. The structure of the hymn is symmetrical, but it does not appear to be liturgical in character but rather a literary composition of the author.⁹⁷ The cantors of the hymn comprise a circle round the throne, which begins with those farthest away and ends with those nearest, and then with the voice from the throne itself. After this comes one last voice: the shout of the multitude, which is likened to cascading water and sevenfold thunder. The voice intones the last strophe.

Thus we find that the first voice of the great multitude praises God for his righteous judgments; the second voice proclaims the perpetuity of the harlot's fate; the third is that of the 24 elders and the living creatures, who pronounce the succinct "Amen, Alleluia." The fourth voice comes from the throne itself and bids all of every station to praise God. The last voice makes a reprise with the opening voice of the crowd (v. 1), but it is rendered more awesome by the similes mentioned above (cf. Ezek 1:24; 43:2; Rev

⁹³ Ruiz, 389.

⁹⁴ See A.Y. Collins, "Rev 18: Taunt-Song or Dirge?," in *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. J. Lambrecht (Gembloux: Duculot, 1980), 18-204.

⁹⁵ Ruiz, 380.

⁹⁶ Deichgräber, 56, n. 6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

1:15; 14:2). It is this last voice which declares that the Lord God Omnipotent has established his rule. The epithet *pantokratōr* occurs seven times in the Apocalypse, this being the sixth.

After this there is an abrupt change of person. For the first time we hear the first person plural imperative "Let us rejoice." It is an arresting invitation for the lectors and audience of the Apocalypse to join the heavenly liturgy. Further, the expressed cause for this rejoicing is a clear Christian reference, namely, the advent of the marriage feast of the Lamb and the approach of the bride clad in white linen. The nuptials symbolize the New Covenant union of God and the faithful.

On this note of the faithful spouse, the author closes his section about the harlot and her destruction. Sweet observes that the establishment of God's kingdom by the destruction of the harlot has been a negative aspect of this kingdom but the positive aspect is portrayed in the bride.⁹⁸ Her clothing is the deeds of the faithful, whose garments were washed in the blood of the Lamb (cf. Rev 7:14). She herself anticipates the New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven (Rev 21:2).

The sudden appearance of the victorious cavalier (vv. 11-16) might seem an intrusion into the nuptial scene. It is, however, an integral part of John's developing Christology. It is tempting to see the influence of Ps 45, the royal epithalamion which lauds first the groom and then the bride. The groom is praised for his martial prowess, he is described in terms consonant with the "splendor and majesty" of God, he is addressed as "God," and his throne is said to be eternal. We have all the features of divine kingship in a royal court. Some parallels may be made.

Ps 45	Rev 19
Gird on your sword (v. 3)	from his mouth a sharp sword (v. 15)
ride triumphantly in the cause of truth (v. 4)	seated on a white horse Faithful and True (v. 11)
God has enthroned you (v. 7)	many diadems (v. 12)
scepter of kingdom is scepter of equity (v. 6)	in righteousness he judges and makes war (v. 11)
people under the King (v. 5)	smite nations, King of kings, Lord of lords (vv. 15-16)

⁹⁸ J.P.M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979), 277.

Although this passage is not hymnic material, it brings together much of the Christology of the hymns. Like God on his chariot-throne, the warrior wages war for justice. The diadems (in the plural) bespeak his multiple sovereignty. His name, like the divine name, is to be kept hidden. He is the very Word of God. He is followed by his hosts like the Lord of hosts. Like God (Isa 63), he treads the winepress. But, most significantly he is declared King of kings and Lord of lords, a title only God may possess. Like God, his throne is in the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:3), and he and God are the Temple of the Holy City. In these points we have a metamorphosis or sophistication of the *Merkabah* vision with which we began in Rev 4. There is no temple or throne because God and the Lamb are both. The spiritual presence of God and the Lamb replaces the symbolism of Rev 4 and 5.

David Aune has argued that Rev 4-5 are an implicit polemic against the imperial cult.⁹⁹ If this is so, John finds no hindrance in making the Lamb equal to God. We have shown that the hymns draw on the anticipated eschatological figures. In this way John interweaves the humanity and divinity of Christ and shows both to be compatible with the claim of prophetic circles in the early Christian communities that Jesus is both human and divine. The last hymn (Rev 21:3-4) jubilantly confirms this in the nuptials of the Lamb amidst resounding Alleluias.

⁹⁹ See Aune, 308-313.