

## Liturgy and Apocalypse

IN the last number of the *Church Service Society Annual*, the Rev. R. Stuart Loudon expressed his regret that so little of the theological revival of our generation is reflected in the liturgical activity of this Society, and insisted that the Society must find its way back into the main stream of the Church's life and allow invigorated theology to result in reinvigorated liturgy. That is a very timely statement, and very well spoken. Unless liturgy and theology go hand in hand each tends to become impoverished and one-sided. Theology is essentially rational worship and unless its statements are made with the recognition that the Truth is more to be adored than expressed, those statements become arbitrary and arrogant. Theology divorced from wonder is not divine. Liturgy that is divorced from theology is not service of God, but the expression of aesthetic experience as itself redemptive, like a Beethoven Mass, for example, or even a Greek Tragedy.

The relation of theology and liturgy has been more closely studied on the Continent, and particularly in Germany, where the liturgy is dominated by the Word as itself liturgical event. Signal evidence of that concern is to be found in the publication of *Leiturgia*, recently reviewed by Dr. John A. Lamb, but evidence is also outstanding in the works of Roman Catholic theologians like Gottlieb Söhngen. The crucial point in this relation between theology and liturgy is the inter-relation between liturgy and eschatology—that is to say, at the point both in theology and liturgy where we lift up our hearts above and beyond our theological and liturgical expressions in wonder and expectation.

It is worth while pausing a moment to note the contrast presented to-day between the liturgical movements on the Continent and in our own country. Roman and Reformed and Lutheran liturgical movements are all moving back to the eschatological emphasis of the Early Christian Liturgies, whereas in this country those engaged in the liturgical movement so often move in the opposite direction. I think particularly, for example, of the work of the late Dom Gregory Dix who interpreted the history of the Church's worship as the transmutation of eschatology into liturgy, and whose reinterpretation of the historic

liturgies had that as its avowed aim. That of course is understandable, for in point of fact that is precisely what happened in the Roman Catholic understanding of the liturgy, particularly after the Council of Trent. When Loisy said that Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God but there emerged the Church, he was giving concrete expression to a movement increasingly characteristic of the Church from the seventh century. The same thesis in another form was advocated by Schweitzer who spoke of the turning point in early Christian History as the moment when, disappointed in the immediate return of Christ, the Church proceeded to readjust itself to the centuries, so that Church history must be interpreted as the progressive elimination of eschatology. Against all that the Reformation was in decided revolt, and it was that revolt which provoked the Tridentine reaction against which modern Roman liturgiologists are battling in their return to the eschatology of the Fathers. The extraordinary thing here is this: that now within the Roman Church on the Continent we find men gripped by the fact which first awoke Zwingli from his Medieval and Renaissance slumbers, the place occupied by the Ascension and the Parousia in the early Liturgies of the Church.

That is the subject of this essay: by examining the *Apocalypse* to explore the place occupied in the worship of the New Testament Church by the Ascension of Christ and His Second Advent, and to draw out some of the theological implications of that for the liturgical movement to-day.

The *Apocalypse* or the Book of Revelation is the most liturgical book in the New Testament and the most eschatological. That dual fact is most important. In Biblical and early Christian understanding liturgy and eschatology are inseparable: liturgical forms and images are essentially apocalyptic, and apocalyptic images and forms are essentially liturgical. This inter-relation of apocalypse and liturgy helps to determine the meaning both of apocalypse and of liturgy.

What are we to understand then by *apocalypse*? Here we must distinguish Christian *apocalypse* sharply from Jewish *apocalypse*. The Christian notion of apocalyptic is bound up with the fact that the two ages, the present and the future age, overlap. Jewish apocalyptic is wholly determined by the imminent impact of the coming age upon the present, and is mainly negative and cataclysmic in

character. It concerns judgment. But Christian apocalyptic pivots upon the fact that already in the heart of this present age the resurrection has taken place, and the new wine of the Kingdom of God is already breaking the old wine-skins. The emphasis in Christian apocalyptic is therefore upon the resurrection, the new age about to be revealed. *Apocalypse* is the unveiling here and now, as far as that may be, of future indescribable glory, and all that such unveiling involves. But how can that be expressed in the language of time? That is the paradoxical fact about apocalyptic: for this unveiling can be described only in the language and forms and symbols of this present age, that is, of the age that passes away: so that apocalyptic symbols belong themselves to the transient age. Unless that is understood apocalypse is not apocalypse, not an unveiling but an even more enigmatic veiling of the future events. And yet apocalyptic forms and symbols are not myths, merely transient and outmoded dramatic ways of expressing what is beyond history and is timeless.

The Book of Revelation repays the closest study, for there we learn that Christian apocalypse makes use of two closely interwoven ways of expressing (as far as possible here and now) the unveiling of future glory. (1) The whole of eschatological expectation is grounded upon the historical Christ, and is determined by the pattern of events in His life and work. Apocalyptic is then the projection into the perspective of the ages of the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ. (2) But at the point where our language breaks down, and we must lift up our hearts and minds above and beyond this present age to the glory of the ascended Christ, eschatology makes use of the language of liturgy. In this context, however, liturgy is not the ritual of earth but the very gate of heaven.

(1) Primarily apocalypse is the unveiling of the glory of the Risen and Ascended Christ to those upon earth, and such unveiling that they can but fall down on their faces and worship the Lamb. That is the way in which the Revelation of S. John the Divine begins, for the very first chapter describes the indescribable glory of the risen Lord. The Glory of the Son of God was veiled in Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus the Rabbi, veiled behind Jesus the Crucified, but through the death and resurrection of Jesus His eternal glory became revealed—of that the Transfiguration on the Mount was an anticipation. The story of the Gospels is then the story of the veiling and the unveiling of the Son

of God, but the veiling was a necessary part of the unveiling, and the unveiling (*apocalypse*) took place through crucifixion, in the rending of the veil of the flesh until men could see and confess: Truly this was the Son of God.

But in the actual Church on earth, the Church of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicaea, churches rooted and embroiled in sinful history, the risen Christ is also present, though His glorious Person is veiled behind the worldly and sinful historical forms of the Church in history. From Calvary and Pentecost the Church as the Body of Christ goes out into history as the servant of the Lord, as the suffering-servant, that is, the Church in the form of humiliation, the Church under the Cross. But as the suffering-servant the Church has at her heart the glorious Lord, risen and ascended and enthroned, who dwells in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The history of the Church is the story of the veiling of the Lamb of God behind the historical Church pressing forward to the unveiling of the Lamb of God at the end of sinful history. We are to think of the Church in history therefore in terms of the Gospel story of Jesus, from Bethlehem to Calvary and Easter, particularly from the Baptism of Jesus at Jordan to Easter. So the Church Baptized (and virgin-born) at Pentecost goes out into history in its ministry of redemption, proclaiming the Word of the Cross and suffering for it, but that ministry exerts pressure upon the world, forcing it to decision, until there is the final day of reckoning in which the Church itself suffers from the Cross it proclaims; but it is in that crucifixion of the Church in history that the glory of the Church is revealed, as the glory of the Lamb of God who dwells in the midst of it.

From this aspect therefore apocalypse regards the life and mission of the Church in history as the life and mission of the Body of Christ parallel to the earthly incarnate life and ministry of Jesus, culminating in the final resurrection and final unveiling. Here eschatology is interpreted exclusively in terms of the veiling and unveiling of the Lamb of God, as a sort of extended christology, or christology projected into history. He who believes in Jesus Christ and has seen by faith the unveiling of His transcendent glory behind the flesh of Jesus made under the law, will have eyes to pierce behind the veil of sense and time in our sinful world to see the unveiling of the Lamb of God through the history of the Church. *In the Spirit on the Lord's Day*

is the perspective from which to interpret history, that is, from the side of the resurrection.

But here Christian apocalypse reckons with something of supreme importance : that the Church on earth is already incorporated into Christ as His Body, and already partakes of its new life in the Kingdom of God. Though the Church to all appearances is the sinful erring Church on earth, it is also the Church which is renewed and conformed to the risen Lord. That means that the Church is the place on earth and in history where the tension between the new and the old is most acute. The Church is part of the world ; it has worldly form and worldly organization, and partakes of the patterns of the passing age. But the Church also partakes of the new pattern of the Kingdom, the form of the risen Body of Christ. The new pattern clashes with the old, the new wine bursts the old wine-skins. Apocalypse is the interpretation of that clash or tension in history where the new age and the old age overlap and contradict each other.

Apocalypse is not therefore flight from history, some sort of escape into a transient world of dreams, away from the cruel persecutions and troubles of this world ; but on the contrary, it is the penetration into history of the new Kingdom of God, and the expression of the conflict which it involves between the essential form of the Kingdom of God in the risen Christ and the cosmic patterns of this age and the kingdoms of this world. Just as in Jesus, made under the law, the divine and eternal life clashed with the sinful life of this world, which He was bearing for our sakes, resulting in terrible tension (and how He was straitened until that was accomplished), so in the Church the Kingdom of Christ clashes with the kingdoms of this world, and the forms and patterns of the Kingdom engage in holy strife with the forms and patterns of this world,—that is the deep underlying significance of the great surging conflict throughout the pages of the Apocalypse. “ Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again ”—is the theme not only of the Gospel story of Jesus but of the Church, His Body, throughout history.

But the significant fact is this : just as the very presence of God in Christ provoked from the Jews the most inveterate and hateful reaction culminating in the Cross, so the presence of the risen Lord in the Christian Church provokes reaction in the world against it. That is why the Apocalypse speaks of great monsters rising out of the sea of the nations whose

purpose, at first veiled and then openly manifest, it is to make war upon the Church of Jesus Christ. But just as Jesus fulfilled His mission and triumphed in the midst of wrath over the powers of evil by the power of His resurrection, so the Christian Church will triumph through suffering, and in suffering witness to the Lamb of God will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of her testimony, only to rise in glory and become the new Jerusalem.

There is no space here to trace in detail how the Apocalypse takes the historical life of Jesus from His virgin birth to His "It is finished" on the Cross, and works out the counterpoint in the successive stages of the Church's history. We may note, however, that just as throughout the Gospel account of Christ the transcendent glory kept breaking through the form of a servant, so that far from being the mere victim of evil, He, the mighty Son of God, deliberately took the form of a servant in order to lay down His life, and by His sacrifice to triumph over evil; so in the history of the Church, though to all outward appearances in the kaleidoscopic picture of the Apocalypse, it is evil which dominates the scene of history, in point of fact, if we look behind the veil of wrath, we see it is the Word of God and the prayers of the saints that really hold the initiative. All else is reaction to the proclamation of the Everlasting Gospel, but God triumphs over it all in the Church so that behind the dark clouds of history faith is given to discern a silver lining, apocalyptically expressed by the *millennium*. Thus, as the Apocalypse moves towards its close, the veil of the outward and terrible panorama of world-history is lifted somewhat and we see the other aspect, the side toward God, and discover that all the time He has been making all things to work together for good, making even the wrath of man to praise Him. Then that picture gives way to the final revelation of the new heaven and the new earth in which God's eternal purpose is eternally and perfectly fulfilled.

(2) It is just because the wrath of Church-history has this silver lining, because throughout all her earthly pilgrimage the Church is already living in the power of the resurrection, that other language must be used, language of transfiguration, whereby there is unveiled in anticipation of the final and eternal day, the breaking in of its glory here and now. That is where the Apocalypse has recourse to the language of liturgy drawn mainly from the Old Testament but transfigured in the Spirit on the Lord's Day

to become the language of the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Parousia. These are the images used for Apocalyptic vision when it breaks through the dark clouds that hang so fatefully over the course of history and penetrate to the throne of the ascended and crowned Lamb of God.

*In the Spirit on the Lord's Day* provides us once again with perspective for our understanding. Right away we are aware of the eschatological significance of the Lord's Day. Behind it lies the O. T. teaching about the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, but the Day which would inaugurate the Messianic Age, the new heaven and the new earth. But for the N. T. the Day of the Lord is the Day on which Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the first-fruits of the new creation. The change from Sabbath to Sunday marks the tremendous emphasis in the N. T. upon the fact that the new age has already begun and that Christian worship is essentially the jubilant worship of those who have entered the new age by the power of the resurrection. The whole notion of worship inherited from Judaism is drastically and radically altered, not only by fellowship with Jesus during His earthly ministry, but by the event of the resurrection that shattered the framework of all previous liturgy. At His death on the Cross, the veil of the Temple was rent in two, and, as the Epistle to the Hebrews put it, a new and living way was opened up into the Holiest of all by the Blood of Christ. Here the resurrection means that our world, our dark and closed world, has been torn wide open so that now the glory of the risen Lord streams into it. Christian worship, therefore, rests upon the dual fact of the crucifixion and the resurrection. This is worship against the forces of nature as we know it in a fallen world, against the course of crumbling and decay and death, against the powers of darkness entrenched in our very flesh. It is worship which rends the veil of the flesh that the risen Lord who breaks into the midst may be the focus of worship. Although He is still to reveal Himself in a future epiphany of glory, the Risen Lord here and now knocks upon the door of the waiting Church in order to sup with them and they with Him, just as He came upon the disciples on the first Easter in the midst of their meal in the Upper Room.

That gives us the very essence of the Eucharistic liturgy of the Apostolic Church,—it is the miraculous, eschatological event, the place in which the Lord of glory breaks into the midst, interrupts us, and creates room and space for His

saving operation among us. The essence of Christian liturgy is therefore the celebration of the Resurrection, such liturgical action that room is left for the Advent of the Ascended Christ. That is the distinctive fact that divides all true Christian liturgy from pagan worship, no matter how beautiful and perfect may be its liturgical forms.

That is the understanding of liturgy which lies behind the Apocalypse, and is embedded in all its visions. We can well imagine John on that Sunday morning in his island exile thinking of the Sunday worship and the Eucharistic liturgy of his home Church, perhaps at Ephesus, for snatches of that liturgy keep breaking into his descriptions. But John is lifting up his heart above and beyond the earthly liturgy, for in the Spirit he is made to see through an open door in Heaven where the heavenly liturgy takes place around the enthroned Lamb. It is the total cosmic liturgy in which heaven and earth join, beings visible and invisible, singing the glory of the Lamb. It is thus in the midst of his apocalyptic visions that John penetrates into the heavenly liturgy, whose bearing upon the action of earth belongs to the very core of the apocalyptic drama.

We cannot overestimate the fact that here in the Apocalypse we have the earliest source-book of the Christian liturgy, but it is liturgy inextricably intertwined with apocalyptic. If we divorce apocalypse from its inner liturgical form we fail to understand apocalypse; but if from this standpoint apocalypse is thoroughly eschatologised liturgy, then by examining the Apocalypse in this way we can gain an understanding of the Christian liturgy in its essential nature and at its very source. Within the compass of this article there is room only for the briefest examination, but it may be sufficient to point out the work that needs to be done,

- (a) by laying bare the significance of the O. T. liturgical pattern for the sub-structure of the Apocalypse;
- (b) by indicating how that is transformed and transfigured through the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ into a new pattern cognate with but transcendent to the old;
- (c) by examining the relation between the earthly liturgy and the heavenly liturgy, for it is at that point that the theology of Christian liturgy emerges into clear view.

(a) Like the prophet Ezekiel, S. John the Divine was steeped in the liturgical rites of the O. T. Tabernacle and Temple, so that his work, the Book of Revelation, is

impregnated with an integrated interpretation of the ancient cult. Behind it all lies the once and for all events of the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, the Baptism in the Red Sea, the sacramental food and water in the wilderness, and the establishment of the covenant by the sprinkling of blood at Mt. Sinai, where Moses ascended into the thick darkness of the Mount to commune with God, to bring back the law and to make atonement for Israel through his mediation. All that was given liturgical extension into the history of Israel in the form of repeated liturgical witness to what God had Himself accomplished, and to what God promised to do through His mighty Word. That is particularly clear in the Tabernacle, which was the moveable Tent of meeting and witness in the midst of Israel during its historical pilgrimage. The events of Sinai, as Psalm 68 puts it, are to be found in the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies being the cultic counterpart to Mt. Sinai, and the ascent of the High Priest into its thick darkness to make atonement being the liturgical extension year by year on the day of atonement of Moses' ascent into the beclouded Mountain of God. The Red Sea is given its cultic counterpart in the Laver, or the great brazen Sea as it came to be called in the Temple, while the tables of the decalogue and portions of manna were laid up in the Ark. Added to that the Song of Moses at the crossing of the Red Sea blended with his great eschatological chant at the ascent of Mount Nebo, are discernible behind what the Apocalypse calls the Song of Moses and of the Lamb. The inter-relation of the saving events in Israel's history with the cult not only carried with it the idea that salvation is to be interpreted in terms of cultic repetition of the historical events of the Exodus, but through the cult that came to be the way in which the final events, eschatological salvation, were to be interpreted: as a new Exodus under a new Redeemer involving a new covenant and a new worship. Already in the Second Isaiah and in Ezekiel the liturgical patterns become the forms by which the future Messianic age is interpreted. On the other hand this inter-relation of saving historical events and cultic repetition carried with it a dynamic understanding of the liturgy, so that with reference to the Tabernacle, the liturgy is described as *the warfare of the priests*. In other words, in liturgical action we are engaging in the great battle of salvation in so far as it reaches out to the great eschatological events of the Kingdom of God. That is the aspect of liturgy that breaks into apocalyptic

whether in Ezekiel or in Revelation. It is the worship and action of the Church Militant.

(b) In the N. T. all this is given creative reconstruction and reinterpretation in terms of the once and for all salvation events in Jesus Christ. That is the aspect so very prominent in the Epistle to the Hebrews with which the Apocalypse has a very close affinity; but whereas in Hebrews the O. T. liturgical patterns are all reinterpreted in terms of their great Antitype in Christ in whom they are fulfilled and abrogated, in the Apocalypse the liturgical patterns of the ancient cult are Christologically transfigured for use as the language of apocalyptic liturgy. The Apocalypse is not concerned with describing the earthly liturgy of the Church as such, but makes use of that to provide the patterns for the interpretation of the last things. As we examine that usage, however, we learn much about the earliest Christian worship, particularly from the first five and the last three chapters of the Book, in their delineation of the heavenly liturgy. In the centre, high and lifted up, is the throne of God overarched by the rainbow of God's covenant mercies, and around the throne in a semi-circle are the four and twenty elders. In front are the laver or the sea of glass, the seven-branched candelabra, the four "deacons" in whom heaven and earth are joined and whose business it is to summon all creation to praise and glorify the Lamb upon the throne, while the whole host of the redeemed together with the angelic choirs are engaged in the eschatological music of redemption. Sometimes upon the throne, sometimes in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, is the risen and ascended Lord clothed with High-Priestly garments, and engaged in royal priestly activity. The host of the redeemed are likewise clothed in white priestly robes that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, while they join in the liturgy of heaven as a kingdom of priests unto God.

After the manner of apocalyptic writing, there are no fixed images here, for they change and shift in kaleidoscopic fashion, but it is possible, nevertheless, to glimpse something in that description of the heavenly liturgy of the liturgy of the Christian Church on earth, for it was inevitably in terms of it that S. John spoke of the heavenly worship.

(c) The main interest for the theologian, however, is the relation envisaged in the Apocalypse between the heavenly liturgy and the earthly liturgy, for it is that above all which

will have most to say about the essence of the liturgy of the Christian Church on earth. The liturgy of heaven is described, as we have already noticed, in terms of the Song of Moses and of the Lamb—the song sung by Israel after the first Passover and the triumphant crossing of the Red Sea, when the hosts of oppression and darkness were overthrown in the waters of Baptism. It is the paean of victory and redemption, the song of thanksgiving that follows upon the blood of the covenant and the inauguration by God's mighty hand of Israel as a holy people. But it refers also to Moses' final song just before he ascended Mt. Nebo to view the Promised Land and to die. It is thus the eschatological song that both looks back to the Passover—redemption out of Egypt, and looks forward through judgment and mercy to the Promised Land ahead. The Song of Moses was used by the Jews at the bringing in of the Passover Lamb, and also used in Christian form by the Early Church on Good Friday as the song of thanksgiving for redemption and triumph over the powers of evil and darkness.

Here the song of the ancient cult is used apocalyptically to speak of the song of heaven, but of that eschatological music of the heavenly liturgy the liturgy of the Church on earth is an echo. As in the Epistle to the Hebrews, so in the Apocalypse, there is the closest relation between the Eucharistic worship of the Church on earth and the eternal intercession of Christ at the right hand of God where all the angels as liturgical spirits join in praise and thanksgiving. But the liturgy of the Church on earth is *only an echo* of that heavenly music. Its participation in the liturgy of heaven is through the Spirit, and through the Spirit the praises of the Church are given to echo the perfect praises of heaven. That is clear, for example, in regard to the sacrifice of Christ. The liturgy of heaven centres on the self-presentation of the Lamb of God before the Father. He is our Advocate and Intercessor, on the ground of His unique and once and for all sacrifice for the sins of the world. The Church in her Eucharistic liturgy does not participate in that sacrifice except by echoing it in the counter-sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. He, the Lamb, is *upon* the altar-throne, and He only is able to break open the book of destiny and to undo guilt and sin, but the saints are given to pray *beneath* the altar. In other words, the Eucharistic sacrifice in the liturgy of the Church on earth belongs to a different dimension; it is an echo

of the Sacrifice of Christ made on our behalf, but it is no more than an echo. It is the counter-sacrifice, not participation in the act of sacrifice ; it is counterpoint, not the *canto firmo*. It is the joyful communion of those who give thanks for a sacrifice made on their behalf and who are summoned by the music of Angels to antiphonal oblation of praise and thanksgiving.

The Apocalypse teaches us also that the liturgy of the Church on earth even as an echo of the heavenly liturgy is essentially imperfect and fragmentary. All we get here is fragmented snatches of the earthly liturgy as it echoes the heavenly. The heavenly liturgy is described as the *New Song*, which no one knows but the redeemed who have passed over to the other side. On this side, in our fallen world, in the Church Militant engaged in history, it is impossible to know that perfect song. Thus, in the language of S. Paul, we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, making intercession for us with cries that cannot be uttered, and in so doing He echoes within us the unutterable agonies of Christ who prayed not only in Gethsemane with strong crying and tears, but ever lives to make intercession for us. There is thus no direct relation between the liturgy of the Church on earth and the liturgy of Heaven. The earthly liturgy is in no sense a transcription in the forms of earth of the perfect liturgical forms of Heaven. The relation between the two is not direct but indirect, not immediate but eschatological, not a smooth harmony but apocalyptic *agonia*.

We recall here that apocalyptic means the clash between the perfect form or pattern of the Kingdom of God and the forms and patterns of this world. That is applicable to the whole Christian life, as S. Paul speaks of it, for the whole of our Christian life (and here Paul uses liturgical language) is involved in a rational worship in which we present our bodies as living sacrifice to God, refusing to be conformed to this world but being transformed through the renewal of our minds. Thus in ever fresh obedience to Christ the Church is crucified unto the world in order that, being transformed, it may become conformed to Him. That conformity to Christ is only possible through the Cross, and indeed it is only through fellowship with the sufferings of Christ that we are made conformable to Christ and know Him in the power of His resurrection.

That is what takes place in the Christian liturgy. It is a liturgy in which we have to do with the judgment of this

world by the Cross, a liturgy interpreted as engagement in the spiritual battle between the new age and this present, passing age. Liturgy holds the new wine in old wine-skins, and therefore in all Christian liturgy there is a breaking of the old wine-skins, a judgment upon the very liturgical forms that we use to hold the new wine of the Kingdom. In every true liturgy the ineffable New Song of Heaven breaks in upon us and interrupts our ordered liturgical forms of earth. It is of the nature of *glossolalia*, essentially charismatic, making room in the midst of the cosmic patterns of the old age for the resurrection of Christ.

Christian liturgy has at its very heart this conflict between the perfect liturgical form of Heaven and the liturgical forms of earth, so that the liturgical forms of earth, no matter how perfect and beautiful and adequate we make them, are ever being judged as earthly by the New Song of Heaven, ever being rendered fragmentary and revealed as essentially imperfect. That is why in the heart of every really Christian liturgy there is the *sursum corda*, when, like S. John in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, we lift up our hearts above and beyond the liturgy of earth and in breath-taking wonder and indescribable joy echo the eternal song of the Lamb.

As a fragmentary and imperfect echo of the perfect liturgy and music of heaven the sacramental liturgy of the Church is at once an anticipation of the future, and yet an interim measure that will pass away. It has validity here and now as echo and anticipation, but will disappear when the full glory of the Heavenly worship is revealed. Consider the Eucharistic meal and worship of the Church: the miracle is that in it the Church is given the real presence of the Lamb of God and its constant repetition gives us continuing participation in Christ crucified and risen. It is the bridge which binds the Church here and now in history to the future Marriage-Supper of the Lamb, as the Apocalypse calls it. But when that Great Supper finally takes place and the Church is perfectly one with Her Lord, the Eucharist will pass away, and with it the Eucharistic liturgy of earth. And so, as S. John puts it toward the end of the Apocalypse, at last in the worship of the New Jerusalem there will be no Temple there, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. That city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for there is no night there, and so no need for the candle; for the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be

its light. Then the servants of God will see His face and they shall worship Him and the Lamb for ever and ever. The worship of the Church on earth needs *created* light, candle-light; it needs a temple made with hands; it needs an artificial liturgy; but all such artifices will pass away before the immediate glory of God and in the perfect worship of Heaven. These artificial helps—candle and liturgy—may be used on earth, therefore, so far as they are set and are used in this eschatological context, so long as we see them in the light of the final judgment of glory, as belonging to the imperfections of this cosmos, all the forms and fashions of which, including liturgical forms and fashions, will pass away in order that the perfect may supervene in their place.

In the last resort, liturgical forms are to be understood in terms of transient apocalyptic images. Liturgy and apocalyptic belong together, they have the same dramatic quality, the same intention of expressing the ineffable in the forms and language of this present passing age, and the same secret in that they point beyond themselves to the New Song and the Heavenly Liturgy of Eternity.

There is another aspect of the liturgy of the Apocalypse that we must note. It is the liturgy of the whole creation, the new heaven and the new earth. In other words, it has a universal aspect and therefore its echoing in the Church on earth must perforce stretch out beyond the bounds of the redeemed Church to the whole creation. It is not only the Church in her liturgy that echoes the perfect liturgy of heaven, but somehow all creation. Again, in the language of S. Paul, all creation groans and travails, yearning for that day, the manifestation of the sons of God. That universal aspect of liturgy is very powerfully expressed in the Apocalypse, but it is bound up as the other aspects of the Apocalypse with the world-mission of the Lamb, the world-mission, therefore, of the Church, the Body of Christ. In other words, true Christian liturgy is not only open toward heaven, leaving room for the Advent presence of the risen Christ, but is open to the whole world of men, in prayer for their salvation, and to the whole of creation in prayer for its renewal.

To understand one aspect of that, the aspect which most concerns us here, we may go back to the Synoptic Gospels, and note how Jesus reacted to the notion of a closed liturgy. I refer to the Jewish practice of excluding from participation in the liturgy of the Temple all those

who by set regulations were ceremonially unclean, or liturgically debarred, such as the publicans and sinners as they were called, men like Matthew and Zacchaeus. The closed liturgy of the Jews involved them in excommunication. Jesus called them the lost sheep of the House of Israel. What our Lord did was apparently deliberate : again and again He ate and drank with the excommunicated publicans and sinners, enacting in their midst a Messianic meal that clearly anticipated the day when they should come from the East and the West and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God. The Jewish authorities were angry, and they challenged Him ; and He spoke to them several parables about the marriage-supper which clearly have Eucharistic import. The Son of Man is not only Lord of the Sabbath, but Lord of the Shewbread and Lord of the Messianic Meal. It is the *Lord's* Supper and not a private supper, and the Lord invites whom He will.

That universal or ecumenical aspect of the Eucharistic liturgy is an essential element in it, as the Apocalypse makes clear, for the Eucharistic liturgy of the Church points beyond itself to the world-mission of the Church. In the last day, in the great Marriage-Supper of the Lamb, "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." So far as the earthly Eucharist anticipates and echoes that final Messianic Supper, and so far as here and now, in the Eucharist on earth, we have the real presence of the *Eschatos*, then here and now all liturgical barriers will be broken down and the Church will join in its earthly liturgy with the Spirit in the heavenly liturgy and say : "Who-soever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely". The eschatological understanding of the liturgy of the Church such as we are given in the Apocalypse has no place for a *problem* of intercommunion. It is only when liturgy and eschatology are divorced that the Eucharist becomes a private rite under the control of men, and is no longer the *Lord's* Supper under the control of the Son of Man. The Eucharistic liturgy that does not involve that eschatological element and does not reflect the essentially ecumenical character of the world-mission of the Lamb of God, so far ceases to be valid Eucharistic liturgy. But surely this is just the point where the liturgy must be engaged in the great apocalyptic strife, where it must allow

the perfect pattern of the Kingdom of God to do battle with the artificial patterns of our worship, in order that through crucifixion with Christ they may be rent wide open to make room for the Advent presence of the Risen and Ascended Lord. *Maran atha.*

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