



**THE TIME FOR THE WEDDING OF THE LAMB HAS COME.
THE RECAPITULATION OF DIVINE JUSTICE IN THE HYMNS
ACCORDING TO REV 19:1-8 ***

O tempo das núpcias do Cordeiro chegou: a recapitulação da justiça divina nos hinos conforme Ap 19,1-8

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ABSTRACT: In the central part of the Book of Revelation (4:1–22:9), there is a group of hymns (4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 11:15-18; 12:10- 12; 15:3-4; 19:1-8) that synthetizes the theological drama of the book. The plot of this part presents a judgement in which God acts as a fair judge against the enemies. Thus, this paper presents a literary analysis of the narration conclusive hymn (19:1-8). The chosen text sings God’s salvation and invites everyone to praise (19:5), because of God’s reign (19:6) and the nuptials of the Lamb with his wife (19:7), the community of faith, dressed with the Saints’ righteousness (19:8). The following topics will be developed in this presentation: the list of the hymns on the Book of Revelation; the literary context and the delimitation of 19:1-8; and the text’s literary analysis. The last hymn constitutes an ending that recapitulates many themes present in other passages of Revelation, mainly in its hymns.

KEYWORDS: Revelation. Justice. Hymn. Judgement. Lamb.

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RESUMO: Na parte central do livro do Apocalipse (4,1-22,9), há um grupo de hinos (4,8-11; 5,9-14; 7,10-12; 11,15-18; 12,10-12; 15,3-4; 19,1-8) que sintetiza o drama teológico do livro. O enredo desta parte apresenta um julgamento em que Deus age como um justo juiz contra os inimigos. Assim, este artigo apresenta uma análise literária da narração do hino conclusivo (19,1-8). O texto escolhido canta a salvação de Deus e convida a todos a louvar (19,5), por causa do reinado de Deus (19,6) e das núpcias do Cordeiro com sua esposa (19,7), a comunidade de fé, vestida com a justiça dos santos (19,8). Nesta apresentação serão desenvolvidos os seguintes tópicos: a lista dos hinos do Livro do Apocalipse; o contexto literário e a delimitação de 19,1-8; e a análise literária do texto. O último hino constitui um final que retoma muitos temas presentes em outras passagens do Apocalipse, principalmente nos seus hinos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Apocalipse. Justiça. Hino. Julgamento. Cordeiro.

Introduction

The Book of Revelation is unique in its style, message, and literary genre. Some find it strange while others admire it. However, everybody is eager to read it.

As for the hymns therein play a specific role because of their textual location and content. They recapture and celebrate the events in a doxological and antiphonal way, consolidating the narrated drama and relating one episode to the other one. There is a relation between dialogue and drama, claiming that the dialogic situations, including the hymns, justify the dramatic nature of the Book of Revelation, as affirms José Cuadrado (2007, p. 140). Consequently, due to this function, the hymns bring within them a synthesis of the image of God present in the Book of Revelation.

This article discusses the last hymn in the Book of Revelation (19:1-8), considered as a recapitulation of all the others because of the repetition of themes and terms. The chosen text (19:1-8) celebrates the divine justice found in the narrative of the Book of Revelation. For that, the final alleluia of the book shows how the judgements of God are true and righteous (19:2). He has judged the great prostitute (19:2), He reigns (19:7), and the marriage of the Lamb has come (19:7).

Furthermore, it summarises the plot and the message of the hymns. We set off with a short presentation of the criteria to classify certain texts of the Book of Revelation, especially hymns. Then, we analyse the pericope under study by presenting its delimitation and its literary analysis. Finally, we conclude with some final considerations on the theology of the hymn.

Although many parts of Revelation suggest divine action against other people, in fact, the end of that distressing reality was expected and that something good would happen to those suffering people. It is not appropriate to interpret the Revelation as a book of divine violence. The focus of the message must be the divine action towards the end of that adverse situation and, therefore, the desire for redemption: “The God in Revelation is sovereign; yet, this sovereign reign is not an oppressive reality but a liberating and redemptive one” (THOMAS; MACCHIA, 2016, p. 436). The narrative’s message encourages Christians to trust God despite the adversity they experience. The various oppressions faced will end and communion with God through Christ will take place and be fulfilled.

The Book of Revelation disposes the narrative in such a way as to introduce the reader to the arcana of God and his Christ. Gradually, according to the plot, the mystery is revealed through the facts, culminating in the final vision of a new heaven and a new earth (21:1).

1 About the Hymns in the Book of Revelation

Although the New Testament does not have a grouping of hymns similar to the Old Testament’s Psalter, we ascertain some texts that are commonly characterized as hymns because of their role in the plot of the book, their style and other specific elements, for example: Lk 1:47-55.68-79; 2:29-32; Fp 2.6-11; CoI 1.15-20; Eph 2:14-16; 1Tim 3.16; 1Pt 3.18-22; Heb 1.3 (VIELHAUER, 2005, p. 70-79).

In the Antiquity, the hymns are composed of simple formulas of adoration or greetings and even more complex and literarily elaborate liturgical acclamations. The Biblical authors receive these influences from surroundings cultures and elaborate their hymns from their own religious experience (LEHMANN, 2009, p. 21). For the Christians, inserted in the Greco-Roman culture, they distinguish their hymns from other hymns by using them to praise God, as a privileged relationship with the divinity, while pagan hymns were poems to the gods and/or heroes, without necessarily constituting a relationship (LEHMANN, 2009, p. 37).

For the research on New Testament’s hymnology, there is neither a consensus on the form or content of hymns in early Christianity, nor the term “hymn” is used to designate texts that are commonly classified as hymns in the New Testament (OSBORNE, 2009, p. 73). The classification depends on the literary elements and the narrative to which the hymn belongs. For our book in question, we observe a set of distinctions common to texts that we call hymns.

The Book of Revelation consists of the prologue (1:1-8), the initial view (1:9-20) and the section of letters for the churches in Asia Minor (2:1-3:22), the central part (4:1-22:5) with intercalations of some hymns of celestial beings directed, above all, “To the One who is seated on the throne” and the “Lamb,” and an epilogue (22:6-21)¹.

Interventions through hymns contain a liturgical and celebrative context, which is developed in a narrative judgement and has a prophetic and eschatological character. The subjects of the exclamations manifest bodily reverence to God: prostrations, worships, celestial visions, accompaniment of musical instruments and so on. The terms used in the passages come from the liturgy: amen, alleluia, holy, honour, glory, thanksgiving and so on. It is possible to notice a Jewish background in the references to the Old Testament with regards to the grammar, text structure and hymns. In the same way, we can perceive therein the context of conflict with the Roman Empire (in their literary genre and message of the book) and the objection to the Emperor.

The subjects in the hymns are always celestial beings: four living beings (4:8; 5:8,11; 7:11; 19:4), twenty-four elders (4:10; 5:8,11; 11:16; 19:4), great multitude (7:9; 19:1.6) and angels (5:11; 7:11; 11:15; 15:1; 16:1). Another common characteristic among the texts is the consignee of the hymns (the One who is seated on the throne and the Lamb). Besides, John, as the visionary, witnesses these celestial happenings.

From the history of forms (*Formgeschichte*), Berger (1998, p. 222) suggests a separate classification for each of the passages considered hymns: acclamation (4:8); acclaim with “worthy” (4:11; 5:9-10.12); doxology (5:13; 7:10.12); doxology of judgment (16:5-7; 19:1-2); proclamation (11:15; 14:8); proclamation with commentary (12:10-12); Old Testament hymn (19:5.6-8); partial hymn (15:3-4; 19:5); song of thanksgiving (11:17-18). Berger’s division details the content of each part of the texts in question, but makes it difficult to see the texts as a whole, the relationship with the plot and the perception of common elements between them.

The lexicon of the above passages does not support a classification as hymns or chants. In Revelation, there is no occurrence of the word hymn (ὑμνος) (*hymnos*); in the New Testament it occurs in: Eph 5:19; Col 3:16. The noun ᾠδή (*ōdē*) and the verb ᾄδω (*adō*) appear in the New Testament in Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Ap 5:9; 14:3; 15:3. Therefore, you need other criteria for a

¹ Most authors divide the Book of Revelation as follows: the prologue (1:1-8); the initial view and the letters to the churches (1:9-3:22); the central part of the book of Revelation (4:1-22:5) in which the authors disagree when it comes to the subdivisions, and an epilogue (22:6-21). See the classic discussions and consensus given in LAMBRECHT, 1980, p. 77-104; BEALE, 1999, p. 108-109; KOESTER, 2014, p. 112.

classification as a hymn. For this reason, some researchers prefer the use of the adjective form of the word hymns: “hymn passages”, as proposed by Michèle Morgen (MORGEN, 2009, p. 215).

The texts can be identified as hymns. First, their formal structure is similar to the hymns in ancient times. Second, they contain a praise of God. Third, other features such as the style, recipients and narrative context are that of the hymns (SCHEDTLER, 2014, p. 30-31). Besides, the introductory formulas common to the compositions suggest that they are hymns. For example: λέγοντες (*legontes*) (4:8.10; 5:9.12; 7:10.12; 11:15.17; 15:3), ὠδὴν κἀνὴν (*ōdēn kainēn*) (5:9; 15:3), κράζουσιν (*krazousin*) (7:10), and φωνὴ μεγάλη (*phōnē megalē*) (5:12; 7:10; in plural: 11:15; 12:10; 19:1) (JÖRNS, 1971, p. 20; SCHEDTLER, 2014, p. 31).

In the book of Revelation, there are sixteen texts that are most referred to as hymns: 4:8c.11; 5:9b-10.12b.13b; 7:10b.12; 11:15b.17-18; 12:10b-12; 15:3b-7b; 19:1b-2.3.5b.6-8 (JÖRNS, 1971, p. 19; AUNE, 1997, p. 315). Excepting 15:3-4, all the hymns are organised with an antiphonal answer set apart by narrative elements (AUNE, 1997, p. 315; SCHEDTLER, 2014, p.30). Thus, we classify the following pericopes as hymns: 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-8. There are other passages with characteristics of a hymn, which for various reasons are not considered hymns: Rev 1:5-6; 8; 13:4; 18:22-24; 21:3-4; 22:12-13; 17:20-21 (JÖRNS, 1971, p. 21-22).

Rev 12:10-12 consists in a text that proclaims the victory and salvation of God. The passage contains a particularity regarding the other hymns in the list. It does not address itself to God or the Lamb, but to the listeners invited to the celebrations of the deeds of God. This passage is kept as part of the selected hymns because of the following characteristics: a similar beginning to the others (καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ λέγουσαν) (*kai ēkusa phōnēn megalēn en tō ouranō legousan*);² the theological thematic and the terms from the same semantic field (σωτηρία ἐξουσία δὴν βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) (*sōtēria, exousia, dynamis, basileia tou theou*).

The list of passages is found in consensus of the main commentators of the book of Revelation at the present time (AUNE, 1997, p. 315). The dissertations on the hymns of Revelation differ from the list according to the approach. For example, Anthony Nusca addresses the smaller units with hymnal features (Rev 1:5-6; 18:20;22) due to the liturgical approach (NUSCA, 1998). Schedtler differs in some verses when it comes to the delimitation (for instance 7:9-14; 11:15-19) because it presents the relation of the hymns in Revelation with the choirs of the Greek Tragedy (SCHEDTLER, 2014).

² We adopt 28 edition's Nestle-Aland for the New Testament (2012). For the connections with the Old Testament, we use Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia 5 edition of Elliger and Rudolph (1997) and Septuaginta of Rahlfs and Hanhart (2006).

Grabiner does not analyse 16:5-7, because of the theme of cosmic conflict (GRABINER, 2015). Another similar approach selected other texts (1:9-16; 3:14-22; 13:9-10; 19:1-8) to present a liturgical action (MANUNZA, 2012).

The hymns of the Book of Revelation have different sources. At first, as it can be observed, these texts are supposed to come from the early Christian liturgy. Such a hypothesis has been long held, but currently disregarded and contested since the studies of Carnegie and O'Rourke (CARNEGIE, 1982, p. 246; O'ROURKE, 1968, p. 402). One can clearly see the context and liturgical elements of the book. However, the writing of the hymns fits cohesively into the overall narrative, in a way that could not have come from any other writer than the author of Revelation himself (GRABINER, 2015, p. 6). The Christian liturgy originates the hymns, but it cannot be the only source.

Researchers currently highlight the main sources and develop their reflections from their own perspectives. According to the studies, we summarize the origins of the hymns from the following materials: the Christian liturgy (CARNEGIE, 1982, p. 246; O'ROURKE, 1968, p. 402); the Old Testament (BEALE, 1999, p. 367-369); other Jewish writings, including the *Merkbah* (GRABINER, 2015, p. 6-7); the acclamations of the court of the Roman Empire (SEAL, 2008, p. 339-352). The different sources do not exclude each other or impose themselves in isolation, but complement each other and attest to the varied assumption of the author and receptors (GLOER, 2001, p. 36).

For this paper, we have chosen the last hymn (19:1-8). It summarizes all the other texts concluding with a final celebration of divine justice.

2 Literary Context and Delimitation of the Pericope

Rev 19:1-8 proclaims the final triumph of God after two episodes: the vision of the beast and the great prostitute (17:1-18) and the destruction of Babylon (18:1-24)³. Between the fall of Babylon (Rev 17:18) and the vision of the new city, the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:22), there is a textual transition (Rev 19:20) formed by the following literary units: the hymn of the throne room (19:1-8); the angel's conclusion (19:9-10); and the final defeat of God's enemies (19:11-20:15).

Thus, the hymn introduces the final celebration for an entrance into God's dwelling among men⁴. This passage concludes not only an immediate

³ About the symbol "Babylon": BIGUZZI, 2006, p. 371-386.

⁴ Another perspective, Matthias Hoffmann proposes the unit 19:1-21 for evidencing the Christology. For him, Rev 19:1-21 has a unity literary structure similar to Rev 14, Rev 1 and Rev 4-5: HOFFMANN, 2005, p. 169-176.

section, but synthesizes what was proclaimed about God in the narrative of Revelation. The text takes up the prostitute's judgement (19:2) and pre-udes the final vision of the new Jerusalem (19:7) in a solemn celebration of divine action (VANNI, 1980, p. 166). The hymn concludes events and serves as a literary transition to the narration.

The pericope starts with an expression that defines a new textual unit: *μετὰ ταῦτα*. (*meta tauta*). The praise stretches throughout the verses until 19:8, where we find the conclusion of the scene. Rev 19:9 declares those who take part in the nuptial feast of the Lamb as blessed. The theme stops being the praise and the nuptials of the Lamb.

Rev 19:1-8 is a hymn that comprises of two parts: praise with attention to the judgement of the prostitute (19:1-4) and an answer with an invitation for the praise (19:5-8) (AUNE, 1998, p. 1019). The first part of the hymn defines the beginning and the separation from the precedent section with the expression *μετὰ ταῦτα*. (*meta tauta*). It is concluded with the act of worship by the living beings and the elders. And the second part is defined by the voice that came from the throne, (*καὶ φωνὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου*) (*kai phōnē apo tou thronou*), inviting to the praise.

The first part of the hymn (19:1-4) consists of three elements: a doxological judgement with a victory cry (19:1-2) similar to 16:5-6; the continuity of the narrative explaining the just judgement of God (19:3); and the scene in which the elder and the celestial beings worship with a responsorial (19:4) (AUNE, 1998, p. 1022).

The second stanza (19:5-8) is formed by two smaller parts: one calling from the throne to worship (19:5) and the hymn of praise (19:6-8). According to David Aune, this strophe is structured in accordance with the hymns of praise present in the psalms, having three main differences: the calling to praise (Alleluia, 19:6) the thematic sentence as transition section justifying the praise (because of God's Kingdom: 19:6); and the remembrance of the deeds of God (19:7-8) (AUNE, 1998, p. 1022. 1028).

Meynet and Oniszcuk (2013, p. 231-237) come up with a tripartite structure (vv. 1-3; 4-5; 6-8) arranged concentrically having the creature's praise as the center (19:4-5). However, we chose David Aune's structure for considering the relation with the narrative set of revelation and not only for the pericope alone (AUNE, 1998, p. 1022). There is another chiasm perspective like Meynet and Oniszcuk, but it considers 19:1-10 as one pericope according to Christian (1999, p. 209-225).

The final hymn is the most complex composition among the others in the Book of Revelation. It concludes the judgement, which is present throughout the narrative and forms the *grand finale* of the hymns in Revelation (JÖRNS, 1971, p. 159; SCHEDTLER, 2014, p. 101).

3 Literary Analysis

The beginning of the hymn repeats a stereotyped formula present in other parts of the Book of Revelation: μετὰ ταῦτα (*meta tauta*) (1:19; 4:1; 7:1,9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3). This is similar to τοῦτο εἶδον, (*touto eidon*) which occurs in 7:1. The voice of the great multitude is heard twice (19:1.6; see also 7:9). It corresponds to the redeemed ones taking part in the celestial joy.

“Alleluia” is the first acclamation word and a new element among the hymns. In the New Testament, the term “alleluia”, meaning “praise the Lord”, appears only in this passage (19:1.3.4.6) and works as an introduction and continuity among the parts that comprise the hymn (SCHLIER, 1964, p. 264). The joyful “alleluia” contrasts with the lamentations because of Babylon, in 18:9-14 (BEALE, 1999, p. 926; DELORME; DONEGANI, 2010, p. 99).

The beginning of the hymn consists of a doxological judgement similar to 16:5-7. Babylon was judged and the victory is celebrated in great exultation. The terms “salvation, glory and power” had already appeared in 7:10; 11:15; 12:10 implying divine sovereignty.⁵ The attribute σωτηρία (*sōtēria*) is also found in acknowledgement inscriptions for the Roman Emperors (AUNE, 1998, p. 1025).

In the following verse, there are two justifications for the divine praise introduced by the casual particle ὅτι (*hoti*). The first one is because of the just and true judgement. It is similar to 15:3, but in an inverted word order, and in 16:7 (according to Ps 19:9; Dan 3:27 LXX) referring to the judgement of Babylon (BEALE, 1999, p. 927; SCHEDTLER, 2014, p. 103). The second one, continuing with the judgement theme, specifies the great prostitute sentenced since the previous events mentioned in the narrative. The expression πόρνη μεγάλη (*pornē megalē*) appears in 17:1; while the noun πόρνη (*pornē*) is found in 17:5.15.16, the verb πορνεύω (*porneuō*) occurs in 2:14.20; 17:2; 18:3.9, and the noun πόρνος (*pornos*) in 21:8; 22:15. In Revelation, such words stand in a context of controversy against idolatry, false prophecy, immorality, and apostasy (NUSCA, 1998, p. 428).

The aorist verb ἔκρινεν (*ekrinen*) refers to the conviction which has been happening since 18:3; 14:8; 11:18. The verb φθείρω (*phtheirō*) resembles the verb διαφθείρω (*diaphtheirō*) used in 11:18. It stands for “destroy”, “wipe out” expressing the judgement against the great prostitute. Both texts depend on the judgement of the Lord against Babylon in Jer 51:25, now representing Rome (AUNE, 1998, p. 1025; BEALE, 1999, p. 927; NUSCA, 1998, p. 428; BIGUZZI, 2006, p. 380-386). For Thomas and Macchia: “the words of 19:2 thus indicate that the destruction of the great whore is the

⁵ For the Concordance in the New Testament, we consult Kohlenberger, Goodrick and Swanson (1995).

result of her own destructive corruption of earth” (THOMAS; MACCHIA, 2016, p. 327).

Further action contains the verb ἐκδικέω (*ekdikeō*) which occurs here and in 6:10. It has a parallel in the episode of the sending of the young prophet to Jehu to “revenge” the blood of the servants and prophets against Jezebel (2:20-23). It alludes to the Old Testament, and it applies to Babylon, symbol of Rome (AUNE, 1998, p. 1026; SMALLEY, 2005, p. 478).

The vengeance of the blood of God’s servants is made, literally, from her (the great whore’s) own hand (19:2). The “blood of the servants” connotes those who went on and gave their own life in the name of their faith in Christ (SCHEDTLER, 2014, p. 104). The figure of speech “from her own hand” stands for the power of Babylon that tries to wipe out the people of God (according to Gen 4:11; Ps 79:10) (BEALE, 1999, p. 928).⁶

Rev 19:3 stands for the consequence of the judgement. The verb εἶρηκαν (*eirēkan*) has as subject (third person plural) the same singers of the hymn in verses 1-2, the great multitude. In the end, following the “alleluia” of transition, we have an excerpt, similar to 14:11, which brings up the prophecy against Edom in Isa 34:10a. Both texts share the same hyperbole and emphasize the destruction (FEKKES, 1994, p. 208-209). The image of smoke differs from the two other descriptions in 8:4 (the prayers of the saints for God) and 15:8 (the glory of God) (NUSCA, 1998, p. 432). The mention of smoke reminds hearers of the similar words spoken about her destruction (14:11; 17:16; 18:8.8) and the fate experienced by Sodom (Gen 19:28) (THOMAS; MACCHIA, 2016, p. 328).

The elder and the living beings, mentioned for the last time in Revelation, prostrated themselves reverently before the one who is seated on the throne like in other hymns (4:10; 5:8.14; 19:4). The verbs πίπτω (*piptō*) and προσκυνέω (*proskuneō*) describe the stages of the act of worship which exclaim “amen, alleluia”. The expression contains a conclusive function like in 5:14. The binomial “amen” and “alleluia” completes the fourth part of the Psalms (106:48) and it still appears in 1Cor 16:36; Neh 5:13 equally with conclusive characteristics (AUNE, 1998, p. 1027; MOYISE, 2003, p. 258; KIM, 2013, p. 96-99).

A voice coming from the throne summons praise (19:5). The expression ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου (*apo tou thronou*) occurs here and in 16:7 referring to the source of the voice, while the variation ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου (*ek tou thronou*) is used as a voice with a poorly defined source (4:5; 21:3; 22:1). The voice could be the one of an elder, from the living beings or from the celestial

⁶ Also check the parallel table between 19:2 and 6:10: BEALE, 1999, p. 928. See still another parallel between Ps 78:5.10; 2Kgs 9,7; Rev 6,10; 19,2: KIM, 2013, p. 79.

myriad (4:8.11; 5:9-14) from the martyrs in heaven (7:10; 15:3-4); or from the throne itself (16:7) (SCHEDTLER, 2014, p. 105).

The voice calls the ones from earth out for the praise, in contrast with the first part of the hymn which is chanted by the celestial beings (19:1-4). The form αἰνεῖτε τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν (*aineitetō theō hēmōn*) parallels to innumerable “alleluias” of the hymn (19:1.3.4.6). It occurs uniquely here, and it stands for the Hebrew expression הללו יהוה (*hallelu yah*) which repeatedly appears in the Psalms (Ps 105:1; 106:48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1. 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1.3.21; 146:1.10; 147:1.20; 148:1.14; 149:1.9; 150:1.6). Rev 19:1-8 is the unique one Hallelujah Hymn in the New Testament. The verb αἰνέω (*aineō*) is found again in others writings in Lk 2:13.20; 19:37; Acts 2:47; 3:8-9; Rom 15:11.

The ones who praise God are listed: all the servants, the fearful, the small and the great alike (19:5). The terms do not stand for different groups of Christians in antiquity, but they characterise the Christian community. The Christians are called servants in the book of Revelation (2:20; 7:3; 19:2.5; 22:3). The differentiations reiterate 11:18 and allude to Ps 115:11 (BEALE, 1999, p. 930).

Once again there is an invitation to praise (19:6) like in 19:1. While the other passages mention a “a strong voice”, now, there are three images which replace it: the great sound of a great multitude (7:9; 19:1.6); the sound of waters (1:15; 14:2; Ps 93:4; Isa 17:12; Ezek. 1:24; 43:2); and the sound of thunders (6:1; 14:2) (AUNE, 1998, p. 1028; NUSCA, 1998, p. 439). Two of them, the waters and the thunders, occur together in 14:2.

Some textual testimonies (Ⲙ, P 046 and others) attest the pronoun ἡμῶν (*hēmōn*) in the sentence κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ (*kyrios ho theos hēmōn ho pantokratōr*) in 19:6. However, other important manuscripts (A and others) and the occurrences of the expression without the pronoun in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22) justify the option to omit it.

The content of praise is justified by the beginning of the kingdom of God. Like in many passages in the Old Testament (Ps 93:2; 96:10; 97:1; 1Cor 16:31; Isa 52:7; Zech 14:9) (BEALE, 1999, p. 932), God reigns after judging the enemies. The same verb (βασιλεύω) (*basileō*) is used two other times in Revelation (11:15.17) having God as their subject. It appears here in aorist giving continuity to the narrative and to the fulfilment of the sovereignty of God (SMALLEY, 2005, p. 482). The divine appointment in the passage (19:6) is certified repeatedly in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7).

Carrying on with the praise (19:7) there are three verbs in sequence χαίρω, ἀγαλλιάω and δίδωμι (τὴν δόξαν) [*chairō, agaliaō and didōmi (tēn doxan)*]. Allusion to Isa 61:10 describes the image used in Rev 19:7-9; 21:2 (FEKKES, 1994, p. 231-232). The first verb creates an antithetical parallelism with 11:10 and often appears in what might be called Johannine eschatological contexts

(John 3:29; 4:36; 8:56; 11:15; 14:28; 16:22; 20:20). The other occurrence of the verb in Revelation describes the joy of the inhabitants on earth because of the martyrdom of two witnesses. The second verb, the only occurrence in Revelation, intensifies the meaning of the celebration (NUSCA, 1998, p. 441). The two first verbs occur in a row in Mt 5:12; Ps 118:24.⁷

The last expression, “give glory”, recalls other invitations in the book of Revelation 4:9; 11:13; 14:7; 16:9. The future form of the verb δίδωμι (*didōmi*), in 19:7, is verified in good textual testimonies (Ⲙ, A). However, it does not agree grammatically with the sentence. It seems to make more sense with the verb in the same tense, thus conjugated δώσωμεν (*dōsōmen*). Metzger suggests that it is an oversight on the part of the copyist to replace the omega (aorist subjunctive) with an omicron (future indicative) (METZGER, 1998, p. 760).

According to J. Fekkes, Isa 61:10 offers a range of themes for allusions in Revelation and in the New Testament: the eschatological nuptials (19:7// Mk 2:19-20; 2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-23; Jn3:29); the people of God as bride or wife: (19:7; 21:2.9; 22:17// 2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-23); the bride being groomed and adorned (19:7; 21:2); and the wedding dresses (19:8.14) (FEKKES, 1994, p. 233).

The rejoicing which is celebrated, introduced by the particle ὅτι (*hoti*) is justified: the marriage with the Lamb has come (19:7). The nuptial metaphor of the Lamb occurs in 19:7.9. Nevertheless, we still find the spousal figure in 21:2.9; 22:17 (AUNE, 1998, 1029). The event of the nuptials is proclaimed, but it is not described in the narrative, neither accomplished. The bride is just prepared (ἡτοιμάσεν) (*hētoimasen*) for the event.

The word γυνή (*gynē*) stands for the woman as female gender distinct from the male, without any age or social classification (OEPEKE, 1964, p. 776). However, the narrative puts forward a woman destined for marriage according to the Jewish custom (e.g.: Deut 22:23-24; Mt 1:18-25). The first part of the Jewish marriage consisted in a signed contract among the bride's and the groom's parents. Months later, the wedding takes place. The bride, especially dressed, ornamented with jewels and accompanied with her female friends, waits for the groom to come with his courtship. Then, the two start living together and the celebration of the union extends itself for many days (HARTMAN, 1963, p. 2567-2568).

The wife of the Lamb, the Christian community, gets dressed in fairness for the wedding, which means, communion with God through Christ. Through the fair acts, the Christian people, symbolised by Jerusalem, get ready for the nuptial meeting (VANNI, 2003, p. 235-257). For now, it is still being prepared, but it will come quite soon, as the wife of the Lamb will too (21:2.9; 22:17) (PIAZZOLLA, 2015, p. 378).

⁷ The two verbs together also appear in other Jewish documents according to AUNE, 1998, p. 1029.

The nuptial metaphor as Christ being the groom and the Church being the bride was widespread in the primitive Church.⁸ The image used in the end of Revelation comes from the marriage of the Lord with Israel and from the Messiah standing for the alliance between the parties (Hos 2:19-20; Jer 3:20; Ezek 16:8-14; Isa 49:18; 50:1; 54:1-6; 62:5) (STAUFFER, 1964, p. 655). The nuptial imaginary often appears in negative contexts representing Israel's unfaithfulness, which seems to have the promise the ideal relationship would be fulfilled in the future (THOMAS; MACCHIA, 2016, p. 331).

The wife gets ready for the nuptials wearing shiny and fine linen, connoting purity and the election of the Christian community (SLATER, 1999, p. 197). The fine linen dress, showing nobility, was a type of linen worn by the priests, chiefs and kings as well as used for the temple ornaments (Gen 41:42; Ex 28:29; 36:34; 1Cor 15:27; 2Cor 5:12; Ezek 16:23; Esth 1:6; 6:8; 8:15; Dan 10:5; 12:6.7) (LEVESQUE, 1908, p. 257-265). The term is employed here, in 18:6 for Babylon and in 19:14 for the army of heaven. There is a contrast between the use of linen for Babylon, standing for lust and vanity, and the use by the bride which becomes evident next.

The term *δικαίωμα* (*dikaiōma*) stands for the fair acts of the saints and the resulting condition from the practice of justice (BEALE, 1999, p. 941). While in the other instance, in 15:4, it stands for the sentence of condemnation (AUNE, 1998, p. 1031). Thereby, the kind of fine linen worn by the bride is explained. We can observe, other times in Revelation, the explanation of the symbolic meaning of the image used (1:20; 4:5; 8:3; 13:6; 14:10; 17:9.12.15.18) (AUNE, 1998, p. 1030).

The last hymn consists in an end which recaptures, like a summary, a lot of themes present in other passages of Revelation, such as, the great multitude in heaven (19:1 // 7:9); the true and just judgement (19:2 // 15:6; 16:5); the judgement of the great prostitute (19:2 // 17:1-18.24; 11:18); the vengeance of blood (19:2 // 6:10); the smoke (19:3 // 14:11); the elders and the living beings prostrated (19:4 // 4:9-10); the praise of the small and the great alike (19:5 // 11:18); the reign of the Lord (19:6 // 14:1-5); the final fulfilment (19:1-2 // 21) (AUNE, 1998, p. 1023).

In the hymns, K-P. Jörns notices the parallels in the attributes to God and other terms which are repeated in the final hymn *δόξα* (*doxa*) (19:1 // 4:11); *δύναμις* (*dynamis*) (19:1 // 4:11; 11:17; 12:10); *ἐκρίνειν* (*ekrinen*) (19:2 // 16:5; 18:20); *ἐφθέρειν* (*ephtheiren*) (19:2 // 11:18); *ἐξεδίκησεν* (*exedikēsen*) (19:2 // 16:6; 6:10) (JÖRNS, 1971, p. 160). The list is still broadened with: *σωτηρία* (*sōtēria*) (19:1 // 7:10; 12:10); *ἀμὴν* (*amēn*) (19:4 // 5:14; 7:12).

The hymnic closing of the Book of Revelation occurs in 19:1-8 with a resumption of the themes, terms, characters and attributes already addressed

⁸ For instance: Mt 25:1-13; 2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-32; 2Clem 14:2; Tertulian, *adversus Marcionem* 5:18; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 3:6. According to: AUNE, 1998, p. 1030.

to God and the Lamb in the other hymns. The scene is recomposed so that the reader-listener enters this kingdom of God and sings praise to God for the harlot's condemnation and the vengeance of the servants' blood (19:2). Thus, the passage leads those who welcome this "unveiling" to a communion with God through the Lamb.

Conclusion

The Book of Revelation organises the narrative to present to the audience the mystery of God and his Christ. Little by little, the mystery is revealed through the facts and the plot, culminating in the final experience of a new heaven and a new earth (21:1). In the hymns, we also accompany this initiation into the action of God.

The last of them in Revelation takes place solemnly with a great praise full of "alleluia" (19:1.3.4.6) and with parallel formulas: praise our God (19:5); let us be glad, let us rejoice and give Him glory (19:7). The expressions demonstrate the rejoicing for the conquered victory.

The reasons to celebrate, mentioned in the narrative of the book and the previous hymns, are immediately explained through the double use of the particle ὅτι (*hoti*). They are seen in the first part of the hymn (19:1-4): the judgements of God are "fair and true" and He "judged the great prostitute" (19:2). Once again, the divine action against the "enemies" of the Christians is exalted (11:18; 15:6; 16:5).

In the second part of the hymn (19:5-8), two other occurrences of the particle ὅτι (*hoti*) communicate the reasons for the praise. The Lord our God has reigned (19:6) and then the marriage of the Lamb has taken place (19:7). Earlier, the attention was on the divine judges, and now we behold the consequence of the just divine actions expressed in the aorist time (ἐβασίλευσεν, ἦλθεν. (*ebasileusen, elthen*), as an event: the reign and the nuptial communion. The nuptials, whose celebration is started, manifest the Reign of God longed for by the Christians⁹.

Finally, the image of the woman-spouse shows up, prepared for the nuptials with the Lamb contrasting it with the woman-prostitute (17:4-9) (DELORME; DONEGANI, 2010, p. 104). The Christian community, in the narrative of Revelation, shows up described as a woman robed with the sun and crowned with twelve stars (12:1) for the battle against the beast

⁹ Kevin Miller argues that Rev 19:5-22,9 makes up a narrative unit about the nuptial reign, in which it is shown that the nuptials are the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God (MILLER, 1998, p. 304).

and in the present hymn ready for the nuptials (19:7). It shows the itinerary of those who believe in Christ and overcome their battles in order to live the communion with God in Christ. In the end of the book (21:9), the woman-spouse will appear victorious and glorified, demonstrating Christian hope in triumph over adversities.

The last hymn (19:1-8) compiles the themes developed and celebrated previously in the others. The “alleluia” of invitation to praise God (19:1.3.4.6) and other expressions with the same meaning (19:5.7) characterize the text and demonstrate the festive tone towards which the narrative is heading. The justifications for rejoicing are “the true and just judgements of God”, the “judgement of the great whore” and “vengeance for the blood of her servants” (19:2). The act of falling down and worshipping God is repeated amid the smoke of incense (19:3). No more asking for justice, because it is being realized (HOWARK-BROOK; GWYOTHER, 2003, p. 264). Hence the joyful celebration and reference to the marriage of the Lamb with his wife prepared and clothed in the linen of righteousness (19:7-8), in contrast to the fall of Babylon.

Therefore, divine justice does not consist in a punishment for the ones who make mistakes, but in the communion of all people with God in Christ. Thus, the hymn stands for the celebration that the great multitude makes calling those of that moment and all from the contemporary time to enter into nuptials with the Lamb. For that, we must get dressed with the justice of the saints (19:8).

Step by step, whoever approaches the Book of Revelation penetrates the mystery of God. The beginning takes place with the presentation of the throne room, where God is seated (4:8-11) and the slain Lamb stands (5:9-14). Then it proclaims that salvation belongs to God and the Lamb (7:10-12). After that the reign of God and his Christ begins (11:15-18) and the realization of salvation (12:10-12), which consist in the judgement of the oppressors of Christians. Finally, the wonderful works of the Lord are celebrated (15:3-4) and his true and just judgements (16:5-7), singing the final “hallelujah” on the way to the wedding with the Lamb (19:1-8).

Thus, we see a mystagogic path in the hymns from the presentation of God and Christ, the immolated Lamb (4:8-11; 5:9-14), until the victory celebration (19:1-8), in which Christians are involved and called to the final “alleluia” of God’s marriage to humanity (19:8), through the Lamb. The hymns associate heaven and earth and demonstrate a theology of the Book of Revelation that fascinates rather than frightens and proposes admiration and reverent awe (THOMPSON, 1990, p. 73).

In this way, the reader-listener passes from reverence to God and the Lamb through the different attributes for the celebration of the divine action that occurs in the historical experience of the first Christians: “Reading God’s

character is more than a mere intellectual exercise. It is an act of worship". (ROTZ; RAND, 1999, p. 96).

According to the hymns, worshiping God is not a "static" act, but "ecstatic" for moving the human being to the recognition of his saving action among those who are afflicted and waiting for new times. Christians should take comfort in the victory-assured experience.

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