

# APOCALYPSE

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## I. - ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK

The APOCALYPSE is a collection of visions which is divided into two parts of very unequal length and very different subject matter. The visions of the first part are contained in the first three chapters and result in seven letters to the angels of seven churches in Asia. The visions of the second part, which extend over nineteen chapters, describe appalling calamities followed by the picture of Jerusalem descending from heaven. Let us leave the letters aside for the moment and deal with the calamities first.

They will be sent at the request of the souls of the martyrs, who will burst into joy when their prayer is answered. The request of the martyrs is set out in these words 6:9-11:

I saw under the altar the souls of those who were sacrificed because of the word of God and the testimony they gave. They cried out with a loud voice and said: How long, O holy and truthful Master, will you delay to do justice to us and to avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?

The hymn of joy that the martyrs, and with them the inhabitants of heaven, will sing when their wishes have been fulfilled, is reported in chapter 19, 1-2 ;

After this I heard as it were the mighty voice of a great multitude saying in heaven, 'Hallelujah, salvation, glory, and power to our God, because his judgments are just and righteous, because he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her harlotry, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.

The calamities destined to avenge the martyrs will culminate in the fall of Babylon, which is presented in the guise of a prostitute and whose coming ruin is written in advance in chapters 17-18:

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls, and said unto me, Come, I will show thee the condemnation of the great whore that sitteth upon many

waters... After this I saw another angel... And he cried with all his might, saying, "It is fallen, it is fallen, the great Babylon! The great city is destroyed in one hour!

## II. ELIMINATION OF HYPOTHESES

The Seer who announces the coming ruin of Babylon provides us with some details about this criminal city. Let us gather them. He says 17:2:

With her the kings of the earth have committed fornication... (9). The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits... The woman you saw is the great city that has kingship over the kings of the earth.

This Babylon, which rules over all the kings of the earth, which inoculates them all with idolatry (designated under the symbol of fornication), cannot obviously be the historical Babylon, which was hardly more than a memory at that time. We are in the presence of an allegory. And it is impossible to get lost in the meaning of this allegory, since the 'seven mountains' constitute a single topography. It is Rome, the city of seven hills, the ruler of the world, that is referred to here. It is the city that heaven will destroy incessantly to satisfy the martyrs who cry out for vengeance.

The Apocalypse announces the coming destruction of pagan Rome. We must therefore dismiss as chimerical all the interpretations which, with multiple nuances, see in the Apocalypse the anticipated history of the tribulations of the Church, interpretations in which, for many centuries, Catholic exegesis has taken pleasure. But we must also discard the interpretation which has been too dear to Protestant exegesis for too long, and which sees in the Apocalypse a prophecy directed against the Papacy. All these systems, as soon as they are confronted with the texts, vanish like dreams.

Revelation does not merely tell us that pagan Rome will soon be destroyed. It also tells us how this destruction will take place. A first piece of information is already given to us by 16, 12 where we see what one of the angels in charge of the vials of divine anger did:

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"The sixth poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates; and its water dried up so that the way of the kings coming from the East was prepared."

According to this text, it is from a region beyond the Euphrates that the executors of divine vengeance must come. To get to their work they will have to cross the Euphrates. Providence, from which no detail escapes, prepares the way for them by drying up the great river. This information is completed by 17:12, where there is mention of ten horns, which are ten kings, and a Beast with which the kings will work:

"The ten horns that you saw and the Beast will hate the harlot, strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her in the fire."

From this it follows that Rome is going to be plundered and then burned by a Beast coming from a country beyond the Euphrates and having under his command ten kings, more exactly ten captains, because the Seer explains to us (12) that the kings have not yet received the kingship. Naturally, we want to know what this Beast is, who is to come from the East with his escort of ten captains and who will reduce Rome to ashes. This is what the Seer tells us. The Beast is the Roman Empire (according to 13:2). This Beast is the mount of the harlot woman, i.e. Rome (17:3). It has seven heads, i.e. seven emperors (13:1; 17:9). Each of these heads is practically identified with the empire it rules, i.e. with the Beast, so that the Beast that designates the Roman empire can also designate an emperor. This is the spectacle that presents itself to us in 17:6, where it speaks of the Beast that 'was', that 'is no more', that 'must rise from the abyss' and astonish men 'because it was and is no more and will appear again'. This Beast is one of the seven emperors (17:10):

"Five have fallen, one exists, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain for a short time. And the Beast that was and is not is himself an eighth emperor, and is of the seven."

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And it is precisely this emperor who, with his entourage of kings, is to come from the depths of the East to destroy Rome. To this information let us add the following which is provided by 13, 3:

"I saw one of these heads as if wounded to death, but its mortal wound was healed."

The head in question, which is an emperor, is clearly identical to the Beast who was, who is no longer, who will come again, and who must return to destroy Rome.

Let us summarise. Rome is going to be destroyed by one of its emperors, more exactly by one of its former emperors, that is to say by a man who was at the head of the empire, who is no longer there, who was wounded to death, whose wound is healed, and who is going to return from the East with an escort of captains. This is what the Seer says. And his words are like a collection of puzzles. Now let us open Tacitus. Here is what we read in the Histories, II, 8 (Burnouf's translation):

"Around the same time Greece and Asia were appalled by the false news that Nero was coming. The contradictory accounts of his death had given rise to the lie and credulity of supposing him alive. Several impostors arose, whose attempts and catastrophe I shall relate in the course of this work. This one was a slave from Pontus, or, according to others, a freedman from Italy, skilled in singing and playing the lyre, a talent which, combined with the resemblance of features, favoured the success of his fraud...".

The events of which Tacitus tells us took place in the last weeks of the year 68. Let us consult Suetonius. Here is what he says (Nero, 57, translation by Baudement):

"Twenty years after (the death of Nero), during my youth, an adventurer boasting of being Nero, made himself among the Parthians, by the favour of this name which was dear to them, a powerful party, and he was only returned to us with great difficulty."

Suetonius' contemporary, the rhetorician Dion Chrysostom, tells us that many people still imagine Nero as alive (Oral. 21, 10, *hon ghé kai nun eti pantes epithumousi dzén, hoi de pleistoi kai oiontai.*). The Sibylline books, 4, 117-124; 137-139; 5, 145, 363; 8, 71) say that Nero is with the Parthians and that he will soon return. Lactantius (*De morte persecutorum*, 2) tells us that, in his time, many thought that Nero was still alive and that he would return to prepare the way for the Antichrist. According to Sulpice Severus (*Dialogus*, 2, 14), St. Martin of Tours believed that Nero would soon return and that the Antichrist would follow. Sulpice Severus, speaking in his own name, expresses the same feeling (*Historia sacra*, 11,29); he even applies to Nero the text of Revelation 13, 3: *et plaga mortis ejus cur ata est*. Finally Augustine (*De civitate Dei*, 20,19) speaking of Nero says: *Unde nonnulli ipsum resurrecturum et futurum Antichristum suspicantur. Alii vero nec occisum putant sed subiraetum potius... et vivum occultari... donec suo tempore reveletur et restituatur in regnum*. Augustine, moreover, rejects this opinion; he merely notes that it still has supporters.

The fact is established. The death of Nero, which had been witnessed only by a very few people and whose circumstances had remained mysterious, did not find credence among the popular masses.

It was thought that the monster, who had been seriously wounded but not dead, had escaped from his enemies by fleeing, that he had found a refuge in the East, and that he would return and take his revenge. This legend, already formed at the end of the year 68, was maintained for a long time in various forms, since in the time of St. Augustine it still had adherents. If we now approach the popular belief, the texts of the Apocalypse (13:3; 16:10; 17:1-16), they immediately become clearer, The Beast wounded to death but whose wound is healed is Nero who, despite the dagger thrust into his throat, is supposed to have escaped death. The Beast that has been, is no longer, and is to reappear is Nero, who was emperor, is no longer emperor, and is to take over the reins of the Empire. The captains who will escort the Beast are the Parthian generals who are preparing to support Nero's claims. The Parthian army, in its march on Rome, will meet the Euphrates; it is therefore to allow it to pass that the foreseeing angel dries up the bed of the great river. Finally, the Beast, who must reduce Rome to ashes, is again Nero who already, in 64, set fire to the imperial city and who thought in 68 of repeating his first exploit (Suetonius, Nero, (16).

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Illuminated by popular legend, the texts of the Apocalypse become intelligible. Deprived of this light they are no more than a shapeless grimoire. How can we hesitate to conclude that our Seer shares the common belief that Nero, followed by the Parthians, will soon march on Rome and destroy it?

The Apocalypse, which knows that Rome will soon be destroyed to avenge the blood of the martyrs, also knows that the executor of the great works of divine justice will be Nero. We are now in a position to appreciate Bossuet's theory that Revelation announces the destruction of Rome by Alaric, and that of Grotius who sees in this book the prediction of the progressive dismemberment of the Roman Empire by the Barbarians and the sacking of Rome by Totila. These two interpretations and others like them have the merit of applying the oracles of Revelation to pagan Rome<sup>1</sup>. But because they leave out Nero, they only manage to identify 'the Beast' at the cost of unacceptable expedients, and they have no consistency. So let us leave them aside and continue our research.

1. Grotius, *Annotationes ad Apocalypsim*, 17, 16, Opera III, 1217, London, 1679; Bossuet, *The Apocalypse with an explanation*. Preface, 7, 10 and commentary.

We have seen that an angel dried up the bed of the Euphrates to enable the executors of divine vengeance to march on Rome, and we have concluded that Nero, when he proceeds to accomplish his mission, will start from a country beyond the Euphrates. This conclusion, which is rigorous, invalidates Renan's theory, which we now have to examine. Renan (*L'Antéchrist*, p. 410 ff.) explains wonderfully that "the Beast" of chapters 13 and 17 of the Apocalypse is Nero. From this he deduces (p. 355) that the Apocalypse was launched to the public at the "end of January of the year 69". He even says (p. XXI): "This date can be determined to within a few days. On what does such precision rest? On the close relationship which, according to him, existed between the writing of the Apocalypse and the appearance of the false Nero of whom Tacitus tells us. This impostor who, surrounded by a band of vagabonds, passed himself off as Nero and undertook the conquest of the empire, was killed on the island of Cythnos (of the Cyclades group) at a date which cannot be later than the first days of February 69. Renan, after having placed these historical data before our eyes, adds (p. 438): "It seems to us impossible that these lines (of the Apocalypse) were written after the murder of the false Nero by Asprenas. The sight of the impostor's corpse being carried from town to town, the contemplation of his features extinguished by death, would have spoken too obviously against the author's apprehensions of the return of the Beast. We therefore readily admit that John, in the island of Patmos, had knowledge of the events on the island of Cythnos, and that the effect produced on him by the strange rumours was the principal cause of the letter which he wrote to the churches of Asia to inform them of the great news of the risen Nero."

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In two words, according to Renan, the Beast whose return the Apocalypse announces is the false Nero of the island of Cythnos, who began to stir up opinion in January 69 and who was killed in the first days of the following month. Our Seer could not have known this impostor until the time when he had given his plans a beginning of execution, which did not take place until the middle of January 69. And he could not have continued to believe in the return of the Beast from the day when he was killed, which took place at the beginning of February. The Apocalypse therefore appeared "at the end of January 69". Let us examine the result obtained by Renan. The result is that the Beast whose return the Apocalypse announces is the false Nero of the year 69. One cannot wish for anything more precise. The confrontation with the text of Revelation will tell us if the accuracy is up to the level of precision. In Revelation, the captains who serve the Beast come from a country beyond the Euphrates, and it is from this same country that the Beast also comes, since he has these captains under his command (16:12; 17:12-13). The false Nero of the year 69 does not reside beyond the Euphrates; neither do his

captains, I mean the vagabonds who surround him. The whole band has embarked in a port of Asia Minor and sailed to Syria or Egypt; thwarted by the storm, they have found a refuge in the island of Cythnos; they are only waiting for a favourable opportunity to leave. In this adventure, the Euphrates has no place. The Beast that Renan presents to us does not correspond to the Beast that Revelation presents to us.

When the total of an addition is inaccurate, it is because somewhere there is an error in the calculations. Renan made a mistake in his calculations. He saw that the Beast of the Apocalypse is Nero, but then wrongly identified him with the false Nero of 69. Where did this error come from? Was it then more difficult to find and establish other identifications? No. In any case, since Suetonius tells us that almost twenty years later, in the year 88, another impostor who had taken refuge with the Parthians and was supported by them passed himself off as Nero, Renan should have studied this second identification and considered its advantages and disadvantages. He did not do so. He did not suspect the possibility of any hypothesis apart from the false Nero of 69. Again, where did this mistake come from?

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From two causes. First of all, the link that Renan imagined between the writing of the Apocalypse and the odious massacre of Christians that Nero committed in the year 64. Let us collect the comments with which he accompanies the account of this monstrous crime: (p. 178) "Rome, made responsible for all the bloodshed, became, like Babylon, a sort of sacramental and symbolic city (reference to Revelation 18:24; 19:2)... There was no longer any doubt; the Antichrist, the Christ of evil, existed. The Antichrist was this monster with a human face..."; p. 202: "The bloody episode of August '64 had equalled in horror the most hideous dreams that a sick brain could conceive. For several years the Christian conscience will be obsessed by it..."; p. 206 "Ephesus will be the point where the resentment of the events of 64 will be the most intense. All the hatreds of Rome will be concentrated there; from there will go forth, in four years, the furious invective with which the Christian conscience will respond to the atrocities of Nero.

Renan saw above all in the Apocalypse the cry of horror raised by the Christians following the massacre of 64. He also understood that such a protest could hardly be explained twenty or thirty years after the crime and that the martyrs of 64 did not have to wait until around 90 or 100 to cry vengeance to heaven. It was this deduction that led him to the date of 69. And certainly the deduction is not without rigour; but since it leads to an erroneous result, we are entitled to conclude that the premise is false. No, Revelation is not the "furious invective with which the Christian conscience" responded

"to the atrocities of Nero"; and the martyrs who (6:10) appeal to divine vengeance are not the Christian martyrs of 64.

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The second reason for Renan's error is the interpretation he gives to 17:10: "(The seven heads are seven mountains...) They are also seven kings: five have fallen, one exists, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain for a short time. Renan explains to us very well on pp. 407, 432 that the ancients included Julius Caesar in the list of emperors; that the five fallen emperors are therefore Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius; that Nero, who is the sixth, will also be the eighth mentioned by verse 22; and that the Seer is writing during the reign of Galba. Renan treats the author of the Apocalypse as a historian whose texts must be interpreted according to the rules of historical method. Therein lies his error. The Seer is an apologist who bends history to the demands of his thesis. He needs seven emperors because he has posited that the seven hills of the imperial city symbolise the holders of the empire. To find his number he takes advice only from his own interest. He removes from the list all the names that bother him, and he constructs for his own use a list that has the merit of being useful to him. We should therefore not ask the texts 17:10-11 to inform us about the date of the Apocalypse. The opposite method must be followed. Let us first find out, without taking 17:10-11 into account, when Revelation was written. Once we have found this date, we can use it to interpret 17:10-11.

Nero is the Beast who is to return to destroy Rome. He is the one who has been given this mission. And when the time comes to accomplish it, he will leave, followed by his lieutenants, from a country beyond the Euphrates. Precisely the false Nero of 88; the one of whom Suetonius speaks resided beyond the Euphrates; he lived with the Parthians, he had their support. And, from 88 onwards, Nero's stay with the Parthians is an integral part of the legend of his return. The Beast is expected and it is known that he will come from the countries beyond the Euphrates. We have the right, therefore, to affirm that the Apocalypse either aims at the false Nero of 88, or uses the legend of Nero's return that has reached its second stage. In the first hypothesis it was written in 88. In the second, its composition cannot be placed before, around 90; but it could be set much later. It is up to the texts to decide. Let us examine the texts.

22

In the first verses of chapter 13, the Seer speaks of the Beast, which here is the Roman Empire. He first shows him (5 and 6) uttering blasphemies against God who gave him full liberty of action for forty-two months. Then we read (7): "And it was given to him to

make war with the saints and to overcome them. So the Beast, that is, the Roman Empire, made war with the saints, a victorious war in which the Seer believes he recognizes the fulfillment of a prophecy of Daniel 7:21, for he borrows its text.

### III. THE APOCALYPSE IS A JEWISH BOOK

Who are these saints? What is this war? What is this victory? Nero massacred the Christians of Rome in the year 64. In the last years of his reign (about 95) Domitian condemned to death as guilty of impiety or atheism a number of people, some of whom, notably Flavius Clemens, are rightly or wrongly thought to have been Christians. Around the year 108 Trajan issued a rescript which brought many Christians before the courts. But, if it is well understood that a war presupposes combat in which the aggressor meets resistance, one cannot think of decorating with the name of war and victorious war either the dreadful slaughter organised by Nero, or the proscriptions decreed by Domitian, or the legal proceedings organised by Trajan. The Roman Empire made war on the Jews once under Vespasian, a second time under Trajan, a third time under Hadrian; and in all three wars it was victorious over the Jews, whom it killed by the hundreds of thousands. He also put Christians to death and, from Trajan onwards, instituted legal persecution against them. But it cannot be said that he defeated the Christians in war, since they offered him no resistance. The Beast of which

Revelation speaks of in 13:7 is indeed the Roman Empire. But the "saints" he is fighting against are not Christians; they are Jews.

#### 1. The Roman Empire.

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And his victory over them must be placed either in 70, 117 or 135. This is the result to which the serious study of 13:6-8 leads us.

This result is of the utmost importance. But the more important it is, the more it needs to be confirmed, to be guaranteed against any chance of error. Let us see, then, if Revelation deals elsewhere with the Jews, if it is interested in them. First of all, let us examine who the "saints" who appear here and there in its texts are.

In chapter 17, the author describes Rome, which an angel has just shown him in the guise of a prostitute. His picture ends with this sentence (6): "And I saw this woman drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Here the victims are divided into two groups. In the first are "the saints", in the other "the martyrs of Jesus". These two groups are obviously differentiated by something. By what? Some commentators go on without stopping: this is a misunderstanding. Others say that the "saints" are the ordinary Christians while the "martyrs of Jesus" are those who have given outstanding witness to Jesus. But what better witness can be given than the witness of blood? The "saints" shed their blood just as the "martyrs of Jesus" did, since the prostitute was drunk with it. Both groups are made up of men who shed their blood. So what is the difference between them? The text tells us clearly: Only in the second group are those who shed their blood for Jesus. The martyrs of the first group shed their blood for another cause, for a cause that was not that of Jesus. The martyrs of the second group are Christians who were sacrificed in a persecution that we will have to identify later. The martyrs of the first group are the Jews who were massacred by Rome either in 68-70, 115-117 or 132-135.

2. Such as Bossuet.

24

Let us continue our investigation of the 'saints'. In 11:18 the twenty-four elders, happy to see that God is about to avenge his servants, give thanks to him: "Your wrath has come; the time has come to judge the dead, to reward your servants the prophets, the saints and those who fear your name." In 16:6 an angel speaks similarly: "You are just... you are holy because you give these judgments; for they have shed the blood of the saints and prophets and you have given them blood to drink." In 18:24, another angel, who celebrates the destruction of Rome in advance, explains why that city will be punished: it is "because the blood of the prophets and saints and of all those who were slaughtered on earth was found in it". In all these texts the saints are associated with the prophets. In all of them, too, the prophets and saints are martyrs; they shed their blood for the right cause and God is about to avenge them. If it is for the Christian cause that they shed their blood, it is difficult to see what the prophets have to do with it, since in this hypothesis they can only be characters like Agabus, of whom Acts 11:27 and 21:10 speak. The importance of these prophets could not be compared to that of the apostles, whose greatest ones - even if one insists on placing Revelation in 69 - had already shed their blood. It is the apostles that should have been mentioned and not the prophets. Let there be no objection to verse 18:20, in which the apostles intervene: "And you, saints, apostles and prophets, rejoice also." What is inexplicable is their absence in three texts where we should meet them and where we meet instead the prophets who

have no title to be there. In two words, the hypothesis that the "saints" of 11:18; 16:6; 18:24 are Christian martyrs has the result of making the explanation of these texts impossible. This result is a sufficient indication of its falsity. Let us therefore turn our gaze to another side and say that the "saints" in question shed their blood for the Jewish cause at a date yet to be determined. Immediately the "prophets" become either the prophets of the Old Testament or the instigators of the as yet unknown uprising in which the "saints" succumbed; and in either capacity they are here justified. I would add that the "God-fearing men" of 11:18 become, in this hypothesis, proselytes affiliated with Judaism and victims of their affiliation. Our previously unintelligible texts acquire a plausible meaning. In four places the "saints" of Revelation are martyrs of the Jewish cause. It is time to return to the "souls" of 6:10 who ask God to avenge them and the "servants" of 19:2 whom God has avenged. We have seen that the souls who cry out to heaven for vengeance cannot be the Christian martyrs of 64. But it is impossible not to recognise them in the "saints" whose blood Rome shed and who will be avenged. The souls who, in 6:10, ask God to take their cause into his hands and who, in 19:2, have obtained satisfaction, are thus Jewish martyrs. And since the theatrical setting of the Apocalypse - apart from various alterations - serves to prepare or carry out divine vengeance, it follows that the Apocalypse, considered as a whole and deducting certain additions which remain to be determined, is a Jewish work.

25

This second conclusion, while confirming the first, makes it singularly worse. It cannot be formulated without fear of falling into some illusion. It cannot be admitted without wishing for additional proof. Does this additional evidence exist? Can we add new concordances to those already mentioned? Let us see.

From chapter 8 onwards, calamities of all kinds fall in avalanche on the earth. But, before the cataclysms are unleashed, an angel (7:3-8) marks the servants of God on the forehead. Where are these servants of God? In the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, all of which are successively reviewed, and all of which provide their share of servants of God. The Epistle to the Galatians tells us (3:28) that in Christ Jesus "there is neither Jew nor Greek"; and (6:15) that "circumcision is nothing, nor the foreskin, but the new creature. But this doctrine is irrelevant to our Seer who proudly displays before us the list of the tribes of the sons of Israel and enumerates the servants of God that each of them possesses.

Let us now read chapter 21. We see the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven. She is marvellous. In her mighty wall twelve gates are pierced. And on the twelve gates are written twelve names (21:12). What are they? "Those of the twelve tribes of the

sons of Israel". I know that a few lines later (14) the wall has "twelve bases" on which are "the twelve names of the twelve apostles". I will come back later on to the "twelve bases" and say why they are there. I simply note here that they do not succeed in masking what is written. Whatever they do, what is written on the twelve doors are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel, and the names attest in their own way that Revelation is a Jewish work.

26

Are there any other correspondences? Let us look at the letters to the churches of Asia.

The letter to the church in Smyrna denounces (2:8) people who "call themselves Jews, who are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. The letter to the church in Philadelphia tells us (3:9) that there is also a "synagogue of Satan" in that city, and that this synagogue is made up of people "who call themselves Jews but are not, and who lie". The "synagogues of Satan" are, in the author's view, false synagogues, against which the synagogues of God stand. In Smyrna and Philadelphia there are two synagogues, the synagogue of God and the synagogue of Satan, which is only a caricature of the first. What is the difference between them? Let us take the author's words. He explains that the synagogues of Satan have as members people who pretend to be Jews without being Jews. If their members were Jews, they would no longer be synagogues of Satan. It is clear that only true Jews constitute the synagogues of God and that a synagogue belongs to Satan when its members are not Jewish but claim to be.

Here two opposite hypotheses are possible. One can assume that the author is a Christian who, based on Romans 2:28-29, says to the Jews: "We are the true Jews because we have true circumcision of the heart"<sup>1</sup>. But one can also assume that the author is a Jew who says to the Christians: "You claim to be Jews:

1. See Justin, Dialogue, 11, 123, 135.

you lie; we alone are Jews because we alone observe the Law." We are Jews because we alone observe the Law. How to choose? The choice would be impossible if our two hypotheses were both true.

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But it is not. The Christians only claimed to be the real Jews when they were forced to do so by the demands of polemics. In everyday life they forgot this challenge and let the Jews have a monopoly on their title. The author of our seven letters is a Jew. The

meaning of his texts is this: "The Christians of Smythe and Philadelphia, pressed by our objections and in order to have something to say when they are at the end of their arguments, call themselves Jews. They lie and their synagogues are synagogues of Satan. The conduct of the opponents is compared to that of Balaam and Jezebel; the partisans are promised a piece of hidden manna: all these memories of the Old Testament are perfectly explained in the words of a Jewish author.

But what are the "depths of Satan" (2:24) known to the adversaries? How can a Jew call the Christian apostles "liars" (2:2)? The "depths of Satan" are an allusion to the "depths of God" spoken of in First Corinthians (2:10). The author is familiar with this text and responds with disdainful irony. The reproach against the Christian apostles is explained by chronology. If we consider only the vocabulary, we must say that the Christian apostolate is borrowed from the Jewish apostolate. Before the coming of Christ, the Sanhedrin sent delegates to the Jews of the dispersion to collect the temple tax and to carry out other missions required by the circumstances. These delegates were called apostles. Paul was one of these apostles before his conversion; he was sent by the Sanhedrin to chastise the Jewish Christians. It is by imitation of the Jewish apostles that the delegates of the Christian communities and the preachers supposedly delegated by Christ were called apostles<sup>1</sup>. The author of our letters, who knows only the Jewish apostles, calls the Christian apostles liars.

(Turmel attributes, in 1926, 1 Cor. 2:10 to a Marcionite writer thus later than 135).

1. Harnack, Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums<sup>1</sup>, p. 274.

28

## IV. INSPIRED BY THE REVOLT OF 132

The book of Revelation, minus certain supplements that have yet to be determined, is a Jewish book that originated in a Jewish uprising that was crushed by the Roman armies. The Jews revolted three times. The first revolt led to the war of Vespasian and Titus. The second led to Trajan's war. The third led to the war of Hadrian. Which of these wars was the occasion of the Apocalypse?

Let us first set aside the war of Trajan 115-117. It took place in Mesopotamia, Cyrenaica and Egypt, but it did not take place in Palestine. Now Revelation shows us (11:2) the holy city, i.e. Jerusalem, trampled underfoot by the nations for forty-two months. It could

not have been written in 117. We have only two dates for it, 70 and 132. Which one should we choose? The legend of Nero's return has something to say here. The Apocalypse announces that Nero will return soon to destroy Rome, that he will return at the head of troops whose country is located beyond the Euphrates. The Apocalypse knows the legend of Nero's return in its second stage, that is, in the form that popular belief took from 88 onwards. The Apocalypse was written after 88, and since by that date we have only the war of Hadrian, we must conclude that the war which inspired the Apocalypse is that of Hadrian.

This important result is strongly motivated. Nevertheless, as an illusion is always possible, before accepting it frankly and without hesitation, we would like to see it confirmed. We have done this by taking the legend of Nero's return as our guide. Let us see if there is not another way to get there.

In chapter 11:2-7, the Seer predicts that the holy city will be trampled underfoot by the nations for forty-two months. Then God will send his 'two witnesses'. These people will have the power to prophesy. Fire will come out of their mouths and devour all those who wish to harm them. But this will not stop the Beast from the abyss from making war on them, defeating and killing them. Who are these two witnesses who will prophesy while the holy city, that is Jerusalem, is being trampled underfoot by the nations, whose mouths will vomit fire, who will exterminate their enemies and whom the Beast will nevertheless eventually kill? Orthodox commentators give, here as everywhere, fanciful explanations, but which are at least clear and well deduced. It is easy to understand what they are saying and to see that they are logical, since their principles oblige them to admit that the Seer, enlightened from above, describes events in the future. Among independent commentators the confusion is complete. According to some, the Seer uses a literary artifice and, under the guise of prophesying, he actually describes events that have already taken place. According to others, he is really prophesying, describing future events that his exalted imagination shows him. Many adopt both solutions simultaneously and believe that, in our text, the description of the past is mixed with the prediction of the future. They take refuge in prophecy, because they cannot find in history two prophets who, after having thrown fire from their mouths and destroyed their enemies, were killed in Jerusalem by the Roman power. But we come back to the story anyway, because we realise that the prophetic genre is incapable of giving details like those in our text. We go from one solution to another because none of them gives satisfaction. The text of the two witnesses has so far been for the commentators like a net in which they have remained entangled.

For those of us who have assigned the date 132-135 to Revelation, let us see what Judea was like at that time. The Roman legions had entered in 132 to subdue a new Jewish revolt. Two of their generals were worn out by this arduous task. Finally, after hard and bloody fighting, they drowned the revolt in blood. It is said that nearly 600,000 Jews were killed, not to mention those who died of disease or starvation. Who raised the banner of the rebellion? Two men: Barkochba and Rabbi Aquiba. The former presented himself as the Messiah announced by the prophets and promised the Jews to restore the kingdom of Israel. The second covered the Messiah with his powerful patronage, for he "had been for years the first authority of the Jews; he was compared to Ezra and even to Moses" (Renan, *L'Eglise chrétienne*, p. 199).

30

Without Rabbi Aquiba the new Messiah's enterprise would have failed. It succeeded because the great doctor persuaded his co-religionists that Barkochba was the "star of Jacob" foretold by Moses in Numbers 24:17. Barkochba and Rabbi Aquiba were thus the instigators of the 132 revolt. It can even be said that they restored the kingdom of Israel, for they drove the Romans out of Jerusalem and minted coins bearing the effigy of the temple surmounted by a star<sup>1</sup>. Following the example of God his master, whose mouth throws fire in Psalms (18:9), the messiah Barkochba also threw fire from his mouth. St. Jerome, from whom we have this information, explains<sup>2</sup> that this charlatan put a flaming oakum in his mouth. But the Jews, who had absolute faith in their messiah, did not doubt the miracle. The kingdom established in 132 disappeared after three and a half years. Its two founders were killed.

1. See Schürer, *Geschichte des indischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Chrisiti*, I3, 679-701 which corrects the errors of Renan, *L'Eglise chrétienne*, p.193-213 and 541- 553.

2. *Apologia adversus Rufinum*, 3, 31.

The kingdom established in 132 disappeared after three and a half years, its two founders were killed, and posterity remembered the messiah and lost sight of his patron. Rabbi Aquiba was forgotten. Even in his own time, he was left in the shade abroad. Justin mentions only Barkochba (I Apol. 31:6); and the Fourth Gospel (5:43) makes the same observation<sup>3</sup>. But in Judea things must have been different. The Messiah and his protector, who lived together, who worked together, necessarily shared the same glory; the prodigies performed by the one were legitimised by the other and enhanced his prestige. Both were commonly called God's witnesses; both were said to

vomit fire from their mouths and destroy their enemies; both were thought to be invincible until the day when both fell under the sword of Roman soldiers.

3. Delafosse, *Le Quatrième Evangile*, p. 41.

I have spoken of the Jewish kingdom of 132 and its founders in the terms used by the oracle of the two witnesses. How could I have done otherwise? The oracle of the two witnesses, which becomes intelligible when framed in the revolt of 132-135, is meaningless when placed elsewhere. Only the events of 132-135 shed light on it.

31

Why else but because they inspired it? Let us therefore say without hesitation that the prophecy of the two witnesses borrows its elements from the revolt of 132, and let us now examine the details of the writing.

The text tells us (6) that the two witnesses have the power to close the sky during the days of their prophecy; that they also have the power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with all imaginable plagues. Let us read that the three years 132-135 were marked by a great drought, that there were also at that time various plagues such as famine and plague; and finally that the water of the torrents and cisterns was reddened by the blood of the victims of the war. The author takes natural phenomena and those which are the inevitable consequence of massacres, and turns them to the glory of the two founders of the kingdom. It is for the same reason that he applies (4) to these two characters the oracles of Zechariah, 4, 3, 12, where it is spoken of two olive trees and two candlesticks which stand before the Lord. It is difficult to see how these oracles could have been applied to Christian apostles. On the contrary, we can easily understand their application to defenders of Jewish institutions.

Now two words of history. From 70 onwards, Jerusalem was occupied by a Roman camp. Around it were gathered Jews, whose numbers grew. Some of them were Christians. They formed a Judeo-Christian church which continued to exist until the day when it was annihilated by the messiah Barkochba (132) and of which Eusebius has preserved for us (*Hist. eccl.* 4, 5, 3) the episcopal list. But the major part of the colony grouped around the Roman camp was composed of Jews who remained faithful to the religion of their fathers. The great concern of these disciples of Moses was naturally to raise the temple as soon as they could (see Schürer, I, 687). They rebuilt it, not with its former splendour, but as their modest resources allowed. It is this reconstruction that is described in oracular style in Revelation 11:1-2. The seer is commanded to measure the temple of God, the altar and the number of worshippers, but to leave out the outer court

of the temple, because the holy city is to be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles for forty-two months. The "pagans" here designate the Roman army which will remain camped in Jerusalem for "forty-two months", that is to say for a relatively short time (the expression is borrowed from Daniel; it is according to the word of Bossuet "a mysterious number" which one should not take literally). The temple with the altar will be rebuilt taking into account the limited number of worshippers. As for the outer court and all that is accessory, it will be renounced because of the misfortune of the times.

32

The oracle of the two witnesses makes sense when framed in the revolt of Barkochba. It only makes sense there. Now that this point is made, let us examine the vision of the heavenly woman and the dragon (12). It is summarised as follows (I will leave out 5b and 6, to which I will return later): A woman appears in the sky. She is wrapped in the sun; she has the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she is in labour pains. A great dragon also appears in the sky. He has seven heads, ten horns, seven diadems. His tail drags away a third of the stars of heaven and throws them to the earth. He is about to devour the woman's child. But now a great battle takes place. Michael and his angels enter into battle with the dragon, who also has angels at his side. The defeated dragon is cast down to earth with his angels. His fall is celebrated with a song of joy in heaven where he was despised because he was the accuser of his brothers before God. When he is on earth he goes after the woman and her offspring.

This is the vision. It must be explained. Let us transport ourselves by thought to Palestine. Since 70 there have been Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, whose episcopal list we know from Eusebius. Alongside them, but in much greater numbers, are non-Christian Jews. It is the same in the rest of Palestine. All these Christian and non-Christian Jews are brothers; but never have brothers been more bitter enemies against each other. The non-Christian Jews do all possible harm to the Judeo-Christians (Justin: Apol. 31, 5; Dialogue, 16, 4; 133, 6, where, however, he reproaches them for persecuting all Christians equally). They see them as renegades who accuse them before God of having put Jesus of Nazareth to death, who are, therefore, "accusers of their brothers before God". Their hatred of Judeo-Christians extends to Christianity. Christianity, with its communities scattered throughout Palestine, is to them like a hydra, a dragon with many heads. Since he accuses the Jews before God, he plays the role of Job's Satan, he deserves the name Satan. He is also the "devil", i.e. the "enemy" par excellence. Finally, by the seduction that he exercises, he reminds us of the serpent who deceived Eve (9). The Jews note with sorrow that the dragon drags many of their people into the folds of his tail. And, borrowing the language of Daniel who (8, 10)

compares the sons of Abraham to the stars of heaven, they say that the tail of the dragon causes a third of the stars in heaven to fall.

33

But in 132, the situation changes. At that time, the messiah Barkochba appears. The mother of the messiah is the Jewish nation. She wears, 12, 1, a crown of twelve stars which are the twelve tribes. It is for her that the sun and the moon were created (note the dream of Joseph, Gen., 37, 9); and this is why the sun envelops her and the moon is under her feet. The Messiah calls all the Jews to follow him to drive out the Romans and found the kingdom of Israel. All the Jews follow him as one man. All except the Judeo-Christians. They expect to see the crushing of the Roman Empire and the inauguration of the kingdom of Israel in the near future, but they expect these happy results from Jesus alone. It is Jesus who is their king; it is in him that they have placed their hope. So they refuse to follow the messiah of 132, to take part in the war to which this messiah invites them. They act as if they were friends of Rome, they seem to support her. And here we have the explanation of 13:2 and 4, which show the dragon lending his authority to the Beast.

Barkochba takes his revenge by slaughtering all those Judeo-Christians who do not have time to flee (Justin I Apol. 31, 6). This is when the fight between Michael and the dragon takes place. Michael is the messiah of 132. The dragon is Judeo-Christianity. The battle takes place in heaven, i.e. in Palestine, which is, according to the language of Daniel 8:10, the dwelling place of the army of the saints. Michael is victorious; the dragon is cast down to earth, i.e. those Judeo-Christians who are not slaughtered flee from the borders of Palestine. The inhabitants of heaven - the Jews - congratulate themselves on having been rid of the devil, Satan, that is, the enemy who accused them before God. But at the same time they pity the earth because of the evil person who is now taking up residence there.

34

He, however, did not give up his work. Since he could no longer pursue the Jewish nation in the heaven of Palestine where it had given birth to its son the Messiah, he pursued it on earth. How is she on earth, who at the beginning of the vision was living in heaven? She has not ceased to be in the heaven of Palestine; she is even more glorious than ever since her son reigns there. But she is also on earth. She is there because many of her children are scattered among the nations. Even when he was in heaven, the dragon had begun to "seduce the seed" (17) of the woman over the whole earth (12:9). Now that he is no longer in heaven, he works harder than ever against her,

against all those "who keep the commandments of God" (17). But he acts only by seduction, and if he tries to "draw the woman away" (15), it is by "casting as it were a river of water behind her (ibid.)", that is, by proselytising to the Jews.

I have explained the vision of the woman and the dragon. I have given an interpretation of it, the elements of which are linked together, let us now ask the commentators how they understand this vision. Up to this time the woman was, according to them, either the Christian Church or the Judeo-Christian Church; the son born of the woman was Jesus; the dragon was the Roman Empire. But how did the dragon lead the stars? How did he seduce the earth? How was he cast down from heaven to earth? How, while in heaven, was he the accuser of his brothers? And what brothers could this dragon have? To all these questions, either nothing was answered, or abracadabrious answers were given, and above all they had no cohesion between them.

For a quarter of a century we have fallen back on myths, and we have consumed them prodigiously. The myth of Latona and the serpent Python, the myth of Isis and Typhoon, the myth of Marduk and Tiamat, the myth of Ormazd and Ahriman have been called to the rescue. Dupuis' famous book on the Origin of all cults has been used and the astral elucubrations of this author have been put back in honour. The Woman of the Apocalypse became the constellation of Virgo; the Dragon became the constellation of the same name, and the twelve stars that surround the head of the Woman like a crown became the twelve signs of the Zodiac. But when we ask our modern mythologists, orientalist and astronomers the questions that we asked the ancient exegetes, when we ask them what the seduction accomplished by the dragon consists of, what the accusation that this same character makes before God against his brothers consists of, and who his brothers might be; When we invite them to decipher these hieroglyphs and others, they who know the cuneiform texts and the celestial map thoroughly, are reduced to reediting the solutions of the ancients, that is to say, to giving us answers that are as incoherent as they are fanciful. In the debauchery of erudition in which they have indulged, they have thought of everything except what needed to be explained.

35

## V. WRITTEN PARTLY AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS REVOLT PARTLY IN 135

The Apocalypse, apart from the alterations it underwent, is a product of the revolt of 132. Now that this has been demonstrated, let us examine the redaction closely and try to get an idea of its modalities.

The piece that runs from 17 to 19:7 is a long cry of rage against Rome, whose demise heaven will soon greet with a huge Alleluia. The author is angry with Rome because it is Rome (17:6) that has become drunk with the blood of the saints, because it is there (18:24) that the blood of the prophets and saints has been found. Now the souls who, in 6:12, are astonished that God is so slow to take up their cause, are angry at "the inhabitants of the earth" in general, and not exclusively at Rome. There is a contrast here. Where does it come from?

Let us continue. In 13:7 we learn that it was given to the Beast to make war on the saints and to defeat them. This was described at length in 17-19. Now according to 9:4 the plagues that will strike men must spare those whose foreheads are marked with the seal of God. And 7:1-8 tells us that these privileged ones are the sons of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their blood is to be spared: and yet they are slaughtered, for the 'saints' whose blood has intoxicated Rome are they. Another contrast. Where does it come from?

36

Let us continue. In 11, 5 the two witnesses are invulnerable, because all those who want to harm them are exterminated by the fire which comes out of their mouth. But in 11:7 these two witnesses are killed by the Beast that comes out of the abyss. Where does this new contrast come from? Other contrasts will soon appear, and we have limited ourselves to pointing out a few cases here in order to give a clear idea of a problem that must now be resolved.

The Apocalypse, apart from the alterations that will be discussed later, is not homogeneous. It presents antinomies that can only be explained by a difference in date. It is indeed the product of the revolt of 132; but some of its texts were written at the beginning of this great drama, the others only came after the denouement. This means that there are two distinct redactions in the Jewish book of Revelation. The first shows us how the uprising of 132 would have unfolded, if the wishes of the Jews had been fulfilled; it shows us an ideal uprising. The second tells us what the uprising actually was. It confesses the disaster that took place, and it announces the steps God will take to correct the awful reality.

The uprising of 132 was to be the revenge of all the Jews sacrificed to the cause of God, 6:10, not only of those who had perished in the catastrophe of 70, but also of those who, in 117, had been massacred in Mesopotamia, in Cyrenaica, in Egypt; finally, of those who, at various dates, had had their throats cut. The victims of the pagan world complained about the "inhabitants of the earth" and asked God to finally decide to avenge them. In the year 132, they learn that they will receive satisfaction 6,11. To honour his word, God will send a long series of plagues on the earth, but he will spare the tribes and the sons of Israel (7, 1-8; of course some Jews will still be affected, 6, 11). He will also send his two witnesses, and they will destroy by fire all those who want to harm them (11:9-6). The empire of the world will belong to God and to his messiah ("the empire of the world is given to our lord and to his Christ"; it is Yahweh who is the lord and Barkochba who is his Christ, his anointed one; same observation for 12, 10). And the twenty-four elders celebrate this triumph in advance as if it had already been achieved, 11:17: "We thank you, Lord God Almighty... that you reign. The nations are angry and your wrath has come.

37

In fact, the messiah does not yet possess the empire of the world; but he has succeeded in driving the Christian hydra, which had seduced a great number of Jews, out of heaven (Palestine) and into the earth (pagan land). This is only the beginning. Having driven the accusers of their brethren away from God, the messiah must now punish the Roman power and, with it, the rest of the earth. We see the Roman Empire in the form of a monster that the earth worships, that the dragon, Christianity, supports. This monster utters blasphemies against God, against his tabernacle, against the inhabitants of heaven (6, the Jews living in Palestine). But an angel (14, 6-7) announces that the hour of punishment has come. Then another angel (8) proclaims that justice is done:

She is fallen, she is fallen, the great Babylon who made all nations drink the wine of her prostitution (idolatry).

Rome is destroyed. It is then the turn of the earth (14:11-20). The human grapes are harvested. Then the living grapes are thrown into the great winepress of God's wrath, and the blood that comes out of the winepress goes up to the horses' bits over a distance of three hundred kilometres.

Now the empire of the world is assured to the messiah. The victors sing a song of thanksgiving and say to God 15:3:

Great and marvellous are your works, O Lord Almighty... All nations will come and worship before you, because your judgments have been made manifest.

From now on those who did not worship the Beast will reign for a thousand years with the messiah (20:4; the "Christ" spoken of in 4 and 6 is the Jewish messiah of 132). As for the Christian dragon, who is the devil and Satan, he has survived the immense carnage of which the enemies of the messiah have just been the victims; but he has lost nothing by waiting.

38

Indeed, an angel enchains him and casts him into the abyss for a thousand years (20:1-3). At the end of the thousand years Satan will come out of his prison, seduce the nations again and lead them to attack the camp of the saints established in Jerusalem (20:9). But all these pagan troops will be devoured by a fire that will descend from heaven. The devil, that is, Christianity, which is their effect, will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where, a thousand years before, the Roman Beast had already been thrown (19, 20); and both will be tormented for ever and ever (20, 10). The book closes with the final conclusion 22:6-19. This is what the Seer, the faithful interpreter of Jewish hope, expected from the uprising of 132. And this is what the first redaction contained, with a setting that I still have to talk about.

This setting consisted of an introduction and letters. The introduction read something like this:

Revelation which God gave to show to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass, and which he made known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2. Who bore witness to the word of God and to all that he saw, 3. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep what is written therein! For the time is near.

The letters, dictated by God himself to the Seer, were addressed to seven synagogues in Asia Minor. This destination, which has disappeared in the present text, is deduced from the fact that two of them denounce the Christian communities as synagogues of Satan. Most of these letters attacked the Christian religion, several contained threats, all spoke of a victory and promised a reward to those who would participate in the victory. Each letter promised a special reward. The letter to the synagogue in Thyatira 2:26-28 said

To him who overcomes I will give authority over the nations. He will break them with a rod of iron; they will be broken like clay vessels. And I will give him the morning star.

Rabbi Aquiba had said to the Jews when presenting the messiah: "Moses announced that a star would come out of Jacob. This star is Bar-Coziba who is before you. And from that time on, Bar-Coziba was called the son of the star (Barkochba) or simply the star. The letter to the synagogue of Thyatira confirmed the assertion of the famous rabbi and announced the reign of the star or the son of the star, the reign of Barkochba.

39

Let us now turn to the second Jewish redaction of the Apocalypse, the one that followed the catastrophe of 135. At this date there was nothing left of the dream that the Seer had made, that the Jews had made with him in 132. Nothing but the extermination of the Judeo-Christians of Palestine, which was definitive, since from then on the Christian church of Elia Capitolina (ancient Jerusalem) would be composed of faithful strangers to the Jewish race (Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 4, 5, 3 and 4, 6, 4; from 135 onwards the Jews were forbidden, on pain of death, to approach Jerusalem). Faced with the brutal denial of his predictions, the author of the Apocalypse was not discouraged. He maintained his hopes; only he adjusted them as best he could to reality. The adjustment required several operations, the whole of which constitutes the second Jewish redaction.

1. The first operation consisted in reworking the wording of the letters of transmission. In the first redaction God alone intervened to dictate the letters and he was called "the one who was, who is and who is to come" (1:4; 1:8); and also "the first and the last" (1:18; 2:8). In the second, the messiah is associated with God. He is the one who says: "I was dead and now I am alive" (1:18; 2:8). It is also he who appears in the form of a son of man, carrying a two-edged sword in his mouth (1:12-16; 2:12), who holds the seven stars in his hand (2:1) and whose eyes look like a flame of fire (2:18). Finally, it is he who will write on the victors the name of his God and of the city of his God, the new Jerusalem (3:12). He is even the only one to intervene in certain letters. This is due to an accident of transcription which made disappear one of the epithets used to designate God.

2. The second operation concerns the fate of the rebellious Jews and the two witnesses who led them to revolt. The crushing of the Jews is discreetly noted in 7:13-17, where it is said of :

those who come from the great tribulation.

Then in 13:7 which announces the victory of Hadrian's armies.

And it was given to him to make war on the saints and to overcome them.

and in 14, 13 where the fate of the victims is celebrated by God himself who says:

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!

As for the two witnesses that the first redaction (11, 5-6) presented as invincible, the second redaction (11, 7-8a) tells us that Rome finally overcame them:

When they have finished their testimony, the Beast who rises from the abyss will make war on them, overcome them and kill them.

Barkochba was killed in the city of Bether where he had taken refuge, and there is every reason to believe that Rabbi Aquiba was killed alongside him. But their corpses were probably taken by the Romans to Aelia Capitolina and left unburied (note that in 69 the corpse of the false Nero was carried through Asia Minor). This is, in any case, what the Seer tells us, adding:

Their corpses will be in the square of the great city which is called in a spiritual sense Sodom and Egypt.

Let us not be surprised to see him give Jerusalem the names of Sodom and Egypt. Since 135 Jerusalem no longer exists; it has been replaced by the pagan city of Aelia Capitolina. The land itself on which Jerusalem stood is no longer holy ground, since the Jews are forbidden, on pain of death, to go near it. Let us return to the two witnesses. Their corpses, exposed to the eyes of the pagans, remain unburied for some time. But God soon gives them back their lives, and they ascend to heaven while an earthquake destroys part of Aelia Capitolina and kills seven thousand men (11:11-13). The entry of the Jewish messiah into heaven is reported a second time in the following text (12:5b):

His child was taken up to God and to his throne.

3. The third operation has to do with the lamb of God. In the first draft, the heavenly court whose splendours the Seer had been able to contemplate (chapter 4) did not have

a lamb. The souls of the slaughtered Jews cried out for vengeance (6, 10) and measures were taken to satisfy them; but everything was happening apart from the actual scene of the opening of the seals which did not exist. After 135 there is a lamb near the divine throne, a slaughtered lamb (iesphagmenon) whose primary function is to open the seals of a book. The most venerable figures of the heavenly court prostrate themselves before him and sing (5, 9):

You are worthy to take the book and open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you have delivered men to God from every tribe, from every language, from every people, from every nation; you have made them a kingdom... and they shall reign on earth.

The seals, once opened, announce the punishments that will strike the earth to avenge the death of the slain lamb. The scene of the seals owes its existence to the death of the lamb for which it is the revenge. Let us only note that the author has inserted two pieces from the first redaction (6:9-11 where the souls of the Jews sacrificed long ago impatiently ask for the punishment of their executioners; 7:1-8 where an angel cries out to the angels of punishment to wait to fulfil their mission until he has marked the sons of Israel in whom he is interested with a protective sign).

What is this lamb whose shed blood was a deliverance for men of every tribe, tongue, people and nation? Let's see the result he achieved. The text tells us that the men for whom he shed his blood "shall reign on the earth". And a little further on, 7:14-17, we learn that the men who come "out of the great tribulation", who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb, will be with the lamb who will lead them to the springs of the waters of life. The lamb is the messiah Barkochba. The men who come "out of the great tribulation" are the Jews whom Hadrian's armies slaughtered by the hundreds of thousands. The men of every tribe, language, people and kind for whom the messiah shed his blood are the Jews of the dispersion, those who are spread among all peoples, who speak every language, who belong to all the tribes of Israel, and who were also slaughtered in many circumstances. The "springs of the waters of life" to which the lamb is to lead his fellow martyrs refer to the river of the water of life which, as we shall soon see, will water the new Jerusalem. The messiah and his companions, the Jews, will "reign over the earth". The Beast, I mean Rome, has not broken their destiny. It has only introduced a complication. The future masters of the earth had to begin by shedding their blood. And their leader destroyed the Roman power "with his blood".

Does this mean that his blood was in some way a sum of money in exchange for which the Jewish people would receive control of the land? Let us reject this interpretation, to which the Greek term *égorasas* leads us, but which distorts the thought of the Seer. The Seer, who is Jewish, worked only with the categories of Jewish logic. Now, in the Old Testament, Yahweh "delivers" his people, he "avenges" them, but he does not redeem them. The messiah of 132 has delivered, or rather will deliver, his companions from the Roman yoke; he has given them, or at least will give them, *pedouth* (see Gesenius, Thesaurus); only to obtain this result he had not to shrink from death and not to fear shedding his blood. He died; he had the fate of the "servant of Yahweh" of which the second Isaiah 53 speaks, who was "like a lamb led to the slaughter". Like the servant of Yahweh, the messiah of 132 is a slaughtered lamb. But this lamb is full of life in heaven where he resides. He opens the seven seals in which are contained the plagues destined to avenge his death and that of his companions. Let us remember that the lamb of Revelation derives from the second Isaiah. The lamb is in heaven, where he was introduced shortly after his death and where he opened the seals. But he travels and wherever he goes, he is followed by his fellow martyrs. Just in chapter 14, the Seer sees him and the one hundred and forty-four thousand men escorting him on Mount Zion. Faithful to the law of Moses, these pious Jews never had relations with pagan women, and therefore never contracted defilement (the words "for they are virgins" can only be a gloss by the Catholic editor; they do not respond to the thought of the Jewish author for whom defilement consisted only in uniting with pagan women). They have been "delivered" from the earth and from men. And now they bear on their foreheads the name of the Lamb 'and the name of his Father'.

43

The messiah of 132 thus has God as his father. This coincidence with the condition of Jesus needs to be explained. And perhaps the real explanation is plagiarism. In 132 the Christians commonly called their messiah 'the son of God'. Witnessing this fact, the Jews did not want their messiah to be below the Christian one. Let us not forget, however, that the Christians had arrived at the "son of God" starting from Psalm 2, where God says to the messianic king: "You are my son". By taking the same path the Jews could, without plagiarism, easily arrive at the same result. This observation applies to the transfer to heaven of the slain Barkochba. This feature may, at a pinch, have been borrowed from the condition of Jesus. But since the Jews were counting on revenge, they were necessarily led to house their messiah temporarily in heaven while awaiting the time of his triumphant return. The crucial encounter is the failure of the two messiahs' programme, and this encounter is the product of unrelated circumstances. All that follows is a logical corollary. Let us note now that the author, when he introduced the lamb in his second redaction, did not always take the trouble to create a context for

it. He sometimes simply added it as an overlay to the text of the first edition. To the observations made above about 5:9 and 7:14, we must add 7:10; 12:11; 15:3.

4. The fourth operation concerns Rome and the nations. In the first redaction the punishment of the imperial city was mentioned in a few lines (14:8) and associated with the punishment of the rest of the earth. In the second redaction the hatred of Rome becomes a frenzy. The Seer forgets for a moment the rest of the earth. He sees only the prostitute who is drunk with the blood of the saints, and he gives us an interminable description of the carnage that Nero will wage on her, who was hardly mentioned in the first redaction, but whose role is now emphasised (15:12). According to him, this beautiful spectacle is already causing the inhabitants of heaven to tremble with joy (15:1, 5-8; 16-19:3). In 19:11-21 we see the great battle in which the armies of Rome and the nations are exterminated. It is like the execution of the divine decree, the formula for which was given in the previous table. The executor is a rider who is the king of kings, the lord of lords, and whose garment is stained with blood. This rider is the messiah put to death by the Romans and who, after having ascended to heaven, descended from it.

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5. The fifth operation concerns Jerusalem. In the first draft the "beloved city" continued to exist. The saints had their camp there, and the pagan armies that, led by Satan, came to besiege them after a thousand years, were destroyed by fire from heaven (20:9-10). But since 135, where Jerusalem was, there is now only a Sodom (11:8). The second redaction tells us how this accident was repaired. We learn that a new Jerusalem came down from heaven to earth to replace the old one. A marvellous city, made of pure gold as transparent as glass, with the brilliance of crystal jasper! A prodigiously large city, since it forms a square, each side of which may be five hundred leagues away, and the circumference of which, in any case, reaches this extraordinary length! A divine city, since God will have his throne there and will illuminate it perpetually! The servants of God will dwell there. The tree of life will feed them, the river of the water of life will quench their thirst. And they shall live forever and ever (21 [except 6a, 14, 19b-20]; 22:1-5; 10-19 [except 13a, 16]).

## VI. ON WHICH A CHRISTIAN VARNISH WAS THEN APPLIED

The Apocalypse is a Jewish book written partly at the beginning of the revolt of 132, partly after the catastrophe of 135. Let us now say that this Jewish book has come down to us in a Christian edition, which I have yet to discuss.

It is characterized by multiple alterations which can be classified into two groups. To the first group belong those whose Christian spirit is manifest and leaves no room for dispute. In the following list, where they are most often found annexed to their Jewish context from which it is impossible to separate them, they are written in italics:

- 1, 1 Revelation of *Jesus Christ* which God gave *him...* to his servant John.
- 1,2 Who gave testimony to the word of God *and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*
- 1,5 *And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*
- 1,6 *To him who loves us...* (up to and including 8).
- 1, 9 Who have part... *and to perseverance in Jesus.* I was in the island called Patmos because of the word of God *and the testimony of Jesus.*
- 1, 11 Send it to the seven *churches* (a term substituted here and in the next two chapters for the term "synagogues". In the Jewish mythology of the time the atmospheric phenomena themselves were governed by angels, see *History of Dogmas* 4:57; it should therefore not be surprising to see angels at the head of the synagogues; thanks to the Christian edition of Revelation, the churches inherited the benefit of the synagogues and were presided over by angels)
- 2, 18 This is what *the Son of God* says, who has eyes like a flame.
- 3, 5 I will not blot out his name from the book of life, *and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.*
- 3, 14 This is what the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, *the principle of God's creation.*
- 3, 21 I will make him sit with me on my throne, *just as I overcame and sat with my Father on his throne.*
- 5, 5 Do not weep; it has been decided that *the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David,* will open the book.
- 11, 8 Their corpses will be in the square of the great city, ... *where their Lord was crucified.*
- 12, 17 He went to make war with those who keep the commandments of God *and have the testimony of Jesus.*

14, 4 These are those who have not defiled themselves with women, *for they are virgins.*

14, 12 This is the patience of the saints who keep the commandments of God *and the faith of Jesus.*

17, 6 I saw this woman drunk with the blood of the saints *and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.*

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18, 20 And you, the saints, *the apostles*, the prophets.

19, 10 I am your fellow servant and your brothers *who have the testimony of Jesus.*

Worship God, *for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

19, 13 He was clothed in blood *and his name is the Word of God.*

20, 4 And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded *for the testimony of Jesus* for the word of God.

21, 6 I am *the Alpha and the Omega*, the first and the last.

22, 13 I am *the Alpha and the Omega*, the first and the last.

22, 16 *I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you in the churches. I am the offspring and the seed of David.*

22, 20 *Come, Lord Jesus!*

22, 21 *May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all!*

Having proved and become certain that Revelation is a Jewish book, we have the right to reject the authenticity of these texts solely on the basis of the Christian spirit which animates them. Our deduction is in accordance with the laws of the strictest logic and we could maintain it, even if nothing else supported it. But we are allowed to note that it does not lack support. Let us consider our texts. Some of them are hooked by the particle "and" or other similar particles to the context that was perfectly adequate without them; others give comments that feel artificial; others blur everything (as we can see in the title): all of them are supernumeraries. We had arrived by way of deduction to deny their authenticity; the syntax confirms our deduction.

Alongside the texts that affirm their Christian origin, there are others that conceal it, so that in order to discover it, a preliminary investigation is necessary. Let us now deal with this second group.

The piece of the two witnesses (11:1-13) has passed before our eyes. The first Jewish redaction showed us these characters as two invincible and invulnerable miracle workers. The second redaction tells us that the Beast killed them, that their corpses were that their corpses were exposed in the square of AElia Capitolina and that,

restored to life, they made their entry into heaven. Now we read in verse 10: "Because of them the inhabitants of the earth will rejoice and be glad, and will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets have tormented the inhabitants of the earth. In this text the author, while describing the joy of the inhabitants of the earth, also legitimises it. He explains that the inhabitants of the earth have reason to rejoice at the death of the two prophets, since they were "tormented" by them. This is not the language of a friend, a supporter. The author who speaks this way is an enemy of the two prophets. In verse 10, it is no longer the Jewish editor of the whole piece who holds the pen, but the Christian editor. He has already intervened in verse 8 to remind us that the bodies of Barkochba and Rabbi Aquiba were exposed "where their Lord was crucified". He intervenes here again to note that these two sectarians persecuted the inhabitants of the earth, i.e. the Christians (persecution attested by Justin, I Apol. 31:6) and to describe their joy.

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In 13:11-17 we see the appearance of a Beast with two lamb-like horns, but who speaks like a dragon and has the ability to bring fire down from heaven to earth. The two witnesses mentioned in 11:5 vomit fire from their mouths. With one nuance, 13:13 and 11:5 are about the same wonder, and probably also about the same cause. The piece in 11 gives a portrait of Barkochba and Rabbi Aquiba drawn by a partisan. The same portrait probably returns in 13, but this time it is drawn by an enemy, by the Christian editor. For him the messiah of 132 and his protector are one and the same Beast with two horns. This Beast has the appearance of a lamb because the Jews, after 135, liked to present Barkochba under the symbol of an immolated lamb; but in reality it behaves like a dragon, the Jewish messiah threw fire from his mouth; but the legend which embellishes everything it touches, must have taught from the beginning that he made fire come down from heaven, and the Christians, for whom the Jewish messiah was only the devil's instrument, had no difficulty in accepting the legend. Finally, let us remember that the Jewish Seer awaits the return of Nero who will soon, followed by the Parthian armies, take Rome and the rest of the world.

Parthian armies, to take Rome and reduce it to ashes. The messiah Barkochba most probably had the same hope. He, too, counted on Nero's help, and he must have communicated to his co-religionists that conviction which was so apt to guard them against any failure. He could not go further and, for example, prescribe to the Jews that they should worship Nero; but the Christians whom he put to death and who, themselves, hated him, were able to spread imputations of this kind on his account, and the Christian piece 13:11-17 may be the echo of these calumnies.

In 16:13 a false prophet appears, who is the partner of the Beast and the dragon. We find him again a little later (19, 20). There we find that he was thrown into the lake of brimstone and fire together with the Beast. And finally 20:10 tells us that in a thousand years the devil will join them. This false prophet can only be the two-horned beast of 13:11, which means the Jewish messiah of 132. But in all three cases, it is the Christian editor who presents him to us.

I now turn to the description of the heavenly Jerusalem. In 21:12 we read that the wall of the city has twelve gates and that on each of the gates is written the name of one of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. In 21:14 we learn that the same wall has twelve bases and on each of the bases is written the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. That twelve gates are pierced in the wall of a city, nothing could be more natural; and that on each of the gates a name is written, nothing could be more probable: therefore 21, 12 does not raise any difficulty. On the other hand, given twelve bases (or twelve foundations) it is not surprising that a name is given to each of the bases (or to each of the foundations) what is not understood is that the wall of a city has twelve bases or twelve foundations. The stones which serve as foundations for a simple house are of indeterminate number; all the more reason must it be so for a wall which has five hundred leagues of circumference, perhaps even on each side. Will it be objected that these bases or foundations are cornerstones? One would understand that these cornerstones would be twelve in number, if the wall of the city formed a dodecagon. But we know from the Seer himself that it formed a square. It must therefore have had only four cornerstones. In any case, our twelve foundations can be explained neither by the requirements nor even by the by the requirements or even the convenience of architectural rules. Let us not conclude that they have no reason to be here. They do have a reason, but it is one that is inspired by non-architectural concerns and, to put it bluntly, is artificial.

These twelve foundations are there to inscribe the names of the twelve apostles. That is the only reason for them to exist. Verse 21:14 is a Christian interpolation to neutralise the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel inscribed on the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. This interpolation continues in 19b and 20 where the twelve varieties of precious stones that adorn the foundations are listed. The original text simply said, "The foundations of the city wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The interpolator who imagined the twelve foundations thought he had to assign to each foundation a kind of precious stone. He puts in the foundations twelve varieties.

Now the varieties that we know, and that the ancients themselves knew, reach the number of nineteen. He thus betrays, without suspecting it, the primitive text which put in the foundations precious stones "of all kinds".

Text 21:14 is of Christian origin. It mentions the "lamb" which, as we have seen, is a creation of the Jewish editor and designates, in the Jewish edition, the messiah of 132. The Christian editor has thus taken the lamb of the Jewish edition and identified it with Jesus. He has done this at least in 21:14. Let us see if he did it elsewhere and read the description of the interior of the new Jerusalem (21,22-22,5):

22. I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple and the Lamb. 23. The city does not need the sun and the moon to shine on it; for the glory of God shines on it, and the Lamb is its torch... 22, 1. And he showed me a river of the water of life shining like crystal, coming out of the throne of God and of Vagneau... 3. The throne of God and of the Lamb is in the city. And the servants of him (autou) shall worship him (auto). They shall see the face of him and the name of him is on their foreheads. 5. There is no more night and they do not need the light of a torch and the light of the sun because the Lord God gives them light.

If we leave out the italicised words the picture does not suffer from this disappearance. God is the temple of the city; he enlightens it; he has his throne in the middle of it, from which a river flows. His servants see him, adore him, have his name written on their foreheads. The city needs neither sun nor torch because God lights it. The text unfolds without a break in continuity.

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And now let us consider the words in italics. Immediately various questions arise. And first of all, since the lamb shares with God the honour of serving as the city's temple, why did the author not write: "The Lord God Almighty and the lamb are his temple?" What is the point of this turn of phrase: "God is his temple and the lamb?" Such awkwardness is strange in a writer who is otherwise a master in the art of writing. Secondly, since God wants to illuminate himself, he must make it a point of honour to shed on her a light at least equal to that of the sun he replaces. From then on, every torch becomes useless; for no one has the idea of reinforcing the light of the sun by that of a torch. This is, moreover, how the Seer understands it, who, in 22:5, tells us that the inhabitants of the city have no need of a torch. So what is the purpose of the torch of the lamb mentioned in 21:23? We can see that it is intended to magnify the lamb; we can also see that it achieves this goal at the expense of logic. Thirdly, how are we to think of "the throne of God and of the Lamb" which is mentioned twice? Does the Lamb have a

throne of his own separate from the throne of God? If he is on the throne of God, is he next to God or on God's lap? How could the author, who multiplies meaningless details, not think of describing the place of the lamb on the throne of God or beside it? Fourthly, since the lamb is, with God, the temple of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, since it is their torch, since it is next to the throne of God or even shares the throne of God, it deserves to be adored by the servants of God; and the inhabitants of Jerusalem who want to see God, to have his name written on their foreheads, must also be happy to see the lamb and to have the name of the lamb written on their foreheads. Why is it, then, that in all cases God alone is named and the lamb is no more mentioned than if he did not exist?

In two words, "the lamb" brings the texts of 21:22-22:5 into conflict with the protests of syntax, logic and common sense. If we discard it, its disappearance introduces no solution into the texts

I continuity. What is there to say except that the lamb is an intruder? The Jewish writer spoke only of God. The lamb was inserted into the primitive text by the Christian editor who associated it with God wherever he could. It does not refer to the Jewish messiah, it refers to Jesus.

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Let it not be objected that the lamb may have been overwritten by the Jewish author himself when he proceeded to the second redaction of his book. The observation would be correct if the description of the new Jerusalem belonged to the first redaction. It falls before the fact that the new Jerusalem belongs to the second edition. Only the Christian author could have introduced the lamb into the previously constituted second edition.

## VII THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN IN HEBREW

Before concluding, it remains for me to say a few words about the language of the Apocalypse. As long as one saw in it an exclusively Christian book, one was naturally led to attribute to it a Greek redaction. But the results we have arrived at completely change the state of the question. The Jews, except in exceptional circumstances, wrote in Hebrew. If the Apocalypse is a Jewish book on which a Christian varnish was subsequently applied, it was very probably written in Hebrew; in any case this hypothesis can legitimately be admitted until proven otherwise. Now the examination of the text, far from invalidating this induction, corroborates it. Renan himself, after having

posited in principle that the Apocalypse was written in Greek, is obliged to admit (L'Antéchrist, p. XXXI) that "it is a Greek copied from Hebrew, thought out in Hebrew and which could hardly be understood and tasted by anyone other than those who knew Hebrew. A proof of the Hebrew writing of our book is provided by 9, 10 where we read that the angel of the abyss is "named in Hebrew Abaddon and in Greek Apollyon". This purely symbolic name has nothing in common with certain Hebrew names that were collected in the Gospels because they were in common use among the Jews. It was created by the author himself, who, if he had written in Greek, would have been content to call his angel Apollyon and would not even have had the idea of using the corresponding Hebrew term. The text 9:11, such as it presents itself to us, is incompatible with a Greek writing. On the contrary, it is easily understood if one starts from a Hebrew text where one reads: "They had over them as king the angel of the abyss named Abaddon". The Greek translator would have thought it necessary to explain that Abaddon was the term "in Hebrew", but that this word meant "in Greek Apollyon". This explanation is also the only one that accounts for the analogous text 16:16, which was originally written as follows: "They gathered them in the place called Armageddon. What the word "Armageddon" means, which in any case is symbolic, is not known. The translator, who did not know either, was unable to explain it in Greek, and could only reproduce the word "Armageddon" purely and simply; but he taught the Greek readers that this word was the name "in Hebrew.

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## VIII. THEN TRANSLATED INTO GREEK

Written in Hebrew, the Apocalypse was almost immediately translated into Greek by a Jew of the dispersion who wished to introduce this book to those of his co-religionists who knew only Greek. It is to the translator that we must attribute the borrowings from the LXX version that we find here and there. For example, in the texts 2:27; 12:5; 19:15, which use Psalm 2:9, the Jewish writer must have put, in accordance with the Hebrew Bible: "He will break them with a rod of iron. It is the translator who substituted the LXX for the Hebrew and put: "He will feed them with a rod of iron. It was also he who introduced the idea of purchase into texts that spoke only of deliverance (5:9): "You have bought for God (the Vulgate went further by translating "redeemed"); 14:3, 4: "The purchased of the earth... they were bought from men. The Jewish writer tells us that his name is John and that he went to Patmos for the sake of God. There is no reason to deny his testimony. We can therefore imagine our author as a Jew who, in order to

escape the armies of Hadrian, took refuge on the island of Patmos. It is there that his book was written; it is from there that he left to comfort the synagogues of Asia Minor, to announce to them the coming undermining of Rome, the destruction of the Church and the destruction of the Church. It was there that he went to comfort the synagogues of Asia Minor, to announce to them the coming of the Messianic kingdom, to warn them against the seductions of the Christian hydra.

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## IX. HOW THE CHRISTIAN EDITION CAME ABOUT

During the second century, conversions of Jews to Christianity, though not numerous, never ceased to occur. From about 138 onwards, the few Jews who became Christians and who had a copy of the Apocalypse in their possession were in no hurry to neutralize by glosses the texts of this book which praised the Jewish messiah of 132 and his protector. From this preoccupation came pieces 11,10; 13,11-17; 19,20. Then they made the corrected Apocalypse known to the Christians. The latter understood almost nothing of this heap of symbolic scenes that was placed before their eyes (with the exception of the symbol of Nero, the key to which was only lost after several centuries). But they marvelled at the picture of the new Jerusalem. This kingdom, unfolding its magnificence before them, was the one they themselves had been waiting for. Knowing no other Christ than Jesus, they did not doubt for a moment that the Christ of whom 11:15; 12:10; 20:4 and 5 speak was Jesus. The Apocalypse was in their eyes a Christian book and they decreed that John, the author of this mysterious book, was the Christian apostle of that name. Around 165 Justin was absolutely certain that the Apocalypse was written by John, a disciple of Jesus (Dialogue, 81,4).

I have said that the Jews who had become Christians, from about 138 onwards, were concerned to neutralise the venom contained in the Apocalypse by means of edifying glosses. The work begun by these pious Jews was continued after them. They wanted to make the revelations of Patmos more and more worthy of the Christian origin they were attributed. Thus the Christian edition that we have in our hands was slowly and progressively formed.

When was it completed? A precious piece of information is provided to us first by text 19, 13 which, speaking of a figure mounted on a white horse, says Secondly, in 1:7, we read: "Every eye will see him and those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth

will mourn for him. The first of these texts reproduces, in its essential part, the prologue of the Fourth Gospel; the second, which summarises a prophecy of Zechariah, evokes the place in the same Gospel 19, 37 where a fragment of the said prophecy is reported. The result of both is that Revelation is intimately related to the Gospel. This result cannot be accidental. It is deliberate.

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I have included these two texts in the list of Christian glosses artificially added to the writing of the Apocalypse. I simply want to note here the mission entrusted to them. It consists in proving that the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel, which have texts in common, must also have a common origin<sup>1</sup>. And since the Johannine origin of the Apocalypse was not in doubt for anyone, our two texts want to prove that the Fourth Gospel emanates from the apostle John. They are part of the operation required to carry out this proof. It goes without saying that the operation, as far as they are concerned, consisted in transplanting them from the Gospel into the Apocalypse. Now it is towards 175 that one was concerned to attribute to the Fourth Gospel a Johannine origin (Delafosse, p. 126). It is thus towards this date that our two texts were introduced into the Apocalypse.

1 The "Lamb of God" who, in the fourth Gospel 1, 29, 36, replaces the son of God, fulfils the same mission. See Delafosse, *Le Quatrième Evangile*, p. 134.

One more observation. At the beginning of the third century, the Roman priest Caius, speaking of the Apocalypse, which he attributes to Cerinthus (in Eusebius 3, 28, 2), says that this book introduces carnal pleasures into the millennial kingdom. The text that we have today contains nothing of the sort and must have been retouched.