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THE GLORY OF THE SON OF MAN IN REVELATION 1-3. REFLECTIONS ON MYSTICISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the mystical nature of the Christophany in Revelation 1-3 in order to illuminate the present research on mysticism in the New Testament. It firstly introduces the relevant text and outlines the extraordinary, exalted nature of the Christophany in Revelation 1. The second part then explains the vision in terms of the mystical revelation of hidden knowledge, whilst the third part analyses the mystical glory of the Son of Man. The article concludes with an explanation of the function of this mystical picture of Christ and the way in which a mystical Christology illuminates the relationship of believers with the divine.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his study on Pauline mysticism, Schweitzer (1931:1-3) spoke of mysticism as a general religious phenomenon about the union with the divinity and about "Being in its ultimate reality". In its earliest ("primitive") forms, according to him, mysticism retains a naive view of the earthly and super-earthly, temporal and eternal. Through some "magical" act, a participant "enters into communion with a divine being in such a way that he shares the latter's supernatural mode of existence". He argues that in its later forms in Hellenistic times this mysticism is linked with immortality with the result that someone "ceases to be a natural man and is born again into a higher state of being" (Schweitzer 1931:1). Mysticism consequently takes on an intellectual, reflective character and becomes wider, deeper and purer. Through reflection the mystic becomes aware that he or she transcends the sensory world and "passes beyond the unquiet flux of becoming and disintegration into the peace of timeless being, and is conscious of itself as being in God, and in every moment eternal" (Schweitzer 1931:2).¹

1 Schweitzer' list of mystics or mystical texts (1931:2) reveals his insight in mysticism. It includes Ignatius, John's Gospel, Augustine, Dionysius the Areopagite, Hugo of St. Victor, Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, Boehme, Tersteegen, *Prof. Pieter G.R. de Villiers, Professor Extraordinarius in Biblical Spirituality, Departments of Old and New Testament, Faculty of Theology, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. pgdevilliers@mweb.co.za.*

Since Schweitzer's study, the number of investigations of Jewish and Christian mysticism has grown steadily, stimulated strongly by the groundbreaking work of Scholem on Jewish mysticism (e.g., 1946). He wrote extensively on mystical texts like the Hekhaloth literature which were neglected by Jewish scholars, mostly hostile to them on ideological grounds (Scholem 1946:2-3). Scholem is the scholar who finally convinced the scholarly world that texts previously considered to be from medieval times, actually reflect the insights of important groups already in the Second Temple period and allow insights in a key movement within early Judaism (Scholem 1960:8).

In this work Scholem (1946:7-10) provided an interesting oversight of mysticism by locating it within a larger historical framework. A historical approach to mysticism implies that it reveals itself in many different forms — not only in different religious contexts, but also in different ways within the same religious contexts (e.g., in *Merkavah* mysticism and the *Kabbala*). He even insisted that mysticism should not be seen as part of all religions. Mysticism, interestingly enough, arises in religious contexts where there is a strong awareness of an unbridgeable gap between God and humanity. Apocalypses with their awareness of the deep contrast between God and this evil world, thus display clear mystical dimensions. Mysticism reflects the desire to overcome this abyss between God and humanity so that human beings can find union with God.

In this quest for union with the divine, mysticism operates within an existing religious framework,² retaining its values and holding on to its traditions. And yet, there is a new mystical experience, a direct contact between the individual and God which shapes and steers the tradition in a decisive manner. It even functions on a level that is equal to traditional values.³ Sacred traditions are then interpreted in a new way, especially because their true meaning has yet to

Angelus Silesius, Novalis, Schleiermacher, etc. As will become clear below, recent research correctly insists that later Christian mysticism needs to be distinguished from Biblical mysticism, especially in terms of the notion of the *unio mystica*.

2 Scholem (1946:10) notes that this implies that there are different mysticisms which should not be confused with each other.

3 Cf. similarly, also Deconick (2006:7). Scholem (1946:9) writes grippingly about this:

To the mystic, the original act of Revelation to the community — the, as it were, public revelation of Mount Sinai, to take one instance — appears as something whose true meaning has yet to unfold itself; the secret revelation is to him the real and decisive one. And thus the substance of the canonical texts, like that of all other religious values, is melted down and given another form as it passes through the fiery stream of the mystical consciousness.

What follows will confirm how Christian mystics went through the same process when they experienced their sacred traditions in the light of Christ's person and life.

be unfolded. As a result God is transformed from an object of dogmatic knowledge to be experienced by mystics in a new, living relationship.⁴

Some of the prominent later researchers⁵ who took their cue for their own work from Scholem and who impacted strongly on Biblical research of mysticism, were Gruenwald (on Jewish mysticism) and Rowland who wrote extensively on Christian mysticism and specifically on Revelation. Rowland regarded apocalyptic as the knowledge of divine mysteries through revelation.⁶ For him Jewish mysticism was not so much about communion of the saint with God as about

... the participation in and knowledge of events which are unseen to the human eye. Jewish mysticism is much more a case of knowledge or enlightenment about things which remained hidden in heaven, whether cosmological, astronomical or theological.

He notes, however, that Revelation is deeply indebted to Jewish mystical literature for its own mystical outlook, but that it was decisively determined by the person and life of Christ who reveals the divine secrets (Rowland 1996:409).

Later on Rowland expanded his work to the rest of the New Testament, pointing out that Revelation is not a lonely mystical voice and that New Testament texts in general are more indebted to mysticism than is normally thought. Revelation brings us “in the midst of the world of apocalyptic mystery” that was “more typical of early Christianity than is often allowed” (Rowland 1996:413).⁷ Revelation is indebted to “a shadowy, perhaps embryonic, mysticism of the Second temple period” and allows us an easier access to this mysticism. Revelation’s typical mystical features are clear. Its angelology, heavenly voices and

4 Paul’s mystical experience — face to face — of the living Christ on the way to Damascus in similar vein decisively steered his theology and ministry, radically transforming his understanding of his Jewish traditions.

5 Cf. Rowland (1996:405) and Deconick (2006:3) for extensive lists of literature.

6 In the preface of his study on apocalyptic (1981), he refers to Gruenwald’s *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* as too late to have used in his own work, but as offering much which coincided with it. Rowland consistently stood out as someone who offered an independent perspective to the study of apocalypticism as early as in 1981. Rowland’s work is especially noteworthy because it appeared at a time in which research on apocalypses was to a large extent dominated by the the SBL group on apocalypses (cf. Collins 1974). Stone (1976) was at that stage the other scholar who pointed to the mystical contents of apocalypses, especially in his seminal article in 1976 (cf. also Stone 1980:32-33). Deconick (2006:18) correctly observed that modern researchers were slow to recognize that early Jewish and Christian mysticism is a major dimension of Jewish and apocalyptic thought.

7 Rowland’s contribution in this illuminating essay (1996) wants to pursue mystical evidence in the rest of the New Testament in “less overtly apocalyptic texts” and paves the way for further research. Cf. now also Deconick (2006).

preoccupation with the hidden is “at one with the mystical literature of Judaism” (Rowland 1996:409).

In recent times this research on mysticism has become part of the mainstream scenario in New Testament studies. An excellent example is the recent discussion of Jewish and Christian mysticism (cf. Deconick 2006) in which contributions of 18 scholars reveal how much material is available to researchers. This book represents the work of the Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism group of the Society of Biblical Literature over a period of ten years. In her insightful introduction to this volume, Deconick (2006:2) allows its readers an insight in the wisdom that this group has generated on the nature of mysticism over such a long period of time. She helpfully underlines that the concept of mysticism is a contemporary construct and as such an etic term which expresses what ancients named differently (a.o. “*apokalypsis*” or “revelation”). She offers as her own explanation of mysticism as that

[I]t identifies a tradition within early Judaism and Christianity (that) centered on the belief that *a person directly or indirectly, immediately, and before death can experience the divine, either as a rapture experience or as one solicited by a particular praxis* (original italics).

She adds, that early Jews and Christians themselves did not describe their experiences “in terms of the *unio mystica* so central to later Christian mysticism”. Deconick (2006:7) adds that authors of mystical texts appear to rebel against the idea “that the truth about the sacred can be reached through intellectual engagement”. They suggest that the sacred is encountered first and foremost face to face, through a direct experience of God (Deconick 2006:8).⁸

From the insights mentioned above and in the rest of the volume edited by Deconick, it is clear that mysticism in the New Testament still awaits much research work, that it is a multi-dimensional phenomenon with many faces in different locations, texts and groups, that later interpretive categories should not obfuscate its meaning in antiquity and that it has a decisive role to play in the interpretation of the New Testament. It is the latter aspect that is so compelling, given the limited attention that mystical aspects of New Testament texts previously received in mainstream scholarship.

8 She notes how in Revelation the direct encounter with God is part of its eschatological expectation. Until then, the revelation and liturgy provides opportunities for such an encounter. Of special relevance for this article, are her remarks (2006:11-14) on the glory of YHWH as centerpiece of the cosmology that undergirds mystical pronouncements (cf. further below). Schwarz (1992:3) also notes that mysticism indicates an active effort to apprehend God directly or especially by means of a vision, confirming Deconick’s description of mysticism.

The rediscovery and reappraisal of ancient mystical texts and groups and in Biblical times is stimulating a new research approach which offers an interpretive grid that allows new insights to be recognized and developed in Biblical texts. To illustrate this practically and in more detail, this article explores the vision of the exalted Christ in Revelation 1 in terms of its mystical nature. The first part briefly discusses the relevant text (Rev. 1-3) and will outline the extraordinary nature of the Son of Man in this vision. The second part will explain this in terms of the revelation of hidden knowledge and the third part will develop this insight even further by tracing the special nature of the Son of Man in his participation in the glory of God as it is expressed by some seminal motifs in the inaugural vision. Finally, the essay will discuss how both these insights about the angelic, glorious status of the Son of Man affect the way in which the book functions.

2. THE CHRISTOPHANY IN REVELATION 1-3

The introductory vision of Christ in Revelation 1:9-20 would not have been completely new to the author's audience. They would have recognised in it motifs and themes from their sacred traditions in Hebrew Scriptures and in their Christian reports and texts. John's use of various Old Testament motifs for his portrait of Christ would have been immediately recognised as taken from the traditional description of the heavenly Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14. It was a title that was popular in apocalypses, for example as description of the heavenly saviour in the Similitudes of Enoch. But they would also have recognised it as title preferred by Jesus during his ministry.⁹ And yet, the Son of Man in Revelation is also different from these traditions, as will be shown below. This is most evident when he introduces himself as the first and the last, the Living One who was dead, but who is alive and alive for ever and holds the keys to death and Hades (Rev. 1:17-8).

Whatever the precise origins of his portrait of the Son of Man, his audience would have been impressed and guided by it in their understanding of the book. John presents the Son of Man as a revelatory figure, almost like an angel. He instructs the visionary to write what he sees in a book and to send it to the seven churches (Rev. 1:9-20). The importance of the Son of Man is also

9 Note, however, the distance that is created from Dan.7:13ff. through the use of the Greek ὁ υἱος in Rev. 1:9. This phrase often functions to point out the symbolic nature of characters and objects. Cf. further De Villiers (1988) and also Scholem (1946:27) where he distinguishes symbols (being the expressible representation of the inexpressible) from allegories (being the expressible representation of the expressible).

evident from his role in the seven letters described in Revelation 2-3.¹⁰ Each letter begins with formulae taken from the introductory vision to depict the Son of Man as its author. After a formula stating “These are the words” follows a self-description of Christ as its author as “He who”:

- “holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp stands” (Rev. 2:1; cf. 1:13, 16),
- “is the First and the Last, who died and came to life” (Rev. 2:8; cf. 1:18),
- “has the sharp, double-edged sword” (Rev. 2:12; cf. 1:16; cf. 19:15),
- “is the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are burnished bronze” (Rev. 2:18; cf. 1:14-15; cf. also 19:12),
- “holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars” (Rev. 3:1, cf. 1:16 and 1:4),
- “is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Rev. 3:7, cf. 1:18),
- “is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation” (Rev. 3:14, cf. 1:5; cf. 19:11).

The prologue with its Christophany thus determines the nature of the seven letters. The letters thus have special authority because they come from the One who appeared to John and who divulges God’s secret knowledge. Not only John, but also the churches share in the privileged information and are thus made aware of a divine perspective on their life. They are given access to John’s visions and through them also to information about what is to happen soon (Rev. 1:19).

Two other passages after Revelation 1-3 develop the vision further and indicate its importance in the book as a whole. In the throne vision in Revelation 4-5 Christ is given an even higher status. His revelatory function is further explained (he opens the closed scroll), he is depicted as the Lamb in conjunction with the messianic descriptions of the lion of Judah and the root of David (5:5) and he is given extraordinary glory by being worshipped as divine. Equally impressive is Revelation 19:11-21 towards the end of the book which balances the vision of the Son of Man in Revelation 1. Similar motifs in the first Christophany reappear in this vision of the victorious Rider who sets out in final battle to conquer God’s enemies. Through this balance the whole book is framed by an exalted

10 Thus correctly, e.g., already Müller (1995:80), who writes, “Sie nimmt in andeutender Weise vorweg, was Inhalt der Briefe ist.” This close link between letters and Christophany should be remembered in the light of naïve-realist readings of Revelation (e.g., Ramsay s.a. and Hemer 1989) that read the letters more for their historical references than in terms of their literary function.

Christology.¹¹ The figure of Christ who mediates secret knowledge and who is portrayed as the One who holds the seven stars, is ultimately the One who vanquishes the evil forces. Clearly then, the portrait of Christ at the very beginning sets a powerful tone for the rest of the book and is continued and developed by later passages. It begins a process in which, increasingly, Christ is depicted as powerful Saviour and Judge. The Christophany therefore provides an important key to decode the message of the book.

3. THE EXALTED NATURE OF THE SON OF MAN

John's vision of the Son of Man (Rev. 1:1-20) has an exceptional appearance and power. He is dressed with special priestly clothes,¹² has white hair like snow, blazing eyes, shining feet and a shining face. He holds seven stars in his hands, is surrounded by lamp stands, overcame death and a double-edged sword comes from his mouth. He even, intriguingly, "holds the seven spirits" (cf. Rev. 1:4). His power is absolute and cannot be withstood, while he is also the One who rules over creation.

This extraordinary description of Christ's appearance is even more imposing if one analyzes Christ's work as it is delineated in the prologue. The prologue has a threefold structure: After the opening description about the revelation of the book (Rev. 1:1-3), Revelation 1:4-8 forms a ring composition in which the short, introductory description of the three divine characters (God, the seven spirits and Christ in Rev. 1:4-5a) and the closing reference to God as Almighty (1:8) form a *frame* for the picture of Christ in the middle. In the frame Christ's faithful witness and resurrection are recalled as two key moments in his life (Rev. 1:5a), which explain his powerful position as "ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5c). What is striking even in the frame, though, is that in the references to the three divine characters (God, spirits, Christ), the Christological descriptions stand out.

11 It is even more interesting to note that whilst the salvific work of the exalted Christ is foregrounded in the introductory vision, the judicial work of Christ is underlined in the vision of the Rider on the white horse. In this way both the motifs of salvation and judgment are kept together (cf. further below). The striking links between Revelation 1-3 and 19-22 have often been noted.

12 Deconick (2006:11) underlines that Jewish and Christian mystical traditions cannot be associated with one single group, but points out that there is growing evidence that one of the main origins of this lies within Jewish priestly circles. Revelation has many priestly motifs. After Christ's salvific work was pointed out in Rev. 1:5b, for example, the first thing that is said is that he made believers into a kingdom and priests (Rev. 1:6). Such a remark in such a telling position at the beginning of the book is of great importance for understanding its social context or roots.

In the middle section the focus is also on Christ and the consequences of his work. This section first speaks of his redemptive work: Christ saved the believers, making them priests and a kingdom (Rev. 1:5b-6) and judging the unbelieving world (Rev. 1:7). It is an exalted picture in which Christ plays a decisive role to transform God's creation. This passage thus reflects a high Christology in which Christ's exalted status is closely linked with Christ's salvific and judicial work. These two important themes of salvation and judgment are key motifs in the rest of the book (cf. further below). Christ's divine status is intricately linked to his transformation of humanity (cf. further the conclusion to this article).

The special status of Christ is worked out in an intriguing and ever more intense manner. To understand this, one has to take cognisance of how the seven letters are neatly structured in a three plus four pattern.¹³ The letter to Thyatire as middle letter is a nodal point in the septet of letters. One of its most striking aspects is the address to "all the churches" that appears in its middle (Rev. 2:23), even though it is written specifically to Thyatire. It is of special significance that this middle letter with its address to all the churches identifies Christ as its sender with the title "Son of God" (Rev. 2:18).¹⁴ Through this centering compositional technique John names the Son of Man from his introductory vision in this letter in a climactic manner as Son of God. In this way he explicitly spells out to the churches Christ's divine nature.¹⁵

Finally, this exalted, divine nature of Christ in the inaugural vision is developed extensively in the throne vision of Revelation 4-5 where Christ is worshipped in the same way as God (Bauckham 1993:137-8; Fekkes 1994:77; Collins 1998:273-4). After the exalted picture of Christ in the inaugural vision, worshipping him adds even more emphasis to his divine character.¹⁶ But it is

13 There are several indications of this. Most important is the fact that the first four letters place the call to listen to the Spirit before the promise of a reward to the one who conquers, whilst the last three letters reverse this order (cf. 2:7, 11, 17 and 2:26-29; 3:5-6, 12-13, 21-22). This four plus three structure is found in the other septets as well. Cf. De Villiers (2005).

14 This also happens in other septets where a character is given a name and thus identified in detail (cf. the fourth seal in Rev. 6:8 where the rider is named "Death"). Cf. further Rev. 3:12 and 19:12 for the importance of names. For a discussion, cf. De Villiers (2005:206).

15 The title "Son of God" is more explicitly divine than all John's other titles for Christ, like Lamb (Rev. 5:6), Lion of Judah (Rev. 5:5), the Living One (Rev. 1:18a) and the Word of God (Rev. 19:13, cf. Fekkes 1994:75) which relate to his redemptive and judicial work. Cf. further Collins (1998:274) for the difference between this passage and Jewish texts. He notes that the Messiah was called Son of God in some Jewish texts and Son of Man imagery could be associated with the deity, but worship of any such figure other than God is highly exceptional.

16 Note, however, that Christ accepts the visionary's worship already in Rev. 1:17.

especially how Christ is worshipped that catches the eye. The hymn to Christ (Rev. 5:8-12) reveals parallels with the hymn of praise to God in Revelation 4:9-11, and, equally striking, God and Christ are both worshipped in Revelation 5:13 in a single doxology. The form and language in the hymns of Revelation 5:12 remind one of mystical prayers in Jewish writings. Bauckham (1993:136), for example, points out how the hymn in Revelation 5:12 “resembles on a minor scale the more elaborate hymns of the Hekhalot texts.” As examples he mentions Hek.Rab. 28:1 and the hymns in Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Shirta 1.¹⁷ This is one of several indications of the mystical nature of John’s portrait of Christ and deserves more attention now.

4. HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

John describes the exalted appearance of Christ only after he recorded Christ’s instruction to him to write down his visions. John hears how the unidentified voice instructs him to note the revelation (Rev. 1:11) and only then proceeds to identify the voice. His visions are mostly divided in two sections in which he would first describe the *appearance* of symbols before he elaborates in a second part on *events* or *actions* that relate to them.¹⁸ By noting the instruction first, he foregrounds the revelatory activity and stresses that the Son of Man is the one who divulges hidden knowledge. And, after the vision of the Son of Man, the instruction to write the visions is repeated, but now with more information. The Son of Man powerfully reveals “what is to happen soon” (Rev. 1:19). Once again John resorts to a ring composition by using the motif of revelation of knowledge to frame his description of the appearance of the Son of Man. The impact of this is that the impressive and exalted Son of Man is presented to the audience as the One who reveals knowledge that is vital to them. In this way his exalted status is part of a relationship with humanity and clearly not speculative.

Of special importance in this regard is John’s remark that he was “in the Spirit” (ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι) when he received his special vision (Rev. 1:9). This remark is often debated in terms of whether John fell in a trance or not.¹⁹

17 Cf. Scholem (1960:20-30; 56-64) and Swartz (1992) for examples of passages and prayers that reflect a similar mystical character. Scholem (1946:57-63) notes the numinous effect of these prayers.

18 E.g., in Rev. 12:1 and 3 where he see the two signs of the woman and the dragon in the sky and describes their wonderful appearance before he elaborates on the struggle between them.

19 Although it is difficult to pin down the connotations of this phrase, one can understand why researchers wish to conduct this debate. It affects questions like John’s consciousness, whether he was still in control of his rational faculties and what creative role he played in recording his visions. Aune (1997:62) translates the phrase as “I

The phrase does, however, suggest certain other important insights. John uses the phrase elsewhere in Revelation as marker that points out seminal moments in his book, but also to indicate significant turning points in his narrative. Except for the introductory vision, the phrase is used before the throne vision in Revelation 4. John notes in Revelation 4:1 how the voice of Revelation 1:10 bid him to enter the heavenly realm for his revelation. He then remarks, "At once I was in the spirit" (Rev. 4:2). With this John portrays his ascent into heaven and prepares the way for further revelations. Elsewhere he is taken by the Spirit as agent on heavenly journeys, once again to receive new revelations. At the end of Revelation, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, carried John "in the spirit" to a desert and mountain to see the visions of Babylon and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 17:3 and 21:10).²⁰ This is all about mysticism, since being in the Spirit and being transported by the Spirit means to be given secret knowledge. The vision of Babylon, the whore is, for example, about the secret knowledge of the secret name on her forehead which is explained to him (Babylon, the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth; Rev. 17:5). This motif of mystery is so important that John repeats it immediately afterwards when the angel responds to his astonishment with an explanation of "the *mystery* of the woman and of the beast she rides" (Rev. 17:7).

Through these textual links, the Son of Man in the inaugural vision is linked to prophecy and to the revelation of hidden, secret, divine knowledge. John, as a prophet (Rev. 1:1; 22:9) had extraordinary experiences that were the result of prophetic inspiration that rests on the authority of the Son of Man.²¹ John's visionary experiences thus takes him beyond the level of the human and the earthly into a mystical sphere that normally eludes human experience and knowledge. He is given visions which must be interpreted to him, since they transcend

fell into a prophetic trance," whilst Giesen (1997:85) in his extensive commentary, argues against understanding the remark as referring to a trance or psychological experience. "Der Geist führt vielmehr in eine Dimension, die der Mensch aus sich allein nicht erreichen kann. Das ist verständlich, empfängt der Seher doch das Zeugnis des erhöhten Jesus." For him the Spirit brought John into a dimension which a human being would not be able to reach. Bauckham (1993:152), for example, observes that, other than in pagan prophetic trances, John is not the passive mouthpiece of the god. Yet it is clear that his visionary experience is "necessarily a suspension of normal consciousness" in the sense "that his normal sensory experience was replaced by visions and auditions given him by the Spirit" (Bauckham 1993:152, referring a.o. to the Asc. Is. 6:10-15).

20 John's understanding was influenced by Ezekiel's experiences about visionary transportation from place to place (cf. Ezek. 2:2; 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5). Cf. Bauckham (1993:152).

21 Cf. Rev. 1:1 where the book is introduced as the revelation of John; similarly, Bauckham (1993:158).

his understanding (Rev. 7:13-14) and their spiritual meaning needs to be explained (Rev. 11:8; cf. also Rev. 1:20). As a result, his book communicates to the readers privileged spiritual information. How special and privileged this information is, is evident from their dense symbolism which indicates John's difficulties in communicating his mystical message.

This mystical aspect is developed equally intensely elsewhere in Revelation. The second part of Revelation 10 also begins with a revelation (of the little scroll) — also by a mighty angel with an impressive appearance, reminiscent of the figure of the Son of Man. A mighty angel plants his feet on the sea and land,²² where after the visionary hears seven thunders who “spoke”. In a subsequent remark, the visionary is prohibited to write down what they say. Revelation 10:4 is also a commissioning vision,²³ since it stands at the beginning of John's prophecy to the nations (Rev. 10:11). In both the commissioning visions in Revelation 1 and 10 the visionary is given privileged information by Christ as an angelic figure and the mighty angel. Clearly this authorizes him and his book as a prophetic, inspired writing and determines the ensuing narrative as imparting revealed knowledge. The mystical nature of this knowledge is emphasized by the fact that not all privileged information is made known to the readers, and, secondly, that only John is given insight in it. In some cases John receives the knowledge, but aspects of it is inaccessible to him and even to all others. The Rider on the white horse has a name written on him “that no one knows but he himself” (Rev. 19:12). Closely resembling this hidden name is the new name that the one who conquers in Pergamum receives on a white stone “known only to him who receives it” (Rev. 2:17). And the privileged position of believers is spelled out in Revelation 14:3b where it is said that no one could learn the new song they were singing before the throne.

One of the best examples of the place of secret knowledge in Revelation is found in the letter to Thyatire. In this letter, the fourth and middle one, Jezebel is named as God's enemy (cf. elsewhere in this essay where naming in the middle part of septets is discussed). As she is the enemy of God in the letters, the main problem in the churches is suggested in Revelation 2:24 where a group in the church is commended because they have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets. There is, therefore, an evil mysticism that brings the destruction of those who are contaminated by it.

22 The immense proportions of the angel remind one also of mystical texts where the divine glory is expressed in depicting characters as having huge bodily dimensions. Cf. Deconick (2006:14, where she refers a.o. to Eph. 3:18-19; 4:13; Col.1:18-9, 2:9, 2 En. 39:3-6 and 20).

23 It therefore would have the same function as the Christophany which commissions John, already a prophet, for a particular prophetic task and thus would not be a call narrative. Cf., e.g., Fekkes (1994:51-52) and Rowland (1980:1-11).

All this depicts John's prophecy as being about special, hidden and secret knowledge about what is to happen to the church. His readers see how Christ as angelic being communicates mystical knowledge to him that is unavailable to other human beings. The fact that only some parts of this hidden knowledge are revealed motivates his readers further to pay even closer attention to them. They realize that John is not recording his own insights, but offers a divine perspective on the life of the church and the future of the world (cf. similarly Rowland 1996:424). Their own fate depends on this book with its special status. Anyone who compromises its contents by adding or taking away from it will be judged and will forfeit salvation (Rev. 22:18-19). The vision of the Son of Man reveals that the gap between the divine and human is overcome, even if it is only partially through the gift of hidden knowledge. This knowledge is of decisive importance.

The special appearance of the Son of Man thus describes the epiphany of a bearer of secret knowledge, an angelo-morphic being (Kanagaraj 1998:144) who as the Son of Man reveals divine knowledge to human recipients. This is in line with how John conceives of angels as messengers, for example at the beginning of his book (Rev. 1:1-2) where an angel is presented as an intermediary of his prophecy and of the consistent role of angels as messengers in the visions of Revelation 6-22. There is, however, more to the vision of the Son of Man than merely Him being a revealer of knowledge, as need to be explained now.

5. THE MYSTICAL GLORY OF THE SON OF MAN

On a deeper level the vision of the Son of Man reveals how humanity attains its true identity and is purified of what degrades it. This will be explained by first noting how the Son of Man is also identified as Son of God (Rev. 2:18), existing and sharing in the mystical union with the divine glory.²⁴ The Son of Man has an identity that supersedes that of angels and heavenly messengers who impart secret knowledge.

5.1 The voice

A first indication of this special, mystical identity of the Son of Man is found in the remark of the visionary that he "heard" a loud voice like a trumpet behind him (Rev. 1:10, 12). This audition is unique among Revelation's many

24 The notion of the glory of God cannot be developed in detail here, except to say that it is an important motif in Revelation which constantly asks that glory be given to God and talks of God's glory that will be present on earth (cf. Rev. 21:23). Its link with Christ's glory is evident from the doxology in Rev. 5:13b-14 and 21:23.

auditions²⁵ because it is given by a special “voice” that sounds like a trumpet, but that also can be “seen” (Rev. 1:12), whilst it reappears in Revelation 4:1 as a revelatory medium in the middle of the vision. For some interpreters, the loud, trumpet-like sound represented mystification. What is being said transcends human language (Roloff 1984:40; Giesen 1997:86). The sound represents the attempt to communicate divine secrets in non-divine language.²⁶

What is especially significant is that a few verses further on, the visionary describes the voice in mystical language as “like the sound of rushing waters” (Rev. 1:15).²⁷ This phrase appears also in Ezekiel, which plays such a prominent role in the Christophany and in mystical literature (cf. e.g. Kowalski 2004:75, 83, 307-24, etc.). Ezekiel 1:24 (LXX) describes the sound of the wings of the living *hayyot* at the wheels of the throne of God in heaven and compares the rushing waters immediately afterwards with the voice of the Almighty. In Ezekiel 43:2 (LXX) the voice of God is again described as like rushing waters. Of special importance is that both Ezekiel 1:28b and Ezekiel 43:2 link the voice with the coming of God’s glory (Kanagaraj 1998:143). In these mystical texts which are traditionally seen as imparting secret knowledge about God’s glory, phrases are used that express the awesome and holy nature of the divine and its secrets. In doing so, they stress how this material transcends human existence and knowledge.

All these references speak of the voice of God in theophanic contexts in which God’s awesome appearance and epiphany are pointed out. Humans respond to the theophany with awe and fear. In Exodus 19:16-9 God’s voice to Moses on Sinai is a key motif and the sounding of the trumpet signals the pending meeting with God which causes the people to tremble (Ex. 19:16c, 17; cf. 1 Thess. 4:16).²⁸ In Isaiah 6:4, 8 and Ezekiel 1:24-5, 28, 2:2 the voice evokes awe from the visionary, smoke fills the place where it is heard, whilst it is accompanied by fire and light. In Daniel 10:7 and 9 which function as intertext for the Son of Man vision in Revelation 1, Daniel responds with fear to the vision, whilst even his friends who did not see it, greatly feared and fled to hide.

25 Fekkes (1994:46) distinguishes between oracular prophecy and visions as two distinct mediums of revelations, but notes that both can be experienced by one person. In Revelation the two are certainly used together and regarded as forms of prophecy. Cf. the table in Fekkes (1994:47) and, finally, Bauckham (1993:3). On the mystification, cf. also Prigent (2001:130).

26 Giesen (1997:86): “Der Posaunenschall weist auf den hin, der geheimnisvoll hinter ihm steht.”

27 Some argue that the voice is that of an angel (e.g., Sickenberger 1942:48; Lohmeyer 1953:15; Roloff 1984:40; Beale 1999:203), but most commentators agree that it is Christ’s voice (e.g., Prigent 2001:130; Schimanowski 2002:41).

28 Cf. the thorough description of the motif of trumpets in this verse by Aune (1997:84-5); also Maier (2002:93), Fekkes (1994:50-51), Beale (1999:203) and Prigent (2001:13) who refer to the liturgical use of trumpets.

They are overawed by what they experience. In Revelation 1:17 the vision has a similar numinous effect and brings the visionary in a state of shock. He fell to the ground in fear before the Exalted One who speaks extraordinary things from the divine sphere. In this case it brings him to worship Christ — which worship is then accepted by him. It is clear that the visionary is not merely impressed by what the voice reveals. He also “sees” the voice and thus experiences the glorious presence of the divine.

All this is underlined by the remarks that the voice was “great” and sounded like a trumpet. Both these motifs indicate the nature of the voice as a supernatural, extraordinary phenomenon. Lupieri (2006:107) insightfully notes how the adjective “great” generally functions in Revelation, “like the root *rb* in some Semitic mystical literature, ... to indicate a superhuman or spiritual quality in the noun it qualifies”.²⁹ He concludes that “the Apocalypse is brimming not so much with gigantic beings and deafening shouts as with beings who are superhuman, angelic, spiritual, and thus ‘great’ in comparison to humans (see Acts 8:10)”. Clearly then the visionary understands that divine secrets are revealed to him, but is also constantly aware that this is done by a mystical divine figure who stands behind the revelation and who represents the divine sphere which is being revealed to humanity.

5.2 The appearance of Christ

The appearance of Christ in the vision is especially noteworthy because of its mystical qualities. The following analysis shows how it is patterned:

A ¹⁴ ἡ δὲ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ αἱ τρίχες λευκαὶ	ὡς ἔριον λευκόν ὡς χιῶν,
B καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ	ὡς φλόξ <u>πυρός</u>
C ¹⁵ καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι	ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ χαλκολιβάνῳ <u>πεπυρωμένης</u> ³⁰
D καὶ ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ	ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν,
C ¹⁶ καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἀστέρας ἑπτὰ	
B' καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ ῥομφαία δίστομος ὄξεια ἐκπορευομένη	
A' καὶ ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ	ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει

29 Lupieri (2006:108-9) also refers to the special significance of the voice within a Christian context where it is linked, e.g., with Christ’s cry on the cross and used when Jesus resurrects Lazarus. “Except in Luke and Acts ..., it is never used of an ordinary human being” (Lupieri 2006:108).

30 John conceives of the eyes and feet of Christ as a pair, as he makes clear in Revelation 2:18 where he repeats the pair in conjunction with the title “Son of God.”

The first four elements (A, B, C, D) form a group through their subjects which are placed in the sentence initial positions and through the comparisons in the sentence final positions (introduced by ὡς). The fourth element (D), in the middle, stands out in this group of four, because it is heard and not seen (creating a 3 + 1 pattern). It is a key element: John previously turned to see the voice (Rev. 1:12), but it actually only happens in 1:15. The voice is placed in the middle (D) and thus forms the focal point of the appearance of the Son of Man — stressing his mystical nature. Elements 5 and 6 (C', B') form a pair because both lack the subject in the sentence initial position and a comparison. These two further stand out as a pair because they are the only elements in the vision that cannot be traced to Daniel 7, 10 and Ezekiel 1 (Boxall 2006:43). At the same time they symbolize salvation (holding in his right hand) and judgment (the sword from his mouth), two key motifs in Revelation. They are also a pair in terms of referring to actions rather than features of the Son of Man and these actions are the two leading motifs in Revelation. The description of the face which is like the sun in full power (element 7; A') is climactic. It resumes the description of the appearance in the first three elements. This part of the vision is a neat ring composition. In terms of a semantic analysis, A-A' belong together (head and face), B and B' both signify judgment whilst C and C' connote salvation.³¹

The prominent luminous motifs of fire and light in this vision, as is illustrated by at least three elements (the eyes, feet and face) are once again taken over from Daniel 10. The eyes which are like a flame of fire (ὡς φλῶξ πυρός) is similar to Daniel 10:6 where the angel's eyes are described as lamps of fire (ὡσεὶ λαμπάδες πυρός). The feet refer to Daniel 10:6, but also to Ezekiel 1:7 and 8:2 (Kowalski 2004:91) — all texts that provided material for later mystical traditions.³² In fact, one could trace such motifs that link the presence with fire to the narrative about the appearance of YHWH to Moses in the flame of fire (Ex. 3:2).³³ Such descriptions evoke mystical language that is closely

By placing them in the middle letter, he gives special status to this pair. The link between the eyes and the feet is also strengthened by the fact that both of them are compared with fire.

- 31 This can only be noted here because of limited space and will be argued elsewhere.
- 32 Many other explanations are given. Beale (1999:209-10) thinks the feet refers to Christ's moral purity so that those among whom Christ walks will have to reflect this purity, whilst Kiddle (1946:15) writes that the feet "symbolize power to crush evil and to punish unfaithfulness." In the case of the eyes, Mealy (1992:66) represents an often repeated position of scholars who think that the fiery eyes refer to Christ's searching gaze (Rev. 2:23). Oecumenius (1:12-6) already suggested that the fiery eyes refer to Christ's fearsomeness and his threat against the seven churches for their disobedience.
- 33 For the feet like bronze glowing in a furnace, cf. Ps. 12:7 and its development in Hodayot (1QH-4QH) 13:16. "Having just spoken of a flame of fire in reference to the

associated with the glory of God. God's throne is, for example, described in Daniel 7:9 (LXX) as a flame of fire with the same phrase (*ὡς φλόξ πυρός*) used in Daniel 10:6. Fire, to name one more example, is used in Rabbi Akiba's mystical prayer to describe God (Swartz 1997:113, 117).³⁴

The face of the Son of Man also has a luminous character. The image of a shining face is popular in antiquity³⁵ with angels or heavenly beings often being described as having a face like the sun (e.g., Dan. 10:6).³⁶ Once more of importance in this context, however, is the role of a shining face in mystical texts where it indicates the glorious presence and activity of the divine. The wheels of God's throne and the gown of the great Glory in 1 Enoch 1:14, 18b-23, 20 look like a shining face (Kanagaraj 1998:143; cf. also Scholem 1946: 44). In a Christian context such mystical thought comes powerfully to the fore in the mystical event of the transfiguration narrative with its report on how Jesus' face shone like the sun (Mt. 17:2).³⁷ In Revelation 10:1 the face (*τὸ πρόσωπον*) of the mighty angel who brings John the small scroll also shines like the sun. But John clearly singles out the Son of Man's face as more special. His *ὄψις* is more exalted, being like the sun shining "in full strength".

Even the motif of the white hair of the Son of Man, for example, is also not so much an indication of his angelic status,³⁸ but rather alludes to the white hair

eyes of the figure in the vision, (the visionary) wants to reaffirm the presence of fire even down to his feet..." (Lupieri 2006:110). Both the fiery eyes and feet contribute to the mystical, glorious appearance of the Son of Man.

- 34 That fire was used in this sense and also for an angelic being like the sun, moon, stars, lightning, wind and clouds (Lupieri 2006:110; cf. Ep.Jer.6:59-61) is certainly a result of the fact that, in a pre-modern experiential reality, fire was an intimidating, numinous phenomenon that was experienced as divine, spiritual or angelic (Lupieri 2006:110). Fire is then used metaphorically with a terrifying, supernatural connotation.
- 35 "There is also a widespread Judeo-Christian tradition that emphasizes the brightness of the faces of the righteous, often comparing them with the radiance of the sun or the stars (Mt. 13:43; 4 Ez. 7:97, 125; T.Job 31:5; b.Ber. 17a; cf. Ex. 34:29; Dan. 12:3; 1 En. 38:4; 2 Apoc.Bar. 51:53; Aune 1997:99).
- 36 Bauckham (1993:253) notes Mt. 13:43; 2 En. 1:5; 19:1; 4 Ez. 7:97; Ap.Zeph. 6:11; T.Abr A7:3; 12:5; 16:6; Qu.Ez. A20; 3 En. 48C:6; Ap.Pet. 1:7; Ap.Paul. 12. The motif denotes "sanctity, divinity, or transcendence, often in theophanies or angelophanies" (Aune 1997:99); cf. also Orlov (2000a) for a discussion of this from a mystical perspective. He refers to how the vision of God affects the appearance of the visionary and his face takes on light, shining features.
- 37 Cf. Mt. 17:2; Lupieri (2006:110) refers to 2 En. 1:5 and 4 Ez. 7:97, but cf. also Rowland (1996:421).
- 38 Angels are often depicted with white hair in e.g. Ap.Abr. 11:2 and 1 En. 106:5-6; cf. Aune (1997:94). In 1 En.106-7 Lamech compares his son to angels because of his hair, white like wool and eyes that made the whole house bright like the sun so that

and garment of the Ancient of Days (Dan.7:9b; Collins 1998:274; Stuckenbruck 1995:209-21, 257-61; Kangaraj 1998:143³⁹) and thus ascribes theophanic features to Christ. Through this seemingly simple motif his divine and glorious nature is underlined in a special manner.

All these luminous and special features of the Son of Man's appearance are interrelated and share a common mystical provenance, not only among themselves, but also with later apocalypses.⁴⁰ They, in fact, are reminiscent of how mystical traditions depict God on the throne of glory in luminous anthropomorphic terminology. The Christophany in Revelation 1 represents a further development of this motif of God's glory or *Kavod* through its references to luminous objects.

5.3 The function of the glorious appearance of Christ

The special mystical features characterize the supernatural, exalted nature of the Son of Man who reflects God's glory (Rowland 1996:410). What is striking, though, is that this exalted portrait is never speculative. It is always, as has already become clear to some extent from the above discussion, integrated within the relationship between the divine and human. The glorious Son of Man reveals divine secrets to humanity. As Son of Man he holds the stars and a sword comes from his mouth. His glorious appearance is linked with his salvific work and his judgment (e.g., Fekkes 1994:77). The glory of the Son of Man thus frames his liberating and purifying role as Saviour and Judge.⁴¹

the whole house was exceptionally bright. He then again says that the son's eyes are like the rays of the sun and his face glorious so that it seems that he is sprung not from him, but from angels. For a discussion of this passage, cf. Orlov (2001:23-38).

39 Cf. for this also Kanagaraj (1998:142) and his discussion of the research of Yarbro Collins and Carrell, the latter of which was unfortunately not accessible to me. In his careful analysis of this dimension, Aune (1997:91) also draws attention to the fusion of Son of Man features with that of the Ancient of Days, but notes that it may also be present in Dan. 7:13 LXX and could have been influenced by Ez. 1:26.

40 Rowland (1996:410) and Deconick (2006:11-14) point out that Dan. 7 and 10 is generally based on Ez. 1. Deconick even traces such descriptions to Ex. 33:18-34:8. Rowland (1996:420) pointed out, like many others, that Jaoul as angel figure in Ap.Abr.10-11 displays striking similarities to the vision of Christ in Rev. 1.

41 This is complementary to the function of the Christophany to authorize the book. Fekkes (1994:52) remarks, for example, that

The Christophany goes beyond providing assurance to John and makes clear to his readers that the *revelation* which he brings them is from Jesus Christ himself, the Lord of the church (1.1).

This suggests a further important function. It was pointed out how John foregrounds the lamp stands as object at the beginning of the vision which he mentions again at its end (Rev. 1:12, 20). He thus frames his vision of Christ with references to the churches, thereby linking the appearance of Christ with the churches which he saves and judges. This link is developed in a special way to denote Christ's abiding presence among the churches (Rev. 1:13).⁴² He stands among the churches. More importantly, in Revelation 2:1 this motif is developed further when it is said that Christ "walks" (περιπατῶν) among them. Aune (1997:142) aptly notes that it "can only be an allegory for the unseen presence of Christ among the Christians of the seven congregations". A key word here is "unseen." Through the divine, secret revelation in John's book, the churches are reminded that Christ, though no longer with them physically, is nevertheless present among them in glory. This is an awesome presence, since he is searching hearts and minds and repaying according to deeds (Rev. 2:23). Christ is a living, active divine presence among believers who fights with the sword of his mouth (Rev. 2:16) and has the power to remove their lamp stand from its place (Rev. 2:5).

The divine presence is also developed further in Revelation 4-5 where the entry of the visionary into the throne room is described. John shares this tradition with mystical texts which narrate how visionaries and Merkavah mystics experience with awe the glory of God in the heavenly sphere. Here again it is revealed to him how and why Christ as Lamb was given access the secret knowledge that was hidden in the locked scroll (Rev. 5). Though it is not a private, individual mystical experience of an individual mystic like in Merkavah texts, this revelation implies that he experiences God's glory. He, like those mystics, enters the heavenly region and experiences the divine presence (Bauckham 1993:136).

John's mystical experience is unique in its focus on Christ. He discovers that Christ is the only one who can get access to hidden knowledge. He alone is worthy to open the scroll which reveals the mysteries of the end time (Rev. 5). Even more unique is how in his mystical thought Christ's special place and worthiness is linked with his earthly ministry. He is given glory because he was a faithful witness, was slain, purchased people for God through his blood and made them to be a kingdom and priests (Rev. 1:5; 5:9b-10, 12). The divine nature and glory of Christ thus is essentially related to his witness.

Also noteworthy is how other human beings and believers are given access to mystical, secret knowledge and to a glorious existence. When believers respond to Christ as Lamb, wash their robes white in his blood (Rev. 7:14) and follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4), fearless even in the face of death (Rev. 12:11), they too will sit on thrones and judge (Rev. 20:4-6). In the words

42 Aune (1997:89) notes that the lamp stands form a circle around Christ. But cf. 2:1.

of the climactic conclusion to the septet of letters, the one who overcomes will be given the right to sit with Christ on his throne, just as he overcame and sat down with his Father on his throne (Rev. 3:21). Followers of Christ will therefore have their special place and their own *kavod* on their thrones. With voices like rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder, they will sing a new song “before the throne” (Rev. 14:2). Fire will come from their mouths and devour the enemies of God (Rev. 11:5). They will live in the New Jerusalem where there is no sun or moon because the glory of God will provide light and the Lamb will be its light (Rev. 21:23). And this will spill over to the nations who will walk by the light of the city (Rev. 21:24). Those who remain faithful in their witness will be given the glory that is now hidden from human view. As followers of Christ believers they will share in the mystical presence of God, transformed from their state of persecution and oppression into a state of glory (DeConick 2001:35). The divine-human relationship is completely transformed: Evil is removed, creation is restored and humanity is recreated in the image of God.

There is, therefore, a mystical unity between Christ as the faithful Lamb and the followers of Christ as his faithful followers. They experience what Christ experienced and they will, when they too remain faithful, live in God’s presence in the new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:3). Finally, though, this experience is not only promised to them. They already experience the divine presence through their liturgical practices, graphically expressed in such passages like Revelation 14:1-5, in which the visionary also hears a sound from heaven like rushing waters and like a peal of thunder with 144, 000 singing a new song.

6. CONCLUSION

In his Christophany John reflects an early Christian mysticism that should be seen as “companion expressions of Second Temple Judaism” and which is, in fact, “essentially ‘Jewish’” (Deconick 2006:2). Revelation shares with Jewish mysticism a message of the living God who manifests himself in the acts of creation, revelation and redemption. The huge gap between the divine and the human is overcome and unity with God can be attained (Scholem 1946:7-10; cf. the introduction above).

John also takes over this traditional language when he speaks about God’s mystical presence in glory (e.g. Rev. 21:3). But John’s Jewish mystical traditions are decisively determined by his Christian context and transformed by his own mystical experience of the divine.⁴³ His entry into heavenly regions to

43 Cf. Scholem (1946:10). He observes that Christian mysticism would differ from Jewish mysticism because of this focus on Christ and the mystical interpretation of his passion. In Jewish mysticism the Torah would fulfil a similar function.

receive hidden knowledge means an entry into the presence of God *and* the Lamb and to participation in true worship of God *and* Christ. As a result, mysticism is democratized. Not only heavenly beings, but also humanity, live in the presence of God. The heavenly ritual that he and the Lamb's followers experience, makes the presence of God regularly available to believers (Deconick 2006:23). As such it displays a particular historical form that distinguishes it from other forms of Biblical and Jewish mysticism.

Behind the present world there exists a divine sphere or realm to which Christ gives John access and, indirectly through his revelation, also to those who belong to John's own group of fellow-believers (Scholem 1946:10-11). And yet, despite this mystical democracy in which God who is good, wise, just and merciful reveals the divine will and decodes the mysteries, God also retains distance and keeps revelation secret. The readers have to be actively involved in witnessing, in decoding John's message (e.g., Rev.13). They have to live with new enthusiasm (Rev. 2:4-5), understand that their enemies are in fact powerless (Rev. 2:9-10) and must also refrain from idolatry (Rev. 2:6, 14, 20). If they do so, they will experience God's presence. Ultimately, though, they will only fully experience God's presence in the future paradise, the New Jerusalem. Even then they do not become divine. They will be "with" God (Rev. 21:3). In the divine and human relationship the divine is not dissolved in the human with the transformation in glory.

Humanity is imparted a mystical experience as a gift. One can experience God's glory – even in a recognisable, human way through the Son of Man and Son of God. But ultimately the union with God elicits awe and respect from humanity. Though God's glory is experienced, God and Christ are accorded glory by humanity and all nations to the end of times.

With these remarks, some insights in the mystical nature of Revelation have been provided. It is a book that claims to be the mystical revelation by the Son of Man who is also the Son of God. He introduces the readers to secret knowledge of vital importance. This revelation transforms them in glory: They discover how they live in the glorious, unseen presence of the glorious Son of God. They get to know that this revelation mystically reveals to them the true nature of their spiritual journey. Just as they realise the glorious presence of Christ among them, they get to experience that their spiritual journey will take them to the mystical presence of the living God and his Lamb.

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