

THE NEW HOSANNA IN THE NEW TEMPLE: JESUS' ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

• José Granados •

“As a petition for help or an exclamation of jubilation, ‘Hosanna’ attests that the Christian preaching of the word is always rooted in the body.”

“The Creator allotted ten measures of beauty to the world, and of them Jerusalem received nine. The Creator allotted ten measures of wisdom to the world, and of them Jerusalem received nine.” This is how one ancient midrash exalts the primacy of the Holy City. But immediately afterwards it adds: “The Creator allotted ten measures of suffering to the world, and of them Jerusalem received nine.”¹

History seems to have confirmed this special joint assignment of glory and pain to the capital of Judea. The city has become a symbol of impossible aspirations and an icon of a peace that is forever being disrupted by political and religious conflicts. In fact, it was already thus at the moment when Jesus entered the city mounted on a donkey and acclaimed by the multitude. An analysis of this moment can help not only to bring us closer to the mystery

¹Cf. Gianfranco Ravasi, “La Madre Sion” in *La Madre del Signore*, ed. Clara Burini et al., *Quaderni di lettura biblica* (Bologna: EDB, 1986).

of Christ, but also to enable us to interpret the significance of his action in the political and religious heart of the Jewish society of his day, thus illuminating our own cultural situation.

We are at that point in the life of Christ where his public ministry reaches its culmination, for his activity has consisted precisely in a gradual ascent to Jerusalem. This is how it is described by the synoptic gospels, and by Luke in particular (cf. Lk 9:51: “he resolutely took the road for Jerusalem”). At this final moment, then, when Jesus is acclaimed as king, the message of the Kingdom of God he proclaimed is made concrete in his person and in his action. All attempts to interpret this key concept of the Kingdom, the heart of the preaching of Jesus, need to take account of this episode.

The scene certainly presents a novelty with respect to the rest of the public life of Christ. Having repeatedly refused to be acclaimed, having pledged to silence many of those he healed to prevent them revealing that he was the Messiah, the Master now orchestrates this triumph of palm branches and hosannas. This new way of proceeding, which we need to explain in what follows, must not, however, lead us to forget the continuity of the scene with the rest of Jesus’ life. The tenor continues to be that of a profound obedience to his Father, expressed in an attentive listening to the ancient scriptures in which the voice of God is revealed. What Jesus effects in entering the City is in fact a prophetic sign that recapitulates key Old Testament themes. Only by reference to these can we make sense of certain enigmatic aspects of the scene: the donkey on which Jesus is mounted and the cry of “Hosanna” with which the people receive him.

1. Riding on a donkey

Jesus tells his disciples to appropriate an ass they will find in a neighboring village. The general description of what took place leaves questions hanging in the air. How is it that the owners of the ass allow the disciples to take it away on the vague excuse that “the Master needs it?” Apparently Jesus is following the law of *angaria* current in his day: this allowed for a public official to requisition a transport animal if he needed it for the exercise of his duties—and even force someone to carry a load (think, for example, of what

happened to Simon of Cyrene).² The gospels are then emphasizing the lordship of Christ. *Vis-à-vis* the owners of the ass (“lords” according to the gospel account), Jesus presents himself as the real “Lord” with royal power, who has all things at his disposal. What the disciples say in Luke 19:31 could in fact be translated as: “The Lord needs it,” but also as: “*Its Lord* needs it.”

Thus the groundwork is laid for the meaning of what Jesus will accomplish: he enters the City as the king hoped for by Israel. In fact, the gospel writers see in the scene the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy. The text of Matthew closely follows Zechariah 9:9: “Shout with gladness, daughter of Jerusalem: See now, your king comes to you; he is victorious, he is triumphant, humble, and riding on a donkey.” The prophecy goes back to times earlier than Zechariah, for the prophet has in mind, in his turn, a passage in the book of Genesis: the blessing of Judah by Jacob, his father. In this ancient text we find: “The scepter shall not pass from Judah, nor the mace from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs, to whom the peoples shall render obedience. He ties up his young ass to the vine, to its stock the foal of the she-ass” (49:10).³ Where Jacob ties his ass to a vine, Jesus asks his disciples to untie an ass and lead it to him. The Jewish commentators read this blessing of Jacob as a messianic oracle. Against this backdrop, Zechariah interpreted the entry on an ass as the sign proper of the Messiah hoped for by the prophets, the son of David. Some rabbinical traditions refer to the donkey on which the Messiah would ride in these terms: “It is a special donkey, the same that Abraham had used to carry Isaac and the same on which, in the end, the Messiah King will reveal himself, as the prophet (Zechariah) says.” Likewise, in reference to the donkey on which Moses returned to Egypt (Ex 4:20): “The very

²Cf. Duncan M. Derrett, “Law in the New Testament: the Palm Sunday Colt,” *Novum Testamentum* 13, no. 4 (1971): 241–58.

³Cf. Joseph Bleinkinsopp, “Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80, no. 1 (1961): 55–64; 56. Cf. also Deborah Krause, “The One Who Comes Unbinding the Blessing of Judah: Mark 11:1–10 as a Midrash on Genesis 49:11, Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:25–26,” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), for whom Jesus unties the ass, indicating thus that the blessing of Jacob, the material prosperity promised in the shape of an abundance of vineyards, was going to be withdrawn from Jerusalem.

thing that is written of the first Savior . . . is also written of the last Savior.”⁴

It should be pointed out that the oracle of Genesis 49 had crossed over the borders of the people of Israel to acquire a universal coloring. It was a prophecy that formed a part of the Hellenistic culture of the time, which also looked to an enigmatic king coming from the east, called for that reason by the name of *Oriens*. Thus, for example, an ancient writer identified this new king with the emperor Vespasian. Since he was fighting in Judea when the crisis developed over Nero’s succession, it could be seen that in his crowning as an emperor “the scepter shall not pass from Judah.”⁵ What this means is that the form in which Jesus interprets this oracle and fulfills it has consequences for understanding the universal reach of Christianity and its relationship with the powers of the world. How are we to understand, then, the kingdom of this universal monarch?

First, this king rides on a donkey. The sign is to be understood in light of the verse that follows in Zechariah’s prophecy, which identifies horses with warrior power (Zech 9:10): “He will banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem; the bow of war will be banished. He will proclaim peace for the nations.” The Messiah does not come on a horse, a sign of power, but on a donkey as emissary of peace. This is not to be a warrior Christ, but someone who will preach the kingdom in tranquility and peace. Jesus had already called the meek blessed and exhorted his disciples to learn from his own meekness.⁶

It is equally important to note that this entry is linked to the Temple of Jerusalem. In this connection let us re-examine the context of the quotation from Zechariah, prophet of the restoration

⁴Quotation from the Pirke of Rabbi Eliezer, in S. Dominique de la Maisonneuve, “Le Messie et son âne à la lumière de la tradition rabbinique,” in *Kecharitomene: Mélanges René Laurentin* (Paris: Desclée, 1990), 139–44; 141.

⁵Cf. Blenkinsopp, “Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry,” 61: “this oracle had already, in the pre-Christian period, been understood and used in a wider politico-religious context on the theme of world domination or empire. Josephus, *Wars* 6, 5, 4: ‘What did the more elevate them (the Jews) in undertaking this was an ambiguous oracle, found also in their sacred writings, that, about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable world.’”

⁶Cf. Klemens Stock, *Las bienaventuranzas de Mateo 5, 3–10 a la luz del comportamiento de Jesús* (Madrid, 2004).

of the Sanctuary. We find it stated there, immediately preceding the verse that refers to the donkey: “Near my House I will take my stand” (Zech 9:8), where the “House” is the Temple of God, which at the end of time extends to all the land of Judea, hallowing everything, down to the smallest aspects of human life (cf. Zech 14:20).⁷ But we must also note that Jesus begins his entry into Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, the place whence the glory of the Lord had left the temple prior to the exile of the people to Babylon (cf. Ez 11:23). Moreover he goes mounted on a donkey no one has ridden before, that is to say, one fit for cultic use (cf. 1 Sam 6:7–8).⁸ The king who comes bearing universal dominion will exercise that dominion precisely in relation to the Temple, to the house of Yahweh.

Here we encounter the essential characteristics of the preaching of the Kingdom, which are now converted into concrete action and synthesized in the person of Jesus. On the one hand there is its eschatological character: a king comes who will have rule over the entire world and who is presented as the culmination of the ages. On the other hand we have the humility of his entry: the kingdom is the kingdom of the little ones, it does not conquer power by force but in peace and gentleness. Finally, these two aspects come together in the whole scene’s reference to God: this kingdom is established in the Temple, which means that its fundamental basis is Jesus’ relationship with the Father. This special presence of the Father is precisely what gives the kingdom the character both of the conclusive event of history and of a paradoxical action of God that only the little ones understand, an action that goes unnoticed by the powerful of the world. That is to say, because God is the Father of Jesus, he can appear as the definitive, eschatological king and combine at once his royal lordship with the humility of the children, of those who have received everything from above. Now let us see what further elements emerge from a study of the cry “Hosanna.”

⁷Andrea Spatafora, *From the “Temple of God” to God as the Temple: A Biblical Theological Study of the Temple in the Book of Revelation* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997), 50–51.

⁸Cf. Jacques Nieuviarts, *L’entrée de Jésus à Jérusalem (Mt 21, 1–17): messianisme et accomplissement des Écritures en Matthieu*, vol. 176, *Lectio divina* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 35.55–56.

2. *Hosanna, blessed is the one who comes!*

To understand this cry we must read Psalm 117. This is a long hymn in which the king gives thanks to God for having saved him from mortal danger. His enemies have been routed, the stone rejected by the builders has been turned into the cornerstone (Psalm 117:22), the monarch is acclaimed by the people and received into the sanctuary by the priests to the cry of Hosanna. The psalm was used in the liturgy in the form of a dialogue, with two choirs alternating the verses of the final part. It became a part of the Hallel, an ensemble of psalms (113–118) that were recited very frequently, so that devout Jews came to know them by heart.⁹

Here we encounter the cry “hosanna,” which had been in the beginning an urgent appeal for help, uttered at a time of mortal danger, “save us soon, save us now.” In time this acclamation became a part of the liturgy of the Temple, which recalled the liberation effected by God. From its being uttered in a joyful context it acquired a festive tonality: “The Lord has saved!” St. Augustine observed that in Hebrew this cry was an interjection, a shout coming from the very heart of man where the emotion of the one who speaks matters more than the meaning of the sounds.¹⁰ The gospel writers (apart from Luke) retained the Hebrew form, transliterated into Greek characters, without translating it. This is a sign that the cry had already entered the liturgy of the Temple and had acquired a fixed form. This fact, however, does not imply that the original meaning had been forgotten, a meaning that was evident from the context of the whole psalm. According to this reading, Jesus was acclaimed as the king who comes to bear the imminent salvation of Yahweh and at the same time as the actual presence of that salvation: in Jesus, God is saving now, his salvation becomes present.

This cry has, then, a sense of urgency: imminent divine aid is hoped for to prevent humankind from perishing. “Hosanna” does

⁹Cf. Andrew Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study of the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John*, vol. 158, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

¹⁰St. Augustine, *In Iohannem* LI, 2 (CCL 36, 440). “Vox autem obsecrantis est, Hosanna, sicut nonnulli dicunt qui hebraeam linguam nouerunt, magis affectum indicans, quam rem aliquam significans; sicut sunt in lingua latina quas interiectiones uocant, uelut cum dolentes dicimus: Heu! uel cum delectamur: Vah! dicimus”

not ask, then, for a non-temporal salvation, but for the help that will come through the concrete vicissitudes of history. Thus, along with the Hosanna, the Psalm has a saying that is also retained in the gospel account: “blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” This sentence synthesizes the key theme of the history of God with his people. Yahweh is indeed a God who comes and acts by sending chosen men to incarnate his salvation.

Let us try to draw some conclusions from the study of the Old Testament background to our scene. The cry of “Hosanna” and the prophecy of Zechariah are at one in presenting Jesus as the hoped-for king, the king who comes to inherit universal dominion; moreover, both situate this kingdom in relation to the Temple. The emphasis is thus placed on the relationship of Jesus with God, whose salvation Christ proclaims. This king is king because Yahweh sent him and he comes to establish, not a kingdom of men, but the kingdom of his Father. The concrete form that this kingdom will take will only become clear when we study the intention with which Jesus enters the Holy City.

For the moment, let it suffice to emphasize that it is not so much Jerusalem that Jesus enters, as the Temple. Mark makes this point when he says: “He entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple” (Mk 11:11) as if the city were to be identified with the sacred enclosure. This means that the mystery of Jesus’ entry is but one half of a diptych that is completed by an action of Jesus in the sanctuary, as Matthew and Luke make clear: the expulsion of the money-changers. Mark, who allows a day to pass between the two events, seems to do so only to increase the dramatic tension. Jesus enters the Temple, looks around at the state of its worship, and will act on the following day after spending the night with his disciples.¹¹ Thus for all of the synoptics, the terminus of the entry of Jesus on the back of a donkey is the Temple, where he goes to take energetic action: first, in carrying out the expulsion of the money-changers; second, in proclaiming a new word (by his preaching in the Temple) spoken with authority.

From this viewpoint the entry of Jesus and the cry of Hosanna with which he is greeted take on a more concrete meaning. Indeed, the Hosanna evokes different Jewish feasts connected with

¹¹For the exegesis of the pericope in Mark, cf. Klemens Stock, “Gliederung und Zusammenhang in Mk 11–12,” *Biblica* 59, no. 4 (1978): 481–515.

the Temple. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated Israel's sojourn in the desert, guided by the presence of God in the Tent of Meeting. It recalled the blessing that the divine closeness brought to the people, symbolized in the waters that issued from the Temple. The last day was called the great Hosanna and the palms waved by the people for the occasion were also called hosanna. In this context the entry of Jesus could be read as the salvation hoped for by the people, a blessing of Yahweh in which the true living water started to flow from the sanctuary. The Feast of the Dedication, on the other hand, had been instituted by the Maccabees when they purified the profaned Temple and returned it to consecration to God. Jesus' entry could allude to this celebration. If this were so, then, in expelling the money-changers from the Temple, Christ would be bringing about a new dedication.¹² Finally, the Hosanna was also sung at the end of the paschal meal along with the rest of the Hallel, and could be associated with the sacrifices of the Temple. Against this backdrop the Hosanna of the entry, alongside the Hosanna of the Last Supper, would unite Jesus' entry with his death on the Cross, which brought an end to the ancient worship and established the new. To which of these feasts are the gospels referring? They do not seem to speak of one in particular to the exclusion of the others. Rather, in the gospel accounts the liturgy of the Temple is brought together in all its richness, summarizing all of the aspects evoked by the three feasts. An analysis of the expulsion of the money-changers will help us to delve more deeply into the entry's symbolism.

3. *Den of thieves*

We have seen that the entry of Jesus has as its terminus the Temple. Psalm 117 says: "We bless you from the house of the Lord Go forward in procession with branches even to the altar" (Ps 117:26–27). The king was hoped for and received with joy in the

¹²According to F. C. Burkitt, "Studies in the Western text of St. Mark," *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1916): 139–52, if the entry of Jesus is understood in the context of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, then we can explain why Jesus was not hindered from knocking over the stalls of the money-changers: those who had acclaimed him the day before were actually expecting an action of this type.

Temple. According to Mark, the episode ends abruptly: Jesus comes into the enclosure, looks around him, and returns to the Mount of Olives. It is clear that the reception given him was not the one anticipated by the ceremony: what Jesus encounters is the rejection or indifference of the priests. The state of things in the Temple does not please the Master, who will throw the money-changers out the following day.¹³

Here we do not see Jesus perform a revolutionary act intended to rouse the populace against the priestly caste and the Temple. For it is clear that the King enters mounted on a donkey, the sign of messianic meekness. His means of establishing the kingdom of God will not be the war horse.¹⁴ How then are we to understand the action of Jesus? It is a symbolic gesture, in the way that the Old Testament prophets used to perform them. This is clear if the scene is read in conjunction with the triumphal entry, full of symbols (the palms, the hosanna, the donkey). The symbol does not, however, refer only to a restoration of the original worship, in the manner of a reform to eliminate abuses introduced with the years. The sale of animals was in fact necessary to maintain the sacrifices according to the ordering of the worship as established in the Law. It must therefore be a question of a radical transformation, of the coming of a new Temple.¹⁵ Thus the oracle of the prophet Zechariah would be fulfilled, foretelling that in the eschatological Temple no money-changer would be found anywhere (Zech 14:21).¹⁶

What is the new Temple that Jesus comes to establish? According to the book of Exodus (Ex 25:9), God showed Moses a model for the construction of a sanctuary. Inspired by this verse,

¹³Cf. C. A. Evans, "Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 8:27–16:20, vol. 34B," (Dallas: Word Books, 2001), 145–46.

¹⁴Cf. Martin Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 16–18.

¹⁵On this point I am in agreement with E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), although I find his final interpretation of this eschatological action of Christ reductionist. On the history of the exegesis of this pericope, cf. C. Metzdorf, *Die Tempelaktion Jesu: Patristische und historisch-kritische Exegese im Vergleich* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

¹⁶It is literally stated that there will be no Canaanite in the Temple, but in the context of universalism in which the oracle is encountered, it does not seem to be a question of the exclusion of a race. The Canaanites were a people dedicated to commerce and trade. Hence the way that many versions translate this passage.

Israel developed the idea of a heavenly Temple that had served as blueprint for building the one in Jerusalem. In this context the prophets foretell a universal renovation that would bring with it the descent of the heavenly Temple to earth, a Temple not built by human hands. Against the backdrop of these expectations, Jesus brings something entirely new. The new Temple, directly created by God, is, as we will see in the following, his own person.

Here we have one more proof that the eschatological expectation—the urgency of the message of Jesus, and his proclamation of a new time—cannot be separated from his own person and, more concretely, from the new relationship with God that he established by the familiar way in which he called his Father “Abba.” If Christ brings history to its culmination it is because he brings with him the definitive unity of the beginning with the end, that is, of man with God, according to the expression used by St. Irenaeus of Lyons.¹⁷ In this view history is conceived not as a mere succession of human actions, but as a path that comes from the Father and moves back toward him. The end of time has finally come because now a new form of relationship with God, a relationship incarnate in Jesus, is present as the definitive horizon of history. The eschatological expectation is not opposed to, but meets up with the confession of Jesus as Son of God.

The whole episode of the entry into the Temple bears this meaning. It reveals to us the special identity of Jesus, someone greater than Jonah, greater than the prophets, greater than the sanctuary itself (Mt 12:6). The key moment of the confession of this mystery occurs before the High Priest Caiaphas, in the context of accusations referring to some of Jesus’ words about the Temple. According to the false witnesses, the Master had spoken of destroying the Temple built by the hands of men and raising another not made by human hands (cf. Mk 14:58). We know from the gospel of John that Jesus did pronounce a saying about the new temple and that this was not understood by his hearers. It was this failure to understand that lay behind the different versions of the witnesses. At this point the High Priest, seeing that things were going nowhere, altered the course of the interrogation and asked Jesus if he was the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One (Mk 14:61). Let us note that Caiaphas is not simply changing the subject, breaking with the

¹⁷Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 4 (SC 100, 634).

thread of the accusations, and forgetting the question of the Temple. It was indeed for the Messiah, as the Son of the Blessed One, to rebuild a new, definitive Temple.¹⁸ And thus when Jesus confessed to being the Messiah and Son of God he declared his special mission with respect to the Temple. Moreover, the Lord's words do not simply affirm his messianic claim. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain why they provoke the high priest to make an outraged accusation of blasphemy. The reason of this scandal is that Jesus has identified himself with the Temple of God, thus placing himself on the divine level: "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mk 14:62).¹⁹ He is not just the Messiah, but a transcendent Messiah who affirms that he belongs to the divine realm.

In this context it is worth remembering Saint Stephen's reply to his persecutors in the Acts of the Apostles. After having spoken to them at length about the Temple, Stephen affirms that he is seeing Jesus himself, seated at the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:56). The protomartyr, too, sees the glorious Son of God as the fulfillment of an Old Testament theme: the dwelling of God in the Temple of Jerusalem. Moreover, in the Gospel of John we find a saying of Jesus that refers to this same vision, the reply that Jesus gave to Nathanael. The disciple, surprised at the revelations he has just received in his first encounter with Christ, is promised the vision of greater things: "heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending" (Jn 1:51). Here there is a reference to Jacob's ladder, on which the angels went up and down, which leads to the following interpretation of his reply: Jesus is identifying himself with the Temple, the Holy Place through which men go up and down to heaven, as Jacob declared: "This is nothing less than a house of God; this is the gate of heaven!" (Gn 28:17).²⁰

¹⁸Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered. Christianity in the Making 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 633.

¹⁹The subject of the Temple reappears in Mk 15:28–29. The people mock the Crucified One because he is unable to come down from the cross, still less to rebuild the Temple. Without knowing it, the passers-by are referring to a mystery (the Cross as new Temple), later corroborated when the veil of the Temple was rent (Mk 15:38).

²⁰Cf. Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement series* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 136–66.

On the other hand, after the entry into Jerusalem and the expulsion of the money-changers, the Master cited another verse from the same psalm: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Ps 117:22). The quotation serves as a conclusion to the parable of the homicidal vine-growers, in which Jesus presents himself as the son in contrast to the prophets, servants sent before him to the vineyard (Mt 21:33–42). There is here a play on words between “son” (*ben* in Aramaic) and “stone” (*eben*). While the wine-growers thought they could appropriate the vineyard (the land of Israel with the Temple at its center) for themselves, what they actually did was to remove the cornerstone. For the stone who holds the building together is the Son, who at Easter will become the foundation of a new building, a new family of God.²¹

Thus, we can conclude that the king who entered riding on a donkey, the one who was greeted with the cry of “hosanna” and “blessed is the one who comes,” was in fact much greater than the Messiah hoped for by the disciples. The One who comes into Jerusalem proceeds from the very eternity of God as his Son, and he is therefore capable of transforming the Sanctuary, making God present in it in a new way. It is this special Sonship of Jesus that allows him to transform the Temple and its function. Because he is the Son of God in a unique transcendent sense, the Temple he constructs is likewise going to have unique characteristics. The Gospel of John says it explicitly: “he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body” (Jn 2:21). Let us now consider the meaning of this saying.

4. *He was speaking of the Temple of his body*

We will start by reflecting on the meaning of the Temple in the Old Testament. In the Temple the space and time of humankind come into contact with the sacred presence of the divine. Already in Israel’s passage through the desert, God made himself present to his People as his glory rested in the Tabernacle. Yahweh lives with his

²¹On the identification of Jesus with the Temple in the gospels, cf. Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple, or, The manner of God’s Presence to His Creatures from Genesis to the Apocalypse*, trans. Reginald F. Trevett (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1962), 112–50.

own and so calls them to journey further beyond themselves, and to enter into an ever deeper covenant with him. But the building of the Temple as a settled edifice only takes place with the arrival in the land that God gives to man for his inheritance. Stephen the proto-martyr began his discourse on the temple with an allusion to the land promised to Abraham (Acts 7:3), and to the holy land in which God appeared to Moses (Acts 7:33).²² The Temple therefore symbolizes the presence of God in the land, this land that unites the desires of the people, giving them a common destiny, a fruitful land that enjoys the blessing of Yahweh. All throughout its history Israel continued to wait to be granted a definitive Temple, where the presence of God would extend from the sanctuary to all the dominions of Jacob. The prophet Zechariah calls this future Israel the holy land (cf. Zech 2:16), because the Temple will have occupied all of the territory, and profane things will have been consecrated to the divine service.

This presence of the Temple on earth is important for its connection with the biblical vision of man. For scripture, man cannot be conceived separately from the land that he inhabits. He is a creature inserted into the material creation that he cultivates and from which he lives. Outside this environment he is dehumanized, because the relationships that constitute his very existence are rendered impossible. A reference to the earth, therefore, given as the inaugural gift of the Creator and promised as final blessing of the way, forms part of the very constitution of the human being. Here we are speaking specifically about that anthropological element which scripture calls *basar*, flesh, into which Yahweh infused his vital breath. Through his flesh man finds himself rooted in the earth, in communion with other men and dependent, in his fragility, on the power of God.

In this light we could say that the presence of the Temple is in intimate harmony with the biblical vision of man. A theology of the Temple, in which the glory and the name of God become present in the land of Israel, corresponds with an anthropology of the vital breath infused by the Creator to animate the clay formed by his hands (cf. Gn 2:7). The Spirit of Yahweh can live in the Temple and land of Israel, because he first lives in the earth with which man has

²²On the sermon of Stephen, cf. Simon Légasse, *Stephanos. Histoire et discours d'Étienne dans les Actes des Apôtres*, vol. 147, *Lectio Divina* (Paris: Cerf, 1992).

been formed. In this way the Temple can symbolize the concrete life of man who, in his relationship with the world and with his fellow men, is open to transcendence. And it can become the icon, too, of the whole people, which is united in coming from a common land, just as the members of the same family can say that they belong to the same flesh.

This relationship between the presence of God in the Temple and his presence in the human body gains particular prominence in the history of the prophets, who are witnesses of a decadent cult.²³ Their echoes resound in the words of Jesus as he expels the money-changers: the Temple, a house of prayer, has been converted into a den of thieves (cf. Jer 7:11; Is 56:7). The People itself is condemned (cf. Jer 2–7) for its unfaithfulness: the worshipers of the Temple do not fulfill the Covenant in love to God and neighbor, but rather convert their presence in the House of God into a justification for their wicked behavior. The divine dwelling is not a house of prayer but a den in which the thief seeks refuge, then clothes his robbery in the cloak of piety. What Jesus actually criticizes, though, as we have seen, is not the pecuniary interest of the money-changers (the fact that they had been doing business with the things of God) but something more radical: the offering in the Temple has been rendered incapable of converting the heart of man. What has happened is that the Temple of Jerusalem has ceased to be a symbol of the corporeality of man, that place where his concrete relationships with others and with the world are woven together and open up to God. And thus, because of this disconnection from the human body, the Sanctuary has been abandoned by the divine presence and is reduced to an empty cipher, incapable of informing human existence.

What solution to this loss of meaning of the Temple do the prophets propose? They do not promulgate a purely spiritual worship that would fail to take account of the space and time of the People. Such a withdrawal into inwardness would go against the fundamental concepts of biblical anthropology, and especially against the insertion of man into the material world, against his fleshly being. For the externality of worship is connected with the corporeality of man, which involves his having a relationship with the

²³Cf. Ulrich Mauser, *Gottesbild und Menschwerdung*, ed. Mohr—Siebeck, vol. 43 of *Beiträge zur historischen Theologie* (Tübingen, 1971).

world, with his brothers, and with God. A merely interior worship would ultimately be individualistic: one would seek salvation within oneself. If there is to be a real worship, it must be one of flesh and bone; it must express itself and be made visible in the world, where man enters into contact with reality in his own body.

Hence it happens that the more the prophets interiorize their worship, the more they turn it into something external, visible, corporeal. But how to accomplish this task, once the sin of the People has emptied the Temple of Jerusalem of its meaning and made it unable to perform its function? The prophets will have recourse to that primordial temple which is the human body, that is, they will make their own flesh the place of the divine presence among his own. One could say that the lack of a Temple helps them to go deeper into the actual reality of which the Temple is the symbol and sharpens their vision to discover the divine presence in man's very encounter with his world. The prophet himself becomes a place where God can be seen and heard, a living temple in the midst of the People, prolonging the divine presence to which the Temple of Jerusalem pointed.

In this sense the passions and sufferings that the prophets experience are of crucial importance. It is by virtue of them that the prophet, in his very body and personal life story, transforms himself into a living symbol. So we have Jeremiah, who does not marry and thereby expresses the pain of living without married love; or Hosea betrayed by his prostitute wife; or Ezekiel, a widower who through his grief brings God's mourning for his People to life. In these men the body cries out in the language of love and thus expresses the relationship of man with God, giving a voice to the drama of the broken covenant and of the divine forgiveness that is offered again and again. The prophets will suffer in themselves both God's disappointment with his unfaithful people and the People's own pain at their alienation from their Maker. Thus the new Temple Jesus will consecrate is being prepared in their bodies.

This is the tradition in which our gospel writers situated Jesus. The story of the expulsion of the money-changers from the Temple bears witness to it, particularly in the Lucan narrative. The third gospel compares Jesus with Jeremiah, presenting him weeping before an unbelieving Jerusalem that is unaware of the day of its visitation (Lk 20:41–42). The anger of Jesus when, immediately afterwards, he throws out the money-changers must be read in light of his weeping because the people have not wanted to be welcomed

by God. The gospel of Mark also charges its account with emotional tension through the day-long interval between the moment when Jesus surveys the scene on his arrival at the Temple, and his action against the money-changers. The emotion experienced in reading the gospel helps the reader understand the emotion that filled Jesus himself when facing the profanation of the Father's house. John, for his part, insists on the ardor with which Jesus expels the money-changers when he recalls the prophecy: "zeal for your house will devour me" (Jn 2:17; cf. Ps 68:10).

Underlying all this is a conception of the body that may seem strange to us. The body appears as the most appropriate place for human contact with transcendence. This is because our body opens us up to the world; when we accept the body as part of our identity we realize that our encounter with the world is part of who we are, that we are defined by this encounter with something that precedes us and calls us to move beyond ourselves. Therefore, far from being that part of us which is the most remote from God, the body (as openness toward relationship with the world) is in fact the place where he can draw near to us without canceling his transcendence. Before we contemplate or love him as an object situated before us, as the Wholly Other that we can never reach, the God of the Bible is felt within, determining all we are and do, from the beginning of our journey in existence. This feeling is not, however, just a matter of vague emotion. Rather, it opens the possibility of our participating from within in the being of Yahweh. It means that the deepest element of man's identity is rooted in his relationship with God. This is why Jeremiah can say: "Then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it" (Jer 20:9). The heart and the bones are the place where the fire of Yahweh, his Spirit, enter into the life of the prophet. So we see established a relationship between the body, the place of the presence of God in man, and the Temple or holy land, the place that God sanctifies with his presence.

Starting from this nexus between body and Temple, John goes on to elaborate his theology of the Incarnation. This helps us to read the central saying of his prologue: "The Word was made flesh, he lived among us" (Jn 1:14).²⁴ Underlying this sentence is the theology of the Temple, according to which God takes up his

²⁴Cf. Kerr, *Temple*, 102–35.

dwelling in the midst of the People of Israel. This background provides a good setting from which to understand why John uses the word “flesh” to refer to Jesus’ becoming man. The natural correlate of the dwelling of God in the Temple is in fact the holy land, which, in the constitution of man, corresponds to the flesh. Given that the vision of John to describe the Incarnation is that of the Temple in the land of Israel, the anthropology that will be the most helpful in order to draw close to the mystery is that of man as *basar*, flesh.

In this light we can return to what Jesus says in the gospel of John, when he identifies the Temple with his body. “Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2:19). Jesus can rely here on the experience of the prophets. His body will be the place where the Spirit, *ruah* of Yahweh, will finally fulfill the saving plan of the Father. In Jesus we see the realization of Saint Irenaeus’s saying: “Now the final result of the work of the Spirit is the salvation of the flesh.”²⁵ Jesus feels God present in his flesh, and it is there that he discovers him as the Father from whom he proceeds and who has formed him in the mother’s womb. In his body, God appears to him as the originating love on which all his human activity feeds and at the same time as the one who calls him to give himself up to his brothers, who will be sharers in his very body and blood (cf. Heb 2:14). Therefore, it is his body that enables us to understand the humanity of Jesus as total gift, as life from God and for God, and therefore also from men and for men.

Given all this, the death and resurrection of Jesus may be seen as the destruction and reconstruction of the Temple which is his body. This is so because the divine presence in the human body will reach its fullness in Jesus’ death and resurrection. In his suffering, the Son makes visible and brings close to us the heart of the Father, who suffers by the rejection of his People and continues to hold out his hand to them. On the other hand, all the pain of the human race, which lives without hope and without God in the world is also embraced by Jesus in his body. Here we arrive at the crux of the mystery: the union between God and man, transformed now according to the obedience of the Son, takes place in the suffering flesh of Jesus. This agony cannot fail to transform human corporeality, raising it to the point at which it is pure invocation to the Father, who will respond by raising the Son from the dead. This is

²⁵Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* V, 12, 4 (SC 153,154).

the moment when the new eschatological Temple rises, the definitive sanctuary. God does not need a Temple made by the hands of men, since he is pleased to live in the Temple that he himself has fashioned, the dead and risen body of his Son. This reading is confirmed by the letter to the Hebrews when it speaks to us of the tent by which Jesus entered into the heavenly sanctuary. Here the tent is the risen body of Jesus and the sanctuary is the actual divine presence. Through his body, Christ has set up a tent that allows man to enter into the very heart of intimacy with God (Heb 9:11–12; Heb 10:20).²⁶

Just as the land of Israel stands for the whole People, so corporeality is a sign of the communion of all humankind in a single family. We see here why and how Christ's action is able to touch all men. To illustrate this point we can refer to St. Augustine. The Bishop of Hippo offers an interesting exegesis of the connection between Temple and body when he ponders the symbolism of the forty-six years that it took to build the sanctuary, according to the Jews who talked with Jesus (Jn 2:20). Although it might look overly allegorical to us, his exegesis actually displays great profundity.

Underlying the Augustinian reading is the biblical conception of the flesh as that which men have in common from generation to generation, which reflects the principle of corporate personality proper to the scriptures. The entire human race is present in the body of Adam. Drawing on an ancient tradition, Augustine suggests that the letters of the name of Adam are the Greek initials of the four cardinal points, a demonstration of the unity of the race across the length and breadth of the world. Now, this unity is not given solely in space, but also in time. Thus Augustine can approach the meaning of the forty-six years in which the Temple was constructed. In order to do so he gives a further reading of the name of Adam, saying that forty-six years is the total of the four letters when numbered according to their place in the Greek alphabet, and that they symbolize the time taken to create humanity. The Temple therefore contains the entire human race, in its bodily union from Adam onwards. With the passing of the generations, this body was broken and dispersed throughout the world as a result of sin. Moreover, this concept of the body also enables us to understand the unity of Adam

²⁶Cf. A. Vanhoye, "Par la tente plus grande et plus parfaite . . . Hé 9,11" *Biblica* 46 (1965): 1–28.

and Christ; Jesus was born of Mary, a descendant of the first man, and so the body of Christ is also the body of Adam. Therefore, the same flesh that Jesus took from Adam is the only temple of the whole of humanity, a temple reconstructed and renewed in the resurrection by the Father.²⁷ In Christ, the body will be gathered from the ends of the earth and made one again in the spiritual concord of love.

What we have said in this section allows us to conclude that Jesus Christ not only bears a new revelation of God, as the God who is love and who is supremely close to us in his mysterious transcendence; the Master also offers us a new definition of man, a definition that touches essentially on his body. In fact the body, the place where man encounters the world and his neighbors, now receives a new language and a new measure: it becomes capable of receiving God himself in his trinitarian mystery, of being the place that contains the total revelation of the Father. Only if we start from here can we understand the characteristics of the kingdom of Christ and the way in which he transforms the city of man with his presence.

5. *Logos and Nomos*

In addition to being the religious center of the life of the People, the Jerusalem Temple had political and economic significance.²⁸ Titus decided to destroy it when he realized that this would be the only way to finish the Jewish revolt and the problems it was causing for the Empire. For its part, Christianity brought about a new vision of the Temple, which implied an accordingly different public presence of the Christian Church. We must bear in mind that it was during his teaching in the Temple following the expulsion of the money-changers that Jesus was asked the question about his relationship to Caesar and the need to pay the tax. Jesus' famous reply, "give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar—and to God what belongs to God" (cf. Mt 22:21), which determines the relationship between Christians and political authority, is based on

²⁷Cf. St. Augustine, *In Ioh.* X, 11 (CCL 36, 107).

²⁸As was generally the case with other ancient temples: cf. G. Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001).

the symbolic act that Jesus had just performed in the Temple. What is of God, as we have seen, is the body formed by divine hands, in which God is able to dwell. This is the point that determines the meaning of the public presence of Christianity and its relationship with the State.

Before developing this insight, we need to give still further consideration to the universal significance of the Temple, which acquired cosmic dimensions among the Jews. For Philo of Alexandria this same Temple was a microcosm, a place of the habitation of the *Logos*, where the whole universe was contained and maintained in unity. Representations of the time show that the columns that upheld the world were thought to be secured in the Temple. In fact, with the destruction of Jerusalem a grave crisis arose: How can it be that the universe continues in being now that the Temple has fallen? One answer to this question referred to the foundation-stone of the building. Since this was part of the rock of the mount, it had escaped demolition at the hands of the Roman armies and remained firm in the midst of the ruins. So as long as this foundation remained in place, the world still had a solid base.²⁹

The Christians had a better answer to this anxiety. The cosmology based on the Temple of Jerusalem, where the columns of each cardinal point were located, was replaced by a different one. The glory of Yahweh, which resided in the Temple, had gone to settle on the Cross, which was thus revealed as the true foundation of the universe. This then was the basis for the development by some Fathers of the Church of the doctrine of the cosmic cross, a cross embedded in the ultimate structure of all things and directing the movement of the entire cosmos. This cross, which the philosophers had already dimly discovered, was shown to be the Cross of Calvary: not indeed the inert wood, but the crucified body of Jesus, transformed into a glorious body in the Resurrection and extending into the body of the Church. Let us note in passing that it is here we find the basis of the vision found in the letter to Diognetus, according to which Christians are capable of holding up the world (*To Diognetus* 7,7).

How could the disciples of Jesus, few and persecuted as they were, consider themselves heirs to such a Herculean mission? St.

²⁹Cf. Stefan Heid, *Kreuz. Jerusalem. Kosmos. Aspekte frühchristlicher Staurologie*, vol. 31, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum. Ergänzungsband* (Münster: 2001).

Justin Martyr worked out a reply to this question, still focusing on the mystery of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. On being received into the City, the Master brought to fulfillment the prophecy of Jacob, which is understood by Justin as the promise of royal dominion over the world: "The scepter shall not pass from Judah, nor the mace from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs" (Gn 49:10). For the Martyr, this empire is not reducible to an inner and purely spiritual governance. On the contrary, it is a lordship that leaves visible traces in history. It was actually since the coming of Jesus that the Jews ceased to have their own kings in their land. Here we have an unequivocal sign that the scepter of the world has finally left Judah to pass on to the Messiah for whom it was reserved—Jesus himself.

Although it affects the course of history concretely, this kingdom is not to be considered on the same level as Roman power. Justin sees its presence in the concrete influence of Jesus and his doctrine on the life of the peoples who have turned to the faith. It is in this context that he places his exegesis of the two animals on which Jesus entered Jerusalem according to St. Matthew (the reference to two animals is found both in Zech 9:9 and Gn 49:11). Justin sees in the two animals an image of the Jewish and Gentile peoples, both received and saved by Jesus. The first, the beast of burden, the donkey accustomed to the yoke of the Law, represented the Hebrew people who welcomed Jesus and went on to form part of the Church. The second, on which nobody had ridden, was the Gentile people, wild up to then for not having been tamed under the instruction of the Torah. With the arrival of the Master, the Gentiles did not have to submit to the Law (*Nomos*) of Moses—already superseded—but received the word (*Logos*) of Jesus, the new and eternal covenant that summed up and perfected the old commandments.

These two terms, *Nomos* and *Logos*, law and word (or reason), are in fact keys for understanding the Hellenistic society in which Christianity spread. The prevailing atmosphere was a cosmopolitan one in which the individual customs and traditions of each people had to accommodate themselves to the mandate of a single empire. In this context the concepts of *Logos* and *Nomos* acquired importance, for they were capable of bringing men together into one single human family. The *Logos* was the universal reason of the philosophers and the *Nomos* the universal laws that were decreed by the rulers.

Against this background the Christians offered their own reading of history. The concrete lordship of Christ was shown in their new interpretation of this *Nomos* and *Logos*, represented in Justin by the two animals on which Jesus entered Jerusalem. According to Isaiah, in words frequently cited by the Fathers, both the word and the law had to leave Jerusalem, the Holy City: “the law (*Nomos*) will go out from Zion, and the Oracle (*Logos*) of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Is 2:3). If the *Logos* and *Nomos* that gave unity to all of the world lived in the Temple of Jerusalem during the Old Testament era, this new word and universal law will from now on be found in another Temple, that of the body of Jesus, crucified and brought back to life in Jerusalem. Christ is the universal *Logos* and in his commandments we meet a new *Nomos*, a new Law in which all men can finally find themselves at home.

The reaction of the German historian Adolf von Harnack to this explanation was to accuse the Apologists of diluting the wine of the gospel in the abstract reason of the philosophers. We should note, however, that although the Christian vision assumes the universal value of the Greek *Logos*, it transforms that *Logos* radically. The Christian *Logos* goes on living in a Temple—not, however, the Temple of Jerusalem, as Philo of Alexandria thought, but the Temple of the body of Jesus and the Christians. In other words, the new universal *Logos* is in point of fact an incarnate *Logos*, a *Logos* that is in intimate contact with the flesh of man. Let us see what this means.

6. *The body and Christian universality*

The idea of associating the *logos* (reason) with the body seems odd to the modern mind. But given the flourishing state of studies on the body in recent years, the connection ought to be easier for us to understand today. Think, for example, of the recent emergence of the sociology of the body, with its focus on the relationship between the body and society.³⁰ According to some, the body has

³⁰Cf. the *status quaestionis* as presented by Chris Shilling, “Sociology and the Body: Classical Traditions and New Agendas,” *Sociological Review* 55, no. 1 (2007): 1–18. The article is an introduction to an entire issue of the journal devoted to the subject of the body.

even become the place *par excellence* where the course of the democratic project and our very capacity to live together under universal laws of reason are now at stake. Underlying this idea is a new vision of the body, now perceived to be a part of the personal project of each individual. The fact that there are different ways of living and understanding the body, depending on the age or the cultural fashion, is held to demonstrate that the body is not given to man in a specific form, but is rather constructed in dependence on the society in question. The argument is that the individual really needs to become aware of this fact, since only then does the body stop being an object alien to man's identity and can be finally absorbed into the self-referentiality of urban society, where everything is done by man and for man. Modern biotechnology becomes a powerful motor for the practical development of this new vision of the body, because it will convert many parameters previously taken for granted into matters of personal choice.

Now, since the body is considered a creation of culture, a question needs to be raised: Is there a set of rules according to which we can shape the body in such a way that it allows us to build a better society? The reply given by the supporters of this vision is that in interpreting and living corporeality, we must be governed by the rules of consensus that are proper to democratic reason. The individual must then have the right to invent his own body according to his own preferences; on the other hand, the State will equally have to guard against those visions of the body classed as antidemocratic for invading the sphere of independence of others and denying them their proper capacity for auto-determination.

To take a significant concrete example, the family is considered an obstacle to the development of this "democratic corporeality." For the relationships between parents and children and between husband and wife contain elements alien to pure democracy, elements that cannot be reduced to the sovereign will of each member. Here the body speaks a language that does not accord with the rules of liberal society. If we are to speed up the process of the body becoming fluid and volatile—which is, according to this reading, the only way to contribute to the final liberation of man—we must promote new models of family. The "traditional" family for its part will only retain a niche if it redefines itself, if the relation of parents to children and of husband to wife are understood

according to much more flexible parameters which eliminate all that is not in accord with the sovereign will of the individual.³¹

How are we to judge this kind of perspective? It is worth noting that for all its talk of the body, this view fails to show respect for the body's own language. In fact, this type of discourse speaks of the body in such a way that corporeality is absorbed into reason (understood as democratic consensus), thus making the body malleable to our plans and projects, provided only that harm is not caused to others. What is overlooked here is that the body testifies of itself that this project of radical autonomy pursued in modern times is an impossible one. In the first place, the body actually speaks of a mutual dependence that marks the identity of man from the very first moment of his entry into the world. We are born into a family, we are sons or daughters of this father and this mother, our being comes from them, and it remains bound to them during our entire life. Husband and wife are in turn transformed profoundly with the birth of their child, an event that changes the core of their identity. In sum, to have a body is to accept a relationship with the world and other men as a constitutive part of my life, and to abandon as absurd the notion that I can realize myself on my own. There is, furthermore, an additional crucial fact: the body also gives man a transcendent reference. Our corporeality places us in a situation we have not chosen, a situation that determines what we do in the world. If we reject it, we reject ourselves. If we accept it, this is only by recognizing that we have received it from someone from whom we proceed, that is, as a reference to an ultimate horizon of meaning. Only in this way can our entry into the world be understood as a significant event, and not as a mere product of chance. The Bible gives expression to this idea when it describes the formation of our bodies as the handiwork of the fingers of God, who works with our flesh as a potter with clay.

It is precisely here that the Christian viewpoint is rooted, which affirms that the *Logos* itself lives in the body of man as in his Temple. The body appears as the place of man's openness to transcendence and therefore to a universe of values that can be shared with all and that serve as a basis for a common life. From this point of view we can trace a line not only from reason to the body

³¹As is expressed in the title of the book by Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies. Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

(so that the body becomes formed according to the projects of intelligence), but also from the body to reason (so that we are able to define reason in a dialogical way and in its openness to transcendence). To put it another way, by starting from the presence of the *Logos* in the body we can arrive at a richer conception of reason. A *Logos* that is capable of accepting the language of the body, its intrinsic reference to our neighbor and its openness to the mystery of the Creator, must in fact be both a dialogical *Logos* and a filial *Logos*. This is why this new conception of the body will carry with it a different idea of universal reason and consequently of public and political life. From this point of view the common rationality (and, consequently, the common good) that we pursue in our life in society, will not be a consensus achieved by autonomous individuals. Rather, it will start by acknowledging that our own individual reason needs to take into account, from within itself, the relationship with others, and that this reason is to be rooted in a primordial relationship to a transcendent horizon, to God the Creator.

We see now that the true political and religious revolution of Jesus is based on a revolution in how we understand the human person in his relationships with others and with God. What Jesus brings with him is a new vision of the body, the proclamation of the gospel of the flesh. The kingdom of God becomes present among earthly kingdoms because it is present in the bodies of men and women and in this way it reaches the deepest core of their lives, helping them understand their existence as constitutive relationship to others and to God. In his Incarnation, his life on earth, his suffering and resurrection, Jesus proclaims this vocation and dignity of the body. It is by doing so that he establishes the bases for a richer understanding of the human city and its laws.

Now we can return to our question about the universality of Christianity. It is this conception of the body as Temple that allows the separation of the religious and political spheres that is proper to the Christian era.³² For now there is no longer a Temple that has to

³²Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, & Politics. New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, trans. Michael J. Miller, et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 146–47: “The Christian faith destroyed the myth of the divine state, the myth of the earthly paradise or utopian state and of a society without rule. In its place it put the objectivity of reason. But that does not mean that it brought an objectivity devoid of values, the objectivity of statistics and mere social dynamics. True human objectivity involves humanity, and humanity involves God. True human reason

be built in a particular place, creating thus a potential point of conflict between the cross and the sword. And yet it should be noted that this same identification of the body with the Temple in turn prevents the kind of clear separation between politics and religion that treats them as disconnected spheres. In fact, we could even say the bond that unites them is now going to be made much stronger. It is true that the Christian is not preoccupied now by a concrete place like the Temple of Jerusalem, nor will he be bound to certain specific forms of external expression like the sacrifice of animals. Christianity has much more room for maneuver here than other religions, whose identity is bound up with such concrete spaces or times. But this change has not occurred because worship has been spiritualized and made purely interior, detached from the body. It is in fact precisely the reverse: incarnation has attained its extreme point, for now it is the human body itself which becomes the Temple: rational worship is corporeal worship. Therefore the faithful's presence at the heart of society does not diminish, but is brought to its point of saturation. The Church can say to the state that the only thing it wants is to be able to worship God, as Moses said to Pharaoh, but it has to add that the place of her worship is the human body, the new Temple. That is to say, the Church needs the conditions that make it possible for the body of man to be treated as a sacred place, since only then can she raise her Temple. In this sense the Christian presence is much more uncomfortable for a totalitarian state. In fact it is precisely this Temple, that of the body of man, that the most sophisticated totalitarisms are desirous of profaning, for this is the means they use to invade the most sacred enclosure of the intimacy of the person.

The temple of the human body is thus converted through history into a suffering body. If nine parts of beauty had been allotted to Jerusalem alongside nine parts of suffering, the same happens through the centuries to this new Temple of the Body of Christ, which has to remain defenseless before the persecution of the powerful. In turn, this same defenselessness of the temple of the human body explains the concrete form that Christ's kingdom takes, in the humility of the Servant of Yahweh. For while other temples can be conquered and defended by force of arms, the key that opens

involves morality, which lives on God's commandments. This morality is not a private matter; it has public significance."

the door of the human body needs to await for a freely-given welcome. To force this temple is to destroy it. Its doors do not open to the force of arms but to the one who enters like Jesus into Jerusalem mounted on a donkey. The royalty of Christ, precisely because it reaches to the deepest center of the human being, at the very junction of body and soul, must do so in humiliation and suffering. The definitive transformation has to wait with patience for the free response of men, without any intent to impose itself. And thus, since it takes into account the time of human freedom that is called to incorporation into Christ's kingdom, the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is converted into the sign of a later coming, at the end of the centuries.

Before we say any more about that, let us answer a question we raised at the beginning of this article, the question of why Christ does not hesitate to have himself proclaimed king in the Holy City. In the episode of the multiplication of the loaves Jesus had avoided an earlier coronation. The people acclaimed him for the sign he had given in feeding the multitude, but in this case there was a great misunderstanding—the assumption that the kingdom of Jesus was based on his power and material abundance. This was not, however, the true symbolism of the miracle, which contained a reference to the Eucharist, to his body divided up and given for many. This is precisely the way to understand the kingdom of Jesus, which begins through a new vision of the human body, in its openness to God and neighbor. Now, when Jesus enters into Jerusalem there is no possibility of misunderstanding. It becomes clear that this sign, that of the new Temple, is the sign of his Body, dead and risen to life. His kingdom will therefore be different from every other that has been or that will be. On the one hand, the claim of Jesus appears innocuous for established power: he comes as humble king to transform spears into pruning shears. On the other hand, his claim is more daring than that of any previous king, for he proclaims himself king in a universal and eternal sense, a king who reaches to the very core of human identity. Since Jesus was a king both humble and glorious at the same time, it was necessary for the acclamation of Hosanna to be united to the accusation of blasphemy from the lips of Caiaphas, for the branches of glory to be united with the Cross. Only when these two come together, does Jesus' royalty cease to be at risk of misunderstandings and he permits himself be acclaimed as the king of Israel by the crowd.

7. *To the final Hosanna*

The prophecies of Israel raised a question for exegetes. On the one hand, according to Zechariah, the Messiah would enter Jerusalem mounted on an ass. But Daniel saw him rather as coming down from the clouds of heaven. How can two such disparate entries happen at the same time? One rabbi answered thus: if the people do not deserve his coming, he will come mounted on an ass; if they deserve it, he will come on the clouds, from above.³³ The reply of Christianity identifies what is different about the new religion with respect to Judaism. Both comings take place: the first in humiliation, the second in glory.

These two comings are explicable by the character of the new sanctuary that Christ inaugurates: that of the human body. By being the Temple of a body, this Temple consists of total openness to the world and to other men, who are called to configure themselves to Christ's body. Since it takes place in the body, this process of incorporation presupposes the temporal law of patience, proper to our corporeal existence. The time of the Church is thus inaugurated, a time of assimilation of the body of man into the glorified body of Jesus. Meanwhile the new and the old body coexist. A glorious vocation of the body enters history, a different sense of corporeal life, while corporeal existence continues to be buffeted by the aggravations of the old suffering and the old rebellion of the flesh.

Christians therefore share with Judaism a vision of history that tends towards the future: they hope for a fulfillment that will come with the second coming of the Messiah, this time as Daniel foretold. The true Temple is in fact the risen body of Jesus, the construction of which will be completed only at the end of time. The Apocalypse of John stresses this future dimension of the mystery in speaking of the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven adorned as a bride.³⁴

This relationship between the body in which we live and the risen body is important if we are to understand the presence of Christians in society. It reveals to us that, at the end of time, the gap

³³Rabbi Joshua on San 98b, cited by Blenkinsopp, "Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry," 60.

³⁴Cf. Spatafora, *Temple*.

between the kingdom of Christ and the temporal kingdom will narrow to a total unity, when God will be all in all (1 Cor 15:28) in the same way that he is the origin of all. It means also that the eschatological tension, the hope of a new Temple, makes the Christian neither repudiate the world nor despise the problems of his contemporaries. For it is the human body, which constitutes the basis of life in society, that will be transformed into the glorious Temple at the end of time. In other words, rather than fleeing exile to go to the homeland, the Christian transforms this world of exile in order that it may be called homeland, in the same way that bodies will be transformed into risen bodies and creation into a new creation. Obviously this preparation is not measured according to the laws of worldly progress, but according to the progress of Jesus through the course of his life, a progress that passes through suffering and the cross, so that weakness is converted into strength. The definitive transformation, of course, eludes all human power and remains totally in the hands of the Father, the one who raised Jesus from the dead.

The cry of Hosanna can then be seen to sum up this pilgrimage of the new Temple, that of the Body of Christ. As a petition for help or an exclamation of jubilation, Hosanna attests that the Christian preaching of the word is always rooted in the body. The Hosanna is part of what Gabriel Marcel called the exclamatory quality of existence: as incarnate beings, we are not just placed in front of the world as if it were an external object at our disposal, but we are immersed in the world and we participate in it, with wonder and passion. This is the Hosanna that is heard by all who journey alongside Jesus from the glory of the palm branches to the suffering of Golgotha. It is said before each Eucharist, in the Sanctus, at the making present of the mystery of a body dead and risen. And, from time immemorial, it was used to express hope for the second coming of Christ, when our bodies will be transfigured in the image of his glorious body (cf. Phil 3:21). Thus we find written in the *Didache*: “Let grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the Son of David. If anyone is holy, let him come; if anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha! Amen” (*Didache* 10, 6).—*Translated by Cyprian Blamires.* □

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