

kingdom of God. It is the prerogatives of this kingdom he claims in the temple action (Mark 11:15–18), which eventually leads to his execution. Until 70 CE the first Christian generation obviously keeps continuity with the Jewish cult (e.g., Matt 5:23–24; Acts 2:46), but it also develops its own ritual system, i.e., baptism in resumption of John's "eschatological sacrament," the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus' last dinner with his disciples, which may well be understood as an alternative to, or the ultimate fulfillment of, the simultaneous sacrificial rites in the temple area.

Early Christian theology shows an ambivalent attitude towards the cultic system. The term *θηροσκεία* is used rarely and with caution against pagan connotations. In the line of the Old Testament prophets, cultic practice is criticized ethically and theologically. This criticism is rooted in the double commandment of love (e.g., Mark 7:1–15; Luke 10:25–37) and insists upon "worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23–24). More radical is the theocentric rejection of the Jewish temple cult among Hellenistic Christians (e.g., Acts 7:47–50; Heb 8:13). Pagan cults are generally rejected *a limine* (e.g., 1 Cor 10:19–21), although they subliminally influence the conceptual and symbolic development of the cultic representation of the Christian belief system. By contrast, since Christians do not participate in the public cult they arouse suspicion of impiety and ritual malpractice.

In the history of biblical reception it was not so much the cultic practice of primitive Christianity that influenced liturgy and theology but the cognitive universe provided by the main trajectories of NT literature. The basis and norm of any worship is Christ as the crucified, exalted, and pneumatically present *κύριος*, who, being the proper "relational space" of God, replaces both the temple (e.g., Mark 14:58; 15:29, 37–38) and any soteriologically relevant determination of ritual involvement. Thus, what we observe in early Christian treatment of the subject of cult is neither the much discussed spiritualization nor the often postulated profanization but a dynamics of universalization and personalization. The *temenos*, as it were, is left behind: The (defensive) cultic boundaries of sacred places and ritual purity are removed, and in an offensive approach to sanctity the whole Christian life is seen as a personal self-sacrifice based on God-given holiness in communion with Christ. It is in this sense that Rom 12:1–2 may be called the "golden rule" of NT cultic theology. Since those who are baptized have immediate access to the one holy God, they consider themselves the *ἄγιοι* and an eschatological priesthood (cf. 1 Pet 2:4–10; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

The Levitical cult, however, as preserved also in the Christian Bible, remained a source of inspiration for imaginative speech, theological reflection, and the gradual elaboration of ritual Christian wor-

III. New Testament

The Jesus movement takes root in an extensive cultic enactment initiated by John the Baptist. He concentrates the entire symbolic system of Judaism on repentance leading up to the day of judgment and provides those who repent with the effective symbol of one decisive baptism for forgiveness, thereby attractively simplifying the complicated washing rituals of contemporary rural Baptist circles. Thus, a marginal purification rite moves into the center of religious self-definition, whereas the urban sacrificial cult shifts to the margins. Jesus also bases the relationship with God solely on divine initiative, so that he shares John's distance from the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Mark 11:27–33). He presupposes the Jewish cult system, to be sure, without rejecting it in principle, but salvation depends on the immediate nearness of the heavenly Father, as it is experienced non-ritually in Jesus' proclamation of the

ship. We may differentiate between analogous, metaphorical, and typological figurations of cultic ideas and notions, which do not function as a derivative or second-level mode of speaking but express, in their own right, the numinous experience in the Christian community.

The analogous use of cultic language describes the enactment of a heavenly liturgy as the true cult which human worship anticipatorily participates in (e.g., Rev 7:9–12). The metaphorical use of cultic language includes spiritual (e.g., Heb 13:15) and ethical (e.g., Heb 13:16) devotion, apostolic ministry (e.g., Rom 15:16), the dignity of the faithful community or individual (e.g., 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19), and even martyrdom (e.g., Phil 2:17). Typological uses of cultic language establish a relationship between Jesus' death on the cross and the sacrificial cult of the Jewish Scriptures (e.g., Rom 3:25). It is the book of Hebrews that most comprehensively describes Jesus' death as opening a priestly access to the heavenly realm (esp. 9:1–14). A preliminary antitype, an earthly "sketch and shadow" (8:5) of the self-sacrifice of the heavenly high priest Jesus, the atoning cult (cf. esp. Lev 16: the Day of Atonement) reveals the anthropological premises and soteriological structures of any mediation of salvation. The "new covenant" fulfils from heaven that to which the earthly and now obsolete cult has pointed (cf. 8:13). Embracing all believers from the beginning of time, the wandering people of God, sanctified by Jesus' obedient life and death (cf. 10:1–10), is now entitled to approach God's heavenly sanctuary (cf. 12:22–24).

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