ONE

The Lombe and His Meyny Schene:
Signs of God in Pearl and the Apocalypse

In the Pearl poet's works the actual images of God Himself are rare—like the Bible, the poems of Cotton Nero A.x. avoid direct theophany, although Pearl and Cleaness offer images of the experience of theophany (not theophany itself) and promise the beatific vision as a reward awaiting us in the world beyond. On the other hand, images of God's kingdom, his cort or the Lombe's meyny, to use two of the Pearl poet's terms, are central to the poems Pearl and Cleaness and stand behind the assumptions in the other two, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Less frequent, but scarcely less important are the contrari, that is, the images of judgment, punishment, and cosmic catastrophe: flood, fire, dungeon, and axe, which historically are to precede the final establishment of the kingdom and our full enjoyment of it.

These visions and images of God and his Kingdom, of the End, of punishment and reward, of separation or reunion with God in His cort, as well as the human understanding and experience of those visions, are best understood in light of medieval apocalyptic tradition. There have been a number of varying (and often conflicting) definitions of "apocalyptic" by scholars, but for our purposes John's text and the iconography and commentary it inspired serve as the best models. Technically, "apocalypse" is but another term, one of Greek derivation (apokalypsis), for "revelation," but it was also used in the narrower sense, as Klaus Koch puts it, for "the title of literary compositions that resemble the Book of Revelation, i.e. secret divine disclosures about the end of the world and the heavenly state" (16). Koch
“THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYN SCHENE”

further provides a list of the most common distinguishing features of apocalypses: “great discourse cycles” that include a “long dialogue between the apocalyptic seer and his heavenly counterpart” (21), as well as visions filled with “mythical images rich in symbolism” (23), and a mood of “spiritual turmoil” as a “result of the unexpected experience of vision and audition” (22). In addition, Koch points to pseudonymity as a common feature of many apocalypses (23), while other scholars remark on the tendency of apocalyptic texts to focus on the scribal mode of transmission.1 Behind all the specific features of the apocalyptic mode and of apocalypses usually stands an eschatological perspective, a perspective minimized or denied by a few scholars, but otherwise considered central to the revelation of divine secrets that, one way or another, constitutes apocalypse.2

For many today and certainly for the Middle Ages, John's Apocalypse is the archetypal apocalyptic text, the one that defines and sets the model for all others. While it is not pseudonymous since the author identifies himself as John,3 John's text contains all of the remaining features we associate with apocalyptic writing: it refers repeatedly to the seer's “spiritual turmoil”; it takes the form of a “great discourse cycle,” a series of visions punctuated by dialogue with the interpreting angel; the visions are imbued with highly popular and influential “mythical images,” many of them derived from Old Testament apocalyptic visions, especially Ezekiel's; the events and images and

1Koch does not mention this “scribal” feature, but most other scholars do. See esp. Russell (118–22) and McGinn (Visions 5).
2Collins makes the clearest statement about the eschatology of apocalypse, pointing out that, while some rightly object to the equation of eschatology with apocalypticism, which is valid only for the “historical” type of apocalypse (like the Book of Daniel), all apocalypses “involve a transcendent eschatology that looks for retribution beyond the bounds of history” (9). See also Emmerson, who says: “Apocalypticism includes more than the last things. It sets eschatology in a historical context” (14).
3Traditionally, of course, this John was identified with the apostle John (who in turn was assumed to be the author of the fourth gospel), although since the third century many have questioned such an identification, usually while objecting to the canonicity of the Apocalypse (D'Aragon 468–69).
vision are all concerned with the Last Days and the world beyond; and finally, John's Apocalypse emphasizes the scribal mode of transmission — repeatedly the angel directs John to write down his visions, and books and written characters play important roles in the visions themselves.

For most of us, and for the Middle Ages, the "mythical images," generally eschatological and always "rich in symbolism," are probably the characteristics that first come to mind when we think of apocalypticism. Because of this, because I believe apocalyptic signs so important in all the poems of Cotton Nero A.x., and because the Pearl poet is such a visual poet, I shall begin this study of his poetics and his fayre forme with his apocalyptic imagery, with first of all the images in Pearl and their biblical and iconographic background. For it is Pearl that provides the reader with the visual and visionary introduction to the other three poems, in much the same way that an apocalyptic vision of God Enthroned stands over the west doorway of so many late medieval churches.4 [Figure 1]

The dream in Pearl gives a glimpse of the future kingdom, which is visualized as the New Jerusalem, the new world where the saved celebrate their joyous love of God with the canticum novum, a celebration symbolized by the Wedding of the Lamb to his "meyny schene" (1145), his "homly hyne" (1211). God himself is symbolized by the Lamb, and his power by the Throne and by the light of the Lamb. Because all of these signs of God and his kingdom are drawn from John’s Apocalypse — either directly, as word-for-word translations of the Vulgate text, or indirectly, through the traditions that developed in exegesis and iconography, close examination of each of these important signs in Pearl, along with their textual and iconographic sources, will help us understand their function in Pearl and their impact on the other poems.

4The twelfth- and thirteenth-century churches in France provide the best examples of this use of the apocalyptic vision of God Enthroned. In addition to the one at Moissac, which is shown in Figure 1, there are two more, at Autun and Conques, that I will be discussing in this chapter [Figures 3 and 4].
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYN SCHENE"

Figure 1. The Tympanum of the Church of St. Pierre, Moissac, France (1100-1115). (Photo: James Austin.)
Signs of God: The Throne and the Lamb

The sign that evokes God in *Pearl* is the Lamb. Before we can understand the force of this symbol in the Pearl poet's writing, we need first to examine its context in the Apocalypse and in the art based on John's text. First of all, the Lamb is not the preeminent symbol either in John's text or even in much of the artistic tradition. In the Apocalypse the dominant sign of God is the Throne, on which the Lamb, is sometimes, but not always, seated. The vision of God Enthroned occurs several times in John's text and was the most reproduced of his visions in the late Middle Ages. There is, however, an important difference between the biblical text and the later representations in art. Whereas the art of the high Middle Ages revels in glorious representations of God Enthroned, John's text seems to avoid actual visualization of this scene, an avoidance also prevalent in early Christian art. Because I think this difference, between the early reluctance toward full theophany and the later tendency to visualize God on his throne is important to the Pearl poet, I want to look more closely at the actual words of John's major visions and then compare the text to a few of the representations of the Throne in art.

The first of the several visions of the Throne occurs directly after John writes the letters to the seven churches. With his scribal and apostolic tasks accomplished, John then returns to the visionary mode, with which his text begins:

Statim fui in spiritu,
et ecce sedis posita erat in caelo,
et supra sedem sedens.
Et qui sedebat similis erat aspectui
lapidis iaspidis et sardini.
Et iris erat in circitu sedis similis visioni zmaragdinae.
(4.2–3)5

5I am using the Württembergische text of the Vulgate. Translations are my own, but with frequent use of modern English versions, especially the New
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYNY SCHENE"

[At once I was in divine ecstasy.
And behold a throne was standing there in heaven,
And on the throne (was) a Sitting (One).
And the One who was sitting was like the appearance
Of a jewel, of jasper and carnelian,
And around the throne was a rainbow like the
appearance of emeralds.]

John suddenly finds himself in spiritu, a state in which percep-
tions are of a special nature, but even in this special state he
does not claim he saw God, nor does he say that God or Christ
was seated upon the throne. There is only a hint of visualization
of the One on the Throne, when we are told what the En-
throned One's appearance was like (similis erat aspectui), a
strange circumlocution that denies visual actuality. Further-
more, there is an unmistakable distancing in the omission of
God's name. Indeed, in the passage above, no noun or pronoun
of any kind is used for God, only a participle used substantively.
The line, et super sedem sedens, does not introduce a substantive
word or clause, but as the independent clause that follows
makes clear, stands alone—in other words, what is sitting on the
Throne is what is sitting on the Throne. God, here, is act and
being, not visual reality. In this respect, John's vision of the
Throne is close to the divine presence in the Old Testament,
which is rarely visual, almost always verbal. However, unlike
the God of the prophets and patriarchs, the Enthroned (One) of
John's vision is not voice or words, even though in the vision of
the first chapter of John's text, it was a voice he first experi-
enced and a voice he wanted to see: "audivi post me vocem
magnam... et conversus sum ut viderem vocem quae lo-
quebatur mecum" (1.10, 12). [I heard behind me a loud voice
... and I turned around to see the voice that had spoken to

American Bible and the New English Bible. When I think it especially relevant for
the Pearl poet, I give some very literal, and often stylistically awkward, transla-
tions of the Latin.

26
me.] The Lamb, as a sign of the divine presence, especially of the Son, soon appears in the middle of the Throne. Actually, the image of the Lamb is a separate vision, or at least a subsequent stage of envisioning, since it is first introduced with the phrase, "et vidi et ecce . . . " [and then I saw/envisioned, and behold there was . . . ].

Throughout most of the rest of John’s text the images of the Lamb and the Throne dominate as visual signs of God. In the final vision they are combined with the Voice, which has been heard throughout the book, but has never before been connected to the visual symbols. Coming as it does at the end of John’s visions and as the climax of the revelation of the new creation, this manifestation of the divine as voice and words represents John’s ultimate experience of God:

Et audivi vocem magnam de throno . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Et dixit qui sedebat in throno,
"Ecce nova facio omnia."
Et dicit, "Scribe quia haec verba fidelissima sunt et vera."
Et dixit mihi, "Factum est.
Ego sum Α et Ω initium et finis." (21.3, 5-6)

[And I heard a loud voice from the throne . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
And (the One) who sat on the throne said
"Behold I make all things new!"
And he said "Write (this) down, for the words are trustworthy and true!"
And he said to me, "It (these words) is accomplished.
I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End."  

It is significant that this final and climactic vision, though it places the divine voice on the Throne, still does not really con-

6See D’Aragon’s commentary on this passage, where he points out that this is the only place in the Apocalypse where “God himself speaks” (491).
stitute a theophany, at least not a fully embodied visual one. Throughout his text, by using the visual symbols of the Lamb and the Throne, or the oral sign of the Voice, John avoids giving a record of the beatific vision (which he never claims to have experienced). Rather than recreating theophany itself, what the visions of the Throne and the Lamb do is to reveal the experience of theophany for those beyond the time and space of this world. This experience, for those who have it, can be divided into two phases: the act of judgment by the enthroned Christ, and the celebration of God's majesty by the saved. The former is an event within time, although at its outer edge; the latter is an eternal act.

The act of divine judgment, for many the most typically apocalyptic moment, is strangely almost a minor event in John's text. Coming just before the passage quoted above that places the Voice upon the Throne, the traditional scene of the Last Judgment is described in a brief passage:

Et vidi thronum magnum candidum,
et sedentem super eum
  a cuius aspectu fugit terra et caelum,
et locus non est inventus ab eis.
Et vidi mortuos magnos et pusillos stantes in conspectu
  throni.
Et libri aperti sunt,
et alius liber apertus est qui est vitae.
Et iudicati sunt mortui ex his quae scripta erant in libris,
  secundum opera ipsorum.
Et dedit mare mortuos qui in eo erant,
et mors et inferus dederunt mortuos qui in ipsis erant,
et iudicatum est de singulis secundum opera ipsorum.

(20.11-13)

[And I saw a large white throne,
And (One) sitting on it,
From whose appearance the earth and sky fled,
And they could find no place to go.]
SIGN OF GOD IN PEARL

And I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne.
And the books were opened.
And another book was opened, which is the book of the living,
And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books,
According to their deeds.
And the sea gave up the dead which were in it,
And death and the underworld gave up the dead which were in them.
And each person was judged separately according to his deeds.

Yet, although John's vision of the Last Judgment seems of minor importance when compared to most of the other scenes in the Apocalypse, it is but one detail in a full dramatization of God as judge. In John's visions the Last Judgment comes as a conclusion and a culmination of the mythic and allegorical battles that occupy the bulk of the Apocalypse, since all of the text's monsters and devils function as figures of evil, and since their final defeat illustrates the power of God's judgment. From the beginning, Christian exegesis and iconography have made this connection, and it has become so imbedded in tradition that few seem aware of how little basis John's Apocalypse gives for the popular Last Judgment scene.

The act of final judgment is historically the first of humanity’s experiences of the theophany that will come at the end of time. For the saved, Christ's second coming will be heralded and celebrated by the canticum novum, a new song sung in the new world. It is this act of celebration, not the image of God

\[\text{\(^{7}\text{See Augustine's discussion of "little judgments" as distinct from but anticipatory of the "last judgment" (City of God 20.1; pp. 710-11); see also McGinn's discussion of the various analyses of the Apocalypse's structure, including the view of "most modern scholars" that the text is a "cyclical presentation of visions repeating, or recapitulating, the same basic message of present persecution, imminent destruction of the wicked and reward of the just" ("Revelation" 523).}\]
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYNY SICHENE"

Himself, that is the focus of most of John's visions of the Lamb and the Throne, and as such those visions are best thought of as scenes of God adored. The first of the visions of the Throne, for example, provides a full description of those worshipping the enthroned one—the twenty-four elders (4.4) and the living beasts (animalia; 4.6–8)—and also repeats their words of praise:

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus omnipotens,
Qui erat et qui est et qui venturus est.

Dignus es Domine et Deus noster accipere gloriæ et honorem et virtutem,
Quia tu creasti omnia,
Et propter voluntatem tuam erant et creatas sunt.

(4.8, 11)

[Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty,
Who was, who is, and who is to come.

Worthy art thou, Lord, our God, to receive glory and honor and power,
Because thou didst create all things,
And by thy will they were and are created.]

In chapter seven, John witnesses another scene of adoration, this time by a great crowd:

Post haec vidi turbam agnam quam dinumerare nemo poterat,
ex omnibus gentibus et tribubus et populis et linguis,
stantes ante thronum et in conspectu agni,
amici stolas albas,
et palmae in manibus eorum.
Et clamabant voce magna dicentes,
"Salus Deo nostro qui sedet super thronum et agno."

(7.9–10)
SIGNS OF GOD IN PEARL

[After this I saw a huge crowd, which no one could count,
From every nation and tribe and people and tongue,
Standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb,
Dressed in white robes,
And with palm branches in their hands,
And they cried out in a loud voice, saying,
“Salvation is from our God, who is seated on the throne
and from the Lamb!”]

In a similar vision of the Lamb adored, in chapter fourteen, the Lamb stands on Mount Sion and is worshipped by 144,000 virgins (actually men, because they have not “been defiled by women”—14.4).

The climax of all these visions of the Lamb and the Throne is not a visual description of either, but the act of adoration by those witnessing the vision. In the vision recorded in chapter fourteen, the 144,000, like the twenty-four elders (seniores) and the four living beasts (animalia) of the earlier vision, celebrate God's reign with songs of praise. In this later vision John elaborates on the uniqueness of the song:

Et cantabant quasi canticum novum ante sedem et ante quattor animalia et seniores.

Et nemo poterat discere canticum nisi illa centum quadranginta quattuor milia qui empti sunt de terra.  
(14.3)

[And they were singing a kind of new hymn,
Before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders,
And no one could learn this hymn, except the 144,000 who had been ransomed from the world.]

This idea of a canticum novum, worthy to glorify God's unique power, goes back to the Old Testament, especially to the Psalms (see, for example, Pss. 32/33, 149/150, 150/151). In the
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYNY SCHENE"

Psalms, however, the canticum novum celebrates the glory of a victorious Israel within human history. The psalmists expect, even demand, the community to join them in praising the Lord. The call to a new song that opens Ps. 32/33 is typical:

   Exultate iusti Domino; rectos decet laudatio.
   Confitemini Domino in cithara; in psalterio decem
cordarum psallite illi.
   Cantate ei canticum novum; bene psallite in
   vociferatione.

   (Ps. 32/33.1–3)

   [Exult you just ones in the Lord; praise from the upright
   is fitting.
   Give thanks to the Lord on the harp; with the
ten-stringed lyre chant his praises,
   Sing to him a new song;
   Chant skillfully, with loud voices.]

Glorious as this song of praise is to be, it is still to be performed with earthly instruments, by righteous, but fully mortal, singers.

The new song of John's Apocalypse, on the other hand, is sung only by those redeemed from the world and removed from human history. In John's text, even when the words of the worshippers are given, as in the vision of the adoring elders and beasts in chapter four, and even when those words are familiar ones from the prophets (the Sanctus hymn, for example, is taken from Isaiah's vision of the altar—Is. 6.3), even then John's context implies a canticum novum that is possible only beyond the eschaton.

When we turn from John's text to the images of God Enthroned in art, we find some interesting developments in the representation of theophany, both in general and in its particular manifestation as God Enthroned. In keeping with the spirit of John's text, the earliest use of the Apocalypse in art demonstrates a reluctance to present a vision of God per se. During the
first centuries, the symbols of alpha and omega were more often used, sometimes together with Christ's initials, to represent the apocalyptic divinity. Later, the Throne appears in mosaics, occasionally with Christ, but more often either empty or with a cross or lamb. In the later Middle Ages the throne continued to be depicted empty, especially in the illustrated Apocalypses. [Figure 2] However, at the same time monumental representations of the enthroned deity also began to appear on tympana. Since the complex tradition of the enthroned Christ, or Christ in Majesty, owes much to the adaptation of imperial iconography, most of these tympana cannot really be considered as visual versions or interpretations of John's Apocalypse. This is particularly true since, as full theophany, these sculptures represent a substantial deviation from John's text. However, certain of the tympana in twelfth-century France offer fairly close visual representations of scenes in John's text, even while drawing on the separate development of the Christ in Majesty. I would like to take a brief, and highly selective, look at a few of these, in particular those of the churches in Autun, Conques, and Moissac and also of a few illustrated Apocalypses, since I think they are both typical and influential; typical, because they show us the medieval traditions of the end of time and the apocalyptic vision of Christ enthroned, and influential, because they appeared in important churches along the well-travelled pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostella and in widely disseminated and frequently copied manuscripts.

The tympanum on the west facade of the Church of St. Lazare at Autun, dating from after 1125 (Hearn 183), shows Christ returning at the end of time to judge humanity. [Figure 3] The patrons and artist(s) responsible for this magnificent sculpture, who were probably not thinking of any particular text, not even John's scene of Last Judgment, have included both the transcendent Christ, here seated (or rather barely seated, more floating in a spaceless, timeless dimension) on a scarcely visible throne, and also the historical event of the act of judging from John's description of the Last Judgment (20.4). To this scene have been added Enoch and Elias, the martyred
Figure 2. The Throne of God and the Lamb on Mt. Sion. Trinity Apocalypse, Trinity College Library, R. 16.2, fol. 16r (1230–50). By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge. (Photo: Trinity College Library.)
witnesses mentioned, but not named, in an earlier passage from the Apocalypse (11.3–13), and also the Virgin Mary enthroned, a detail certainly not in John's text. At Autun there is a formal separation of the motionless, centered Christ from the flurry of activity surrounding him. This separation signals the radical differences between, on the one hand, eternal theophany beyond time and space and the beatific vision promised to all the saved, and, on the other hand, the moment at the end of history that will decide whether we are to participate in that vision. Everything about the fully frontal and almost two-dimensional Christ and his throne and his encompassing mandorla is still and static; everything and every creature outside is in motion—souls are being weighed (on the right), dressed in their new robes (on the left), pushed into hellmouth, or elevated into the company of angels. One small, naked creature among the souls just awakened from the dead is in the very process of being lifted up by a pair of grasping hands that has broken through the lower horizontal band separating this world from the next. The tympanum at Autun is an eloquent representation of the medieval sense of the apocalyptic: the revelation of the transcendent otherworld shown in conjunction with the depiction of the crisis at the end of time that is epitomized in the Last Judgment.

The tympanum at Conques, ca. 1130–1140 (Hearn 182), above the west portal of the church of Ste. Foy, is a much more literal-minded version of the Last Judgment. [Figure 4] Lack-
ing the sublimity of vision and craft that Autun boasts, the

---

8Although John does not name the two witnesses, earliest tradition identifies them as Enoch and Elias (Emmerson 41, 136–40), while modern scholarship believes that the descriptions in John “obviously fit Moses and Elijah” (D’Aragon 481). Including Mary in various theophanies was a late development in medieval art.

9See Nichola’s discussion of this detail (Romanesque Signs 45), which is part of his general analysis of the “distribution of figures on a Romanesque tympanum, where the humans tend to be set in horizontal registers, while the theophanic Christ figure—as at Moissac, Vézelay, Autun, Beaulieu, Saint Denis, and others—cuts vertically across these bands at the center of the image field” (43).
"The Lombe and His Meyny Schene"

Figure 3. The Tympanum of the Church of St. Lazare, Autun, France (after 1125). (Photo: James Austin.)

Figure 4. The Tympanum of the Church of Ste. Foy at Conques, France (ca. 1130-1140). (Photo: James Austin.)
tympanum at Conques provides us, nevertheless, with a typical, even archetypal, representation of the Last Judgment, as that event developed in iconography. Within a mandorla is Christ seated on a throne, a throne more visible than the one in Autun but hardly at the center of the vision, as it is in the passages from the Apocalypse. Specific references to John’s text—the symbols Alpha and Omega, which are inscribed in Christ’s nimbus, and the four Evangelists—are included, although they come not from the vision of the Last Judgment, but from the earlier visions in John’s Apocalypse. The enthroned Christ at Ste. Foy displays his wounds, while above the entire drama angels are holding signs of the crucifixion—the cross, the lance, and the nails. These references to Christ’s passion appear increasingly in later representations of the Last Judgment, an iconographic development that marks the tendency to associate Christ’s final act of judging with his saving sacrifice and that corresponds to the symbolic wounds on the Lamb in John’s Apocalypse (see esp. 4.6, 12). The business of judgment, given in much greater detail in Conques than it is in the Apocalypse, is taking place around the enthroned Christ, while an angel holds the liber vitae from John’s Last Judgment scene.

The Conques tympanum is justly famous for the contemporaneous details of the damned: the bad knight still in armor tumbling into hell as though he has just fallen off his horse; the adulterous couple standing before Satan in all their naked (and somewhat erotic) shame, while a leering devil whispers in Satan’s ear (thereby depicting the scandal and loss of honor associated in courtly romances with adultery made known); the poacher being roasted on a spit, like the hares he presumably had been stealing from his lord (maybe even from the church’s hunting preserves). This kind of specificity is lacking on the left

10The cross as an element of the Last Judgment scene is a characteristic of western iconographic tradition and can be found in Carolingian representations; these used the detail of the cross to interpret the passage in Matthew that says the “sign of the Son of Man” will appear at the Last Judgment (24.30). The other signs of Christ’s actual suffering are new to the twelfth century, first appearing in Beaulieu (Mâle, Religious Art 407–408).
side, the realm of the saved, although the blessed do bear certain attributes to identify them, either as specific saints (St. Peter with his keys, for example), or as representational types (like the allegorized virtues around Abraham). The blessed are less tied to the time and place of the artists and patrons than are the damned—the latter could easily be someone the artists and viewers knew. The effect of this tympanum is quite different from the one at Autun, for Conques particularly marks the division between the saved and the damned, rather than between the otherworld and this. Furthermore, although the Conques Christ is still a transcendent Christ enthroned in majesty, the symbols of his saving passion and the clearer association of him with the act of judging help to place him more firmly in a moment in time, although a moment at the very end of time.

An important feature of the Conques tympanum—the contrast between the particularized, active damned and the more generalized, peaceful saved—can also be found in many manuscript illustrations of the Last Judgment. In the Trinity Apocalypse, executed in England in the mid-thirteenth century, heaven and hell are distinguished both by their contrasting moods and their different levels (Cambridge, Trinity MS. R.16.2, fol. 24v). [Figure 5] Those in hell, on the bottom level, are in chaotic, constant motion, their unnaturally twisted bodies being flung around; while those in heaven above are calm and arranged in orderly rows. Even the color scheme participates in this separation: primarily monochromatic in hell, touches of color and gold in heaven.

Of the three tympana I have chosen to look at, the one above the west portal of the Church of St. Pierre at Moissac provides the closest representation of John's text. [Figure 1] In fact, one scholar, Emile Mâle, has argued that a double-paged illustration from the St. Sever Apocalypse, fols. 121v-122, was the

---

11 For the dating and provenance of the Trinity Apocalypse, see James, Trinity (24-26); Brieger (14); and Henderson (127) — James and Brieger are the respective editors of the two facsimiles of the manuscript, the first published in 1909, the second in 1967.
Figure 5. The Last Judgment. The Trinity Apocalypse, Trinity College Library, R.16.2, fol. 24v (1230–1250). By permission of the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge. (Photo: Trinity College Library.)

direct source for the Moissac tympanum (Religious Art 4). Although later scholars have since questioned or modified Moissac's connection to the St. Sever manuscript, there is no doubt that the Moissac tympanum is essentially a rendering of John's
vision of the throne in the fourth and fifth chapters of the
Apocalypse. While the artists and planners of this tympanum
have gone beyond John's description by placing a visualized
Christ on the throne, they have otherwise stayed close to the
biblical text and brilliantly captured in sculpture the exact
words of the passage, especially the joyous celebration of God
and His reign in eternity. The energy of this celebration is at the
point of ecstasy. The elders are in almost frenzied motion as
they turn, harps in hand, to gaze at Christ; the elongated angels
and the sharply twisting beasts seem to dance, while Christ
himself remains still and frontal in the center, with only a slight
suggestion of motion in his lower drapery (Schapiro, "Moissac"
203; Hearn 171–72). The separation, which in the depictions
of the Last Judgment is either between the saved and the damned
or between the judge and the judgment, is in this rendering
between the envisioned and the visionaries. The visualized
Christ at Moissac is the eternal essence of reality, the Creator
who makes all things new, the beginning and the end; those
privileged to see him are actively engaged in worship and cele-
bration. The Moissac tympanum is thus more than a rendering
of the vision of the throne or even than a visualization of God; it
is also a representation of the joyous response to theophany—it
is the canticum novum carved in stone.

In this brief survey of the visions of John’s Apocalypse and
their later artistic representations, the Throne emerges as the
dominant image. In John’s text the visions are of the Throne
itself (and the Voice from the Throne), while in later medieval

---

17The sources for the iconography of the twelfth-century tympana have been
extensively discussed and argued. Mâle’s original thesis regarding the source for
Moissac’s tympanum was subsequently questioned or modified by several
scholars, including Schapiro (306–27, esp. 317). More recently, Christe, in a
study of all the Romanesque portals, has maintained that the tympana do not
illustrate specific episodes from the Apocalypse or any other biblical text, but
that each is presented as “une image synthetique” (143); earlier Schapiro had
said of Moissac’s tympanum that it “does not render a specific line” from the
Apocalypse, but rather a “characteristic and impressive moment of the vision”
(202).
art, especially monumental sculpture, the image is closer to full
theophany, for it depicts Christ in Majesty upon the throne.
There can be little doubt that the Pearl poet, as well as most of
his audience, was familiar with the medieval image of God
Enthroned as a primary symbol of the divine presence, for it is
referred to in several places in his poetry. For example, Jonah in
Patience speaks of “Oure Syre” who “syttes. . . . on sege so hyme /
In His glowané glorye” (93–94); and the narrator in Cleanliness
refers to “pe Kyng pat al weldez” (17). However, these refer-
ences are just that—references—not actual visualizations or po-
etic ekphrases. This lack of visualization is a remarkable omis-
sion in a poet at once so visual and so concerned with fayre
formes; such an omission provides strong evidence that the poet
recognized and embraced the reluctance to visualize a full the-
ophany, a reluctance found both in the Old Testament and in
the Apocalypse. In Pearl, which contains the most visual signs of
the divine, the forme most used for God’s presence is the Lamb,
which is a symbol not a visualization, and the preferred symbol
of the deity in early Christian art (though not, as we have seen,
later), and which in John’s text either joins with the Throne or
sometimes replaces the Throne in visions of the worship of God
by the saved beyond this world and time.

In Pearl, which refers so often to the joyous celebration of the
Lamb’s meyn, it is natural that the Lamb as sign would domi-
nate over the Throne. The Lamb is a more physical living
reality than the Throne and essential to the very personal rela-
tionship the Pearl Maiden describes as her life in eternity. Addi-
tionally, I suspect that the Pearl poet relies on the Lamb as the
visualization of the deity, because the Lamb is at once a more
direct sign of God as living being (unlike the Throne which is a
sign of divine power) and yet still only a sign of the deity, a
symbol, not the image of the deity himself. Once John’s words
are translated into visual images, it is not surprising that the
less-visual God Enthroned would give way to the highly visual
sign of the Lamb, especially where there is a reluctance to
depart from John’s text and actually visualize God on the
throne. In this respect, as in others, the rearrangements and
various changes in detail that the Pearl poet makes of John's visionary recordings reflect not only traditional readings and artistic treatments of John's text, but the original perspective and spirit of John's text itself.

Like John, moreover, the Pearl poet conflates visions and signs, merging Throne, Lamb, the Lamb adored by his meyn, the Throne surrounded in majesty, and the heavenly city. The most important passage in Pearl for this conflation comes in the midst of the climactic vision of the New Jerusalem granted to the dreamer at the end of his dream. For this forme of the beatific vision and the kingdom, the Pearl poet makes particular use of the passage near the end of the Apocalypse in which John merges the Lamb with the visions of the heavenly city and God Enthroned (21.1–22.5). In this vision, John tells us:

Et civitas non eget sole neque luna, ut luceant in ea;
nam claritas Dei inluminavit eam, et lucerna eius est
agnus.

(21.23)

[And the city needs neither sun nor moon to light it; for the splendor of God illumines it and that lamp is the Lamb.]

John then goes on to describe the Throne of God, the Lamb, and the river of the water of life (fluvius aquae vitae), all at the center of the heavenly city. The first stanza of section eighteen in Pearl uses the same transition, the Lamb as the city's light, to move from the vision of the city to a vision of the Lamb and of the Lamb adored:

Such lyxt þer lemed in alle þe stratez
Hem nedde nawþer sunne ne mone.

Of sunne ne mone had þay no nede;
þe Self God watz her lombe-lyxt,
þe Lombe her lantyrne, withouten drede;

42
In this passage, the poet, like John, includes the river and the Throne and even two references to God, placing "Godez Self" on the Throne, without, however, giving any visual description of the enthroned deity. Although admittedly "Godez Self" is less circumlocutory than the supra sedem sedens of chapter four in John's Apocalypse, it still lacks the direct simplicity of the name "God" and seems to insist on not being a visual image of God, but rather a reference to the divine presence.

More importantly, the focus in the above passage in Pearl, and throughout the entire section, is upon the Lamb, not the Throne. Through elaborate wordplay, including the pun available in English upon "Lamb" and "Lamp," the poet is developing the motif of the Lamb as divine light, in contrast to earthly light from sun or moon. The latter, the weaker and more flawed source of light ("to spotty ho is, of body to grym" [1070]), is particularly contrasted to the brilliant light of the Lamb. But the poet has done more than just make use of a pun available to him in English. He has obviously noted the Vulg-
te's emphasis on *lucerna* (used as noun and in the previous clause as the verb *lucet*) and also more subtly the semantic and syntactical connection between *claritas* and *lucerna*: both are subjects of their respective clauses and one substitutes for the other (*lucerna* for *claritas*); also because the first belongs to God ("claritas Dei") and the second equals the Lamb, there is a distinction being made, between God (perhaps God the Father) and the Lamb.

In *Pearl* the appearance of the Lamb in the climax of the dream—notably still more a verbal reality than a visual one, a source of light, not the object lighted—prepares the way for the vision of the Lamb adored by the 144,000, the subject of the second-to-last section of the poem. The Lamb himself is envisioned as he appears in the visions of the earlier chapters of the Apocalypse:

> With gret delty þay glod in fere
> On golden gatez þat glent as glasse;
> Hundreth þowsandez I wot þer were,
> And alle in sute her liurez wasse.
> Tör to know þe gladdest chere.
> þe Lombe byfore con proudly passe
> Wyth hornez seuen of red golde cler;
> As praysed perlez His wedez wasse.
> Towarde þe throne þay trone a tras.
> þay þay wern fele, no pres in plyn,
> Bot mylde as maydenez seme at mas,
> So droȝ þay forth with gret delty. (1105–16)

This stanza, taken from the vision of the seventh chapter of the Apocalypse, is followed by a paraphrase of John's vision of the adoration of the Lamb in chapter five:
SIGNS OF GOD IN PEARL

Delyt þat Hys come encroched
To much hit were of for to melle.
Þise alderman, quen He aproched,
Groutelyng to His fete þay felle.
Legyounes of auengelez togeder uoched
þer kesten ensens of swete smelle.

(1117–22; cf. Apoc. 4.7–11)

The vision of the Lamb adored then climaxes in Pearl in section nineteen with a canticum novum, which provides the final ecstatic moments of the dream:

Al songe to loue þat gay Juelle.
Þe steuen moȝt sryke þurȝ þe vrʒe to helle
þat þe vertues of heuen of joye endyte.
To loue þe Lombe His meyny innelle
Iwysse I lasþ a gret delyt. (1124–28)

The verse in the first three stanzas of section nineteen achieves a tour-de-force comparable to that of the Moissac tympanum, one a verbal, the other a visual, mimesis of otherworldly joy and the ecstasy of those participating in eternal love. However, the dreamer’s glimpse of divine love, the wholly transcendent love that the Pearl Maiden has been trying to explain to him since the beginning of the dream, is only a vision of heavenly joy, not the joy itself. The last line of the stanza quoted above suddenly and radically shifts the perspective from the heavenly response back to the earthly one of the dreamer. The “gret delyt,” the linking phrase of this section, which is at first applied to the 144,000, is only later, in the stanza quoted above, applied to the dreamer, who “catches” the joy from the blessed. The dreamer’s subsequent rash behavior, when he attempts to cross the river, reveals that he does not understand that the heavenly joy, the gret delyt verbalized in the canticum novum, cannot be his, any more than the Pearl’s love can be his.

Even so, this vision towards the end of the poem, of the Lamb
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYN SCHENE"

adored in the New Jerusalem, does attain a directness over the earlier part of the dream, where we are given more indirect versions in the Pearl Maiden’s descriptions. In sections fourteen and fifteen, she begins to tell the dreamer in greater visual detail about her Lamb and his heavenly kingdom:

“Lest les þou leue my talle farande,
In Appocalyppeece is wryten in wro:
‘I seghe,’ says John, ‘þe Loumbe hym stande
On þe mount of Syon, ful þryuen and þro:
And wyth Hym maydennen, an hundreþ þowsande,
And fowre and forty þowsande mo.
On alle her forhedeþ wryten I fande
Þe Lombez nome, hys Faderz also.
A hue fro heuen I herde þoo,
Lyk flodez þele laden runnen on resse;
And as þunder þrowez in torreþ blo—
Þat lote, I leue, watz neuer þe þes.

A note ful nwe I herde hem warpe,
To lysten þat watz ful luflly dere.
As harporez harpen in her harpe,
Þat nwe songe þay songen ful cler,
In sounande noteþ, a gentyl carpe.” (865–76, 879–83)

This earlier description of the Lombe and His meyny is basically third-hand, for the Pearl Maiden is telling the dreamer about John’s description of the vision. She repeatedly cites John’s Apocalypse as her authority, even quoting him directly for the climactic vision. John’s text thereby is granted the privileged position of the first and best and most orthodox visualization of the Lamb adored — most orthodox because it, unlike the dreamer’s version, does not end with a rash and unauthorized response.
SIGNS OF GOD IN PEARL

Signs of God's Kingdom:
The New Jerusalem and the Wedding Feast

In addition to the visions of the Throne and the Lamb adored, two other images of God's kingdom that are used in the Apocalypse proved especially popular in the later Middle Ages: the vision of the New Jerusalem and the reference to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. Both of these figure importantly in the Pearl poet's work, especially in Pearl. The New Jerusalem, as it appears in late medieval art and literature, remains very close to John's text, in which the description of the New Jerusalem is the final and most sublime of his visions. It not only brings together several details of the earlier visions, along with various allusions in other New Testament texts, but also draws upon the many passages in the Old Testament that look forward to a return to the promised land and a restoration of the city of God's people.

The Voice from the Throne, in John's climactic vision, finally speaks, promising the comforts traditionally evoked by the prophets when they held out hope to the scattered remnant:

Ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus et habitabit cum eis.
Et ipsi populus eius erunt,
et ipse Deus cum eis erit eorum Deus.
Et absterget Deus omnem lacrimam ab oculis eorum,
et mors ultra non erit neque luctus neque clamor neque
dolor erit ultra,
quae prima abierunt. (21.3–4)

[Behold the tabernacle (dwelling) of God is among men, and he shall dwell among them. And they will be his people, And he himself, "God-with-them," will be their god.]^{14}

^{14}"God-with-them," following the New English Bible, transliterates the Hebrew Emmanuel, as does the Latin ("Deus cum eis").
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYN SCHENE"

And God will wipe every tear from their eyes,
And there will be no more death, neither will there be
any more mourning or crying or grief,
For the former things have passed away.

While very close to the similar promises of the prophets, the
words in John's text are less direct than they are, for example, in
Ezekiel, where God speaks in the first person:

Et erit tabernaculum meum in eis,
et ero eis Deus et ipsi erunt mihi populus.
(Ezek. 37.27; emphasis mine)

[And my dwelling shall be with them.
And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.]

In contrast, the effect in the Apocalypse of having the Voice
from the Throne speak of God in the third person is to distance
the promise, to make it less immediate. The emphasis in John's
vision is on the radical newness of the heavenly city and on its
distance from this world and time. Unlike the restored or re-
built Jerusalem promised by the prophets, John's Jerusalem
comes from heaven and is a wholly new creation set beyond
history.\(^{\text{15}}\)

Paradoxically, while John's Jerusalem is less of this world
than that of the prophets, it is nonetheless described in minute
physical detail, most of it drawn from Old Testament pas-
sages.\(^{\text{16}}\) This combination of otherworldliness and detailed visu-
alization was no doubt one of the reasons that the New Jerusa-

\(^{\text{15}}\) The distinction between the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly one, the
major theme of Augustine's City of God, is an important development in early
Christian theology, one which has its basis not only in the Apocalypse, but also
in Jesus's assurance in John's gospel that his kingdom "is not of this world"
(18.36).

\(^{\text{16}}\) The specific and direct source for the description of the New Jerusalem is
Ezekiel, chapters 40-48 (D'Aragon 491), which in turn draws on other images
of the restoration in the prophetic books.
lem exerted such appeal for late medieval artists and poets. In art the New Jerusalem sometimes appears as a recognizable medieval city, either in the background or as a main subject. [Figure 6] Elsewhere, especially in the Beatus manuscripts, the New Jerusalem is an abstract, colorful diagram, not a three-dimensional place;\textsuperscript{17} the Trinity Apocalypse, although not a Beatus manuscript, partakes of that tradition in its full-page, two-dimensional map of the heavenly city, bejewelled and sparkling with its lavish use of goldleaf. [Figure 7] The Trinity's New Jerusalem is a perfect evocation of John's vision, especially of the verse that describes the city's jewel-like light:

\begin{center}
Habentem claritatem Dei,  
lumen eius simile lapidi pretioso tamquam lapidi iaspidis  
sicut cristallum. (21.11)
\end{center}

[Having the splendor of God,  
And its light like that of a precious jewel, such as jasper  
or crystal.]

Pearl's description of the New Jerusalem contains the most extensive and the most direct use of John's actual words to be found in all of the poet's writings. Like the vision of the Lamb adored that I discussed earlier, the New Jerusalem is actually described twice in the poem, once by the Pearl Maiden, and later by the dreamer himself when he describes his own vision of the New Jerusalem. In both of these descriptions, the poet reminds us of how indebted he is to John. When the Pearl Maiden is describing the New Jerusalem, she cites John's Apocalypse as her authority, asserting that the heavenly city is to be distinguished from the earthly one: "Bot þe nwe, þat lyst of Goodz sonde, / Þe apostel in Apocalyppe in theme con take" (943–44).

\textsuperscript{17}For a depiction of the New Jerusalem as a city, see for example, the Angers Tapestries in Planchenaut (pl. 80); and for a representation as an abstract, map-like diagram see the Morgan Beatus (f. 222v), reproduced in Williams (pl. 20).
Later, when recounting his own vision of the New Jerusalem, the poet repeatedly tells us that he saw the city as John saw it and as John described it. At one point, the poet explains that he only knew the names of the jewels that he saw in the New Jerusalem because John had already named them: “As John þis stonez in write con nennem, / I knew þe name after his tale” (997–98). In all but one case (the ðyðe), the poet has not so much translated the names of the stones as transliterated them. For example, for saphyrus he has saffer, and for chrysoprasus, cryspase (Apoc. 21.20 and Pearl, 1002, 1013). The poet’s detailed “pointing” of the New Jerusalem adds up to a dazzling vision, a shining bejewelled picture very like those found in illustrated Apocalypses, especially the lavish Trinity Apocalypse, with its abundant use of gold leaf:

As John þe apostel hit syʒ with syʒt,
I syʒe þat cyty of gret renoun,
Jerusalem so nwe and ryally dyʒt,
As hit watz lyʒt fro þe heuen adoun.
Þe borrh watz al of brende golde bryst,
As glemande glas burnist broun,
With gentyl gemmez anvnder pyʒt. (985–91)\(^2\)

\(^1\)Andrew and Waldron have carefully glossed and footnoted many of the names of the gems, even providing a lengthy comment on what kind of stone a *caulydonye* might be (101; note to 1003), but I believe the poet generally was little interested in what stone was meant—the only specific thing he had in mind was the word named in John’s text, *sardionius* or *scyldionius* (21.19). For a discussion of the one exception to this transliteration, the word ðyðe for *sardius*, see Gordon (79, note to 1007) and compare Gollancz, who emends to *sarde* (*Facsimile* 18), which seems to me correct since it would be in keeping with the poet’s handling of the other terms.

\(^2\)The term “pointing” is used by Burrow in describing the Pearl poet’s craft (*Ricardian Poetry* 69–73; see my earlier reference in the Introduction, 13).

\(^3\)It seems likely that the poet was visualizing the New Jerusalem as it was actually painted in illuminated manuscripts like the Trinity Apocalypse. See Nolan, who says that *glarye* (used later in the description, line 1027) refers to the egg white used in gold leaf, one of several pieces of evidence that the Pearl poet was drawing his terms from “the illuminators’ craft” (200); in an earlier article Salter makes much the same point (149, note 24).
The vision of the New Jerusalem is the most detailed and direct of the Pearl poet's borrowings from John's Apocalypse. Less visually realized and less dependent upon John's text, but equal in importance as a sign of God's kingdom in *Pearl*, is the Wedding of the Lamb, the focal figure for the love between the *Lombe and His meyn sygne*. Here, in giving us more verbal
REFERENCES THAN VISUAL DESCRIPTION, THE PEARL POET AGAIN REVEALS A FAITHFULNESS TO JOHN'S TEXT, AND TO THE SPIRIT OF THAT TEXT. FOR THE VISUAL AND EXEGETICAL TRADITION OF THE WEDDING OF THE LAMB COMES FROM A COMPLEX ICONOGRAPHIC AND THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT, NOT FROM JOHN'S TEXT. IN FACT, THE APOCALYPSE PROVIDES NO DIRECT ACCOUNT OF THE WEDDING, BUT ONLY INDIRECT REFERENCES. IN CHAPTER NINETEEN, JOHN SAYS HE HEARD A LOUD NOISE, LIKE A GREAT CROWD SAYING:

```
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Alleluia!
Quoniam regnavit Dominus Deus noster omnipotens.
Gaudeamus et exultemus et demus gloriam ei,
quia venerunt nuptiae agni,
et uxor eius praeparavit se."

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Et dicit mihi, "Scribe,
Beati qui ad cenam nuptiarum agni vocati sunt."
(19.6-7,9)
```

```
[. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Alleluia!
For the Lord our God reigns all-powerful!
Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory!
For the Wedding Day of the Lamb is come,
And his bride has made herself ready."

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
And he said to me, "Write:
'Blessed are those who are called to the Wedding Feast of
the Lamb!'"]
```

The figure of the Wedding of the Lamb is carried over into the vision of the New Jerusalem, which immediately follows, when John writes that the heavenly city is "arrayed as a bride prepared to meet her husband" (21.2—"paratam sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo"). In addition, the tradition that developed around the Wedding of the Lamb drew upon the other visions of the Lamb in John's text, as well as upon scattered references in the gospels to wedding banquets or the coming of the bride-
groom, and also upon elaborate allegorization of the Song of Songs as the heavenly marriage. In this case, we find John’s visual descriptions combining with essentially verbal and nonvisualized signs to produce newly realized visual images in late medieval art.

Of John’s visions of the Lamb, the ones that contributed most to the Wedding symbolism are those that describe his followers. The first of these is the opening of the fifth seal in chapters six and seven, which is a continuation of the first vision of the Lamb, and the opening of the sealed book (which in turn follows the first vision of the Throne and thereby connects the Lamb with the Enthroned One). When the Lamb breaks the fifth seal John sees the dead souls under the altar being given white robes (6.9–11). Later, after the opening of the sixth seal John sees 144,000 from the tribes of Israel and then a great throng from every nation, all robed in white and praising God and the Lamb. The angel tells John that these “veniunt de tribulatione magna / et laverunt stolas suas et dealbaverunt eas in sanguine agni” (“come from the great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”—7.14). These followers are linked to the 144,000 virgins of chapter fourteen, who are with the Lamb on Mount Sion and praising him with the Canticum novum (14.1–5). The Lamb’s followers, in one vision martyrs, in the other virgins, were thought of as his brides, especially in the later tradition of the virgin martyrs as brides of Christ. In John’s text both references stand clearly in the apocalyptic tradition that insists upon purity and persecution as necessary to salvation.21 This purity of the Lamb’s followers is emphasized by the Pearl Maiden, with her repeated references to the moteles meyn (900;

21 For an example of the emphasis on purity as necessary to salvation and to the separation of the saved from the wicked, compare the close of the Book of Daniel: “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are kept secret and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and be refined, making themselves shining white, but the wicked shall continue in wickedness and none of them shall understand; only the wise leaders shall understand” (12.9–10).
"withouten mote" then becomes the linking phrase of the following section, XVI).

Also important in developing the image of the Wedding of the Lamb, and especially significant for the Pearl poet, are the various references in the gospels to banquets and weddings. In particular, Matthew's parable of the Wedding Feast (22.1-14), in which Jesus tells the story of a king "qui fecit nuptias filio suo" ("who prepared a wedding feast for his son"—21.1), and Luke's version of this parable, which has only a banquet (magna cena, Lk. 14.16), sources for the parable in the prologue to Cleaness, were understood as references to the aeterno convivio, the eschatological banquet (Glossa ordinaria, PL, 114.155).22 Through these connections, the Wedding of the Lamb is joined to all the iconography and symbolism of the eucharist. With the basic figure from the gospels—that the kingdom of God will be a joyous nuptial celebration, where the saved are united to God in an eternal feast—was added the passage in Paul's letter to Ephesians that compares the relationship of Christ and his Church to human marriage (Eph. 5.22-33). Finally, this figure was enriched by the allegorization of the Song of Songs, especially in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons, the whole resulting in an extended metaphor of love, marriage, and feasting, which became available to artists and poets depicting the joy of the world beyond human time.23

The Glossa ordinaria specifically identifies Matthew's nuptias with Luke's cena and both with the aeternam convivium. Modern biblical scholars point out that the celebration of the eucharist "anticipated the return of Jesus and the messianic feast with him in the immediate future" (Gager 153); there are numerous biblical texts that make this connection, including Mark 14.25 and 1 Cor. 11.26 (Gager 155, note 19). Furthermore, Matthew's version of the Parable of the Wedding Feast, by its use of the "tag line" (22.13) "introduces an eschatological note that changes the image of the wedding feast from the Church to the eschatological Messianic banquet" (McKenzie 100).

I know of no one source that summarizes the complex traditions of exegesis and iconography that fed into the Wedding Feast. Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons contain the most extended allegorization of the Song of Songs and are considered a cornerstone of the late medieval figures of the mystical marriage and God as the Christian's bridegroom.
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYNY SCHEME"

Several of the illustrated Apocalypses attest to the interest in the Wedding of the Lamb and include large illustrations of the Wedding Feast, even though as we have seen, John barely mentions the Wedding and says nothing whatsoever about a wedding feast. The Wedding Feast in the Morgan Apocalypse is a good example of the way this scene in the illustrated Apocalypses is created from all the interwoven traditions and symbols, especially the eucharist, the eschatological banquet, and the Wedding of the Lamb (MS. M524, fol. 17r). [Figure 8] The manuscript illustration combines divine power, eternal moment, and human tenderness: the bride enthroned on a high bench, her loving embrace of the Lamb, the sumptuous banquet laid out on the table, with one guest holding forth a chalice, and an angel emerging from the clouds above to blow a trumpet.

The Morgan's Wedding Feast appears on the same page with the better-known vision of Christ enthroned in glory, and together the two pictures provide a visual relationship between the sacrament of the eucharist and the transcendent reality of the Kingdom of God. The scene of Christ enthroned is the supreme image of the divine, beyond time and space, whereas the banquet depicted below includes the human and historical institution, Christ's church, along with the individual souls privileged to share in the beatific vision and the reign of God. The Wedding Feast is not only a vision of eternity, but a sacramental union, realizable on earth within time through the eucharist. The ritual offering of the chalice evokes the mass, at once both a symbolic act of the transcendent union of divine and human and also a commemoration of an historical event, an event which ultimately makes such a union possible.

As in John's text, in Pearl the Wedding of the Lamb is never actually pictured, but the joy of that union is referred to from the beginning of the dream. Like the visions of the adoration of the Lamb and the heavenly Jerusalem, and in fact closely bound to both of them, the Wedding of the Lamb is referred to twice in Pearl: once by the Pearl Maiden to the dreamer, and secondly by the poet himself. The context for the earlier refer-
FIGURE 8. Christ Enthroned; and the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M.524, fol. 17v (mid-13th cen.). By permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library. (Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library.)
ences, as well as the medium through which they are filtered, is the dreamer's obsessive and human love for his pearl, in answer to which the Pearl Maiden insistently refers to her love for the Lamb. By the end of the dream, following the vision of the New Jerusalem, the dreamer sees the Pearl's loving union with the Lamb in its heavenly context, visualized as a joyous celebration by the great crowd of the 144,000, all united to the Lamb. The pointed contrast between these two perspectives of love parallels the two contrasting Jerusalems: the historical Jerusalem, where the Lamb was slain, and the heavenly Jerusalem, where God's kingdom reigns and is celebrated with the "nwe songe" (881). Both the old Jerusalem and the mortal love that the dreamer has for his pearl are bound in human time and human space. However, the earthly Jerusalem has the validity of sacred history, a validity that the dreamer's obsessive, earthly love lacks.

Early in the dream the Pearl Maiden describes her marriage to the Lamb:

Bot my Lorde þe Lombe þurȝ Hys godhede,
He toke myself to Hys marylge,
Corounde me queene in blysse to brede
In lenghe of dayez þat euer schal wage;
And sesed in alle Hys hertytage
Hys lef is. I am holy Hyssse. (413-18)

In this passage the Pearl Maiden begins with the symbol of the mystical marriage and adds to it the image of a court of heaven and her election to that court. The image is further enriched by the evocation of the traditions of the heavenly wedding available through iconography and exegesis. Finally, in the last line the pun on "holy"—referring both to the sacredness and the unique exclusiveness of the Pearl Maiden's love for the Lamb—encapsulates the paradox implicit in the use of the metaphor: the love between the Lamb and the Pearl is both like and unlike human love. Like human love, the union with the Lamb insists that the lovers be all in all to each other; unlike human love, the Lamb's exclusivity is good and holy.
Towards the end of the Apocalypse, the Wedding of the Lamb is merged with the New Jerusalem. Here, in the passage in which John comes closest to actually envisioning a wedding, the New Jerusalem descends from heaven, "paratem sicut sponsam ornatum viro suo" [arrayed like a bride for her groom] (21.2). In Pearl the connection between the New Jerusalem and the Wedding of the Lamb is more logical and less figurative: the city is simply the place of the joyous union. As the Pearl Maiden tells the dreamer:

"Pe Lambes vyuez in blysse we bene,
A hondred and forty bowsande flot,
As in pe Apocalyppez hit is sene:
Sant John hem sy3 al in a knot.
On pe hyl of Syon, yat semly clot,
Pe apostel hem segh in gostly drem,
Arayed to pe weddyng in yat hyl-coppe,
Pe nwe cyt e o Jerusalem." (785–92)

Later, when the dreamer is granted his vision of the New Jerusalem, it is in response to his specific request to go and see the place (note) where the Pearl Maiden lives. This focus on the mote of eternal bliss serves to emphasize its otherness and to separate and celebrate the experience of union with God, rather than providing that experience itself. Likewise, much of the Pearl Maiden's earlier discourse with her juelere is about the Lamb's followers and their happiness, while the climax of the dreamer's own vision comes not with the appearance of the Lamb, but with the nue songe sung by the Lamb's meny. This emphasis is in keeping with the spirit both of John's text and of much of its artistic representations, the Moissac tympanum in particular.

The poem uses a number of different terms for the company of the blessed, some of them—the 144,000 or "maydenez" for example—taken directly from the Apocalypse, others more of the poet's own coining. The preeminent of these is "perlez," although it is indicative of the dreamer's situation in most of the poem that
usually the term is in its singular form—"perle." Two of the narrator's own terms for the company of pearls are especially revealing: the first, used when he recounts the vision, is "his meyny Schene" (1145); and the second, which comes in the final prayer, is "his homly hyne" (1211). The term used in the poet's prayer is a humbler one, for although "homly" in Middle English is not as homely and inelegant as its modern equivalent, it does suggest a kind of ordinary domesticity, as does "hyne," a word used for common laborers and servants. "Meyny," on the other hand, is a little less lowly, for it is generally used for the followers or retinue of a lord, while "schene" elevates the company to the shining light of heaven. Characteristic of the Pearl poet (and indeed, as Burrow has shown, of much fourteenth-century poetry) is this combination of ordinariness and transcendence. A pearl too, as the concrete, literal gem, combines these characteristics, for, while it lacks the dazzling light or colors of gems like rubies and emeralds, it is perfect in its roundness, a conventional figure for perfection and eternity, and in its spotlessness—a pearl is both homly and schene.

The Rivers in Pearl and the Apocalypse

In all the fayre formes of God and his kingdom that are quoted from John, described by the Pearl Maiden, and envisioned by the dreamer, there is an emphasis upon the dreamer's absence from the actual experience of theophany and from the company of blessed, of whom he is not yet a member. This separation and

24See Wood [Douglas] on the term "hyne" as it is used in the parable told by the Pearl Maiden.
25In the chapter on "Ricardian Style" in Ricardian Poetry (11-46), Burrow has a good discussion of this aspect of poetic style and discourse in late-fourteenth-century English literature. Burrow concludes: "Neither Chaucer nor his great contemporaries are often in [Arnold's] sense 'serious.' Their characteristic manner lies, to adopt a favourite phrase of the period, 'betwixt earnest and game.' This oblique and often humorous approach to great matters—God, sin, death—does impose undoubted limitations on the range of Ricardian poetry, however attractive it may be to post-Arnoldian taste" (45).
the dreamer’s attempt to conquer it are very much a part of the story of Pearl and therefore belong to my later discussion of the forme as narrative pattern. However, there is also a forme as visual image that signifies the separation of the New Jerusalem from the dreamer’s world and, as such, should be examined along with the other formes that refer to God’s kingdom: that image is the river running through the dream landscape. Although it is usual to read this river as one and the same with the river that flows from the Throne envisioned at the end of the dream, such an identification is never made in the poem and is, I believe, totally wrong.  

The river that the dreamer sees flowing from the Throne is taken directly from John’s Apocalypse, where it appears in the climactic vision: “Et ostendit mihi fluvium aquae vitae splendidum tamquam cristallum, / Procedentem de sede Dei et agni in medio plateae eius (22.1) [And he showed me the river of the waters of life, resplendent like crystal, / Proceeding from the Throne of God and of the Lamb into the middle of the city’s street]. At virtually the same point in his own vision, the dreamer sees the same river: “A reuer of þe trone þer ran outryste / Watz brystir þen boþe þe sunne and mone” (1055–56). Traditionally, this river symbolizes the outpouring of God’s gifts (Andrew and Waldron 104, note to 1055). It is a river that flows forth and that shines and was usually represented in art more as a living outgrowth than as a body of water to be crossed; the Morgan Apocalypse’s river is especially remarkable in this respect. [Figure 9] In Pearl the river from the Throne is clearly part of the glorious splendor of the New Jerusalem, like the streets of gold and the jeweled walls. The other river in Pearl—the one seen from the beginning of the dream, the one that separates the dreamer from his pearl,  

26The identification of what I believe to be two different rivers is made in both Gordon’s and Andrew and Waldron’s editions. See also W. S. Johnson, who says that the river is both a boundary and a “means of passing” (41). This is the way the river Lethe works in Dante’s Purgatorio (canto 33), but I do not think it is what we find in Pearl.
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYNY SCHENE"

Figure 9. The River of Life. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M.524, fol. 21r (mid-13th cen.). By permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library. (Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library.)
and the one that he rashly tries to cross at the end—is not found in John's text and figures something very different from the river of the Throne. As the otherwise fairly inept artist who illustrated the Cotton Nero manuscript clearly saw and depicted in three of his four pictures accompanying *Pearl*, this first river is a line of demarcation, a visual sign symbolizing the separation of this world from the next. [Figure 10] This river is not sacramental, it is not the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is not divine grace, and it is not the emanation of the divine into this world—it is the *separation* of the divine from the human and thus a symbol of the distance of God, not of His approach to humanity.\(^{27}\) The river is the visual sign that corresponds to the insistence on the special experience of the visions that characterizes apocalyptic texts, with their sealed books and warnings of secrecy. The river in *Pearl* probably also reflects the iconographic tradition that showed John on Patmos, alone and set apart by the Bosphorus; the Morgan Apocalypse contains a particularly good example of this use of the sea as a separation between the ordinary world and the visionary one. [Figure 11] What we must remember, however, is that the dreamer is not in a position analogous to John's, for the dreamer in *Pearl* is on the wrong side of the river and therefore closer to the position of the boatman who is moving away from Patmos (and out of the picture) in the Morgan illustration.

In the last stanza, *Pearl* offers a resolution to the problem of the separatedness and distance of the otherworld and its joys:

```
To pay þe Prince oþer sete sayte,
Hit is ful eþe to þe god Krystyyn;
For I haf founden hym, boþe day and náste,
A God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyn.
Ouer þis hyul þis lote I læste,
For pytþ of my perl e endyyn,
And syþen to God I hit bytaxte,
```

\(^{27}\) Hanning discusses the role of the river in *Pearl* as a separation marker and sees a connection between this and the river in *Navigatio saneti Brendani* ("Limn").
Figure 10. The River in *Pearl*. BL Cotton Nero A.x., fol. 42r. By permission of the British Library. (Photo: The British Library.)
FIGURE 11. John on Patmos. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M.524, fol. 1r (mid-13th cen.). By permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library. (Photo: The Pierpont Morgan Library.)
"THE LOMBE AND HIS MEYNY SCHENE"

In Krystes dere blessyng and myn,
pat in pe forme of bred and wyn
pe prest vus scheweʒ vch a daye.
He gef vus to be His homly hyne
And precious perles vnto His pay. Amen. Amen.

(1201–1212)

In this final stanza the poet, having left the visionary and apocalyptic mode altogether, turns to the sacramental, where he finds a fayre forme that is both visual—"pe forme of bred and wyn" that the priest "scheweʒ" us—and verbal—the "lote" the dreamer "læste" on his hill. In the eucharist and the celebration of mass lies the dreamer's best hope for theophany and the joys of God's presence.

By concluding with the fayre forme of the eucharist, Pearl suggests that visions of future bliss are not available to most people, except secondhand. For all the beauty of John's visions of the Lombe and his meyny enjoying the bliss of the New Jerusalem, it is a beauty not immediately the dreamer's. He can see or hear or read secondhand representations of the New Jerusalem, but he cannot cross the river to join the meyny scheene in singing the nue songe. Furthermore, the dreamer's vision is definitely inferior to the certain truth of Scripture. John's vision is authoritative and reliable, but the narrator's own dream is subject to doubt. Unlike the forme of John's words, which are a true and accurate description, and unlike the visual forme of the bread and wine, which the priest shows him, the forme of the poet's dream is human and flawed. In Pearl, neither John's vision nor the eucharist deals with present reality—each works in a different mode, the modes of future time or sacrament, but their fayre formez are still more fully realized than those of the narrator's dream.

It remains to the other poems to introduce and develop other aspects of the formez made by God and those adapted or created by his creatures, in particular the fayre formez of biblical history and the Beatitudes, the fayre formez of sacrament and the promises of the beatific vision, and also the contrar of fayre formez, the signs of divine judgment and punishment.