

# ***En Pneumati* ("in Spirit") :** **An Experience of Newness in Revelation**

## **1. Introduction**

As early as in 1967 H. Richards wrote a commentary on Apocalypse with a title : **What the Spirit says to the Church**. This indicates the importance of the Spirit in the book of Revelation and the role of the Spirit in the early Christian community. The Acts of the Apostles and the letters of Paul give ample evidences that the early Church was a Spirit-filled community (Acts 5:32; 15:8; Rom 5:5; 11:8; 2 Cor 1:22; 2 Tim 1:7). As Yahweh spoke to Israel: "I will put my new spirit in you" (Ezek 36:26-27) the new people of Israel received the spirit (Jn 20:22; Acts 2:33; 8:15; 10:47; 19:2; Gal 3:2). A high moral and spiritual standard is expected of Christians because, Paul says, "the Spirit of God dwells within You" (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Rom 8:9, 11). Stephen's martyrial testimony was a clear example of being "full of the Spirit" (Acts 6:3, 5, 8; Cf. Lk 4.1; Acts 11:24). Philip is another example how a spirit-filled person is led to the testimony of the faith (Acts 8:6). Testimony to the Lord, in the early Christianity, is seen as a pneumatic characteristic (Acts 21:8-9). This feature of the witness to faith led by the Spirit plays a major role in the Apocalypse.

## **2. The Spirit in the Apocalypse**

The theme of the Holy Spirit is not a major issue in the book of Revelation. The prominent role of the Holy Spirit is nevertheless an important characteristic of the Apocalypse of John. The term *Pneuma* (Spirit) occurs eighteen times in the Apocalypse. The author uses the terms 'Spirit' and 'Spirit of the Lord' in various combinations :

"in the Spirit" (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), "to the Spirit" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 19:10; 22:17) and "seven spirits" (1:41; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). It is to be noted that in every case, the *Spirit of God* is meant, although it is never called 'the Holy Spirit'.<sup>1</sup> It refers to the working of the Spirit in the formation of the New Jerusalem through the words of the prophet (22:6) and through trials and tribulations (3:2). We shall here investigate the occurrences of *en pneumati* only in order to show how the Spirit is the *Spirit of newness* in the context of the Apocalypse.

### 3. En Pneumati

The prophetic vision of John is seen under the influence of the Spirit. This is clear from the phrase *en pneumati*, repeated four times: At the inaugural vision John was seen "in the Spirit on the last day" (1:10); in the important scene of theophany the author "was in the Spirit" (4:2); before the vision of the great whore the Angel carried the Seer "in the Spirit" (17:3); and finally, at the last important vision of the New Jerusalem the author "was carried away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain..." (21:10). Each one is a very significant moment in the visionary journey of the author. He begins to have the visionary experience "in the Spirit". Even though this phrase refers to John's experience as a prophet, the precise meaning is not the same in each case.<sup>2</sup> There are varied modes of translations found for *en pneumati*; "I was in the Spirit" (RSV; NRSV), "I

1. Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester 1989) 49; R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh 1993) 150-173; De Smidt, "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Revelation", *Neotestamentica* 28.1(1994) 232. Contra: J. J. Engelbrecht, "The Holy Spirit in Revelation 1-3", *Papers delivered at NTSSA Congress* (1987) 1-21. He holds that the terms do not refer to the 'Spirit' in every case.

2. R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 150.

came to be in the Spirit" (NIV), "I became in the Spirit" (RIV), "I fell into the Spirit" (R. H. Charles, ICC).

In the early stages of christian literature *en pneumati* is understood to denote the influence of the Spirit. Paul along with the Antiochean theology, emphasizes the pneumatic character of his mission (1 Thes 1:5-6; 1 Cor 2:4-5). The gift of the Spirit in this case is perceived as empowerment for the missionary activity. F. W. Horn rightly observes that God's own eschatological action is thus carried out by his messengers through the empowerment of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> The Spirit was experienced as a personal power which filled a person in order that he becomes the agent of dynamic mission. However the emphasis no longer falls on the ecstatic, exceptional and wonderful occurrences, but rather on the human-encompassing involvement of the Spirit with God's people.<sup>4</sup> The Apostles and other mission activists are led by the Spirit not only for personal witness to the Word of God (Act 7:55) but also to proclaim the Word with much vigour and certainty (Acts 8:29-39; 1 Cor 2:6-14). This empowerment of the Spirit produced something new in the Jewish as well as Gentile community that they all became the children of God (Rom 8:9-17). Therefore *en pneumati* does not often denote, as some think,<sup>5</sup> a temporary experience of the Spirit's power, although in some cases its primary meaning is to denote ecstatic speech.<sup>6</sup>

3. F. W. Horn, "Holy Spirit," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary III* (New York 1993) 270.

4. Cf. J. C. De Smidt, "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Revelation - Nomenclature," 232.

5. Cf. De Smidt, "Holy Spirit...," 232.

6. R. J. Bauckham, "The Role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse," *Evangelical Quarterly* 52 (1980-81) 66.

### 3.1 The Inaugural Vision

The first occurrence of *en pneumati* is found in the Apocalypse in the inaugural vision of the author (1:10). Beckwith translates the phrase "*egenomen en pneumati*" of 1:10 as "I was in the Spirit," i.e. "caught away by the power of the Spirit into an ecstasy" (cf 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).<sup>7</sup> However as Swete would indicate *egenomen en pneumati* is the normal condition of Christians, in contrast with *einai en sarki* (Rom 8:9) denoting the exaltation of the prophet under inspiration (Ezek 3:12; Acts 22:17).<sup>8</sup> It expresses more the theological and phenomenological sphere than merely mental and spiritual. Bauckham would explain the process of a person being "*en pneumati*": When a man ceases to be "en eautou" (Acts 12:11) and becomes "**en ekstasei**" he loses his outward consciousness. Instead the Spirit takes control of his faculties, he becomes "*en pneumati*."<sup>9</sup> But it is not a case of the soul's heavenly journey, as St. Paul experienced (2 Cor 12:1-7), i.e. not a departure from the earthly realities of time and space; rather it was the reception of a message, experienced in the condition of full consciousness which proceeded from heaven to him in words and pictures. The time element is mentioned as the "Lord's day" - the day of worship. This indicates the divine atmosphere in which the author was placed to receive the Revelation for a community troubled with trials and tribulations. Thus the Spirit of God takes control of the Seer that he may receive something quite encouraging amid the afflictions of the most varied kind: persecution, exile and death (1:9; 2:13).

7. I. T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (Michigan 1947), 435; R. H. Charles (Revelation I [Edinburgh 1985] 22) too is of the same opinion: "the Seer fell into a Trance in order that Christ would address him."

8. H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of John* (New York 1907) 13.

9. Bauckham, "The Role of the Spirit," 67.

### 3.2 The Throne Vision

The second occurrence of the expression *egenomen en pneumati* is found in 4:2 which refers to John's rapture to heaven. Chapter 4 describes the glorious power of the Almighty God in an apocalyptic scene of God sitting upon the throne. Throne is one of the important symbols, which occurs very frequently in Revelation.<sup>10</sup> Usually heaven is considered as the throne of God.<sup>11</sup> The *thronos* as the royal symbol signifies the majestic power and sovereignty of God (cf. Heb 8:1). In Revelation too it is the manifestation of God's absolute authority.<sup>12</sup> Besides, John sees the exalted Christ sitting on the throne of God the Father. Christ shares the glory of the Father by sitting along with the Father (3:21; also 21:5; Heb 1:8; 12:2). In many other places Christ the Lamb is honoured along with God who sits on the throne.<sup>13</sup> Because he shares the throne with God, Christ has power to bring down all the created dominions (cf. Lk 1:52; Col 1:16) as well as to judge the living and the dead.<sup>14</sup> This notion of Christ's glory is taken up in Revelation.

On account of his majestic power Christ is presented in Revelation, at the very beginning itself, as a glorious

10. The occurrences of *thronos* in the NT :

Mt	Mk	Lk/Acts	Jn	Pl	Heb	Jas	Joh	Pt	Jud	Rev	Total
5	0	3/2	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	47	62

11. Cf. Mt 5:34; 23:22; Acts 7:49.

12. Cf. 1:4; 4:2-6; 5:1; 6:7, 11, 13, 16; 7:9-17; 8:3; 14:3, 5; 16:17; 19:4-5; 20:11-12; 21:5; 22:1, 3; also Kiddle, *Revelation of St. John* (London 1946) 81.

13. Cf. 6:11, 13, 16; 7:9, 17; 12:5; 19:4-5; 22:1, 3.

14. Even the disciples of Christ are also given the same privilege when they conquer the Dragon with him (cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30; Rev 3:21).

heavenly being (1:12-16) who possesses the glory of heaven and who shares the likeness of God Himself. John employs the epithet: 'One like the Son of Man' from Dan 7:13, in which the 'dominion and glory and kingdom' of the whole world is given by God to the representative of the saints of the Most High.<sup>15</sup> It refers to the fact that Christ is the supreme Lord of the cosmos, independent of all human combat and manipulation, who now reveals his true name. He is worthy of divine worship because his worship can be included in the worship of the one God.<sup>16</sup> Therefore the symbol of throne attributed to Christ indicates the absolute sovereignty which He shares with Almighty God.

This experience of the author is not an example of a second trance; John is already in *en pneumati* in 1:10 and here in 4:2 there is the next revelation of the mighty and glorious God and Christ as against the so called mighty Roman Empire. The Seer, *caught up by the Spirit* (NEB), "is released temporarily from the body in order to rise to heaven and to receive entry to the domain of God that is found there."<sup>17</sup> As per the Jewish-Apocalyptic view, heaven is where the future things, which will define the new world era, are being prepared and preserved (cf. 21:2). Thus the eschatological victory over the powers of evil is foretold by this throne vision to the Seer. Therefore the

15. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 66, observes that the title, 'Son of Man' in this context is intended to convey the notion of glory, and not humility.
16. However, as Bauckham (*The Theology of Revelation*, 58-59) has pointed out, in any case, John is evidently reluctant to speak of God and Christ together as plurality. He is careful to include Jesus in the monotheistic worship, since his mentioning of God and Christ together are followed by a singular verb (11:15) or singular pronouns (6:7; 22:3-4).
17. J. Roloff, *Revelation: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis 1993) 98.

second experience of the author being *en pneumati* is a follow up of the first one (1:10).<sup>18</sup> The author is placed in a very favourable situation to understand the theology of irony: the Lamb is the Lion (5:5) and he is given the basic notion of belief in a God who can do wonders and for him nothing is impossible (Lk 1:37).

The Roman empire, with all its political and religious claims, tried to persuade its subjects to submit to its all powerful authority.<sup>19</sup> The dreadful portrait of the Dragon which symbolized the world power, would surely terrify the early christian community. In this political, social and religious conflict the author wants to present to his readers a theological and rhetorical alternative portraying God as the supreme and Almighty, that it is God and not the Dragon / Roman Empire who is the supreme authority of the cosmos. This political portrait of God as the supreme ruler with absolute authority is best described by the Seer by the

18. J. Moffat (*The Revelation of John the Divine* [The Expositor's Greek NT 5; London 1910] 376) speaks of a "fresh wave of ecstasy" that catches up the Seer. Swete (67) mentions, "The state of spiritual exaltation which preceded the first vision...has returned, but in greater force."

19. Notice, for example, the "super power" attributed to the evil empire :

**12:3-4** : Dragon : great, red, 7 heads, 10 horns, 7 diadems; tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

**12:9** : Great dragon.

**13:1-2** : Sea Beast : 10 horns, 10 diadems, strange features, power, throne and authority is given.

**13:11-18** : Earth Beast has horns like a lamb, but speaks like the Dragon; performs great wonders and inflicts the saints, even to the point of death. Notice also 13 of the 20 occurrences of the word "*exousia*" in Revelation are attributed to the evil force (6:8; 9:32; 10:19; 1:62; 13:2,4,5,7,12; 17:12,13).

symbol of the throne.<sup>20</sup> The political image of the Almighty God is further unfolded in the visions of the seals (6:1-17; 8:1, 3-5), trumpets (8:2, 6-21; 11:4-19) and bowls (15:1, 5-21) which follow the throne-room scene of ch 4. Constructing these visions in seven series in order to indicate completeness, John teaches not a literal prediction of events, but a theological relevance that God's power and vindictive judgement on the unrighteous world are unchallengeable and irrevocable. These visions should be seen in relation to God's throne-room. Each series is depicted as proceeding from the throne-room. The four creatures gather the four riders of the first four seal openings (6:1, 3, 5, 7) while the seven angels surrounding God's throne blow the seven trumpets (8:2, 6). Besides, the seven last plagues by which God's wrath is ended (15:1) seem to proceed from the throne-room of ch 4. The mention of the heavenly temple (15:5) and the angels who come out of the temple to pour out God's wrath and the description of God in 15:7 allude to the way God is portrayed in the throne-room (4:9-10).

For the Church persecuted by the great Roman Empire this belief in the Almighty God and Christ becomes the basis for a life of endurance and commitment to their christian faith. The author is able to breathe hopefully with this throne vision given to him in the Spirit. This vision in the Spirit leads him to the awareness of God's providence on his children.

### 3.3 Vision of the Harlot

John is under the control of the Spirit for the third time before the vision of the Woman sitting on the scarlet beast (17:3). This time the angel carried (*apeneken*) him away to the desert in the Spirit. Unlike the previous expe-

20. Of the 62 instances of *thronos* in the NT, 47 occur in Revelation.

rience of hope and consolation in the mighty power of God *in the Spirit* (4:2) the Seer is given another experience *in the Spirit*, a vision of total wickedness. Obviously the author presents the appearance of the Woman of ch 12 and ch 17 in a similar manner.<sup>21</sup> But the contrasting elements are many both in character and purpose.<sup>22</sup>

The angel carried the Seer *eis eremon en pneumati* for another different experience than that of 4:2. It would seem, as W. Barclay thinks,<sup>23</sup> in comparison with Rev 12:14 that the desert would signify the place of protection and grace. But this is not the significance of the desert in 17:3. The desert here is not even a place of retirement and solitude of inner life (Rev 12:14) for he would not have found a vision of Babylon there, but the desolation of life with God. Many commentators suggest that in 17:3 *eis eremon* represents an allusion to Is 21:1.<sup>24</sup> We cannot exclude this possibility. But in the context of ch 17 we can find two poles of meaning for desert :

a) In the world of apocalyptic literature the author presents to the reader that important vision comes to him in varied places. A solitary region is a fitting place for visions (cf. Ex 3:1; 2 Es 9:23). In the same way in different ecsta-

21. Woman of ch 12 :	Woman of ch 17 :
Clothed with the sun	Clothed in purple and scarlet;
Adorned with moon and stars	Adorned with gold and jewels and pearls.

22. Cf. J. E. Bruns, "The Contrasted Women of Apocalypse 12 and 17," *CBQ* 26 (1964) 459-463. J. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16:17-19:10* (Frankfurt am Main 1989) 308-310.

23. W. Barclay, *The Revelation of John, Vol. 2* (Edinburgh 1990) 143.

24. R. H. Charles; R. H. Mounce; G. R. Beasley-Murray.

cies the Seer beholds himself on earth (1:10; 10:8), in heaven (4:1), on the sea-shore (12:18), and on the mountain top (21:10); and here in the wilderness. As Beckwith rightly points out, the wilderness as used in the Scriptures does not necessarily denote a dry and barren place, it is often an uncultivated region with little or no settled population,<sup>25</sup> indicating the state of destruction and desolation that is going to follow.

b) "Just as with mountains and water, the desert of the OT has the double aspect of the holy; it is the place where Yahweh reveals himself, but it is also the abode of demons, who threaten human beings with impurity, sickness and death."<sup>26</sup> As for the vision of the New Jerusalem the Seer ascends a mountain, so for the vision of the New Babylon he is carried away to a desert. Thus the desert in 17:3 is not a place of protection and providence, but a place of divine judgement (Ez 20) where Israel's infidelity is revealed.

Considering the description of the Woman and the historical and social context of Revelation the identification of the Woman is the great Roman empire. The Great Harlot with her splendid figure, indicates her wealth and the brutal ruling force of the Empire. The author is given the clear picture of the "mighty" Roman Empire wrecked with the blasphemous worship of the Emperors; not its heads only but the whole body politic did this dishonour to the Living God (H. B. Swete; Charles; Mounce) with her moral corruption, ceremonial uncleanness and wickedness of drinking the blood of the christians (saints).

25. I. T. Beckwith, **The Apocalypse**, 692.

26. Otto Bocher, "Eremos," Colin Brown (ed), *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology Vol. 3* (Exeter 1971) 1005.

This vision of total wickedness of the Roman Empire, the anti-God and Christ, in the figure of the Harlot Woman is shown to the Seer in the Spirit. The Spirit takes hold of him to see the full vision of the Woman, the agent of the Dragon, the embodiment of the Evil which is in direct opposition to the mighty God who sits on the throne. The Spirit of God becomes the enlightening spirit both in 4:2 and 17:3 so that the Seer is able to see the conflict between the Good and the Evil. Thus the experience of the author *en pneumati* in 4:2 is progressively brought forward in 17:3, also *en pneumati*, so that he is prepared for the final vision of conflict and conquest.

### 3.4 The Vision of New Jerusalem

The final occurrence of *en pneumati* is found in Rev 21:10 :

“And *en pneumati* he took me to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.”

H. B. Swete (p. 284) would say that the author's spirit was under the influence of the 'Spirit of revelation'. The Seer is given another but completely a new experience through the power of the Spirit. When taken into the wilderness *en pneumati* the Seer had seen the wicked city Babylon (17:3). On the other hand, it is from a high mountain he views, in the influence of the same Spirit, the new Jerusalem.

The author speaks of high mountain in three different backgrounds :

i. Paradise and lofty mountains are associated together in Enoch 24 (Charles, II, 157) and also in Jewish thought mountains have always played a very significant role with regard to Israel's encounter with Yahweh (cf. Ex 19).

ii. Many commentators see here the background of Ezekiel's great vision of the restored temple and land, which was given to him "upon a very high mountain" (Ezek 40:1-2).

iii. Besides, I think, that the Seer would like to present the picture of the New Jerusalem in contrast to the old city of Jerusalem which is also situated upon mount Zion. Jerusalem, signifying Israel, is no more the God-dwelling place; instead, the New Jerusalem has become the city of God. The Seer is carried away to the mountain not to see the city from above but to see the origin of the city: God. That is why the Seer is able to see the New Jerusalem "coming down out of heaven from God" (21:2). The author wants to show that the New Jerusalem is only the transformation of "Jerusalem" in the spirit of Christ. If the old Jerusalem stood upon mount Zion to signify God's presence and protection for her, the origin of New Jerusalem is itself from God (high mountain) signifying her life in God: "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (21:22). This analogy would bring to the readers hope and confidence in Christian faith which would bring them to the New Jerusalem.

**Significance of New Jerusalem:** The Seer is able to understand the meaning of the New Jerusalem *en pneumatī*. The climax of the dynamic rhetoric presented by John to his troubled Church is the *New Jerusalem motif* (21:9-22:5), which is, in fact, the development of the *New Heaven and New Earth* imagery (21:1-8).<sup>27</sup> The obvious scene of *en pneumatī* (17:3ff) describes the Evil in its full nature proclaiming its power and might in the world. This would bring to the 'saints' a spirit of despair and discouragement.

27. Cf. C. Deutsch, "Transformation of Symbols: The New Jerusalem in Rev 21:1-22:5," *ZNW* 78 (1987) 100. Yarbro Collins (*Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* [Missoula 1976] 15) calls this section as the "Jerusalem appendix".

But the scene changes in the following chapter which brings the reader to a life of hope and consolation with the destruction of the Evil and establishment of the New Jerusalem. Thus we see the return of the victorious Rider (19:11-16), the last battle (19:17-21), the binding of Satan (20:3), the thousand-year *interim-reign* of Christ (20:4-6) and the last judgement which culminates in the decisive destruction of the Satanic Dragon, and the elimination of Death and Hades (20:14-15). Then the scene moves completely to a new milieu where earth becomes heaven and heaven is on earth. In other words, heaven and earth become one. It is not easy to imagine what this new city will look like, neither is it possible to situate a location and time of this holy city. Although 21:1-5 refer to its cosmic character, as pre-existent yet still to come, it transcends temporal and spatial bounds. As Yarbro Collins observes, the images found in this section should not be taken as a description of the way things will be at some future time. They only symbolize the complete triumph of creation over chaos, just as the elimination of death implies the complete victory of life over death (20:1-15).<sup>28</sup> It is situated neither in heaven separated from the earth nor is it composed purely of worldly realities with all its imperfections. Therefore, instead of trying to find out the whereabouts of this heavenly community, we shall try to understand the purpose of this section in the Seer's mind.

By the New Jerusalem image John wants to present to his troubled Church an *alternative* divine kingdom with all its might and perfection in contrast to Babylon/Rome. This kingdom of God is a new world in which suffering is abolished; it is a world of completely whole or healed men

28. Yarbro Collins, *The Apocalypse* (Dublin 1979) 144. Beckwith (*Apocalypse*, 750) has rightly noted that John's language of the New Jerusalem cannot be taken to describe systematically a *future cosmic event*.

and women in a society where peace reigns and there are no master-servant relationships. God's message that "I will make all things new" (21:5) is a comprehensive summary of all that is contained in the announcement of ch 21:1 as well as the reference to the removal of every negative aspect of life: pain, death, sorrow, and sin of the "old" Jerusalem which has ceased being God's city and has instead assumed the essence of the great city (Babylon/Rome) inimical to God (11:8). The old order of the cosmos where the Dragon had his hold has been destroyed (20:11-14); the going away with the sea (21:1) signifies the final conquest of the old evil empire; because the sea represents the mythical forces of evil and chaos (15:2-3). This refers to the new creation or the restored community symbolized by the image of the Paradise (Zech 14:8), the blessed state of the people of God (21:3-4).

The Spirit of God gives the Seer the above revelation, something completely new, which is an essential requirement for the suffering christian. With this new revelation the Seer's audience is able to take up their cross hopefully looking forward to the New Jerusalem where they find final victory over Evil and its Empire. The revelation which started *en pueumati* in 1:10 finds its culmination in 21:10 with the establishment of the New Jerusalem which is the end result of a committed christian witness.

#### **4. Conclusion**

##### **a) The Theological Implications**

As seen above, the book of Revelation records the influence or the control of the Spirit four times (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10); its occurrences are well spread out and placed at significant moments of important revelations: at the inaugural vision (1:10), the vision of the throne, which is a revelation of mighty God in the world of mighty Roman

Empire (4:2); the vision of the Anti-God, the 'harlot Woman' (17:3) and finally the establishment of the New Jerusalem (21:10). In this structural device which shows a progressive revelation, the author wants, first of all, to tell his readers that God is in control of the course of the events in the world. Whatever be the power of Evil, whatever be the suffering which the children of God would have to bear, everything will come to end and the Good will always find its final victory. It is a message of hope and consolation to a suffering Church.

The role of the Spirit is highlighted in this process of newness in the Church. The Spirit of God, first of all, is in the background for any important revelation. He guides and takes control of our human nature in order to understand the 'wonders' of God. On the earth the Church of Revelation is oppressed and persecuted; she is a Church of martyrs which is only strong and triumphant through the blood of the Lamb and in testimony to him (7:14; 12:11). She is basically united with the brethren who have gone on before to the Lord (6:11; 14:13), but no distinction is yet drawn between the earthly and the heavenly Church (19:7; 21:2). The witnessing Church, then, becomes the *ecclesia gloriae* in which all the promises appear to be fulfilled, by which quality she points towards her eschatological dimension. The Spirit is the source and strength of this ecclesial community which has gone through difficult moments of trials and tribulations.

Even today the Spirit leads us in every moment of our life, always with a ray of hope. Under the control of Spirit there is total absence of anxiety over any form of oppression (cf. 22:1-5). The four stages of revelation as the author had, are to be realized in every person living in God. One's life, first of all, must be placed in the presence of God and His Spirit (1:10). The realization of the power of Good (4:2) and Evil (17:3) that activates us is very essential

to allow us to be "carried away by the Spirit". Secondly, in this process, life in the Spirit will automatically lead us to the state of "New Jerusalem" (21:10). This happy end-result is not only the conclusion of the troubled life of any person living in the Spirit, but also the sure consequence of a life in committed Christian faith, to witness to Christ "even in the face of death" (Rev 12:11).

Moreover the outlook of the New Jerusalem points to two re-creation motifs which run through much apocalyptic thinking. One is that the end will in some way correspond to the beginning. What the creator willed at the beginning he will restore and bring to perfection. The other is that of heavenly Jerusalem which seems some times earthly in character and at other times it is 'heavenly' and transcendental. It is the redemption of the whole creation and the Spirit acts in the process of re-creating the world to place God in its centre (Rev 21:22). Thus the Spirit (of God) is always the Spirit of newness, bringing us to the realm of fresh and progressive revelation that would lead us to full life with God.

### **b) Contextual Applications**

Christian existence in India in a multi-religious context has been generally characterized by exclusion and isolation. It is practically impossible for us today to live without taking into account the claims made by the members of other faiths with whom we live. Faith in Jesus Christ cannot be any more a point of separation from other religious people; neither can it be an obstacle to be associated with current politics and governmental system of the nation. The Spirit moves us to view these religious as well social structures as "instruments" of God's message and not "something" alien to our faith. Therefore dialogue in this context has become the "sacrament" of the Holy Spirit who carries us to the high mountain of brotherhood/sisterhood.

A comprehensive inculturation, in all modes of religious practices (theologizing, liturgical life, and social activities), can be seen as witnessing to our faith in today's context. This will evoke in us the creative newness that the Holy Spirit brings with diversity of charisms (1 Cor 12: 4-11), since the Spirit is the creator of the new world (Ezek 36:26-37:14).<sup>29</sup> The basic message that we find in the mission of the Spirit in the book of Revelation would be the message of hope in the face of trials and tribulations. The Spirit, therefore, moves us to identify the issues we face both inside and outside the Church with openness and hope. If we allow the Spirit to take control of us then he will lead us to have the great experience of the mighty hand of God in us.

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29. M. Amaladoss, *Becoming Indian: The Process of Inculturation* (Rome 1992) 114.