The rise of apocalyptic

Richard J. Bauckham

Dr. Bauckham is Lecturer in the History of Christian Thought at the University of Manchester. Since writing his PhD (Cambridge) on the sixteenth-century divine William Fulke, he has been much engaged in studying the book of Revelation in the wider context of apocalyptic literature. The following study arises from Paul D. Hanson’s recent book, The dawn of apocalyptic, but goes on to consider other recent advances in this area, and to evaluate the place of apocalyptic in the development of biblical literature.

Apocalyptic is currently a growth area in biblical studies. Fresh study, more reliable texts, new editions, even hitherto unpublished documents are enriching our understanding of the intertestamental apocalyptic literature. In addition, there has been fresh debate over the origins of apocalyptic and its relation to Old Testament prophecy, while in the wake of E. Käsemann’s notorious claim that ‘apocalyptic is the mother of all Christian theology’ the importance of apocalyptic as the intellectual matrix of primitive Christianity is increasingly recognized. More and more apocalyptic must be seen as a crucial historical bridge between the Testaments.

All this raises serious theological questions. Is apocalyptic a legitimate development of OT religion? The historical investigation of apocalyptic origins cannot avoid a theological assessment, which has its implications also for NT theology to the extent that apocalyptic was a formative factor in early Christian theological development. In this way the question of the theological continuity between the two Testaments themselves is involved in the problem of the status of apocalyptic. Moreover, as James Barr points out, the status of apocalyptic raises the question of the status of the canon in which it is only marginally represented. Can an intertestamental development be seen as providing theological continuity between the Testaments?

In this article we shall be concerned primarily with the rise of apocalyptic up to the flowering of Hasidic apocalyptic in the mid-second century BC.

We shall be asking (in Part I) the historical question of the origins of apocalyptic, in the light of some recent studies, and (in Part II) the theological question of the theological legitimacy of apocalyptic as a development of Old Testament religion.

I. ORIGINS

Apocalyptic in the prophets

The most important recent investigation of the origins of apocalyptic in OT prophecy is that of Paul D. Hanson. Hanson argues that apocalyptic eschatology developed in the early post-exilic period (late sixth and early fifth centuries) as a development rooted in the prophetic tradition. The extent of the development of apocalyptic in this period, as he estimates it, is indicated by his revision of the usual terminology: he uses the term ‘proto-apocalyptic’ for Second Isaiah, since he points in the apocalyptic direction; Third Isaiah and other prophetic material from the early Persian period (Ze. 9–13; Isa. 24–27) he calls ‘early apocalyptic’; Zechariah 14, which he dates in the mid-fifth century and thinks marks the point at which apocalyptic eschatology is fully developed, is ‘middle apocalyptic’; Daniel, from the mid-second century, is already ‘late apocalyptic’.

(To avoid confusion, in this article I shall use the term ‘apocalyptic prophecy’ to designate apocalyptic material within the OT prophetic books, i.e.


4 In this article I accept, as Hanson does, the usual critical conclusions as to the unity and date of the books of Isaiah, Zechariah and Daniel. Readers who maintain the traditional conservative views on these issues will naturally have to differ very radically from both Hanson’s and my own reconstructions of the rise of apocalyptic. For the consistency of these critical conclusions with an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, see J. E. Goldingay, ‘Inspiration, infallibility, and criticism’, The Churchman 90 (1976), pp. 6–23; idem, ‘The book of Daniel: three issues’,Themelios 2 (1977), pp. 45–49. The honesty of the pseudopigraphal device in Daniel is defended below.

[We hope to publish a full article dealing with this issue in the September 1978 number—Editor.]
Hanson’s ‘early’ and ‘middle’ apocalyptic.) Hanson admits a chronological gulf between Zechariah 14 and ‘late’ apocalyptic, but the special characteristic of his thesis is that he considers apocalyptic eschatology to have already developed in all essentials before this gulf. This enables him to stress the continuity between prophecy and apocalyptic to an unusual degree, and to deny the importance of the non-Israelite influences (Iranian and Hellenistic) which have so often been regarded as contributing significantly to the development of apocalyptic. Such influences, he argues, enter the picture only at a late stage when apocalyptic’s essential character was already developed.

Of course such a thesis can only be maintained if an appropriate definition of apocalyptic is used. Hanson’s definition focuses on apocalyptic eschatology and relates it to prophetic eschatology, distinguishing the two in terms of the kind of balance which each maintains between myth and history. The characteristic of classical prophecy is the dialectic it maintains between the cosmic vision of Yahweh’s plans and the prophet’s responsibility to translate that vision into concrete historical terms. Prophetic eschatology is ‘a religious perspective which focuses on the prophetic announcement to the nation of the divine plans for Israel and the world which the prophet has witnessed unfolding in the divine council and which he translates into terms of plain history, real politics and human instrumentality’. What apocalyptic lacks is that last clause. The balance between vision and history is lost. Despairing of the realization of the vision in the historical sphere, the apocalyptists were increasingly content to leave it in the realm of myth. Apocalyptic eschatology is ‘a religious perspective which focuses on the disclosure . . . to the elect of the cosmic vision of Yahweh’s sovereignty—especially as it relates to his acting to deliver his faithful—whereby the visionaries have largely ceased to translate into terms of plain history, real politics, and human instrumentality’.6

This apocalyptic eschatology developed among the disciples of Second Isaiah (to whose tradition belong not only Is. 56—66 but also Zc. 9—14) in the post-exilic Palestinian community. Second Isaiah’s prophecies of glorious restoration remained unfulfilled, and in the bleak conditions of the early Persian period the visionary group which maintained his eschatological hope increasingly presented it in purely mythical terms, in images of sheer divine intervention and cosmic transformation. To the possibility of fulfilment through human agency and favourable historical conditions they became indifferent.

As the sociological context for the development of apocalyptic eschatology Hanson postulates an intra-community struggle between this visionary group on the one hand, and on the other hand the hierocratic group, a Zadokite priestly group which adopted a pragmatic approach to restoration. By contrast with the visionary programme of Second Isaiah and his followers, this latter group were at first inspired by the more pragmatic restoration programme of Ezekiel, and through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah they succeeded in harnessing eschatological enthusiasm to their policies. After the rebuilding of the temple they won control in the community and thereafter discouraged all eschatological expectation as a threat to the stability of their achievement. The visionary group, on the other hand, consistently opposed the rebuilding of the temple in the name of their transcendent eschatology and waged the most bitter polemic against the hierocratic party. Their own political powerlessness encouraged their visionary indifference to the sphere of political responsibility.

Hanson’s reconstruction of this community struggle is speculative at best and probably the weakest part of his thesis. In particular it leads him to a polarization of the prophetic tradition of Second Isaiah, Third Isaiah and Zechariah 9—14 on the one hand, and on the other hand the tradition of Ezekiel and Zechariah 1—8. The former he regards as the tradition in which apocalyptic emerged, while the latter only used apocalyptic motifs to legitimate a pragmatic political programme. Such a polarization does far less than justice to the significance of Ezekiel and Zechariah 1—8 in the development of apocalyptic,7 as Hanson himself has begun to recognize in a subsequent modification of his treatment of Zechariah.8 To treat Zechariah 9—14 as belonging to the tradition of Third Isaiah rather than to the tradition of Ezekiel and Zechariah 1—8, is to ignore the evidence that these chapters are quite heavily dependent on Ezekiel and relatively little dependent on Isaiah 40—66.9 This in itself suggests that the emergence of apocalyptic must be

6 Hanson, The dawn of apocalyptic, p. 11.
6 Ibid.
8 Interpreter’s dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary volume, pp. 32, 982f.
reconstructed according to a less rigid classification of prophetic traditions.

This is not the place to attempt an alternative reconstruction in detail, but what seems needed is greater recognition of the common features of the various post-exilic prophecies. Despite the varying emphases there is a common conviction that the eschatological promises of restoration in Second Isaiah and Ezekiel remained largely outstanding despite the restored city and temple. In all of these prophecies there is therefore a degree of dependence on and reinterpretation of the earlier prophecies, and all are more or less apocalyptic (according to Hanson’s definition) in the extent to which they depict the coming salvation in terms of Yahweh’s direct intervention and radical transformation of historical conditions. The distinctive aspect of Haggai and Zechariah (1–8) is that they focused these apocalyptic hopes on the rebuilding of the temple and the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel. But these historical realities soon proved incapable of measuring up to the hopes aroused, and so those who subsequently kept alive the eschatological expectation were not opponents of Haggai and Zechariah but successors who sought to remain faithful to their prophecy.

There is, however, a great deal of value in Hanson’s analyses of Isaiah 56–66 and Zechariah 9–14. He shows convincingly how various features of apocalyptic eschatology emerge in these passages. Thus, judgment and salvation are no longer prophesied for the nation as a whole but respectively for the faithless and the faithful within Israel. The doctrine of a universal judgment is adumbrated in Isaiah 63: 6; 66: 16, and eschatology takes on cosmic dimensions. Beyond the judgment lies a new age radically different from the present age and inaugurated by a new act of creation: this idea has its background in Second Isaiah and is already developed in such passages as Isaiah 65: 17–25; Zechariah 14: 6–9. These elements compose the transcendent eschatology of divine intervention and cosmic transformation which forms the central core of apocalyptic belief.

Hanson also shows how this development entails the revivification of ancient mythical material, especially the Divine Warrior myth, to depict the coming eschatological triumph of Yahweh. Here Hanson follows the pioneering work of his teacher F. M. Cross, whose studies of Canaanite myth in relation to the Old Testament revealed the extent to which ‘old mythological themes rise to a new crescendo’ in apocalyptic. Other studies have shown the extent to which Canaanite myth continues to be used even in Daniel and Enoch, while the apocalyptic assimilation of myth extended also to Babylonian, Iranian, and Hellenistic material. This ‘remythologization’ of Israelite religion was not, however, a reversion to an historical viewpoint, but serves to represent an eschatological future which is now understood to transcend the categories of ordinary history.

Hanson has succeeded in demonstrating that the transcendent eschatology which characterizes apocalyptic emerged in post-exilic prophecy as an internal development in the Israelite prophetic tradition in response to the historical conditions of the post-exilic community. This is an important conclusion. On the other hand, there remains a significant gulf, which is not only chronological, between this apocalyptic prophecy of the fifth century and the Hasidic apocalyptic of the second century. Apocalyptic prophecy is not pseudonymous, though it is often anonymous. It does not include extensive surveys of history in the form of vaticinia ex eventu. Its angelology is relatively undeveloped. The temporal dualism of two ages is emerging, but the spatial dualism of heaven and earth, which also characterizes intertestamental apocalyptic, is not yet apparent. Moreover, the transcendent eschatology of apocalyptic prophecy does not yet include the transcendence of death, so central to later apocalyptic belief.

In other words, although Hanson has demonstrated the continuity between prophecy and the apocalyptic prophecy of the early Persian period, there still remains a problem of continuity between this apocalyptic prophecy and the later apocalyptic of Daniel and the intertestamental literature.

To the origins of this later apocalyptic we now turn. We shall see that it is really the heir of post-exilic prophecy and owes its transcendent eschatology to that source. But we shall also see that this is not the whole story, for the alternative derivation of apocalyptic from wisdom has some validity, and there is moreover a significant dis-

---

17 Probably a doctrine of resurrection appears in Is. 26: 19, which Hanson considers ‘early apocalyptic’ (op. cit., p. 313f.), but he does not discuss it.
continuity between the self-understanding of apocalyptic prophecy and that of the later apocalypticists.

**Daniel and mantic wisdom**

The most radical rejection of the derivation of apocalyptic from prophecy is that of Gerhard von Rad, who argued that apocalyptic is not the child of prophecy but the offspring of wisdom. This proposal has been widely criticized, as being at least one-sided. In this section and the next, we shall argue that, while von Rad's thesis was too generalized and cannot be treated as an alternative to the derivation from prophecy, it does have some validity in relation to the background of the books of Daniel and Enoch. In both cases, however, the wisdom background needs more careful definition than von Rad gave it.

An important attempt to refine von Rad's argument is H. P. Müller's proposal to derive apocalyptic not from proverbial but from mantic wisdom. For alongside the wise men whose type of wisdom is represented by the book of Proverbs, the ancient Near East had also mantic wise men, whose function was to divine the secrets of the future by various methods including the interpretation of dreams, omens, mysterious oracles, and the stars. There is little trace of a class of mantic wise men in Israel, but two OT figures who rose to prominence in foreign courts did so by virtue of their successful competition with the court diviners in the practice of the mantic arts: Joseph at the court of Pharaoh and Daniel at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. It is the case of Daniel which suggests that one of the roots of apocalyptic lies in mantic wisdom.

Daniel was not a prophet in the sense of classical Israelite prophecy. His activity in chapters 2, 4, 5 consists in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and of the mysterious message on Belshazzar's palace wall. In each case he is called in after the failure of the other diviners at court. Clearly he belongs among them (2: 18), and as a result of his success becomes their chief (2: 48; 4: 9; 5: 11). His function is exactly theirs: the disclosure of the secrets of the future. Of course the source of his supernatural knowledge is the God of Israel, and his success is designed to bring glory to the God of Israel as the God who is sovereign over the political future. Daniel is the representative of the God of Israel among the magicians and astrologers of the Babylonian court, but he represents him in the practice of mantic wisdom (cf. 5: 12). It is, moreover, this aspect of the Daniel of chs. 1—6 which most plausibly accounts for the ascription to him of the apocalypse of chapters 7—12. We must therefore take seriously the claim that apocalyptic has roots in mantic wisdom.

There are strong formal resemblances between the symbolic dream with its interpretation in mantic wisdom and the apocalyptic dream or vision with its interpretation. The latter also has roots in prophecy (especially Ezekiel and Zc. 1—6), but the connexion with mantic wisdom is hard to deny in the case of Daniel, where Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation in chapter 2 corresponds so well to Daniel's dream-visions and their interpretation in chapters 7 and 8. Besides their dream-interpretation, the mantic wise men were doubtless responsible for the literary peculiarities of the ancient east, such as the Mesopotamian 'apocalypses' which have been compared with Jewish apocalyptic in certain respects. These provide a precedent, which cannot be found in Israelite prophecy, for the long reviews of history in the form of predictions from a standpoint in the past, such as we find in Daniel 11 and other Jewish apocalypses. The astrological

---


aspect of mantic wisdom is naturally less well represented in Jewish parallel material, but it is noteworthy that interest in astrological prediction recurs at Qumran.

The argument about the date of Daniel may have been conducted too simply in terms of a choice between the sixth and second centuries. We may now be able to recognize the book’s dual affinities, with Babylonian mantic wisdom on the one hand and with Hasidic apocalyptic on the other, which indicate the probability of a developing Daniel tradition, which has its roots as far back as the exile in Jewish debate with and participation in mantic wisdom, developed in the Eastern diaspora, and finally produced Daniel apocalypses on Palestinian soil in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. This is all the more probable in view of the similar chronological development which the Enoch tradition underwent (see below).

The key to the emergence of apocalyptic in such a tradition is undoubtedly a growing concern with eschatology. Apocalyptic, like mantic wisdom, is the revelation of the secrets of the future, but in its concern with the eschatological future apocalyptic moves beyond the scope at least of Babylonian mantic wisdom. Thus, while Daniel’s interpretations of the dream of chapter 4 and the oracle of chapter 5 belong to the typical activities of the Babylonian diviners, his eschatological interpretation of the dream of chapter 2 is already in the sphere of apocalyptic. Hence it is chapter 2 which provides the point of departure for the apocalyptic of chapters 7–12, which interprets the future according to the pattern of the four pagan empires succeeded by the eschatological kingdom. But even this contrast between mantic wisdom and apocalyptic may be too sharply drawn. If Nebuchadnezzar’s prognosticators would not have given his dream an eschatological sense, the Zoroastrian magi who succeeded them at the court of Darius might well have done. Precisely the four empires scheme of chapter 2, with its metals symbolism and its eschatological outcome, has close parallels in the Iranian material which has been plausibly suggested as its source. We touch here on an old debate about apocalyptic origins: the question of the influence of Iranian eschatology. Whatever the extent of the influence, it is clear that there are parallels, of which the Jews of the diaspora cannot have been unaware. Not even eschatology decisively differentiates Jewish apocalyptic from the products of mantic wisdom, insofar as eschatology developed also to some extent in non-Jewish mantic circles.

It becomes increasingly clear that apocalyptic, from its roots in mantic wisdom, is a phenomenon with an unusually close relationship to its non-Jewish environment. At every stage there are parallels with the oracles and prophecies of the pagan world. This is equally true as we move from the Persian to the Hellenistic age. Hellenistic Egypt has an ‘apocalyptic’ literature of its own: pseudonymous oracles set in the past, predicting political events, eschatological woes, and a final golden age. There is an extensive Hellenistic literature of heavenly revelations and celestial journeys sometimes remarkably similar in form to those of the apocalyptic seers. It is not surprising that H. D. Betz concludes that ‘we must learn to understand apocalypticism as a peculiar manifestation within the entire course of Hellenistic-oriental syncretism.

Nevertheless this close relationship of Jewish apocalyptic to its non-Jewish environment is misunderstood if it is treated merely as syncretistic. Undoubtedly there is considerable borrowing of motifs, symbols, literary forms—not only by Jew from Gentile but also vice versa. Undoubtedly Judaism after the exile, especially in the diaspora but increasingly also in Palestine, was not immune from the moods and concerns of the international religious scene. The relationship, however, was not

are probably anonymous, but Hallo and Borger’s (like the Jewish apocalypses) are pseudonymous.

The products of the Daniel tradition are not limited to our book of Daniel: to the ‘court-tales’ of Dn. 1–6 must be added 4Q Prayer of Nabonidus and the LXX Additions to Daniel; and to the ‘apocalypse’ of Dn. 7–12 must be added the (still unpublished) fragments of a Daniel apocalypse from Qumran: 4QPsDan. That Dn. 1–6 originated in circles of Jewish mantic wise men in the east diaspora, and Dn. 7–12 in the same circles after their return to Palestine, is argued by Collins, art. cit. (n. 19).

Mesopotamian ‘apocalyptic’ (n. 22 above) has no properly eschatological features, at most a cyclical view of history: cf. Hallo, art. cit., p. 241.


28 D. Flusser, Israel Oriental Studies 2 (1972), pp. 148–75. The Iranian sources are late, but are based on a lost passage of the Avesta and the parallels are too close to be fortuitous. Note how the passage from the Zand-i Vohuman Yasn (p. 166) incorporates precisely the connexion between mantic wisdom and apocalyptic in terms of symbolic dream/vision: Ahuramazda gives Zarathustra a vision of a tree with branches of four metals, which he explains as four periods. M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism I (London: SCM, 1974), pp. 182f., prefers to trace Dn. 2 to Hellenistic Greek sources. Cf. Hengel, op. cit., p. 193; J. J. Collins, VT 25 (1975), pp. 604–608.


32 Hengel, op. cit., p. 185: ‘It is not improbable that Egyptian “apocalypticism”... and its Jewish counterpart had a mutual influence on each other.’
one of passive absorption of alien influence, but of
creative encounter and debate in which the essence
of Israelite faith was reasserted in new forms.

This element of debate is already in evidence in
the encounter with Babylonian mantic wisdom.
Daniel, as we have seen, practises it among but also
in competition with the Babylonian diviners, to
show that it is the God of Israel who is sovereign
over the future and gives real revelation of the
secrets of destiny (2: 27 f., 46). Such a tradition of
debate found one of its most natural expressions in
the Jewish Sibylline oracles, in which an interna-
tionally known pagan form of prophetic oracle
was adopted as a vehicle for a Jewish eschatological
message. The message, drawn from OT prophecy,
of God’s judgment on idolatry and his purpose of
establishing his kingdom, was attributed to the
ancient prophetesses, the Sibyls, largely, it seems,
with an apologetic aim, to gain it a hearing in the
non-Jewish world. Of course the bulk of Jewish
apocalyptic was written for an exclusively Jewish
audience, but behind it lay a close but critical
interaction with its non-Jewish environment such
as the Sibyllines bring to more deliberate expression.
This kind of relationship is hazardous. The ap-
propriation of pagan forms and motifs can become
insufficiently critical and the voice of authentic
Jewish faith can become muffled or stifled. We
cannot suppose that the Jewish apocalyptists never
succumbed to this danger, but on the whole the risk
they took was justified by the achievement of
an expression of prophetic faith which spoke to
their own age.

From its potentially ambiguous relationship with
paganism, apocalyptic emerged in the crisis of
hellenization under Antiochus, not as the expression
of hellenizing syncretism, but as the literature of
the Hasidic movement, which stood for uncom-
promising resistance to pagan influence. How did
apocalyptic succeed in retaining its Jewish authen-
ticity and avoiding the perils of syncretism? This
is the point at which the derivation of apocalyptic
from mantic wisdom fails us, and needs to be
supplemented with the derivation from OT pro-
phesy. The two are after all not entirely dissimilar.
While Jewish practitioners of mantic wisdom were
entering into competition with the Babylonian
fortune-tellers, Second Isaiah, the father of apo-
calyptical prophecy, was also engaged, at a greater
distance, in debate with his pagan counterparts,
exposing the impotence of the Babylonian gods and
their prognosticators (Is. 44: 25; 47: 13) by contrast
with Yahweh’s sovereignty over the future revealed
to his servants the prophets (Is. 44: 26; 46: 9–11).
The apocalyptic heirs of Jewish mantic wisdom
were not prophets, but their concern with God’s
revelation of the future made them students of Old
Testament prophecy, and the more they concerned
themselves with the eschatological future, the more
they sought their inspiration in the prophets. With
the cessation of prophecy in Israel, the apocalyptists
became the interpreters of OT prophecy for their
own age. So while the form of their work was
stamped by its continuity with pagan oracular
literature, its content was frequently inspired by OT
prophecy. Again we can see this in Daniel. His
eschatological dream-interpretation in chapter 2 is,
if not inspired by, at least congruous with the
eschatological hope of the prophets. Taken as the
fundamental idea of the apocalypse of chapters
7—12, it is then filled out by means of the inter-
pretation of OT prophecy. Thus the Hasidic
apocalyptists stood in a tradition with its origins
in mantic wisdom, but filled it with their own dominant
concern to achieve a fresh understanding of
prophecy for their own time. In that sense they
were also the heirs of post-exilic apocalyptic
prophecy.

Enoch and the cosmological wisdom
We have traced the emergence of apocalyptic
between the exile and the Maccabees, between
prophecy and mantic wisdom, in the tradition
which produced our book of Daniel. We must now
look at the emergence of apocalyptic in another
tradition which spans the same period, the Enoch
tradition.

The discovery of the Aramaic fragments of
Enoch at Qumran, now available in J. T. Milik’s
edition, is most important for the study of
apocalyptic origins. With the exception of the
Similitudes (1 En. 37—71), fragments of all sections
of 1 Enoch have been found: the Book of Watchers
(1—36), the Astronomical Book (72—82), the Book
of Dreams (83—90), and the Epistle of Enoch
(91—107). There are also fragments of a hitherto
unknown Book of Giants.

These discoveries clarify the issue of the relative
dates of the parts of the Enoch corpus. The
generally accepted date of the Book of Dreams (165
or 164 BC) may stand, but the pre-Maccabean date
of the Astronomical Book and the Book of Watchers,
hitherto disputed, is now certainly established on
palaeographic evidence. The Astronomical Book
(now known to have been much longer than the abridged
version in Ethiopic Enoch 72—82) cannot
be later than the beginning of the second century.

---

25 On the relative dates, cf. also P. Grelot, RB 82 (1975),
pp. 481–500.
and Milik would date it in the early Persian period.\textsuperscript{36} The Book of Watchers cannot be later than c. 150 BC, and Milik thinks it was written in Palestine in the mid-third century.\textsuperscript{37} He is almost certainly correct in regarding chapters 6—19 as an earlier written source incorporated in the Book of Watchers; these chapters he regards as contemporaneous with or older than the Astronomical Book.\textsuperscript{38} While Milik’s very early dating of the Astronomical Book and chapters 6—19 is uncertain, the important point for our purpose is their relative date as the earliest part of the Enoch corpus. This means that apocalyptic was not originally the dominant concern in the Enoch tradition, for the apocalyptic elements in these sections are not prominent.\textsuperscript{39} The expansion of chapters 6—19 with chapters 1—5, 21—36 to form the Book of Watchers, had the effect of adding much more eschatological content to this part of the tradition. Then in the Maccabean period a full-blown Enoch apocalypse appeared for the first time in the Book of Dreams. So we have a development parallel to that in the Daniel tradition.

Also like the Daniel tradition, the Enoch tradition has its roots in the Jewish encounter with Babylonian culture, but in this case over a wider area than mantic wisdom.\textsuperscript{40} The circles which gave rise to the tradition had an encyclopedic interest in all kinds of wisdom, especially of a cosmological kind: astronomy and the calendar, meteorology, geography, and the mythical geography of paradise. In all these areas of knowledge they were indebted to Babylonian scholarship,\textsuperscript{41} while the picture of Enoch himself as the initiator of civilization, who received heavenly revelations of the secrets of the universe and transmitted them in writing to later generations, is modelled on the antediluvian sages of Mesopotamian myth.\textsuperscript{42}

But, once again as in the Jewish involvement in mantic wisdom, this Jewish encyclopedic wisdom is not only indebted to but also in competition with

\textsuperscript{36} Milik, op. cit., pp. 7–9.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., pp. 22–25, 28.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., pp. 23, 31.

\textsuperscript{39} Eschatological material appears only in 10: 12—11: 2 (which may have been expanded when chs. 6—19 were incorporated in the Book of Watchers); 16: 1; 72: 1; 80.

\textsuperscript{40} The debate with mantic wisdom is reflected in 1 En. 7: 1; 8: 3.


its pagan counterpart. Civilization is represented as an ambiguous phenomenon, with its sinful origins in the rebellion of the fallen angels (1 En. 7: 1; cf. 69: 6–14) as well as an authentic basis in the divine revelations to Enoch.\textsuperscript{43} The true astronomy which Enoch learns from the archangel Uriel is not known to the pagan astrologers who take the stars to be gods (80: 7) and distort the calendar (82: 4f.). The true wisdom which Enoch teaches is inseparably connected with the worship of the true God. So the scientific curiosity of the Enoch circles retains a genuinely Jewish religious core.

Von Rad’s derivation of apocalyptic from wisdom relied heavily on the evidence of 1 Enoch, but he was mistaken to generalize from this evidence. Only in the Enoch tradition was encyclopedic wisdom (as distinct from the mantic wisdom of the Daniel tradition) the context for the development of apocalyptic. Von Rad explained this development simply from the wise men’s thirst for knowledge, which led them to embrace eschatology and the divine ordering of history within the sphere of their wisdom. There may be some truth in this, but the increasing dominance of eschatology in the Enoch tradition demands a more specific explanation. Perhaps the most promising is that the Enoch tradition shows from the start a preoccupation with theodicy, with the origin and judgment of sin. The myth of the Watchers, the fallen angels who corrupted the antediluvian world, is a myth of the origin of evil. Though the Watchers were imprisoned and the antediluvian world annihilated in the flood, the spirits of their offspring the giants became the evil spirits who continue to corrupt the world until the last judgment (15: 8—16: 1). Already in the earliest section of the Book of Watchers (6—19), eschatology emerges in this context: the judgment of the antediluvian world prefigures the final judgment\textsuperscript{44} when the wickedness of men will receive its ultimate punishment (10: 14=4QEn\textsuperscript{31}: 5:1f.) and supernatural evil be entirely eliminated (16: 1; 19: 1). With the expansion of the Book of Watchers, the emphasis on the final judgment increases. Enoch, who in chapters 6—19 was primarily the prophet of God’s judgment on the Watchers at the time of the flood, now becomes, naturally enough, the prophet of the last judgment (1—5). Also, for the first time in Jewish literature, a doctrine of rewards and punishments for all men

\textsuperscript{43} So the Enoch writings do not identify Enoch with an antediluvian sage of pagan myth. They present Enoch in opposition to the pagan heroes and sages, who are identified rather with the fallen angels and their offspring the giants: cf. Milik, op. cit., pp. 29, 313.

\textsuperscript{44} In 10: 20, 22 it is clear that the deluge and the final judgment are assimilated, cf. also the description of the deluge as ‘the first end’ in 93: 4 (Epistle of Enoch).
after death is expounded (22=4QEn*1:22): this too expresses a concern with the problem of evil, the problem of the suffering of the righteous at the hands of the wicked (22: 5-7, 12).

So the Enoch tradition included a strong interest in the problem of evil, which was first expressed in the antediluvian legends of chapters 6—13, but also gave rise to increasing preoccupation with eschatology. This was its point of contact with apocalyptic prophecy, which therefore began to provide the content of Enoch’s prophecies of the end. Apocalyptic prophecy was also much concerned with theodicy, specifically with the problem of Israel’s continued subjection to the Gentile powers, but this specific problem does not (at least explicitly) appear in the Enoch tradition until the Book of Dreams, in which the tradition at last related itself to the prophetic concern with Israelite salvation history. The special mark of the Enoch tradition, linked as it was to prehistoric universal history, was its treatment of theodicy as a cosmic problem. This proved a reinforcement of a general tendency in apocalyptic to set the problem of God’s dealings with Israel within a context of universal history and cosmic eschatology.

The pre-Maccabean Enoch tradition left a double legacy. On the one hand, much as in the Daniel tradition, the tradition became a vehicle for the interpretation of OT prophecy. In the Hasidic Book of Dreams, and the (probably later) Epistle of Enoch, we have classic expressions of the apocalyptic view of history and eschatology, inspired by Old Testament prophetic faith. On the other hand, however, Enoch’s journeys in angelic company through the heavens and the realms of the dead, discovering the secrets of the universe, are the first examples of another aspect of later apocalyptic literature. We need to distinguish two types of apocalypse. There are those which reveal the secrets of history: the divine plan of history and the coming triumph of God at the end of history. These could be called ‘eschatological apocalypses’. But there are also apocalypses which reveal the mysteries of the cosmos: the contents of heaven and earth, or the seven heavens, or heaven and hell. These could be called ‘cosmological apocalypses’.

The Hasidic apocalypses—Daniel, the Enochic Book of Dreams, the Testament of Moses—are eschatological apocalypses. But the cosmological interest did not die out, and was by no means divorced from eschatological apocalyptic, since the secrets of heaven were believed to include the pre-existing realities of the eschatological age. Cosmology really came into its own in the late Hellenistic apocalypses of the Christian era, such as 2 Enoch and 3 Baruch, in which the eschatological hope has disappeared and apocalyptic is well on the way to the pure cosmology of gnosticism. As the revelation of cosmic secrets the apocalypse became the typical literary form of Gnosticism.

So we see once more how apocalyptic, from its origins in the Jewish encounter with the Gentile cultures of the diaspora, retained a somewhat ambiguous position between Jewish and Gentile religion. Its continuity with OT prophetic faith cannot be taken for granted. Each apocalypticist had to achieve this continuity by creative reinterpretation of prophecy in apocalyptic forms. His success depended on the vitality of his eschatological hope inspired by the prophets, and when this hope faded apocalyptic easily degenerated into cosmological speculation of a fundamentally pagan character.

**Apocalyptic as interpretation of prophecy**

The continuity between prophecy and apocalyptic occurred when the apocalyptists assumed the role of interpreters of prophecy. They did not always do this nor always to the same extent, for as we have seen there are other aspects of apocalyptic literature, but this was the dominant aspect of the major tradition of eschatological apocalypses. In this tradition the transcendent eschatology of post-exilic prophecy was taken up and further developed.

46 On this passage see Milik, op. cit., 219. In view of the mention of Cain’s descendants (22: 7), ‘the souls of all the children of men’ (22: 3) must mean all men, not just all Israelites, as R. H. Charles thought: The Book of Enoch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 46. So a doctrine of general rewards and punishments after death was already developed in pre-Maccabean apocalyptic tradition. This is a decisive refutation of the thesis of G. W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr, Resurrection, immortality, and eternal life in intertestamental Judaism (Harvard Theological Studies 26: Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), who argues that a doctrine of rewards and punishments after death developed at the time of the Antiochian crisis with reference only to the martyrs and persecutors of the time. His discussion of 1 Enoch 22 assumes a post-Maccabean date (p. 134 n. 15, p. 143), which the QEn fragments now render impossible. 1 Enoch 22 (cf. also 10: 14; 27: 2f.) is therefore of crucial importance for the origins of Jewish beliefs about the after-life, as is the fact that the Enoch tradition, unlike other apocalyptic traditions, never expresses belief in bodily resurrection, but rather the doctrine of spiritual immortality which is also found in Jubilees and probably at Qumran. This is a striking instance of the continuing distinct identity of the various apocalyptic traditions.


48 For the date of the Testament of Moses, see n. 52 below.
in a conscious process of reinterpreting the prophets for the apocalypticists' own age.

The apocalypticists understood themselves not as prophets but as inspired interpreters of prophecy.\(^49\) The process of reinterpreting prophecy was already a prominent feature of post-exilic prophecy, but the post-exilic prophets were still prophets in their own right. The apocalypticists, however, lived in an age when the prophetic spirit was quenched (1 Maccabees 4:46). Their inspiration was not a source of new prophetic revelation, but of interpretation of the already given revelation. There is therefore a decisive difference of self-understanding between prophets and apocalypticists, which implies also a difference of authority. The authority of the apocalypticists' message is only derivative from that of the prophets.

So when Jewish writers with a background in the mantic wisdom of the Daniel tradition or the cosmological wisdom of the Enoch tradition inherited the legacy of post-exilic prophecy, they did so as non-prophetic interpreters of the prophetic tradition which had come to an end. There may of course have been other groups without a wisdom or diaspora background who stood in greater sociological continuity with the prophetic tradition, maintaining the eschatological hope of the disciples of Second Isaiah and influencing the Enoch and Daniel traditions. The strong influence of Isaiah 40—46 on the apocalyptic of the Book of Watchers\(^6\) and Daniel\(^1\) is suggestive in this respect. To such a group we might attribute the eventual compilation of the book of Isaiah. But even in such a tradition a theological discontinuity occurred (perhaps gradually) when consciousness of independent prophetic vocation disappeared.

The puzzling apocalyptic device of pseudonymity is at least partly connected with this apocalyptic role of interpreting prophecy. The Testament of Moses, which may well be a Hasidic work contemporary with Daniel,\(^5\) is the least problematic example: as an interpretation of Deuteronomy 31—34 it puts its interpretation of Moses' prophecies into Moses' mouth. Similarly Daniel 7—12 has been attributed to Daniel because its fundamental idea is the scheme of the four empires followed by the eschatological kingdom, which derives from Daniel's prediction in chapter 2. Of course the apocalypticist does not interpret only the prophecies of his pseudonym, but the pseudonym indicates his primary inspiration.\(^5\) Pseudonymity is therefore a device expressing the apocalypticist's consciousness that the age of prophecy has passed: not in the sense that he fraudulently wishes to pass off his work as belonging to the age of prophecy, but in the sense that he thereby acknowledges his work to be mere interpretation of the revelation given in the prophetic age. Similarly the vaticinium ex eventu are not a fraudulent device to give spurious legitimation to the apocalypticist's work; they are his interpretation of the prophecies of the past, rewritten in the light of their fulfilment in order to show how they have been fulfilled and what still remains to be fulfilled. In pseudonymity and vaticinium ex eventu the apocalypticists adopted a form which was common in pagan oracular literature and made it a vehicle of their self-understanding as interpreters of Israelite prophecy.

II. THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

The problem of theological evaluation

Discussion of the origins of apocalyptic cannot really be isolated from a theological evaluation of apocalyptic. Implicitly or explicitly, much recent discussion has involved the judgment that apocalyptic is a more or less degenerate form of Israelite faith. Von Rad, for example, was clearly led to deny the connexion between prophecy and apocalyptic because he believed the apocalyptic understanding of history compared so badly with the prophetic, and even Hanson, despite his strong argument for the continuity of prophecy and apocalyptic, still treats pre-exilic prophecy as the high point of OT theology, from which apocalyptic is a regrettable decline, however much it may be an understandable development in post-exilic circumstances.

Moreover, the general theological outlook of the scholar can determine which new theological developments in the rise of apocalyptic he selects as the really significant ones. An older generation of scholars regarded the development of Jewish belief in life after death as a major landmark in the

\(^{49}\) This is argued most recently by Willi-Plein, art. cit. Cf. also D. S. Russell, The method and message of Jewish apocalyptic (London: SCM, 1964), ch. 7.

\(^{50}\) See n. 46 above.


\(^{52}\) There are two possible dates for the Testament of Moses (also called Assumption of Moses): c. 165 BC (with ch. 6 as a later interpolation) or early first century AD. The former is supported by J. Licht, JJS 12 (1961), pp. 95—103; Nickelsburg, op. cit., pp. 43—45, and in Studies on the Testament of Moses, ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg (Cambridge, Mass.; SBL, 1973), pp. 33—37; J. A. Goldstein in ibid., pp. 44—47.

\(^{53}\) In later apocalypses, such as those attributed to Ezra and Baruch, there is no longer any question of interpreting the pseudonym's prophecies. The authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch doubtless chose their pseudonyms because they identified with the historical situation of Ezra and Baruch after the fall of Jerusalem.
history of revelation, and so, however unsympathetic they may have been to other aspects of apocalyptic, this feature alone guaranteed the positive importance of apocalyptic. Recent scholarship in this area has paid remarkably little attention to this central apocalyptic belief, so that von Rad barely mentions it, and Hanson can argue that apocalyptic eschatology was in all essentials already developed before the introduction of a doctrine of immortality or resurrection.

Almost all modern attempts either to denigrate or to rehabilitate apocalyptic focus on its attitude to history. So discussion of Wolfhart Pannenberg’s evaluation of apocalyptic in his systematic theology has centred on whether he is correct in supposing that apocalyptic gave real significance to universal history as the sphere of God’s self-revelation.44

To a large extent recent discussion has rightly concentrated on the apocalyptic view of history in relation to eschatology, since this takes us to the heart of the problem. The real issue is whether theology may seek the ultimate meaning of human life and the ultimate achievement of God’s purpose beyond the history of this world. For many modern scholars, pre-exilic prophecy is the OT theological norm partly because it did not do this, while apocalyptic is a serious decline from the norm, even a relapse into paganism, because it did. Thus for Hanson the transcendent eschatology of apocalyptic prophecy is ‘myth’ not merely in the literary sense (which is undeniable) but in a sense akin to Bultmann’s. In their literal expectation that Yahweh was going to establish his kingdom by direct personal intervention rather than human agency, and in a way which involved radical transformation of this world beyond the possibilities of ordinary history, the disciples of Second Isaiah were mistaken. Such language of divine intervention and cosmic transformation could only be valid as a mythical way of illuminating the possibilities of ordinary history. So when the apocalyptists did not translate it into pragmatic political policies but took it to mean that ordinary history would really be transcended with the arrival of salvation, they were engaged in an illusory flight from the real world of history into the timeless realm of myth.

For the Christian the validity of transcendent eschatology is in the last resort a problem of NT theology. While the apocalyptic hope was certainly modified by the historical event of Jesus Christ, the NT interprets this event as presupposing and even endorsing a transcendent eschatology of divine intervention, cosmic transformation and the transcendence of death. The final achievement of God’s purposes and the ultimate fulfilment of humanity in Christ really do lie beyond the possibilities of this world of sin and suffering and death, in a new creation such as apocalyptic prophecy first began to hope for on the strength of the promises of God. Of course the new creation is the transformation of this world—this distinguishes Christian eschatology from the cosmological dualism of Gnosticism—but it transcends the possibilities of ordinary history. So it seems that a serious commitment to the NT revelation requires us to see apocalyptic eschatology as essentially a theological advance in which God’s promises through the prophets were stirring his people to hope for a greater salvation than their forefathers had guessed. This must be the broad context for our evaluation of apocalyptic.

It still remains, however, a serious question whether the apocalyptists in fact abandoned the prophetic faith in God’s action within history, and the prophetic demand for man’s free and responsible action in history. Have they in fact substituted transcendent eschatology for history, so that history itself is emptied of meaning, as a sphere in which God cannot act salvifically and man can only wait for the End? To answer this we must look more closely at the apocalyptic attitude to history in the context of the post-exilic experience of history to which it was a response.

The negative view of history

The apocalyptic attitude to history is commonly characterized by a series of derogatory terms: radically dualistic, pessimistic, deterministic. The apocalyptists are said to work with an absolute contrast between this age and the age to come. This age is irredeemably evil, under the domination of the powers of evil, and therefore all hope is placed on God’s coming intervention at the end, when he will annihilate the present evil age and inaugurate the eternal future age. In the history of this age God does not act salvifically; he has given up his people to suffering and evil, and reserved the blessings of life in his kingdom wholly for the age to come. So the apocalyptists were indifferent to the real business of living in this world, and indulged their fantasy in mere escapist speculation about a transcendent world to come. It is true that they engage in elaborate schematizations of history and emphasize God’s predetermination of history, but this is purely to show that God is bringing history to an end, while their extreme determinism again has the effect of leaving man with no motive for responsible involvement in the course of history.

This is the wholly negative view of history commonly attributed to the apocalyptists. Like so much that is said about apocalyptic, it suffers from hasty generalization. It would not be difficult to make it appear plausible by quoting a secondhand collection of proof-texts, and especially by preferring later to earlier apocalyptic, and emphasizing texts which are closer to Iranian dualism at the expense of those most influenced by OT prophecy. We have seen that the apocalyptic enterprise, with its potentially ambiguous relationship to its non-Jewish environment, was hazardous, and the above sketch has at least the merit of illustrating the hazard. But it does no justice to the apocalyptists to draw the extreme conclusions from a selection of the evidence.

The apocalyptic view of history must be understood from its starting-point in the post-exilic experience of history, in which the returned exiles remained under the domination of the Gentile powers and God's promises, through Second Isaiah and Ezekiel, of glorious restoration remained unfulfilled. Those who now denigrate apocalyptic rarely face the mounting problem of theodicy which the apocalyptists faced in the extended period of contradiction between the promises of God and the continued subjection and suffering of his people. The apocalyptists refused the spurious solution of a realized eschatology accommodated to Gentile rule and the cult of the second temple: they insisted on believing that the prophecies meant what they said, and undertook the role of Third Isaiah's watchmen, who are to 'put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem' (Is. 63: 6f.).

So the apocalyptists did not begin with a dogma about the nature of history: that God cannot act in the history of this world. They began with an empirical observation of God's relative absence from history since the fall of Jerusalem. It did not appear to them that he had been active on behalf of his people during this period. Consequently the common apocalyptic view, which goes back to Third Isaiah, was that the exile had never really ended. Daniel 9 therefore multiplies Jeremiah's seventy years of exile into seventy weeks of years to cover the whole period since 586. It was of the history of this period that the apocalyptists took a negative view. Daniel's four world empires are not a scheme embracing all history, but specifically history since Nebuchadnezzar and the exile. The Enochic Book of Dreams contains an allegorical account of the whole history of the world since creation (1 En. 85—90), but again the negative view characterizes only the period since the end of the monarchy. In this period (89: 59—90: 17) God is represented as no longer ruling Israel directly but delegating his rule to seventy 'shepherds', angelic beings who rule Israel successively during the period from the fall of Jerusalem to the end. The number seventy indicates that the author is reinterpreting the seventy years of exile of Jeremiah's prophecy. God in the vision commands the shepherds to punish the apostates of Israel by means of the pagan nations which oppress Israel during the whole of the post-exilic period, but in fact they exceed their commission and allow the righteous also to be oppressed and killed. God is represented as repeatedly and deliberately refusing to intervene in this situation. Evidently this is a theologically somewhat crude attempt to explain what the author felt to be God's absence from the history of his people since the exile. Later the idea of angelic delegates developed into the idea of Israel's being under the dominion of Satan during this period. It was the 'age of wrath' (CD 1: 5) in which Satan was 'unleashed against Israel' (CD 4: 12).

This view of post-exilic history came to a head in the crisis of Jewish faith under Antiochus Epiphanes. This was the climax of the age of wrath, 'a time of trouble such as had never been' (Dn. 12: 1; cf. Testament of Moses 8: 1). The Hasidic movement, which produced the apocalypses of this period, was therefore a movement of repentance and suffering intercession, seeking the promised divine intervention to deliver the faithful. This was not a retreat from history but precisely an expectation that God would vindicate his people and his justice on the stage of history, though in such a way as to transcend ordinary historical possibility.

The apocalyptists faced not only the absence of God's saving activity from history since the exile, but also the silence of God in the period since the cessation of prophecy. 'There is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long' (Ps. 74: 9). Behind apocalyptic lurks a fear that God had simply abandoned his people, and against that fear apocalyptic is a tremendous reassertion of the prophetic faith. In apocalyptic God's silence was broken by the renewal of his past promises in their relevance to the present. God had not abandoned his people; his promised salvation was coming. Sometimes, perhaps, the apocalyptists broke God's silence with speculations of their own, forced too much contemporary relevance out of

---

the prophecies, answered too precisely the unanswerable ‘how long?’ But their work ensured the survival of hope.

It is true that the act of divine deliverance for which the apocalyptists looked far transcended the great events of the salvation-history of the past. So the image of a new exodus is less common in apocalyptic than the image of a new creation. In the Enoch literature the dominant type of the end is the deluge, in which a whole universe was destroyed.\(^\text{48}\) This universalization of eschatology resulted in part from the historical involvement of post-exilic Israel in the destiny of the world-empires, and in part from the pressure of a universal theodicy which looked for the triumph of God over every form of evil: we saw how this developed in the Enochic Book of Watchers. The apocalyptists dared to believe that even death would be conquered. So they expected an act of God within the temporal future which would so far transcend his acts in past history that they could only call it new creation.

This is the expectation which gives rise to the temporal dualism of apocalyptic: its distinction between this age and the age to come which follows the new creation. The terminology of the two ages does not emerge in apocalyptic until a late stage, becoming popular only in the first century AD, as the NT evidences.\(^\text{49}\) This is significant because it shows that apocalyptic did not begin from a dualistic dogma, but from an experience of history. For this reason the contrast between the two ages is never absolute. There is no denial that God has been active in the past history of Israel, and this can even be emphasized, as in the Enochic Book of Dreams. His coming eschatological intervention transcends, but is not wholly different in kind from his past acts.\(^\text{51}\) Even in late apocalyptic where the dualism is sharpened, this world remains God's world. It is not totally given over to the powers of evil. So the temporal dualism of apocalyptic is not cosmological dualism.

Apocalyptic eschatology does not therefore arise from an abandonment of the prophetic faith that God acts in history. It would be better to say that the apocalyptists held onto this faith in the face of the doubt which the universal experience of history provokes. Because they believed he had acted in the past they hoped for his action in the future. But they saw the world in terms which demanded the hope of total transformation as the only appropriate expression of faith in a God who rules history.

In a sense, then, the prophetic faith could only survive the post-exilic experience by giving birth to eschatological faith. We may be grateful for that. Nevertheless, there was surely a danger. The apocalyptists might be so intent on eschatology that they could forget that God does act in history before the end. They might despair of history altogether, and the experience of God's absence from their own history might become the dogma of his absence from all history.

So the Hasidic apocalyptists have often been contrasted with their contemporaries the Maccabees. The former are said to have deduced from their eschatology a quietist attitude of waiting for divine intervention, so that they held aloof from the Maccabean revolt and were unable to see the hand of God in the Maccabean victories. We can see how this might have happened, but it is not really clear that it did. It is true that the book of Daniel refers to the Maccabees only as 'a little help' for the martyred Hasidim (11: 34), but this need not be as disparaging a reference as is often thought. More probably it indicates that Daniel was written when the Maccabean resistance had only just begun. The Enochic Book of Dreams, written a year or so later, regards the Maccabean victories as the beginning of God's eschatological victory and Judas Maccabaeus as a practically messianic agent of God's eschatological intervention (1 En. 90: 8–18). The truth would seem to be that the apocalyptic hope mobilized support for the Maccabees. Of course the Maccabean revolt did not turn out actually to be the messianic war, though it was a notable deliverance, but it does not follow that the apocalyptists must have concluded that their expectations of it were entirely misplaced. The fact that the Hasidic apocalypses were preserved without modification, and Daniel was even canonized, suggests otherwise. An historical event like the Maccabean deliverance could be regarded as a provisional realization of God's promises, an act of God within history which anticipated and kept alive the hope of the greater deliverance still to come. Transcendent eschatology need not empty history of divine action; it can on the contrary
facilitate the recognition and interpretation of God’s action in history.

Again I do not wish to say that this was always the case. In this as in other respects the apocalyptists were walking a theological tightrope, and there was no guarantee that they would keep their balance, other than their study of OT prophecy. It seems that in the end they did not. The overwhelming disappointment of Jewish apocalyptic hopes in the period AD 70–140 proved too great for the healthy survival of the apocalyptic hope. The great apocalypses of that period—the Apocalypse of Abraham, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra—are the last great eschatological apocalypses of Judaism. In 4 Ezra in particular we can see the strain under which the apocalyptic theodicy was labouring. There is a deepening pessimism, an almost totally negative evaluation of the whole history of this age from Adam to the end, a stark dualism of the two ages. This apocalyptist does not surrender his eschatological faith, but we can see how short a step it now was to cosmological dualism and outright gnosticism.

Apocalyptic eschatology at its best spoke to a contemporary need. It was not identical with the faith of the pre-exilic prophets, but nor was the experience of history in which it belonged. Perhaps it is true that transcendent eschatology was gained at the cost of a certain loss of awareness of the significance of present history. This loss was recovered in the NT revelation, but it is worth noticing that it was recovered in a way which so far from repudiating the apocalyptic development, took it for granted. The significance of present history was guaranteed for the NT writers by their belief that in the death and resurrection of Jesus God had already acted in an eschatological way, the new age had invaded the old, the new creation was under way, and the interim period of the overlap of the ages was filled with the eschatological mission of the church. So it is true that the apocalyptic tendency to a negative evaluation of history is not to be found in NT thought, but this is not because the NT church reverted to a pre-apocalyptic kind of salvation history. It is because the apocalyptic expectation had entered a phase of decisive fulfilment.

Apocalyptic determinism
We have still to answer the charge of determinism against the apocalyptic view of history. Von Rad made this a major reason for denying apocalyptic an origin in prophecy. He correctly stresses the apocalyptic doctrine that God has determined the whole course of the world’s history from the beginning: ‘All things which should be in this world, he foresaw and lo! it is brought forth’ (Testament of Moses 12: 5). This is the presupposition of the comprehensive reviews of future history and of the conviction that the end can come only at the time which God has appointed (Dn. 11: 27, 29, 35f.). It is the secrets of the divine plan, written on the heavenly tablets of destiny, which the apocalyptist is privileged to know: ‘what is inscribed in the book of truth’ (Dn. 10: 21); ‘the heavenly tablets . . ., the book of all the deeds of mankind, and of all the children of flesh that shall be upon the earth to the remotest generations’ (1 En. 81: 2). Von Rad correctly points out that this differs from the prophetic conception, in which Yahweh makes continually fresh decisions, and issues threats and promises which are conditional on men’s sin or repentance (Je. 18: 7–10). Granted that the apocalyptists share the prophetic concern for Yahweh’s sovereignty over history, is their deterministic way of expressing it a denial of human freedom and responsibility and so a retreat from human involvement in history?

Determinism certainly belongs more obviously in the context of apocalyptic’s continuity with the pagan oracles than it does in the context of its debt to OT prophecy. Pagan divination was generally wedded to a notion of unalterable fate. There are no threats or promises calling for an ethical response, simply the revelation that what will be will be. The forms of oracle which apocalyptic shares with its pagan neighbours, including the vaticinia ex eventu, tend to reflect this outlook. Their popularity in the centuries when apocalyptic flourished may partly reflect the fact that the nations of the Near East had lost the power to shape their political future. A genre which made the seer and his audience mere spectators of the course of history corresponded to the mood of the time.

Again we can see the hazardous nature of apocalyptic’s relationship to its environment. In its attempt to express in this context the sovereignty of the personal and ethical God of Israel there was the risk of confusing him with fate. The avoidance of this risk depended on the apocalyptists’ ability to place alongside a passage like Daniel 11, with its deterministic emphasis, a passage like Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9, with its conviction that God judges his people for their rebellion and responds in mercy to their repentance and to the prayers of intercessors like Daniel. It is no solution to this paradox to excise Daniel’s prayer as later inter-
potation,\textsuperscript{64} for the conviction that God would respond to repentance and intercession was at the heart of the Hasidic movement and appears in all their apocalypses. All their pseudonymous seers were noted intercessors: Daniel (Dn. 9; Testament of Moses 4: 1–4), Enoch (I Enoch 83ff.), Moses (Testament of Moses 11: 14, 17; 12: 6).\textsuperscript{65} Belief in the divine determination of all events clearly exists in tension with the conviction that the covenant God responds to his people’s free and responsible action. The former does not result in fatalism because it is only one side of the apocalyptic faith.

Positively, the apocalyptic belief in divine determination of history functioned to support eschatological faith in the face of the negative experience of history. In an age when it was tempting to believe that God had simply abandoned the historical process and with it his promises to his people, the need was for a strong assertion of his sovereignty. This functions, first, to relativize the power of the pagan empires in stressing that it is God ‘who removes kings and sets up kings’ (Dn. 2: 21). So his purpose of giving the kingdom to his own people is assured of success at its appointed time. Secondly, the apocalyptic belief emphasizes that in the last resort the promise of eschatological salvation is unconditional, as it was also for the prophets. For their sins, Moses predicts, Israel ‘will be punished by the nations with many torments. Yet it is not possible that he should wholly destroy and forsake them. For God has gone forth, who foresaw all things from the beginning, and his covenant is established by the oath’ (Testament of Moses 12: 11–13). Similarly Second Isaiah had met the despair of the exiles with the message of Yahweh’s sovereignty over the nations and his irrevocable purpose of salvation for his people.

So the determinism of apocalyptic must be judged not as an abstract philosophy, but by its function within its context, which is precisely to counter fatalistic despair, to lay open to men the eschatological future, and call men to appropriate action.

In terms of that function the gulf between the prophetic and apocalyptic concepts of history is by no means so unbridgeable as von Rad assumes.\textsuperscript{66}

**Apocalyptic and the canon**

We have defended the apocalyptists as interpreters of prophecy for their own generation. A literature as varied as the apocalyptic literature must be evaluated with discrimination rather than generalization, and we have recognized the theological hazards which the apocalyptists did not always avoid. But they lived in an age whose dominant mood encouraged just such a flight from historical reality as eventually issued in gnosticism. So if their hold on the full reality of OT salvation history seems sometimes precarious we should not be surprised. It is more surprising that they kept hold of it as well as they did. They faced the problem of believing in the God of the prophets against the evidence of history. Their transcendent eschatology was both a solution, in that the problem of history demands a solution which transcends history, and an aggravation of the problem, as apocalyptic hopes remained unfulfilled. But with NT hindsight, we can see that this was their theological role between the Testaments: to keep Jewish faith wide open to the future in hope.

The apocalyptists occupy an essentially intertestamental position. They interpret the prophets to an age when prophecy has ceased but fulfilment is still awaited. They understand their inspiration and their authority to be of a secondary, derivative kind. Their transcendent eschatology, which is apocalyptic’s theological centre, is already developed in post-exilic prophecy,\textsuperscript{67} and the apocalyptists’ role is to intensify it and enable their own generation to live by it. It was by means of apocalyptic that the OT retained its eschatological orientation through the intertestamental age, in this sense apocalyptic is the bridge between the Testaments, and it corresponds to the character of apocalyptic that it is represented, but not extensively represented, in the OT canon.

\textsuperscript{64} As von Rad does: *Old Testament theology* II, p. 309 n. 19.

\textsuperscript{65} On the significance of this theme in Testament of Moses, A. B. Kolenkow in *Studies on the Testament of Moses*, pp. 72–74.

\textsuperscript{66} *Wisdom in Israel*, p. 270.

\textsuperscript{67} Probably even resurrection: Is. 26: 19. But the development of this doctrine remains a very significant development in the intertestamental period.