

^{the} **Hermeneutical** *Spiral*

**A
Comprehensive
Introduction
to
Biblical
Interpretation**

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today. Indeed, a careful reading of the characteristics of prophecy above shows the applicability of these themes to our own day. The necessity of dwelling within God's New Covenant, the judgment warnings and salvation promises, all speak to the modern Christian with the same clarion voice they held for the Israelites. The condemnation of social injustice and immorality are as needed today as then.

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Apocalyptic

FOR MOST PEOPLE APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE REPRESENTS ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING and yet most mystifying portions of Scripture. When studying Daniel or Revelation readers feel they have been transported into a fairy-tale world of myths and monsters, a Tolkien-type panorama of fantasy. The unreality of the symbols and the constant shifting from one mysterious scene to another is greatly confusing. At the same time, the text portrays the war in heaven and on earth, between good and evil, between the children of God and the forces of Satan. The reader is caught between the literal and the symbolic, not knowing quite how to approach these works. Once we know how to handle the locusts and demonic hordes, the many-horned goats and fearsome beasts, apocalyptic is a fascinating and pervasive vehicle for the presentation of theological truth.

Like narrative (chap. six), apocalyptic cuts across the testaments. In the Old Testament we would note Daniel and Zechariah as well as the visions of Ezekiel (chaps. 37—39) and perhaps Isaiah 24—27 or the locust plague of Joel. From the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are 1 Enoch, Slavonic Enoch (2 Enoch), Hebrew Enoch (3 Enoch), Jubilees, Assumption of Moses, the Ascension of Isaiah, 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch, 4 Ezra, Psalms of Solomon, Testament of Abraham, Apocalypse of Abraham, portions of the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs (Levi, Naphtali, perhaps Joseph), Life of Adam and Eve (Apocalypse of Moses), Shepherd of Hermas, Sibylline Oracles (Books III-V) and several of the Qumran scrolls (such as the War Scroll, An Angelic Liturgy, the Testament of Amram). New Testament apocalyptic might include the Olivet Discourse (Mk 13 and parallels); 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Thessalonians 2; 2 Peter 3; Jude and the book of Revelation. This material covers a period extending from the seventh century B.C. to the second century A.D. The extracanonical literature is essential for a proper perspective and control in studying the canonical material.

Formal Features and Characteristics

The term *apocalypse* was not used of this body of literature until it appeared in the book of Revelation (1:1), and it was not until the second century that the term regularly appeared for this genre. The word meant to "reveal" or uncover knowledge previously

aspects: it is both a genre, or type, of literature and a set of concepts found in texts that belong to this genre.¹ Therefore, I will separate specific formal features related to the style and content of the texts and more general characteristics that describe the mindset that led to the production of those texts.

A preliminary definition (adapting those of Rowland, Collins and Aune) draws together these features and introduces an overall perspective on the apocalyptic genre:

Apocalyptic entails the revelatory communication of heavenly secrets by an otherworldly being to a seer who presents the visions in a narrative framework; the vision guide readers into a transcendent reality that takes precedence over the current situation and encourages readers to persevere in the midst of their trials. The vision reverse normal experience by making the heavenly mysteries the real world and depicting the present crisis as a temporary, illusory situation. This is achieved via God transforming this world for the faithful. (See Hanson 1983:25-26)

1. The Formal Features. Scholars have vigorously debated the formal features of the apocalyptic genre. Sanders sums up the current debate: (1) many of these features (symbols, cycles) also can be found in nonapocalyptic works; (2) many so-called apocalyptic do not contain a majority of these traits; (3) many of the lists fail to contain other elements commonly found in apocalyptic works (1983:447-59). Recent scholars overcome this difficulty in two ways, first by separating "genre" (considering a work as a whole and "form" (dealing with small discourse units within a work) and second by distinguishing apocalypticism (the sociological situation behind the movement), apocalyptic eschatology (the major theme of the movement) and apocalypse (the literary genre).

The most important of the distinctions is between form and genre. Few of the works listed above are entirely apocalyptic. Large portions of the biblical books, like Daniel or Zechariah, are prophetic, and the same is true of intertestamental literature like 1 Enoch (chaps. 91-104 are not) and Jubilees (it moves back and forth between general discourses and apocalyptic). The book of Revelation contains the letters to the seven churches (chaps. 2-3) in general epistolary style, and Ladd calls it "prophetic-apocalyptic" in tenor (1957:192-200).

It can be easily shown that there are almost as many variations in apocalyptic style as there are apocalyptic works. Yet this is hardly a new phenomenon. I have noted the problem in virtually every genre discussed above, and it is not a final deterrent to general categories (see Osborne 1983). Therefore, I will concentrate more on "form" and note that the apocalyptic "genre" depends upon the accumulation of formal categories in small units within the larger whole. There is no such thing as a pure genre, and the attempt to elucidate such on the part of Sanders and others is doomed to failure.²

a. A *revelatory communication* is perhaps the most common trait. In the past it was often asserted that prophecy is characterized by a direct audition and apocalyptic by vision or dream. While this is generally adequate it is not true in every instance. Zechariah 1-6 is a series of visions, while 9-14 comprises a series of oracles (see also Is 24-27; Joel 1-2). The calls of Isaiah (chaps. 6) and Ezekiel (chaps. 2) are in the form of vision.

locust plague (compare Joel 1-2, without a vision). Nevertheless, a revelatory situation is behind nearly every apocalyptic work, including the intertestamental ones. The major exceptions are New Testament passages like the Olivet Discourse (Mk 13 and parallels) and the epistolary material (2 Thess 2; 2 Pet 3), though their stature as apocalyptic is debated. These are narrative units that employ apocalyptic style and themes. Apocalypse per se employs visions (see the book of Revelation).

Another misconception is that apocalyptic literature had a secondary authority, since prophets had a direct communication from God while apocalyptists had only visions and normally needed an angelic interpreter. However, this ignores the fact that both vision and angel were directly from God and were part of a supernatural communication of the divine will.³ In short, the vision is a basic trait but by itself cannot point to apocalyptic.

b. *Angelic mediation* is part of the revelatory medium. Given the symbolism employed in the vision, the writer is understandably confused about the meaning of the communication. Often an angelic guide conducts the seer on a "tour," as in Ezekiel 40 (the measurement of the temple; compare Rev 11:1-2), Zechariah 1 (the four horns), the Apocalypse of Abraham 10 (the angel Jael takes the patriarch to heaven) or Revelation 17 (the judgment of the great harlot). More frequently the angel interprets the vision or dream, as in the night visions of Zechariah 1-6, the visions of the four beasts and little horn in Daniel 7-8, the explanation of the heavenly Jerusalem in 4 Esdras 7, or the vision of the heavenly martyrs in Revelation 7.

Some late Jewish works like 1 Enoch, Jubilees and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs also employ the medium of the "heavenly tablets," secret books given to the great figures of the past like Enoch, Jacob or Moses and now disclosed to the seer himself. These tablets record the divine plan for the ages and have a future orientation, preparing the faithful for what is to come. As Russell says, the divine revelations come via vision, angelic mediation or on "heavenly tablets" and disclose the long-hidden truths regarding past, present and future for the "last days" (1964:108-9). This disclosure was proof that indeed the End was near.⁴

c. *Discourse cycles* demonstrate the stylized literary form of apocalyptic (see Koch 1972:24). While the prophetic writings originally were spoken oracles, apocalyptic was literature from the start. The apocalyptist is told to "write" down his visions (compare Rev 1:19) and therefore the formal elements have even greater significance. In one sense this formal category encompasses the other traits, for the form is usually a series of dialogues within the visions between the seer and the angelic interpreter or God himself. Often there is an introductory formula such as "I looked and behold" (Dan 7:1; 8:2; Zech 1:18; 2:1; 5:17) followed by a series of questions asked by the mediator (Zech 4:2; 5:2) or by the seer (Dan 7:16; Zech 1:19; 5:6; Rev 17:6). The fear and turmoil of the seer is graphically described: "The recipient is beside himself; he falls to the ground, his trance sometimes being heightened to the point of unconsciousness" (Koch 1972:25; compare Dan 10:7-9; 2 Baruch 21:26; 4 Ezra 5:14; Rev 1:17; 4:2). God or the angel then calms the fears and explains the phenomena.

Scholars have too often neglected the literary effects and rhetorical techniques. While

truths in order to bring the reader into line with God's control of history is a uniform pattern. Hartman speaks of the importance of noting the place of the smaller units in the whole message of the work (1983:333-67). For instance, the appearance of the angelic mediator has the "illocutionary" function (a deeper message behind the surface) of linking heaven and earth and making the communication of divine realities possible. Moreover, the progression of visions has some importance, and they relate to one another in important literary ways. The book of Revelation is a carefully conceived work with a distinct structure and each element moves the reader forward in developing the basic apocalyptic thesis of God's sovereign control over history.

d. *Ethical discourse* often clarifies the purposes of the visions for the readers. Previously scholars often stated that apocalyptic was not interested in the present age and had a paucity of parenthesis or exhortation. While the prophets warned and castigated Israel, the apocalyptists comforted and confirmed the saints (Morris 1972:58-61). While this distinction is basically correct, and while there are few condemnations of the saints (though see Testament of Benjamin 10:3; Rev 2—3), we dare not press this too far. There are constant ethical pronouncements, but they are more positive, calling the people of God to endurance and righteous living in light of the visions (compare Rev 16:15; 22:7). In fact, Charles could call apocalyptic "essentially ethical" in the sense that the saints were constantly called to an awareness of and faith in the God who controls present and future (1913:2:16). Charles has certainly overstated the case; Russell more correctly notes that "eschatology, not ethics, was their consuming interest" but that the two were not mutually exclusive (1964:101). "On the contrary they recognized the moral demands of God here and now. . . . Their one aim was to obey God and to carry out his commandments (cf. Dan 9:10f, 14, etc.)." In one sense the book of Revelation as a whole centers on the need of the saints to be "overcomers" (note the conclusion of each of the seven letters) rather than "cowardly" (21:8).

e. *Esoteric symbolism* is the most visible quality of apocalyptic literature. The source of these symbols also differs from the prophets and other biblical writers. The latter drew their symbols or metaphors from the experiential world, such as locusts, horses, salt, lamps. The apocalyptists would do so as well but added many symbols from the world of fantasy or myth, such as many-headed beasts, dragons, locusts with the tails of scorpions. However, these symbols were drawn from the times of the writers and many quickly became conventional, for example, animals stood for men, cosmic signs for supernatural phenomena and numbers for God's control of history.

The significance of numerology is particularly striking. In all apocalypses the numbers three, four, seven, ten, twelve and seventy predominate. For instance, the book of Revelation is dominated by the number seven and its multiples. At times this can be frustrating, such as in the mystifying use of 666 in Revelation 13:18 (for a survey of the possibilities see Mounce 1977:263-65). We will not know the meaning of that symbol for certain until we get to heaven, although it was probably well known to the readers. My own preference is to think that 666 refers to Nero Caesar—the letters of his name in Hebrew, if assigned numerical values, add up to 666.

subject of the next section. The problem is that while many ancient apocalyptic works provide an interpretation, others do not. This is especially true in the book of Revelation, which contains only one angelic interpretation (chap. 17). The reader is increasingly bewildered as the images multiply. Morris provides a good example:

Thus in 1 Enoch we read of stars falling from heaven and becoming bulls. They cohabit with cows and sire elephants, camels, and asses (1 Enoch 86:1-4). Later we learn of a white bull that became a man (1 Enoch 89:1) and of bulls which sired creatures as diverse as lions, tigers, wolves, squirrels, vultures and others (1 Enoch 89:10). (1972:37)

We cannot begin to make sense of apocalyptic without coming to grips with the background and meaning of such symbols (see further below).

f. *A recital of history* is featured in many apocalyptic works, like Jubilees, that intertwine past and future. Several preoccupy themselves with the details of world history, especially that of Israel (Dan 2, 7—12; 1 Enoch 85—90; 4 Ezra 11—12; Apocalypse of Abraham 27—28). As Rowland points out (1982:136-39), this distinguishes these works from prophecy, which rarely recites historical facts (for example, Ezek 20 uses it only to chronicle Israel's sins). The purpose is to demonstrate the divine control over all history on behalf of the people of God. This can be past history (1 Enoch 85—90) or the immediate future (Dan 7—12); both come together to show the sovereignty of God. By reflecting upon God's control of the past, Israel or the church is asked to trust him in the present. The same God who was sovereign over past history is sovereign over present and future history. Israel need not fear the disasters of the present or the world empires of the future. Nothing takes place without the foreknowledge and consent of God. This has been proven in the past and will be reiterated in the future.

Often this recital takes the form of a calendrical reworking of the ages. Jubilees, for instance, divides history into "jubilee" periods of forty-nine years each, taking the reader from creation to the Passover and exodus from Egypt. All of this is seen as a direct revelation from God to Moses. The Apocalypse of Weeks in 1 Enoch 91:12-17 and 93:1-10 divides history into seven past "weeks" or periods and three future "weeks." The similarities to the seventy "weeks" of Daniel 9:24-27 are obvious. In 1 Enoch the seventh week is characterized by apostasy, while in Daniel it is the seventieth that is marked by "abominations."

g. *Pseudonymity* is the first characteristic mentioned by many, but it is certainly overstated, primarily because of the assumption that Daniel is a pseudonymous second-century work. This, however, is at the very least debatable and in my opinion is dubious.³ However, even without Daniel we would have a difficult time proving pseudonymity for Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah, and few try to do so for the book of Revelation. Yet pseudonymity is undeniably true of intertestamental works. In the ancient world a work had greater authority when it was linked to one of the great heroes of the past. The Apocalypse of Abraham, for instance, recalls details from the patriarch's life as providing the setting for visionary experiences. Similar attributions are made with respect to Enoch (1 Enoch), Moses (Assumption of Moses), Ezra (4 Ezra) and Baruch (2 Baruch,

Russell lists several factors behind this:⁶ (1) On the basis of the corporate solidarity between the heroes of the faith and the nation, the choice of these figures showed the unity of God's people in all ages. (2) The idea of "contemporaneity" meant that all those within the tradition shared the same revelations from God and the same spiritual experiences as the great men of the past. (3) The "name" of a person bespeaks his character and the choice of a name in a Jewish context linked the vision and the writer with the heroes of the past. Rowland argues that the first two notions have been recently challenged and are difficult to prove (1982:65-66). However, it is likely that such religious reasons approximate the reasons for such choices. The writers wished to deepen the impact of their visions by connecting them to the leaders of antiquity.

2. Characteristics. More difficult to delineate are characteristics that define the mindset of apocalyptists. Nevertheless, we can see clearly several aspects in a majority of their works.

a. *Pessimism toward the present age* may be the dominant characteristic. Most who attempt to isolate a *Sitz im Leben* (situation in the life of Israel that gave rise to the movement) believe that apocalypticism developed in a time of great crisis and peril for the nation. The situations were so desperate that there could be little hope for the present. All the child of God could do was await God's future intervention. Ladd believes that this is one basic difference between prophecy and apocalyptic (1957:198-99). The prophet argued that if Israel returned to God the condition would be met and the prophecy could be fulfilled. The apocalypticist could offer no such optimistic forecast but could only comfort the reader that God in the future would bring contemporary history to a close and vindicate his people. In a very real sense one could say that the apocalypticists had a healthy respect for the depravity of humanity. They soundly rejected the falsely optimistic view of the progress of society and placed their trust not in man but in God. Morris calls this "the shaking of the foundations," for the whole Jewish perspective or world view was turned upside down (1972:41-43). No longer would things be right with the world for not only did Judaism face troubles from without but troubles from within, a growing secularism and a clash of cultures with Babylonian, Persian and later Hellenistic values. Only God could bring order out of this chaos.

b. The *promise of salvation or restoration* is the other side of the same coin. Sanders believes this is so important that it is the one essential peculiarity of the movement.⁷ While Sanders overstates the case, there is no denying the centrality of this characteristic. Throughout the visions of Daniel and Revelation the theme of restitution is predominant. In Revelation 6:9-11 and 8:3-5 the prayers of the saints for retribution are answered in the outpouring of the wrath of God, and the book moves throughout to its climax in the glory and joy of those martyred for Christ. In fact, the climax is prefigured throughout in the juxtaposition of wrath (chaps. 6; 8-9; 15-16) and glory (chaps. 1; 4-5; 7; 10; 19) passages.

c. A *view of transcendent reality* centering upon the presence and control of God is another major theme. Collins believes that this is in fact the primary distinguishing

revelation by a heavenly being; and a transcendent communication with a temporal axis the coming eschatological salvation) and a spatial axis (the new order to be established by God on the earth). This divine transcendence relates to the futuristic eschatology of the apocalypses. The emphasis actually is not so much on the hopelessness of the present as upon the hopefulness of the future. Though it may have seemed as if God had disappeared from the scene, the apocalyptic writer is saying that this is illusory. In reality God still reigns over history, and he will bring it to a close in his own time.

However, this cataclysm would occur within history, and all humankind would see it. Descriptions of the event differ from writer to writer, and it was not until the time of Christ that their ideas were crystallized. Some stressed a messianic kingdom on this earth, others an otherworldly existence. For a time there was a two-Messiah doctrine that later coalesced into a single Messiah.⁸ Many others had more interest in the messianic age than in the Messiah himself (the personal Messiah is missing in Tobit, 1 and 2 Maccabees, the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Jubilees, the Assumption of Moses and 2 Enoch). However, all alike emphasize the intervention of God in catastrophic fashion (such as the seals, trumpets and bowls of Rev 6; 8-9; 16). This triumph would be absolute, visible to all, and would vindicate the faithful. Evil would be stamped out forever and righteousness prevail. Hartman delineates a fivefold pattern in the apocalyptic expectations: (1) cosmic catastrophes ending the sin and lawlessness; (2) divine intervention by God or a messianic figure; (3) judgment linked with retribution; (4) punishment of the wicked and (5) salvation of the faithful (1966:28-49).

d. A *determinism* was observable, in which God completely controlled all of history. A very strong predestinarian perspective prevailed, as God had already charted the future course of this world. In fact, apocalyptic could be labeled the "revelation" of this future history preordained by God. In the midst of the persecuted minority among Judaism and the church, this message held immense comfort. In the present they saw only the control and triumph of the wicked. The message that this was only temporary and that the future triumph of God and his people was assured was extremely meaningful.

e. A *modified dualism* is seen in the doctrine of the two ages, this age and the one to come. This age is characterized by total opposition between God and Satan, between the good and the wicked. An unceasing war is being waged between these opposing forces. The next age will be introduced by the complete victory of God and will be a new order. The poor and the dispossessed in the present order will experience exaltation at the hand of God, becoming like the angels or the heavenly stars (Dan 12:3; 1 Enoch 50:1).

The Interpretation of Symbols

Biblical symbolism is actually a special type of metaphor (see pp. 103-5 above) and heretofore part of the multiple senses of the semantic range. The task of the interpreter is to determine which figurative sense the symbol has in the larger context. This means that the true meaning is not to be found in our present situation but rather in the use of that symbol in its ancient setting. This point can hardly be overemphasized in light of the misuse of biblical symbols in many circles today.

situation nor that their "fulfillment" should not be sought. Rather, it means that the interpreter should seek first the "author's intended meaning" in the original context before delineating the way that the prophecies apply to our time. We should not look for the meaning of "666" (Rev 13:18) in things like the credit-card system or names of individuals in our current time but rather in the context of the first century (see Mount 1977:263-65). At the same time the purpose of esoteric symbols in apocalyptic is to turn readers from the actual event to its theological meaning. In other words, readers are expected to see the hand of God in the future but are not supposed to know the exact sequence of events—that is, they are not given a description of what will actually happen. In short, we have no blueprint in Scripture for current events, but rather theological signs which tell us *in general* that God is going to draw history to a close. Symbols are literary in that they point to future events but not so literal that they tell us exactly how God is going to accomplish his purposes.

As Ramm points out, there are two elements in a symbol: the mental and conceptual idea and the image that represents it (1970:233). The problem is the cultural gap; both the symbol and the idea it represents stem from the ancient world and the biblical reality of that day. Symbols are actual objects (a boiling pot, a goat or ram, a chariot) often placed in strange combinations (a lion with an eagle's wings, Dan 7; a beast with ten horns and seven heads, Rev 13) to convey forcefully some religious truth. When the symbols are explained, as in Zechariah 6 (the chariots with red, black, white and dappled horses are heavenly spirits patrolling the four corners of the earth), the meaning is self-evident. When it is not the reader is tempted to give the symbols more specific meaning than safe, for they are interpreted on the basis of current cultural meaning.

There are six types of symbols (see Mickelsen 1963:266-78; Ramm 1970:235-38; Stott 1964:104-5): (1) external miraculous symbols (the burning bush, the pillar of cloud and fire, the ascension); (2) visions (the olive trees in Zechariah 4, the sheet filled with animals in Acts 10, the visions of the book of Revelation); (3) material symbols (blood = life, the cherubim on the mercy seat = holiness of God, the vine and branches = God's sustaining power); (4) emblematic numbers (seven and twelve in the book of Revelation), names (Isaiah's children in 7:3; 8:3), colors (the four horses of Zechariah 6 and Rev 6), metals (the hierarchical list from gold to clay in Dan 2) and jewels (the twelve foundation stones of the walls of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21); (5) emblematic actions (Ezekiel and John eating the scroll in Ezekiel 2 and Rev 10; Agabus binding himself with a belt in Acts 21) and (6) emblematic ordinances (the Jewish feasts celebrating harvest or the exodus and so forth, circumcision as a sign of the covenant, the eucharist as celebrating Jesus' sacrificial death).

In moving from the symbol to the reality it envisages, the reader should seek first the biblical background behind such symbols and then use this to interpret later allusion. For instance, the four beasts of Daniel 7 stand for the world empires and their leader. The use of the beasts in Revelation 13 builds upon Daniel 7 and should be interpreted accordingly. It is debated whether the beast from the sea of Revelation 13 is a person (the Antichrist) or a world empire. In light of the presence of both in 2 Thessalonians

are correct. The important thing is to allow the background behind the symbol to become a key to unlock its meaning.

One caveat is necessary: the past use of a symbol is a pointer to its meaning but is not determinative in itself. Symbols rarely became absolutely fixed or formalized in meaning. Therefore, we must check the total semantic field behind the associative senses of a term (see pp. 84-87), noting both similarities and differences in the uses elsewhere. For instance, the lion can be used for Judah, Christ or Satan in various contexts. At times the ferocity and predatory nature of the lion is stressed (1 Pet 5:8 of Satan); at other times his lordly nature is behind the image (Rev 5:5). In the latter in fact the lion is identified with the "lamb slain" (5:6), a marvelous juxtaposition of images! Natural qualities, such as salt used as a preservative or a seasoning (Mk 9:50), often provide a clue as well.

If the symbol is interpreted in the passage, that has important repercussions. Not only does the symbol lose its enigmatic character and become a known item, but it also becomes a control for other symbols in the immediate context and in the remainder of the book. We are given a critical clue to the mind of God in the particular vision, which aids us in tracking the progress of the visions elsewhere as they build upon and clarify the one known passage. Fee and Stuart list six interpreted images in the book of Revelation (1981:210): The one like a Son of man = Christ (1:17-18); the golden lampstands = the seven churches (1:20); the seven stars = the seven angels of the churches (1:20); the dragon = Satan (12:9); the seven heads = the seven hills on which the harlot sits (17:9); but what are the seven hills? Jerusalem or Rome?; the harlot = the great city (17:18, probably Rome, which was built on seven hills). These interpreted portions become keys for understanding the other visionary symbols.

Moreover, since Jewish and Christian apocalyptic did not exist in a vacuum, we must note the use of symbols in other cultures, such as Persian or Hellenistic. The Hellenistic background in the book of Revelation has been too long neglected. The readers came out of both Jewish and Greek circles, and God chose the symbols accordingly. The woman, dragon and child of Revelation 12 are an "international myth" (in a positive sense) with very close parallels in every ancient religion (such as Isis and Osiris, Marduk, Apollo). The symbol spoke eloquently to all backgrounds. Of course, Jewish background predominates, but this does not exclude Hellenism. For instance, Aeneas makes a very convincing case for a background from Caesar's court behind the throne-room scene of Revelation 4-5 (1983:5-26). This scene, following the central problem of the imperial cult in Revelation 2-3, shows where the true majesty and sovereign power exists and sets the stage for the use of Roman imagery throughout the remainder of the book.

Finally, note the total surface structure and on the basis of semiotics (see p. 81) decide which of the possible meanings suggested by the diachronic (past background, for example, in Scripture) and synchronic (the current semantic range) analyses of the symbol best fits the immediate context. In this light the theological thrust of the whole passage is the key.

Let us consider the twelve foundation stones of Revelation 21:19-20 as an example. Many interpretations have been offered down through the ages. In the early centuries it

However, this is only one among many options and is too subjective to be likely. TI list parallels the jewels on the breastplate of the high priest in Exodus 28:17-20 and the similar royal list of jewels in Ezekiel 28:13. Philo and Josephus both believed that the high priest's jewels represented the twelve signs of the zodiac and from this Charles theorized that the list in Revelation reversed the order of the path of the sun through the zodiac (1920:2:165-69). However, there are too many discrepancies and this too doubtful. Most likely, the jewels are not meant to be seen as individuals but rather suggest in a vague way the breastplate of the high priest and the magnificence of the New Jerusalem. While they may have had a more specific meaning, there is no evidence for such and we must be content with a more general interpretation.

Hermeneutical Principles

1. Note the type of literature. I pointed out above the differences between apocalyptic and prophecy. The fact is that none of the canonical books and few of the noncanonical are purely apocalyptic. Ladd has made a plea for the category "prophetic-apocalyptic" as better describing the biblical literature (1957). In many of the categories (such as pessimism vs. optimism, straightforward language vs. cryptic symbolism, prophetic figure vs. pseudonymity, no specification of time vs. the division of time into periods) the biblical works are mixed and in many portions are closer to the prophetic. The interpreter must be alert to these categories and work carefully with the smaller units within the larger whole. For instance, Zechariah 1-6 is primarily apocalyptic, but 7-14 is primarily prophetic. Daniel is an obvious blend of the two genres. Fee and Stuart argue that the book of Revelation is a composite of apocalyptic, prophetic and epistolary forms (1983:206-9). John does not merely await the eschaton but has a great interest in the current age primarily because the present is the Age of the Spirit (see 1:10-11) and because the book blends apocalyptic form with a prophetic perspective (see 1:3; 19:10; 22:18-19). Revelation speaks to the church of John's own day and to the church of every age. Further, John employs the epistolary form (see below; see 1:4-7; 22:21), addressing his readers in the customary "I-you" manner. This makes it even more important to recognize the extent to which many of the visions address current situations in John's church and blend the present with the future.

2. Note the perspective of the passage. While the first point centers upon the form and features of the work, this concerns more the characteristics discussed above. The interpreter must study the aspects emphasized and particularly the pattern by which the develop. For instance, Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog and Magog) follows a familiar pattern (note by Hartman 1966:28-49) of chronicling the sins of the wicked followed by the cosmic catastrophe (38:19-20, 22) which publicly manifests the judgment of the wicked (38:2, 39:7, 21-23) and total destruction (39:9-20), magnifies God's holy name (39:7, 22) and after demonstrating the iniquity of Israel (39:23-24), restores the remnant (39:25-29). Determinism is stressed, and the dualism is seen in the fact that a message of repentance is not present. The vision moves directly from the punishment of Israel for her sins (39:2, 24) to the restoration of the nation after the exile (39:25-29).

Critical scholars usually state that apocalyptic works are composite, that is, collections of isolated visions (Koch even makes it a formal feature). I have two responses: first, it is by no means proven that apocalyptic books are composite. I have already noted that apocalyptic is more literary than oral; if that is true the visions were never meant to be individual entities but rather were given as parts of larger wholes. I personally doubt the accuracy and validity of this assumption. Second, the canonical order is still critical. Even if we grant later redactors or collections (which I would argue against), most would agree that the structural development of the books is still crucial. Childs, for instance, grants a composite nature to Zechariah and accepts the view that each vision addresses a quite different historical circumstance (1979:474-76). However, he argues that the final shaping of the text has important theological implications for the meaning of the book.

This is not the place to argue the critical issues, but Childs's plea for the final canonical shape fits the recent trend toward literary exegesis rather than historico-critical restructuring and is essentially correct. The visions of Zechariah 1-6 provide an eschatological reinterpretation of the return from exile (539 B.C., twenty years prior to Zechariah's visions) in the direction of the final deliverance at the eschaton. There is a unified theological pattern and each one builds upon the other. The themes of chapters 9-14 (judgment and restoration), while quite different in form, expand and clarify the earlier chapters.

4. Note the function and meaning of the symbols. After noting the basic thrust of the whole, one must exegese the parts. Fee and Stuart make a special plea for the necessity of exegesis when studying the book of Revelation, primarily because it is so common to ignore historical factors when interpreting apocalyptic literature (1981:209-11). The prevalence of predictive elements causes the reader to forget the original situation and accent only the futuristic fulfillment (primarily in terms of the current age). Yet in every case the author's original meaning must predominate, for it is the key to the fulfillment.

Since I have already discussed hermeneutical principles with respect to symbols, a summary is sufficient here. We will want to ask first whether the symbol is interpreted in the immediate context or elsewhere in the book. If so, this will provide the control for the meaning of those symbols not directly interpreted. Next, we will study the synchronic (the use of the symbol in literature of the same period) and diachronic (the use of the symbol in the past) parallels. Especially important will be a direct allusion to a past text (such as the use of Ezekiel or Daniel in the book of Revelation). These provide specific helps to the meaning of the symbols, although the final arbiter is still the immediate context.

5. Stress the theological and note the predictive with humility. This does not mean that futuristic prophecy is not as important as the theological message to the writer's own day. Rather, the future even in apocalyptic texts was not an end in itself but a means to an end, namely to comfort and challenge the saints. I personally believe that one reason for the use of cryptic symbols was to keep the reader from giving the future fulfillment too great a place in the message of the book. The writer wanted to turn the reader toward God, not just toward future events. Therefore, the actual event prophesied was clouded in the mist of

This point is as relevant to the church today as it was to Judaism and the church in the past. We often forget how mistakenly Israel interpreted prophecies of the First Advent. We have no greater perspective from which to interpret prophecies of the Second Advent. We must remember that each era of the church through the ages has believed that Christ would return in its generation. Therefore, we need to stress the theological meaning of apocalyptic and hold to interpretations of fulfillment in our own day (such as those related to the reinstatement of Israel as a nation) with humility. Above all, we dare not preach such prophecies as absolute truth. Otherwise, when they fail to come to pass, people's faith can be hurt and the church made to look foolish. Such occurred recently with respect to some who gave too much credence to the pamphlet promising the Lord's return in 1988.

The implications of this for preaching are enormous. Apocalyptic contains a powerful theological message centering upon the ancient followers of God and their difficult situation. That same message has parallels with and repercussions for the saints of our own day. With unemployment on the rise, a greater amount of worldwide persecution today than ever before in history and vast uncertainty about the future economically and ecologically, the apocalyptic truths are more needed than ever before. Note the following recapitulation of the book of Revelation and ask the extent to which that historical situation applies today.

The main themes are abundantly clear: the church and the state are on a collision course; and initial victory will appear to belong to the state. Thus he warns the church that suffering and death lie ahead; indeed, it will get far worse before it gets better (6:9-11). He is greatly concerned that they do not capitulate in times of duress (14:11-12; 21:7-8). But this prophetic word is also one of encouragement; for God is in control of all things. Christ holds the keys to history, and He holds the churches in His hands (1:17-20). Thus the church triumphs even through death (12:11). God will finally pour out His wrath upon those who caused that suffering and death and bring eternal rest to those who remain faithful. (Fee and Stuart 1981:212)

Even these passages primarily concerned with the future apply to the present. For instance, the Beast and his forces (the Antichrist of the future) depicted also Rome and the enemies of the church (the many antichrists) in John's day. The seals, trumpets and bowls are future outpourings of wrath but remind the unbeliever of the certainty of God's judgment and the believer of God's future vindication.

Above all, note the congruence of present and future throughout biblical apocalyptic literature. There is a very real "telescoping of time" throughout, which in the New Testament is built upon the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" in the eschatology of Jesus and the early church. The prophecies regarding the "not yet" are so closely tied to the "already" that the two can at times appear to be simultaneous. Therefore, we must avoid dogmatic pronouncements and contrive to address our present in light of the certainty of God's control over history and of his future vindication of his faithful followers and punishment of the wicked.

Hasidic protest against the religious policies and persecution of the Seleucids and of Antiochus Epiphanes in particular (Rowley 1963:21-24; Russell 1978:2). Ezekiel, Zechariah and the other earlier works are considered to be prophetic precursors but not apocalyptic works (see the survey in Nickelsburg 1983:641-46). Certainly one could argue thus for Isaiah 24-27 and perhaps Joel. While themes of Jewish eschatology are present in the Isaiah passage (destruction of the earth, cosmic portents, heavenly banquet, Leviathan, the dragon), many of the signs of apocalyptic are not (the vision, the negation of the present in favor of the future, the dualism). The locust plague of Joel 1-2 does use symbolism but without the profusion of images, and it is more a prophetic call to the people to return to Yahweh.

However, when we look elsewhere there are clear signs of apocalyptic. Hanson (1971:463-68) finds the perspective of despair in the present and the direct intervention of God in several oracles of Isaiah 39-66 (such as 40; 43; 51). "This interlocking of primeval-past, historical-future . . . lends cosmic significance to the future event" (p. 465).⁹ Such is even more true with respect to Ezekiel and Zechariah. Rowland (1982:199-200) notes the literary setting of Ezekiel 40, with its vision followed by interpretation, as a constant apocalyptic mode (compare Dan 8-10; Rev 17). Zechariah also employs an angelic interpreter (1:19; 3:1; 4:2). The use of cryptic symbols in the dream-visions and the themes of the visions demonstrate the presence of apocalyptic thinking.

Moreover, apocalyptic literature was present in the ancient Near East prior to the prophetic period. In Bergman's excellent article on Egyptian apocalyptic (1983:51-60) he discusses the Egyptian determinism and cyclical view of eternity, which in the opinion of some make any apocalyptic tradition in Egypt impossible. Bergman argues that this represents only one among many religious traditions in Egypt and in fact there was interest in the ages and in heavenly journeys. In the same volume Ringgren (1983:379-86), Widengren (1983:77-156) and Hultgard (1983:387-411) discuss the motifs in Akkadia and Persia respectively. Akkadia represents an early stage of developing apocalyptic ideas, but the Iranian texts on the role of Zoroaster as apocalyptic mediator, in spite of difficulties of dating, show a developed mode of thinking at an early period. On the basis of the divine names, S. Hartman (1983:71-73) argues that the basic Iranian traditions go back to the sixth century B.C. and that Iranian dualism as well as ideas of pre-existent wisdom and an eschatological redeemer were well known to Jewish thinkers. In short, there are parallels elsewhere in the period of the prophets. Naturally, the question of direct influence is subjective and difficult to detect. Rather, I would argue that there is little evidence to suggest that apocalyptic was a late development and every reason to conclude that it originated parallel to Iranian and Near Eastern ideas primarily in a prophetic milieu from the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.

However, prophecy was not the only influence upon apocalyptic thinking. I have already mentioned the connection between wisdom and apocalyptic. Von Rad in fact argues that wisdom was the primary source for apocalyptic thought, since both movements stem from the quest for knowledge and human experience in this world (1972:280-81). Yet while a connection does exist, there are too many differences between the two

in wisdom thought) to posit direct influence (see Rowland 1982:203-8).

It is of course impossible to isolate any particular *Sitz im Leben* (situation in the life of Israel) for the rise of apocalyptic. It seems most likely that due to the pressures and exigencies of the exile, God added to his direct pronouncements through the prophets a series of visionary experiences relating his control of the future and the necessity of Israel's remnant trusting his direct intervention in the historical processes as the only answer to the situation. The mediums of vision and symbol became the best means for proclaiming these truths, and from Isaiah to Ezekiel to Daniel to Zechariah this method became increasingly predominant in the divine revelations. One thing is clear: the answer is not found only in sociological analysis. We must note the mind of God as the key to the process. Naturally the two are not mutually exclusive. God chose the mode that best fit the moment for the communication of his will.

A second and more developed apocalyptic movement took place in the second century B.C. In the post-Maccabean period the movement was linked with the Hasidim (the pious party that later gave rise to the Pharisees and the Essenes). Connections with both parties can be noted, but they are certainly more direct with the latter. Morris correctly notes that while some apocalyptic concerns can be found in Pharisaism (resurrection, the afterlife), on the whole the latter movement was opposed to such "enthusiastic" religious approaches (1972:14-16). At an earlier date a connection is likely, but the two groups went in different directions. Apocalyptic was not a political movement or party like the Pharisees or Sadducees. Like wisdom it was more a way of thinking, a mode of outlook at life. It was first a divinely chosen means of revelation and then became an outlook on life that cut across the different Jewish sects and manifested itself at different times in all of them (with the exception of the Sadducees). Most important, it provided one of the most obvious links between Judaism and Christianity, far more direct than a single party.

11

Parable

PARABLES, ALONG WITH APOCALYPTIC, HAVE BEEN AMONG THE MOST WRITTEN ABOUT YET hermeneutically abused portions of Scripture. This is understandable since the two form at one and the same time the most dynamic and yet the most difficult to comprehend of the biblical genres. The potential of the parable for communication is enormous, since it creates a comparison or story based upon everyday experiences. However, that story itself is capable of many meanings, and the modern reader has as much difficulty interpreting it as did the ancient hearers. Jesus himself gave the operating principle, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand" (Lk 8:10). Mary Ann Tolbert correctly states, "Judging by the varied opinions and continued controversies that mark the study of the parables of Jesus . . . it is undoubtedly true that most modern parable interpreters fall into the category of the 'others'" (1979:13). The disciples had great difficulty understanding the parables, and this is even more true in our day. If one were to read a cross-section of works on the parables or hear a randomly selected cross-section of sermons, the multiplicity of interpretations would be bewildering. Is the "author's intended meaning" possible? And by "author" do we mean Jesus or the evangelist? These are only two of the many issues we face when coming to grips with the parable genre.

The Meaning and Use of Parables

The importance of parables is evident when we realize that fully a third of Jesus' teaching in the Synoptic Gospels comes in parabolic form. In modern terms, we think of a parable as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." Yet what did it mean in the ancient world? The Hebrew term is *māšāl*, which also is used for the "proverb" or "riddle" and has as its basic meaning the idea of comparison. Indeed, the proverbial form often established a comparison, such as Proverbs 18:11, "The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, like a high wall in their imagination." As Peister points out, *māšāl* developed from a popular term for proverb to a technical term for wisdom teaching and finally to a broad term used for prophetic proverbs, parables, riddles and symbolic actions (1978:744-45). Several

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APOCALYPSE

APOCALYPSE. See APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE; REVELATION, BOOK OF.

APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH. See APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE III.H.

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE. The word "apocalypse" appears as the first word in our NT apocalypse, the REVELATION OF JOHN, meaning "disclosure" or "revelation." In this book it designates "what must soon take place": the consummation of God's redemptive purposes. The revelations were imparted to John in a series of ecstatic experiences (see "in the Spirit" at Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10) when Christ revealed to him the events that would attend the consummation of the age and the establishing of God's rule in the world. The term "apocalypse" has been borrowed from the Revelation and applied to a whole genre of Jewish literature produced between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100. The earliest apocalypse is the book of Daniel, and the subsequent apocalypses were written in imitation of it.

The word "apocalyptic" is used to designate two distinct things: the group of writings, and the kind of eschatology they contain. These two uses of "apocalyptic" need to be clearly distinguished.

- I. Apocalyptic as Literature
 - A. Revelatory Character
 - B. Artificial Nature
 - C. Pseudonymity
 - D. Pseudo-Prophecy
 - E. Symbolism
- II. Apocalyptic as Eschatology
 - A. Dualism
 - B. History and Eschatology
 - C. Pessimism
 - D. Determinism
 - E. Ethical Passivity
- III. Apocalyptic Writings
 - A. First (or Ethiopic) Enoch
 - B. Book of Jubilees
 - C. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
 - D. Psalms of Solomon
 - E. Assumption of Moses
 - F. Second (or Slavonic) Enoch
 - G. Fourth Ezra
 - H. Apocalypse of Baruch

1. *Apocalyptic as Literature.*—We do not know with certainty what circle in Judaism produced the apocalypses, nor how widely they were known and read in NT times. Albright held that Jewry swarmed with apocalypists (FSAC, p. 374), while G. F. Moore thought they were only a small group of enthusiasts who were practically ignored by the masses of the people and their religious leaders (*Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, I [1927], 127). Extensive new information about first-century Judaism has come to hand in the so-called Qumrân literature, and one fact at least is clear: the Qumrân community prized the apocalyptic writings. This is proved by the fact that fragments of several apocalyptic books, or of sources of some of these books, have been found in the Qumrân caves, including fragments of ten MSS of Jubilees, fragments of ten MSS of four of the five parts of Enoch, and fragments of the sources of the Testaments of Levi and Naphtali (see J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* [1959], pp. 32-35). This fact has led some scholars to conclude that the Qumrân community, or rather the proto-Essenes of which it was one community, produced and preserved the apocalyptic literature, and that these writings should be interpreted in the life situation of the thought of this community (F. M. Cross, Jr., *Ancient*

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE



"The Four Horsemen" — Death, Famine, Pestilence, and War — trampling men and women, with Dragon of Hell at lower left. Fourth print in Albrecht Dürer's fifteen-part woodcut series "The Apocalypse" (1498) (National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection)

Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies [1957], pp. 142ff.; H. H. Rowley, *Jewish Apocalyptic and the Dead Sea Scrolls* [1957]). However, H. Ringgren admits only the possibility of an Essenic source for the apocalyptic writings ("Jüdische Apokalyptik," RGG, I, 464); and while there are marked similarities between the eschatological ideas of the apocalypses and the other Qumrân literature, there are also striking differences (see Millar Burrows, *Dead Sea Scrolls* [1955], p. 261). Perhaps this problem could be solved if we had sufficient knowledge of the intertestamental period to reconstruct accurately the history of the Essene movement, but we must deal with the apocalypses as they stood and await further light upon their historical milieu.

As a genre of literature, apocalyptic is notable for several features that set it apart from prophetic literature. In fact, a popular critical view is that prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology are two mutually exclusive kinds of eschatology in the OT and Judaism. According to this view, prophetic eschatology expected the kingdom of God to arise out of history and to be an earthly kingdom within history. However, when this historical hope was not realized, the Jews came to despair of history and to expect the kingdom of God to come from outside of history—i.e., directly from God—to involve a cosmic catastrophe, and to issue in a kingdom so different from earthly experience that it could only be described as a kingdom "beyond history" (see S. Mowinkel, *He That Cometh* [1956]; P. Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde* [1934], ch. 23). Prophetic eschatology looked for the coming of an earthly Davidic king (Messiah); apocalyptic eschatology looked for the coming of a heavenly Son of Man. However, the present author has argued that the expectation of a cata-

clysmic irruption into history is intrinsic to the prophetic hope of the OT. The kingdom of God will be established in this world, but with an entirely new quality of life (see G. E. Ladd, *Presence of the Future* [1974], pp. 55ff.). T. C. Vriezen describes the eschatology of Isaiah and his contemporaries as one that is "historical and at the same time supra-historical. It takes place within the framework of history but is caused by forces that transcend history, so that what is formed is a new order of things in which the glory and the Spirit of God (Isa. 11) reveals itself" ("Prophecy and Eschatology," in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, I [1953], 222). Vriezen finds an even more distinct contrast between the old order and the new in Deutero-Isaiah. Certainly the eschatology of such scriptures as Isa. 24-27, Zephaniah, Joel, Zec. 9-14 expects to see the kingdom of God established only by a cosmic act of God. This is the most notable feature of apocalyptic eschatology, and it has its roots in the OT. See ESCHATOLOGY.

A. Revelatory Character. The apocalyptic literary genre has several outstanding characteristics. First, it is revelatory of the future. In this matter, apocalyptic differs from most of the writings of the prophets. The prophets claimed to receive revelations, as did the apocalyptists; but the central content of prophetic revelation was the will of God, and the chief means of revelation was the word of God. The prophets often foretold God's action in the future, but they did so that in the light of future judgment and salvation they might enforce the demands of the divine will in the present. Furthermore, while the prophets received revelations through dreams and visions (e.g., Isa. 6; Ezk. 1; Jer. 24), these were not central. "The word of the Lord," the dynamic message of the living God, was the center of their experience. Dreams and visions were never an end in themselves but were accompanied by an explanatory, accosting word.

With the apocalyptists, the center of interest has shifted. The living word of the Lord has given way altogether to revelations and visions. God no longer speaks by His Spirit to the prophet. The seer learns the solution to the problem of evil and the coming of God's kingdom through dreams, visions, or heavenly journeys. By means of these media the apocalyptist discovers the secrets of the hidden world, the reason for the suffering of the righteous on earth, and when and how the Kingdom will come.

We should note that some of the books usually called apocalyptic are not true apocalypses in that they are not revelations of this sort. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs contain eschatology of an apocalyptic character, but the literary form is not that of an apocalypse. Each of the twelve patriarchs gives a brief resume of his life, makes a moral application, and usually utters a brief prediction of the future of his descendants. In form the book is imitative prophecy rather than apocalyptic. The Psalms of Solomon are not apocalyptic, i.e., revelatory, but are patterned after the OT Psalms. Since two of the Psalms anticipate the coming of Messiah and of the kingdom of God, they are usually included in the survey of Jewish apocalyptic literature. Those two books illustrate that apocalyptic literature and apocalyptic eschatology are not identical; the apocalyptic eschatology found expression in works that were not apocalyptic in literary form.

B. Artificial Nature. A second characteristic of apocalyptic literature is the imitative and artificial nature of its revelations. This stands in contrast to the visions of the canonical prophets, which involved genuine subjective experiences. In apocalyptic, visions and dreams have become a form of literature. While a few of the apocalyptists may have undergone some sort of subjective experience as

a result of brooding over the problem of evil (see G. H. Box, *Ezra-Apocalypse* [1912], p. lxvii), Porter is correct in saying that "the visions described in the apocalypses are beyond doubt in the majority of cases not real visions at all but literary fictions" (F. C. Porter, *Messages of the Apocalyptic Writers* [1905], pp. 40f.).

C. Pseudonymity. A third characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic is pseudonymity. Usually, the apocalyptists employed the transparent fiction of using the name of an OT saint long dead as a means of validating their revelations. Many critics feel that the real authors did not intend to deceive their readers by this devout fiction; however, if the prevailing interpretation of the reason for pseudonymity is valid, the authors did expect their pious fraud to be taken seriously. After the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, Judaism felt that the age of the prophets was over, for no one stood up among the people to announce, "Thus saith the Lord." The Qumran community believed that the Holy Spirit inspired their leaders, but the purpose of this inspiration was the correct interpretation of the Word of God, not the utterance of a fresh word from God. If the age of prophecy was over, how could the revelations of the apocalyptists gain a hearing? Since the apocalyptist could not speak as a prophet, "Thus saith the Lord," he borrowed an OT saint and attributed his visions to him, that the writing might receive the sanction of the prophetic name, whether Enoch, the Twelve Patriarchs, Moses, Ezra, or Baruch.

In this connection, we must observe that Daniel is not pseudonymous, for Daniel is not an OT saint whose name could be used to lend authority to a book. Apart from the stories in the book of Daniel, he is a nonentity. This fact lends some evidence to the view that, whatever the date of composition of Daniel, it embodies traditions of a historical person who lived in the time of Captivity.

Here too is one of the most notable differences between the Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic. The Revelation was written by a living author who was well known to those to whom he wrote.

D. Pseudo-Prophecy. Pseudonymity may be accompanied by pseudo-prophecy. The author not only borrowed an OT saint as the alleged author of his book; he often rewrote the history of Israel from the time of the alleged author to his own time, but cast it in the form of prophecy.

The prophets were men known to their audiences, who took their stand in their own historical situations and proclaimed their messages to their own generations against the background of the coming kingdom of God. Each prophetic writing reflects the events of the author's own time, which the critic must study to determine the date of the book. The prophets also predicted both historical and eschatological events that yet lay in the future. The apocalyptists often took their stand in the distant past and rewrote history as though it were prophecy, attributing the pseudo-prophecy to the pseudo-author. It is frequently possible to follow the course of the alleged prophecy down to the author's own time, when the historical predictions become vague and the Kingdom is expected to come.

It is significant that the Revelation does not use this technique, nor does Our Lord in his apocalyptic sayings. Both take their stand in their own day and predict both historical and eschatological events to come.

E. Symbolism. A final characteristic of the apocalyptic genre is the use of symbolism in declaring the will of God to the people and in predicting future events. This goes back to the prophets. To illustrate Israel's corruption, Jeremiah buried a linen cloth until it was spoiled (Jer. 13:1-11). Ezekiel's vision of the valley full of bones depicted the revival of Israel to national life (Ezk. 37). With Zechariah

symbolic visions reach a new dimension. The first six chapters contain eight visions, each involving developed symbolism. The last vision is of four chariots with red, black, white, and dappled-gray horses that came from between the two mountains of bronze to patrol the four corners of the earth (Zech. 6:1-8). These chariots are symbolic of the accomplishment of God's will in all the earth. They are not designed to be identified with specific historical events or personages.

In the use of symbolism, Daniel goes beyond the other prophets and introduces a usage that is imitated by later apocalypses. He uses symbolism to represent events in history. The great image of gold, silver, brass, and iron represents four successive nations in history before the coming of God's kingdom (Dnl. 2), as do the four beasts of Dnl. 7. This device is greatly elaborated in subsequent apocalypses (see 1 En. 85-90), and the symbolism of the beast in Rev. 13 is clearly dependent on Daniel.

II. Apocalyptic as Eschatology.—We have examined the main features of the apocalyptic genre of literature. We must turn now to a consideration of the main features of the type of eschatology embodied in the apocalypses.

A. Dualism. The first and most important characteristic of apocalyptic eschatology is eschatological dualism. The apocalyptists see a sharp contrast between the character of this age and that of the age to come. The present is the age of sin and evil; the future will see the establishment of the kingdom of God, when God's people will be redeemed from all traces of sin and all the effects of evil will be removed from the earth. The transition from this age will not be achieved by historical processes, but only by an unmediated cosmic act of God.

This apocalyptic dualism is a development of the theology of the prophets, who were conscious of the contrast between God's ideal world and the actual world of nature and history. Although nature and history were under the divine sovereignty, both lay under the curse of sin and the burden of evil. God's kingdom would be established only by an inbreaking of God into history that would result in both a moral and a physical transformation of the present order.

This dualistic eschatology appears distinctly in one of the earliest prophets, Zephaniah. He begins his prophecy with an announcement of divine judgment in which God will "sweep away everything from the face of the earth" (Zeph. 1:2), including man and beast. "In the fire of his jealous wrath shall all the earth be consumed; for a full, yea, sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth" (v. 18). Yet beyond judgment Zephaniah sees a time of salvation when a remnant of Israel, redeemed, will be gathered in Zion, and even the Gentiles will be converted and worship God in the language of Zion (3:9-20).

Zephaniah does not emphasize the redemption of nature as do other prophets. Amos sees an earth that has become rich and abundant in harvest. So abundant will be the grain that the harvest will take all summer. The vines will yield so richly that the work of the treader of grapes in the wine press and that of the sower in the fields will overlap. The mountains and hills on whose slopes the vineyards lay will seem to stream with the flow of the wine (Am. 9:13). Isaiah paints the familiar picture of the wolf lying down with the lamb, the calf with the lion—of a nature so transformed that these fierce beasts become the pets of little children (Isa. 11:6-9). Second Isaiah describes the new age in terms of a new heaven and a new earth (65:17; 66:22), so different will the new order be from the old order. There is, in short, the *idea* of the contrast between this present world with its burden of evil and the new world transformed by a divine act of redemption.

This dualistic eschatology gradually developed the terminology of "this age" and "the age to come." This terminology begins to appear in I Enoch (16:1; 48:7; 71:15), but it makes its clear appearance first in 4 Ezra and in the NT. Fourth Ezra, written at the end of the 1st cent. A.D., says, "The Most High has made not one Age but two" (7:50, *APOT*); "This age the Most High has made for many, but the age to come for few" (8:1). If our Gospels accurately report Jesus' saying, he *may* have been among the first to use this idiom (Mk. 4:19; 10:30; Mt. 12:32; Lk. 16:8; 20:34). The expression also appears in the Pauline correspondence (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:6; 3:18). The theology of eschatological dualism is that the powers of evil are so dominant in this age that only a direct unmediated act of God can destroy them; and this redemptive act of God will deliver not only God's people but the very world of nature from the grip of evil. "The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). This is a thoroughly apocalyptic saying.

B. History and Eschatology. A second characteristic of apocalyptic eschatology is its non-prophetic view of history. The prophets see a dynamic tension between the immediate historical future and the more distant eschatological future. For instance, Amos describes the day of the Lord as a day of darkness, when a historical judgment would overtake Israel (5:18-20). This means nothing less than captivity beyond Damascus (8:27). Yet beyond this historical judgment Amos sees a further visitation: the eschatological Day of the Lord. The future holds a day of universal judgment (7:4; 8:8f.; 9:5) and, beyond that, a day of salvation when the house of David will be revived, Israel restored, and the earth become a blessing (9:11-15). God will judge His people for their sins in a historical judgment, but He will finally redeem them in the kingdom of God.

The apocalyptists lost this tension between history and eschatology. The present and the future were seen as quite unrelated. The apocalyptists could not understand the prophetic interpretation of present historical experience as God's judgment upon His people for their apostasy, for Israel was no longer faithful. After the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Law assumed a role of new importance in the experience of Israel. Israel in OT times again and again neglected the Law and apostatized to foreign gods; but in NT times, under the influence of Pharisaic and scribal religion, many Jews were utterly devoted to obedience to the Law. In fact, religion had become a life of strict obedience to a mass of rules. Here then was Israel's problem: "Israel has received and kept God's law; why then are God's people suffering under the heel of godless pagans? This cannot be God's doing." The only answer given is that God's ways are inscrutable. There is no other answer. After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, a very sensitive spirit, pondering this problem, wrote 4 Ezra 3:32-36: "Has another nation known Thee besides Israel? Or what tribes have so believed Thy covenants as these tribes of Jacob? Yet their reward has not appeared and their labor has borne no fruit, . . . when have the inhabitants of the earth not sinned in Thy sight? Or what nation has kept Thy commandments so well [as Israel]? Thou mayest indeed find individual men who have kept Thy commandments, but nations Thou wilt not find." The response to this problem is one of utter despair: "It would be better for us not to be here than to come here and live in ungodliness, and to suffer and not understand why" (4:12). The only solution offered is that God will yet act to rectify the evil of the present. The age will finally come to its end, and God will inaugurate the new age of righteousness. However, this final redemptive act has no bearing upon the present.



"Christ in Majesty," popular twelfth-century A.D. concept of Christ as judge, seated on rainbow with world at His feet and holding sealed book. Beasts at corners represent the four Evangelists (cf. Ezk. 1:5-19; Rev. 4:2-5:1). Enamel plaque from book cover, Limoges, France (Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917)

While the NT shares the eschatological dualism of Jewish apocalyptic, it does not share its despair over history. In fact, the NT revives the prophetic tension between history and eschatology. Jesus' view of the divine acts in the future includes both judgment in history and judgment at the end of history. He wept over Jerusalem because the Holy City had rejected the divinely appointed messenger: "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate" (Mt. 23:38). He foretold the destruction of the holy temple; not one stone was to be left standing upon another (Mt. 24:2). He predicted the destruction of Chorazin and Bethsaida because of their unrepentant spirit (Mt. 11:20-22). God was again seen as active in history to challenge and to judge His people. Jesus also announced that Israel is to be dispossessed as the covenant people of God and that a new people will be raised up to take her place (Mt. 21:43).

At the same time, Jesus looked beyond this historical judgment to a final eschatological judgment. This is clear from the parables: in the day of judgment the wheat and the tares will be separated and the bad fish gathered out from among the good (Mt. 13).

This tension between history and eschatology (cf. G. E. Ladd, *Presence of the Future* [1974], pp. 64ff.) is seen most vividly in the Olivet discourse. According to Matthew, the disciples asked two questions: when will the temple be destroyed, and what will be the sign of the close of the age? In answer, Jesus seems to have conflated these two events, and to have viewed the eschatological future through the transparency of the nearer historical future. Mk. 13 and Mt. 24 emphasize the eschatological aspect — the appearance of the Antichrist and the last great tribulation (Mt. 24:15ff.). In the parallel passage, Luke writes of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (Lk. 21:20). God, who will act at the end of history to establish His kingdom, is working in history in His kingly power. This tension between history and eschatology is one of the most distinctive marks of prophetic eschatology in contrast to Jewish apocalyptic. While Jesus shares the eschatological dualism of apocalyptic, with its expectation of a cosmic catastrophe, He stands squarely in the prophetic tradition in that He also sees the hand of God in historical events.

C. Pessimism. Jewish apocalyptic may also be described as pessimistic about history. Some scholars (e.g., H. H. Rowley, *Relevance of Apocalyptic* [1947], p. 36) object to the use of the term "pessimistic." As Rowley writes, it is erroneous to call the apocalyptists pessimists in their ultimate outlook, for they never lost their confidence that God would finally triumph. They possessed an ultimate optimism that was born of an unshakable faith. Indeed, the very purpose of their writings was to assure God's people that God had not really forsaken them, but that in His own good time He would arise to save Israel and punish the wicked.

But it is also true that the apocalyptists had not only lost the sense of the divine activity in history; they had become utterly pessimistic about the evil character of this age: the blessings of God's kingdom could not be experienced in the present, for God had abandoned this age to suffering and evil. Such a theology was forced upon devout Jews as the only possible explanation for their evil plight. The solution to the problem of evil was thrown altogether into the future; the present was seen as irretrievably evil. The righteous could only submit patiently to suffering, sustained by the assurance that deliverance would surely come when the evil age was past and the new age of the Kingdom had arrived.

The most vivid illustration of this is found in the dream-visions of 1 Enoch (chs. 83-90). According to the second vision, God personally guided the experiences of Israel throughout its history until the Babylonian captivity. Then God withdrew his personal leadership, forsook the temple, and surrendered his people to wild beasts to be torn and devoured. God "remained unmoved, though He saw it, and rejoiced that they were devoured and swallowed and robbed, and left them to be devoured in the hand of all the beasts" (1 En. 89:58, *APOT*). Then God turned the fortunes of the nation over to seventy angel-shepherds, instructing them as to the number of Jews who might be slain. However, the shepherds were self-willed and faithless, ignoring the divine directive, and permitting fearful evils to befall God's people. When reports of the evil conduct of the shepherds were brought to God, He laid them aside and remained unmoved and aloof (1 En. 89:71, 75). A record was made of the angels' faithlessness that they might be punished on the day of judgment when Israel would be delivered. Between the years 586 and 165 B.C., God was conceived to be inactive in the fortunes of Israel. God's people found themselves at the mercy of faithless angels. No deliverance could be expected until the messianic era.

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The apocalypse of Ezra reflects an equal pessimism. Ezra's problem is found in the fact that Israel has received and kept God's Law (4 Ezr. 6:55-59), while the Gentiles have rejected it (3:31-34; 7:20-24); yet God has spared the ungodly and preserved His enemies, but has destroyed His people (3:30). This insoluble problem casts Ezra into abject despair. He wishes he had never been born (4:12). Dumb beasts are better off than the righteous, for they cannot think about their fate (2:66). The only hope lies in the future. By divine decree, there are two ages: the present age is hopelessly evil, but the future age will witness the solution to the problem of evil (4:26-32; 7:50; 8:1-3). The righteous, therefore, must now patiently resign themselves to evil in the confidence of a solution in the age to come, and are not to be disturbed because the masses perish. God himself is not moved by the death of the wicked (7:60f., 131; 8:38, 55). This age is evil; hope belongs altogether to the age to come.

The NT shares the view of Jewish apocalyptic that this age is evil (Gal. 1:4). Satan is even called the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4). But no NT writer shares the Jewish pessimism about this age. In fact, the heart of the gospel is found in the fact that in Jesus of Nazareth God has acted to bring to men the blessings of His kingly rule. The kingdom of God, which belongs to the age to come, has actually come to men in history (Mt. 12:28). While Satan is the god of this age, the mission of Jesus accomplishes a binding of Satan (Mt. 12:29). By His death, Jesus has "destroyed him who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (He. 2:14). Our NT apocalypse shares this redemptive view of history. John sees the scroll of human destiny resting in the hand of God, but the scroll is firmly sealed with seven seals so that no one can open the book and read its contents. When John weeps because the book can not be opened, he is told, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered [lit., has won a victory], so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (Rev. 5:5). When John turns to see the Lion—the Davidic King—he sees instead a lamb, bearing the marks of slaughter. The Davidic King will be able to bring history to the kingdom of God only because He was first the suffering Lamb of God. He won a victory in history that will lead into the kingdom of God. This is the theme of the entire NT: the redemptive work of God in the historical Jesus of Nazareth, which will issue finally in Jesus' apocalyptic coming as the Son of Man to establish the glorious kingdom of God.

D. Determinism. Another characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic is determinism. The course of this age is predetermined and must run to its completion. The Kingdom does not come even though the righteous deserve it, because certain fixed periods must first unfold. Therefore, the Kingdom must await its appointed time. Little emphasis is placed on a sovereign God who is acting through these appointed times to carry out His purposes. Rather, God Himself is awaiting the passing of the times He has decreed. "For he has weighed the age in the balance, and measured the times by measure, and numbered the times by number; and he will not move nor arouse them until that measure is fulfilled" (4 Ezr. 4:36f.). The entire course of human history is prerecorded in heavenly books (1 En. 81:1-3; 103:1f.).

Since the time of the end is fixed, the present age is often thought to be divided into certain determined periods. The dream-visions of Enoch divide time, from the captivity to the end, into seventy periods during which Israel is given into the care of seventy shepherds (1 En. 89:72; 90:1, 5). Only when the seventy periods have passed can the end come. The apocalypses usually assume that the fixed periods have nearly run out, and therefore that the end is about to come.

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In contrast to this stand Jesus' words: "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Mt. 24:36); "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming" (v. 42); "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know" (v. 50).

E. Ethical Passivity. A final characteristic may be called ethical passivity. The apocalyptists were not motivated by strong moral or evangelical urgency. The prophets continually appealed to Israel to repent and to turn from their sins to God. They prophesied that judgment would fall upon a sinful nation, but that the kingdom would one day come for a righteous remnant. The prophets were not interested in the future for its own sake, however, but only for its impact upon the present. They predicted future judgment and salvation in order that, in light of that future, they might confront Israel with the will of God.

As the apocalyptists perceived it, however, the problem in their day was not the need for national repentance. Rather, the problem arose out of their conviction that the Israel of their day was the righteous remnant—yet the Kingdom did not come. The apocalyptic and rabbinic definitions of righteousness were basically the same: obedience to the Law of Moses; and the circles in which the apocalyptists moved were faithful to the Law. The literature from the Qumrân caves, e.g., shows that the Qumranians were strict legalists. Therefore most of the apocalypses devote very little space to ethical exhortation. The two notable exceptions are the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the last part of Enoch (chs. 92-105). The Testaments have a strong ethical emphasis with a noteworthy stress on inward righteousness and the ethic of love; but this sets the book apart from the usual atmosphere of apocalyptic literature. The book is not in fact apocalyptic in form, but is imitative prophecy. The last section of Enoch defines righteousness in terms of obedience to the Law (99:2, 4) and has little apocalyptic material in the strict sense of the word. The scholars who insist upon a strong ethical emphasis in apocalyptic literature draw most of their illustrations from the two canonical apocalypses, Daniel and Revelation, and from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

Ethical exhortation is lacking because there is a loss of a sense of sinfulness. The problem of the apocalyptists is found in the fact that the true Israel *does* keep the law and therefore *is* righteous—and yet is permitted to suffer. Fourth Ezra seems to be an exception to this statement, for the author at several points expresses a profound sense of sinfulness (4:12; 7:118). This, however, is counterbalanced by a sense of the righteousness of God's people, who have received the Law (3:32; 5:29; 8:29), have kept it (3:35; 7:25), and therefore have a treasury of works before God (6:5; 7:77; 8:33). Nevertheless, Jerusalem has been destroyed by the Romans and the temple leveled, and according to prophetic theology this must be a judgment for Israel's sins. But just there is the problem: as a matter of fact, Israel is not sinful! She has kept the Law. This problem created a tension in the author's mind that led to deep despair (7:118) and to a pitiful cry to God to deal with his people in terms of grace (8:6). Thus, Ezra's sense of sinfulness is more the result of theoretical theology than deep conviction. Throughout the book we meet the contrast between the righteous few who have kept the Law—the faithful of Israel—and the mass of men who perish, but about whose fate God is unconcerned (8:56; 7:61, 131; 8:38).

Both Jesus' teachings and the Revelation reflect prophetic rather than apocalyptic theology on this point. Jesus' forecast of the future has an ethical purpose.

"Watch [lit., be awake], therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you must always be ready" (Mt. 25:42-44).

The seven letters of Rev. 2-3 are replete with ethical warnings. Most of them contain a summons to repentance. The Revelation as a whole concludes with an evangelical summons for men to come and drink of the water of life (Rev. 22:17).

III. Apocalyptic Writings.—Included here are the several books that are usually grouped under the heading of apocalyptic writings, even though some of them are not, strictly speaking, apocalyptic in form.

A. First (or Ethiopic) Enoch. Three apocalyptic books bearing the name of Enoch have come down to us, known as Ethiopic Enoch (1 Enoch), Slavonic Enoch (2 Enoch), and Hebrew Enoch (3 Enoch). Since the last of these lies beyond the period of our interest, it will receive no attention.

First Enoch is obviously a composite work, consisting of at least five different parts. The third part (chs. 72-82) is an astronomical treatise containing no eschatology and may here be ignored. Since Aramaic fragments of ten different MSS, representing four parts of the book, have been found in the Qumrân caves, it is quite certain that the book in its several parts was originally written in Aramaic and then translated into Greek at an early date. Considerable fragments of the Greek version have been found; these have recently been re-edited by Matthew Black (*Apocalypsis Henochi Graece* [1970]). The Greek version was translated into Ethiopic. In 1773 a traveller, James Bruce, brought three MSS in Ethiopic from Abyssinia to Britain. We now possess twenty-nine MSS, but all of them more or less corrupt. We have no materials to trace the history of the five parts of Enoch as individual books or as a collection.

Few objective criteria exist by which to date the production of these books and their collection. Most scholars believe they were written between 165 and 64 B.C., but conclusions vary considerably.

The central motif of Enoch is easy to understand. According to Gen. 5:24, Enoch was caught up from the earth to be with God. The books of Enoch relate many of the heavenly secrets that Enoch allegedly saw on his journeys through the heavens. He learned not only secrets about the end of the age and the coming of the kingdom of God, but also secrets about many of the mysteries of life and the world.

The first book (chs. 1-36) opens with a brief introduction (chs. 1-5) that contains a short passage quoted in Jude 14f.: "And behold! He cometh with ten thousand of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all and to destroy all the ungodly, and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (1:9). In this part of Enoch there is no messianic personage; it is God who comes.

The main part of the first book is concerned with the problem of evil. Evil is traced to the fallen angels who lusted after the daughters of men. The fallen angels instructed men in many arts and crafts of civilization. Furthermore, all sin is ascribed to these fallen angels (10:8). They are allowed to plague mankind throughout human history, but Enoch foresees their final doom. This book pictures the coming of the kingdom of God, but in very crude terms, "Then shall all the righteous escape, and shall live till they beget thousands of children. And all the days of their youth and their old age shall they complete in peace" (10:17). There is no messiah of any kind.

In his travels, Enoch visits Sheol. The depiction of Sheol shows considerable development beyond the OT conception of a place where all the dead have a shadowy existence. In Enoch's description there are several compartments into which men are separated according to the good and evil of their lives. The righteous are gathered into a place that has a bright fountain of water (ch. 22). Although it is not explicitly stated, Enoch probably expected a resurrection before the day of judgment.

The second book, called the Parables or Similitudes (chs. 37-71), is of great interest for NT studies. It differs significantly from the first book in that it makes no reference to the fallen angels. Instead, the wicked are said to be subject to Satans (54:6) who, unlike the fallen angels, have access to heaven (40:7f.) to accuse men. The Similitudes is of particular interest because of its distinctive doctrine of the Son of Man and the kingdom of God. In Dnl. 7 "one like a son of man" comes to the throne of God to receive the kingdom of God. Scholars disagree as to whether this passage refers to a specific individual or merely to a symbol representing the saints of God (cf. the four beasts). In any case, in Enoch the Son of Man has become an individual who is also called the Elect One. He is a superhuman, heavenly, preexistent being to whom God has given all dominion, who comes to raise the dead and to sit in judgment over all men. Twice in Enoch this Son of Man is called the "messiah" (48:10; 52:4), but as the Psalms of Solomon shows, the messiah was thought to be an earthly, human, Davidic king, not a heavenly supernatural being. Therefore it is well to distinguish between the earthly Davidic messiah and the heavenly preexistent Son of Man.

In Enoch the righteous will be raised to a glorious Kingdom. They will be "clothed with garments of glory" (62:16). Both the earth and the heaven will be transformed (45:4) as the final dwelling place for the righteous. This reflects the theology of the new heaven and a new earth in Isaiah 65:17; 66:22.

A few scholars have maintained that the figure of the heavenly Son of Man in the similitudes can be used to explain our Lord's use of the term. Others have argued that the Son of Man passages in Enoch are the result of a Christian redaction of a Jewish book. The situation is further complicated by the fact that fragments of the other four books of Enoch have been found in Qumrân; and some scholars have used this fact to argue that the Similitudes is a Christian work. However, there is no distinctive Christian element in the book. The Son of Man theme can be accounted for as a midrash on the Son of Man in Dnl. 7. This book is of great value to Gospel study because it shows how some circles in Judaism interpreted Dnl. 7.

The fourth book (chs. 83-90) is the account of two visions seen by Enoch in his dreams. The second vision uses elaborate animal symbolism to trace the history of the world down to the establishment of the messianic Kingdom. We can trace this history down to Maccabean times. In the final period the Gentiles will launch an attack upon Israel; but they will not prevail, because a deliverer will arise, who is pictured as a mighty horn sprouting on one of the sheep (90:9ff.). The judgment will take place, the wicked will be destroyed, and the surviving Gentiles will be converted to serve Israel (90:30). A new Jerusalem replaces the old, the righteous dead arise, and the messiah will lead them (90:37). He is not called "messiah," but the idea is present.

The fifth book (chs. 92-105) contains an apocalypse of weeks, in which human history is divided into a period of ten weeks. The seventh week is marked by apostasy; the eighth week is a time of righteousness; the ninth week will see the destruction of the works of the godless; and the

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tenth week will witness the final judgment of the angels. This apocalypse is notable in that the kingdom of God is in a new heaven (91:16); there is no mention of a new earth.

B. Book of Jubilees. In form Jubilees is an apocalypse, for it allegedly records the revelation God made to Moses on Mt. Sinai. "The angel of the Presence" dictates the history of the world beginning at creation and ending with Moses on Mt. Sinai. The book is called Jubilees because of its way of calculating time. History is divided into a series of forty-nine Jubilees of forty-nine years each. It has also been called the "Little Genesis," not because of its size but because it tells the story found in Genesis in much greater detail.

Scholars are generally agreed that the book was written in the 2nd cent. B.C. Fragments of the book in Hebrew have been found in three of the Qumrân caves, representing ten different MSS. The Hebrew text as a whole has been lost, and so has most of a Greek translation. We possess four Ethiopic translations of the Greek, and a sizeable fragment in Latin.

The book, although technically an apocalypse, contains very little eschatology. Its main purpose is to prove that the cultic and religious practices accepted by the author actually go back to Moses. This reflects the Jewish tradition that both the written Law and the oral interpretation of the Law go back to Moses. The author rewrites the whole history of Genesis to prove that the patriarchs observed the customs of the author's own day. It is primarily a book glorifying the Law and Israel, and urging separation from Gentile practices. Thus, e.g., the angels were created circumcised (15:27).

What little eschatology the book contains is significant. A time of decadence and apostasy will set in; but this will be followed by a renewed study of the law and obedience to the commandments. This will result in the coming of the Kingdom, which is described in very earthly terms—men will live to be 1000 years old (23:27). There is no hint of a resurrection; instead, "their bones will rest in the earth, and their spirits will have much joy" (23:31)—a very unusual teaching in Judaism.

C. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. This book (abbr. XII P.) belongs to the PSEUDEPIGRAPHIA rather than to apocalyptic literature, for it consists of twelve pseudo-prophecies allegedly uttered by each of the patriarchs before his death. Usually each of the twelve parts consists of a resume of the life of the given patriarch, emphasizing his particular merits or weaknesses; a moral application urging his sons to follow his example in the good things and warning them to avoid his sins; and a prediction of the future of the tribe. The book contains a strong eschatological element, and for this reason is usually included in the discussion of apocalyptic literature.

The text of XII P. is an unsolved problem. It exists in Greek translation and in Armenian and Slavonic translations of the Greek. Numerous fragments in Aramaic of Levi and Naphtali have been found in the Qumrân caves; but these look like fragments of sources used by the authors rather than fragments of the Semitic original. The problem of the text is further complicated by the fact that there are some obvious Christian passages in the Testaments, e.g., "In thee shall be fulfilled the prophecy of heaven, concerning the Lamb of God, and Savior of the world" (T. Benj. 3:8, *APOT*). The Armenian version lacks the Christian glosses that appear in the Greek. These facts have led to diverse conclusions. The most obvious conclusion is that XII P. is a Jewish book that has been interpolated by a Christian hand. Although some scholars have argued that XII P. *in toto* is a Christian production, the Christian passages are so obvious and interrupt the context so abruptly that this seems unlikely. One scholar has

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said, "Given such a history of the text it is apparently hopeless to try to unscramble the present omelet" (M. Smith, *IDB*, IV, 578).

The date of the book is difficult to determine. It has been dated as early as the 3rd to 2nd cent. B.C., but the prevailing date chosen by those who accept it as a Jewish work is the Maccabean period, probably in the reign of John Hyrcanus, between 140 and 110 B.C.

The book has strong moral and ethical emphasis. Dan warns against anger and sums up the law in these words: "Love the Lord throughout your life, and one another with a true heart" (T. Dan 5:3). Gad hates Joseph and warns against hatred. Joseph dwells at length on his refusal to yield to Potiphar's wife and urges mutual love that covers one another's faults.

Throughout the book, the moral law is stressed rather than the ceremonial. Sin results from the evil impulse in man, which is personified in Beliar, the prince of evil, and his seven false spirits—lust, greed, hostility, hypocrisy, arrogance, falsehood, and injustice (T. Reub. 3:3-6). The seven false spirits are therefore evil tendencies rather than demons. Repentance receives considerable attention. "For true, godlike repentance drives away the darkness, illuminates the eyes, gives knowledge to the soul, and leads the mind to salvation" (T. Gad 5:7). There is a passage in Joseph (1:5f.) that is strikingly similar to Mt. 25:35f.

Beliar plays an important role in the book and is frequently mentioned. He is the lord of darkness (T. Jos. 20:2); he can rule men (T. Dan 4:7). In the last days men will serve Beliar (T. Iss. 6:1). One is to arise (Messiah) who will make war on Beliar and deliver men from his captivity (T. Dan 5:10f.). He will bind Beliar (T. Levi 18:12) and cast him into the fire (T. Jud. 25:3). Beliar stands over against God; he is the embodiment of evil as God is of goodness. H. H. Rowley thinks that Beliar corresponds to Antichrist (*Relevance of Apocalyptic* [1963], p. 72); and although he is not a human figure, he is the personification of opposition to the will of God, and thus fills the role of Antichrist.

There are several striking similarities to the Qumrân literature, especially in the opposition of light to darkness (T. Levi 19:1; T. Jos. 20:2). The office of the priesthood is exalted over the office of the king. The descendants of Levi are urged to revere Levi and Judah—the priesthood and the Kingdom; but God "set the kingdom beneath the priesthood" (T. Jud. 21:3). Before the Qumrân materials had been published, G. R. Beasley-Murray defended the thesis that there were two messiahs in the Testaments (although they are not called "messiah"), with the kingly messiah subordinate to the priestly messiah (*JTS*, 48 [1947], 1-13); and this apparently is the messianic theology of Qumrân. "The Lord shall raise up from Levi as it were a High-Priest, and from Judah as it were a King" (T. Sim. 7:2; see also T. Iss. 6:7). Judah says, "To me the Lord gave the kingdom, and to him (Levi) the priesthood. He set the kingdom beneath the priesthood. To me He gave the things upon the earth, to him the things in the heavens. As the heaven is higher than the earth, so is the priesthood of God higher than the earthly kingdom, unless it falleth away through sin from the Lord and is dominated by the earthly king" (T. Jud. 21:2f.; cf. *APOT*).

It is clear that a messianic king is expected who will "make war against Beliar, and execute an everlasting vengeance on our enemies" (T. Dan 5:10). Israel is to be restored to her land (T. Iss. 6:4). There will be a resurrection of the patriarchs (T. Jud. 25:1), martyrs (v. 4) and all the saints (T. Levi 18:14). There will be a judgment of men, of angels and Beliar (T. Levi 3:2f.); the ungodly will be cast into eternal fire (T. Zeb. 10:3). God will visit

His people (T. Ash. 2:3), and "the saints shall rest in Eden, and in the New Jerusalem will the righteous rejoice . . . and no longer shall Jerusalem endure desolation, nor Israel be led captive, for the Lord shall be in the midst of it, and the Holy One of Israel shall reign over it" (T. Dan 5:12f.). The saints will enter into eternal life (T. Ash. 6:6).

D. Psalms of Solomon. These Psalms are not properly apocalyptic, but since they contain one of the most important eschatological passages in Jewish literature they are usually discussed in connection with this genre. Why the Psalms are ascribed to Solomon is a matter of conjecture.

The Psalms reflect a definite historical situation. Judea was plunged into war (1:2), invaded by a foreigner (17:8) who comes from the ends of the earth (8:16). The authorities opened the gates of Jerusalem to him (8:18f.), but he met stiff resistance within the walls (8:21). He broke down the walls with a battering ram (2:1) and trod Jerusalem under foot (2:20), desecrating the sanctuary (2:2). Multitudes were slain (8:23) and many taken away into captivity in the west (8:24; 17:13f.). However, the destroyer soon met his doom on the mountains of Egypt by the seashore. His body was thrown to the waves with none to bury him (2:30f.).

The situation depicted here corresponds to the historical situation in 63 B.C., when the Roman general Pompey came to Jerusalem. Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II were contending for the position of leadership of the Jews. When Pompey arrived they sent ambassadors to him bearing gifts. Hyrcanus opened the city to Pompey, but Aristobulus fortified himself on Mt. Zion; and Pompey had to lay siege and break down with rams the walls protecting the temple area. He entered the holy of holies to see what was there, thus desecrating it. He carried Aristobulus and his children back to Rome as captives. Some years later (48 B.C.) Pompey was engaged in civil war with Caesar. Defeated at Pharsalus, he fled to Egypt, where he was murdered and decapitated. His body lay for some time unburied and was finally burned on a pile of spars. The allusions to these facts indicate that the book was written shortly after 48 B.C.

The tone of the Psalms is distinctly Pharisaic. Israel is divided into the righteous poor who fear the Lord, and the sinners or transgressors who are the priestly or Sadducean aristocracy. The pious, or Hasidim, are humble and poor (16:12-15), quiet souls who seek peace (12:6), enduring patiently the chastisement of the present distress (14:1; 16:11). They look forward to a reward after death (13:9-11; 14:3; 15:15; 16:1-3) and the coming of the messianic kingdom.

The author prays for the coming of the king, the Son of David, who is called "the anointed of the Lord" (17:36; 18:8), i.e., "the Lord's Christ." He will destroy his enemies with the word of his mouth (17:37f.), purify Jerusalem, gather the righteous in Israel together under his rule. Thus "the Lord Himself is our King for ever and ever" (17:51, *APOT*).

Here is a messianic concept very different from that found in the Similitudes of Enoch. The latter, following Dnl. 7, looks for the coming of a preexistent, supramundane, heavenly figure at whose coming the very earth will be transformed. The Psalms look for the coming of a Davidic kingly messiah, arising from among men, human but divinely empowered to destroy the enemies of Israel, purify Jerusalem, and gather God's people together in an earthly kingdom. These two concepts should be kept distinct in the study of the NT.

E. Assumption of Moses. This book is extant in a single sixth-century Latin MS discovered in 1861 in Milan. The Latin is obviously translated from the Greek, and the

Greek from either Hebrew or Aramaic. It is allegedly a prophecy made by Moses to Joshua on the threshold of entering the Promised Land. Moses forecasts the future of Israel down to the coming of the Kingdom. It is largely didactic prophecy and does not use the elaborate animal symbolism of Daniel or the dream visions of Enoch. Events can be identified that belong to the Maccabean period. The insolent king (6:2) is probably Herod the Great, and the King of the West (6:8) Varus, governor of Syria, who quelled a rebellion in 4 B.C. This is followed by a time of trouble and then God's kingdom comes. The book therefore is easy to date; it must have been written shortly after the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C.

It is quite certain that ch. 8 is out of place and belongs between chs. 5 and 6. Some scholars think ch. 9 also is out of place. It contains a reference to a mysterious figure Taxo (9:1), who had seven sons. Some think this is a reference to Eleazar of Maccabean times (2 Macc. 6:18-31); others think he is an unknown contemporary of the author. S. Mowinckel (*He That Cometh* [1956], p. 301) suggests that the word "Taxo" comes from the Gk. *táxon*, "the orderer," the one who expounds the law and establishes right order. Mowinckel thinks Taxo is identical with the Teacher of Righteousness of the Qumran community.

Scholars disagree as to the nature of the Kingdom in the book. One thing is clear: there is no messianic figure for "the Most High God, the Eternal and Only God shall arise and manifest Himself to punish the nations" (10:7). "Then shalt thou be happy, O Israel, and shalt mount on the neck and wings of the eagle . . . And God shall exalt thee, and bring thee to the heaven of the stars, the place of His habitation. And thou shalt look from on high and behold thy adversaries on the earth, and shalt know them and rejoice, and give thanks, and acknowledge thy Creator" (10:7-10). It is possible that instead of "earth" (Gk. *gē*) we should read "Gehenna," for *gē* can stand alone to represent Heb. *gē-hinnōm*. Some scholars think this is a nationalistic earthly eschatology, others a wholly supramundane eschatology.

F. Second (or Slavonic) Enoch. A second book bearing the name of Enoch has been preserved only in a Slavonic version. It is not at all clear that this book belongs to NT times, for some scholars have found strong reason for dating it much later (see K. Lake, *HTR* 16 [1923]). Rowley says, "it is improbable that the first-century date will maintain itself" (*Relevance of Apocalyptic* [1963], p. 110). The book describes the things seen in the seven heavens as Enoch ascended from earth to the dwelling place of God. In the first heaven he sees the angels who guard the ice and snow and dew; in the second he sees the fallen angels in torment waiting their final doom. In the third heaven he sees both the paradise of the righteous and the place of torment for the wicked. In the fourth heaven are the sun, moon, and stars and their attending angels. In the fifth he sees the watchers who revolted against God, and their chief, Satan. In the sixth he sees the angels who superintend the forces of nature. In the seventh heaven he comes to the throne of God himself, with the archangels and the heavenly glory.

The book contains several items of interest. Enoch is told about the souls who have been created from eternity (23:5). He is told about the course of creation, which will last seven thousand years—a thousand years for each day (33:1f.). The seventh thousand years will be a period of rest, corresponding to the sabbath. Here is the one place in Jewish literature where we find the idea of a millennium—a thousand-year interim kingdom. At the end of the thousand years time shall come to an end. There will be "no compu-

tations and no end; neither months, nor weeks, nor days, nor hours" (32:2). Here is a very un-Jewish idea, for our other literature considers "eternity" to be unending time in the age to come. There is no reference to a messiah and no description of a messianic kingdom.

G. Fourth Ezra. This book was originally written in either Hebrew or Aramaic, which was in turn translated into Greek. From it have descended versions in Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, and Coptic. Of these, the Latin is the best. The Latin contains four additional chapters—two at the beginning and two at the end—that are obviously not a part of the apocalypse. The translation of the Latin, including the four additional chapters, is included in our English versions of the Apocrypha as 2 Esdras. The apocalypse alone is usually called 4 Ezra.

The book contains a series of seven visions allegedly given to Ezra in Babylon, but it was clearly written shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This is by far the most profound and moving apocalypse we possess. "Ezra" is deeply troubled that such a terrible fate could have befallen God's people, who have received and who keep God's Law. He descends to the depth of pessimism and despair, cries to God for help, and prays for a new heart (8:6, 31-33). He feels it would have been better if the human race had not been created and given the power of choice (7:116). "It would be better for us not to be here than to come here and live in ungodliness, and to suffer and not understand why" (4:12).

In answer to his despair, Ezra is told that God's ways are inscrutable (4:7-11), that human intelligence is finite and limited (4:12-21), that human history has been predetermined (4:33-43), and that God does love Israel (5:31-40). The most fundamental answer is that the evils of the present age will be righted in the future age (7:1-16). Suffering in this age is the way to future blessing. While God loves Israel, he does not love the mass of sinners (7:60f., 131). God is patient with men not because he loves men but because the times have been ordained (7:74).

The eschatology of the book is notable for its explicit dualism. "The Most High has made not one world but two" (7:50; cf. 6:7; 7:113; 8:1, 4-6). "This age is full of sadness and infirmities" (4:27); the present age has grown tired and lost the strength of youth (5:55); this age must pass away to make room for a new age (4:29).

In the first vision (3:1-5:19), Ezra is told that the end of the present age is not far off (4:44-50). The signs of the end will be widespread desolation, portents in the heavens, monstrous births, and universal wickedness (5:1-5). Ezra is also told that "one shall reign whom those who dwell on earth do not expect" (5:6)—probably the antichrist.

In the third vision (6:35-9:25) Ezra is told how the New Jerusalem will appear (7:26) and the messiah will be revealed together with those who have not tasted death. The messiah is called "my Son the Messiah." The messiah will remain for four hundred years "and those who remain shall rejoice" (7:28). Here again, as in 2 Enoch, is the idea of a temporal earthly kingdom before the age to come. After this "millennium" the messiah dies, and all men die with him. This is the one place in apocalyptic literature where we find the idea of a dying messiah. However, no reason or value is ascribed to his death. There follow seven days of silence on the earth, after which will come the resurrection of all men for the great judgment (7:31-35). Gehenna and Paradise will stand over against each other (7:36), and the judgment period will last a week of years (7:43).

Here the messiah is mortal and does not play a significant role in the Kingdom or in the Judgment. Resurrection is universal, and there is no enduring earthly kingdom, but a temporal earthly kingdom followed by the age to come.

In the fourth vision (9:26-10:59) Ezra beholds a sorrowful woman, who represents Jerusalem in all its misery and desolation. The sanctuary is laid waste and the altar broken down (10:21); the cultus and sacred songs are no more, and exile, bondage, and dishonor are the lot of the people (10:22). This passage, representing the desolation of Jerusalem, points to a date for the book shortly after A.D. 70. Suddenly the woman is transfigured so that she is no longer a woman but the New Jerusalem, surpassing in beauty. Thus the seer is assured of a blessed future for the Holy City.

The fifth vision (11:1-12:51) is the Eagle vision. The vision is of a twelve-winged eagle with three heads, which is interpreted as the fourth kingdom of Dnl. 7. The eagle thus represents Rome, whose emperors are indicated by the wings and heads. The three heads probably represent Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, who reigned as emperors A.D. 70-96. Then appears a lion, who announces the destruction of the eagle. Thereupon the eagle is destroyed and burned. The lion is declared to be the messiah, who will execute judgment upon the oppressors, deliver the righteous with mercy, and make them joyful until the day of judgment. Little is said here of the reign of the messiah, and he functions only in the role of deliverer. He merely brings joy that shall last until the unspecified time of the Judgment.

The sixth vision (ch. 13) is of interest because of the appearance of the Son of Man figure. Ezra beholds a storm-tossed sea and emerging from it is the figure of a man, who comes with the clouds of heaven. A multitude of men gather to do battle with him. He makes for himself a mountain, later explained as Mt. Zion, and flies upon it. He consumes his foes with the breath of his mouth, then calls forth a peaceable multitude. In the interpretation the deliverer is called "my Son" (13:32). The fact that he flies with the clouds of heaven shows that he is not a human messiah of the seed of David, but the heavenly transcendental figure of Dnl. 7. However, his mission is to destroy his foes and deliver the saints. Little is said about the blessings he will bestow on the righteous in the Kingdom.

The seventh vision (ch. 14) assures Ezra that he is to be translated out of the world together with "my Son" (14:9), and together with those who are like him until the time of the end; and he is told that nine of the twelve parts into which the age is divided have already passed.

In conclusion, Ezra experiences a remarkable inspiration. He takes five men into the field, and after drinking from the cup of inspiration he dictates to the five scribes for forty days and nights without stopping. During these forty days, ninety-four books are written: the twenty-four of the Hebrew canon that are for all men to read, and seventy books that are to be given "to the wise among your people" (14:46). These were apparently apocalyptic books, and this incident suggests that the apocalypses were not widely read among the people at large but were the particular possession of small esoteric groups.

These seven visions contain very diverse eschatologies and messianic ideas, and have led to theories of various sources for the apocalypse. One thing is clear: there was no "orthodox" eschatology in Judaism.

Several items in this book are of great interest. In comparison to 1 Enoch, there is little angelology. This shows that an elaborate angelology and demonology is not essential to an apocalyptic view of history. Sin did not originate with fallen angels as in Enoch, but springs from an evil heart (3:20, 22). Sin is indeed attributed to Adam, but Adam sinned because he had an evil heart (3:21). The book has quite a bit to say about faith; but faith for Ezra is not personal commitment as in the NT, but is faith in the law

(5:20). The Gentiles are condemned because they have not had faith in the law (7:24). On the other hand, Ezra frequently speaks of treasures of works laid up before God (7:27; 8:33).

H. Apocalypse of Baruch. Also dating from the late 1st cent. A.D., the Apocalypse of Baruch is similar to 4 Ezra in its theology, but is far less profound and original. Most scholars think it was written in imitation of 4 Ezra. It has been preserved in a single Syriac version.

The book opens with Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah, in Jerusalem. God announces to him the destruction of the Holy City. The next day the Chaldeans besiege the city; but before they take it, it is destroyed by four angels, who bury the sacred vessels of the temple. The Chaldeans then take possession of the city. Jeremiah goes into exile, but Baruch remains in Jerusalem lamenting its fate. He cannot understand why, if the world was made for God's people, such great evils should befall them. (As in 4 Ezra, the actual historical situation is the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.) In answer, Baruch is told that men have sinned deliberately; therefore they deserve to suffer (15:6). A future world is destined for the righteous. Here again appears the eschatological dualism of the two ages (15:7; see also 44:13-15; 51:3; 83:8). If man is prospered in the end, then everything is in order (19:7); it is the end that should be considered (19:5). Meanwhile, Zion's fate will hasten the divine visitation and the coming of the end (20:1f.). There follows a series of revelations of the final woes, judgment, the messiah, and the messianic kingdom. These events are revealed not by the medium of visions or dreams, but in the form of a dialogue with God.

The revelations begin with a time of tribulation when men will abandon hope (25:4). The tribulation is divided into twelve disasters which will precede the messianic age. These woes will affect the whole earth (29:1), but those who are in the land will be protected (29:2). "The Messiah shall then begin to be revealed" (29:4), and the Kingdom—portrayed in crudely materialistic terms—will be established. Two great monsters, Leviathan and Behemoth, which have been kept in the sea since the fifth day of creation, will come up from the sea to serve as food for those who enter the Kingdom (29:4). "The earth also shall yield its fruit ten thousandfold, and on one vine there shall be a thousand branches, and each branch shall produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster shall produce a thousand grapes, and each grape shall produce a cor (120 gal.) of wine" (29:5). Manna will again descend from on high.

"And it shall come to pass after these things, when the time of the advent of the Messiah is fulfilled, that He shall return in glory" (30:1, *APOT*). This is a perplexing passage, for the messiah seems to be revealed before the beginning of the Kingdom. Many interpret this passage as saying that the messiah will return to heaven after his reign in the Kingdom. It is possible, however, that it refers to his coming to earth. He only *begins* to be revealed before the Kingdom; his advent occurs after the Kingdom. In any case, we have here a temporal earthly Kingdom, which is followed by the resurrection of "all who have fallen asleep in hope of Him" (30:2). The souls of the wicked, however, will waste away in torment (30:4f.). This is to be followed by the renewal of creation (32:6). In this passage the messiah seems to be only a conventional figure, without any significant function.

In the second section (chs. 36-40) Baruch is given a dream-vision of the coming of the Kingdom. In the vision, he sees a forest that represents the four kingdoms of Dnl. 7. In the forest is one great cedar. Then he sees a peaceable fountain that submerges the forest, rooting out the greater

part of the trees so that none is left except the great cedar. Finally the fountain destroys also the cedar.

Baruch's interpretation of this vision takes the fountain to be "the principate of My Messiah" (39:7). The tall cedar is "the last leader of that time" (40:1), possibly the antichrist. The victory of the fountain over the cedar means that "My Messiah shall convict him of all his impieties . . . and afterwards he shall put him to death, and protect the rest of My people which shall be found in the place which I have chosen. And his principate shall stand for ever, until the world of corruption is at an end, and until the times aforesaid are fulfilled" (40:2f.). Here the Kingdom is an everlasting earthly kingdom, and the messiah a warlike deliverer who does not destroy by the word of his mouth but by the sword in his hand. The antichrist is apparently a human figure, the last Roman sovereign; and Messiah's Kingdom lasts forever. Nothing is said about the Age to Come.

A third section (chs. 49-52) is important for its teaching on the resurrection. Baruch asks in what shape men will come forth in the resurrection. He is told that men will first come to life again in the same form in which they died, in order that they may recognize one another. After this recognition, they will be changed. "Those who have now been justified by My law" (51:3) shall be "turned into the light of their beauty," that they may inherit the world that does not die. They shall be transformed into the splendor of angels because they have been "saved by their works" and the Law has been to them a hope. They shall dwell "in the heights of that world" and "be made like unto the angels, and be made equal to the stars, and they shall be changed into every form they desire" (51:10, *APOT*) in paradise.

A final apocalypse is found in chs. 53-74. In it Baruch sees another dream-vision in which the entire course of history is disclosed to him in the likeness of twelve white and black waters pouring upon the earth from a great cloud. The black waters represent evil periods in Israel's history, the last of which is the Roman period, and the bright waters represent good periods in history. Finally, he sees lightning on the summit of the cloud, which shines so brightly that it illuminates the whole earth, and heals the place of the last black waters and has dominion over all the earth. The lightning represents "My Messiah" who shall "summon all the nations, and some of them He shall spare, and some of them he shall slay . . . Every nation which knoweth not Israel and hath not trodden down the seed of Jacob shall indeed be spared" (72:2, 4, *APOT*). Those who have ruled over Israel shall be given to the sword. Here the messiah is a warlike being who slays Israel's enemies with his own hands. Thus the Kingdom is established.

It is clear that Baruch's concept of righteousness is legalistic. The righteous can die in peace because "they have with Thee a store of works preserved in treasures" (14:12). Paradise will be opened to "those who have been saved by their works" (51:7). Baruch, like 4 Ezra, has no doctrine of fallen angels. However, his theology of sin is different. In 4 Ezra sin is due to an evil heart; but in Baruch every man is free. Adam was indeed the first to sin; but Adam's successors are responsible for their own sin. Man may choose torment or glories to come. "Adam is therefore not the cause, save only of his own soul, but each of us has been the Adam of his own soul" (54:19, *APOT*).

See also APOCRYPHAL APOCALYPSES; PSEUDEPIGRAPHA.

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APOCRYPHA.

I. Definition

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3. In the NT
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B. "Esoteric"

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I. Definition.—The word "Apocrypha," as usually understood, denotes the collection of religious writings that the LXX and Vulgate (with trivial differences) contain that are not included in the Jewish and Protestant canon. This is not the original or the correct sense of the word, as will be shown, but the one it bears almost exclusively in modern speech.

It is customary to speak of the collection of writings now in view as the OT Apocrypha, because many of the books at least were written in Hebrew, the language of the OT, and because all of them are much more closely allied to the OT than to the NT. But there is a "New" as well as an "Old" Testament Apocrypha consisting of gospels, epistles, etc. Moreover the adjective "apocryphal" is also often applied in modern times to what are now generally called "pseudepigraphical" writings, so designated because ascribed in the titles to authors who did not and could not have written them (e.g., Enoch, Abraham, Moses). The persons thus connected with these books are among the most distinguished in the traditions and history of Israel, and there can be no doubt that the reason for using such names is to add weight and authority to these writings. See PSEUDEPIGRAPHA.

II. Usage.—When the word "apocryphal" was first used in ecclesiastical writings it bore a sense virtually identical with "esoteric," as we shall see, so that "apocryphal writings" were such as appealed to an inner circle and could not be understood by outsiders. The present connotation of the term did not become fixed until the Protestant Reformation had set in, limiting the biblical canon to its present dimensions among Protestant churches.

A. Original Meanings. 1. *Classical.* The Gk. adjective *apókryphos* denotes strictly "hidden," "concealed," of a

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material object (Euripides *Hercules furens* 1070). Then it came to signify what is obscure, recondite, hard to understand (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3.5, 14). But in classical Greek it never has any other sense.

2. *Hellenistic.* In Hellenistic Greek as represented by the LXX and the NT there is no essential departure from classical usage. In the LXX (or rather Theodotion's version) of Dnl. 11:43 it stands for "hidden" as applied to gold and silver stores. But the word has also in the same text the meaning "what is hidden away from human knowledge and understanding." So Dnl. 2:20 (Th.), where the *apókrypha* or hidden things are the meanings of Nebuchadnezzar's dream revealed to Daniel though "hidden" from the wise men of Babylon. The word has the same sense in Sir. 14:21; 39:3,7; 42:19; 48:25; 43:32.

3. *In the NT.* In the NT the word occurs but thrice, viz., Mk. 4:22 par. Lk. 8:17; Col. 2:3. In the last passage Lightfoot thought we have in the word *apókryphoi* (treasures of Christ hidden) an allusion to the vaunted esoteric knowledge of the false teachers, as if Paul meant to say that in Christ alone we have true wisdom and knowledge and not in the secret books of these teachers. Assuming this, we have in this verse the first example of *apókryphos* in the sense "esoteric." But the evidence is against so early a use of the term in this—soon to be its prevailing—sense. Nor does exegesis demand such a meaning here, for no writings of any kind seem intended.

4. *Patristic.* In patristic writings of an early period the adjective *apókryphos* came to be applied to Jewish and Christian writings containing secret knowledge about the future, etc., intelligible only to the small number of disciples who read them and for whom they were believed to be specially provided. To this class of writings belong in particular those designated apocalyptic (see APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE), and it will be seen that *apókryphos* as thus employed has virtually the meaning of the Gk. *esōterikós*.

B. "Esoteric." From quite early times the philosophers of ancient Greece distinguished between the doctrines and rites which could be taught to all their pupils, and those which could profitably be communicated only to a select circle called the initiated. The two classes of doctrines and rites—they were mainly the latter—were designated respectively "exoteric" and "esoteric." Lucian (d. 312; see *Vitarum Auctio* 26), followed by many others, referred the distinction to Aristotle, but wrongly as modern scholars agree, for the *exōterikoi λόγοι* of that philosopher denote popular treatises. The Pythagoreans recognized and observed these two kinds of doctrines and duties, and there is good reason for believing that they created a corresponding double literature, though unfortunately no explicit examples of such literature have come down to us. In the Greek mysteries (Orphic, Dionysiac, Eleusinian, etc.) two classes of hearers and readers are implied all through, though it is a pity that more of the literature bearing on the question has not been preserved. Among the Buddhists the *Samga* forms a close society open originally to monks or *bhikkhus* admitted only after a most rigid examination; but in later years nuns (*bhikkhunis*) also have been allowed admission, though in their case too after careful testing. The *Vinaya Pitaka* or "Basket of Discipline" contains the rules for entrance and the regulations to be observed after entrance. But this and kindred literature were and are still held to be caviar to outsiders.

It must be borne in mind that the word "apocrypha" is really a Greek adjective in the neuter plural, denoting strictly "things hidden." But almost certainly the noun *biblia* is understood, so that the real implication of the word is "apocryphal books" or "writings." In this article apoc-

THE INTERPRETER'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE

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מלאה הארץ דעה את־יהוה

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord—ISAIAH 11:9c

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NASHVILLE

APHEKAH ʾfē'kə [פֶּקָה] (Josh. 15:53). A city assigned to the tribe of Judah. The location is still unknown.

APHEREMA. KJV form of APHAIREMA.

APHERRA ʾfēr'ə ['Αφερρά] (I Esd. 5:34). Head of a family of Solomon's servants. His name is omitted in the parallels Ezra 2:57; Neh. 7:59.

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APHIAH ʾfī'ə [פִּיחָה] (I Sam. 9:1). A Benjaminitic who was one of the ancestors of King Saul.

APHIK. Alternate form of APHEK 3.

APHRAH. See BETH-LE-APHRAH.

APHSES. KJV form of HAPPIZZEEZ.

APIS ʾpīs. The translation of אִפִּס in Jer. 46:15, resulting from a redimension of the Hebrew text, reading מִדּוֹן נָהָה, "Why has Apis fled?" (RSV), instead of מִדּוֹן נִהָה, "Why are [they] swept away?" (KJV). The sacred bull known as Apis was worshiped in Memphis by the Egyptians from earliest historical times as a general god of fertility. Although he was primarily a manifestation of the god Ptah, his fertility function led to his being closely associated with OSIRIS in Greco-Roman times and to his being regarded as the reincarnation of that god, under the name Osiris-Apis or Serapis. The representative bull was chosen with great care by the priests of the cult, and during its lifetime it was accorded all the honors concomitant with divine adoration. At its death it was mummified and buried in one of the several places reserved in Egypt for that purpose.

Fig. API 37.

Bibliography. S. A. B. Mercer, *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* (1949), pp. 233-34; J. Černý, *Ancient Egyptian Religion* (1952).

T. O. LAMBDIN



Courtesy of Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

37. The bull Apis, its body decorated with a winged scarab, a vulture, and a fringed carpet; Saïte period (ca. 663-525 B.C.)

APOCALYPSE OF JOHN ʾpök'ə lips. See REVELATION, BOOK OF.

APOCALYPSES, APOCRYPHAL. A comparatively small group of apocryphal writings attributed to NT characters (Peter, Paul, Thomas, Stephen, the Virgin, etc.) and purporting to provide visions of the next world and (occasionally) prophecies of the end of this world. See APOCRYPHA, NT, for a further statement and a list of those apocalypses to which separate articles are devoted herein. M. S. ENSLIN

***APOCALYPTICISM** ʾpök'ə lip'tə siz əm. A type of religious thought which apparently originated in Zoroastrianism, the ancient Persian religion (see PERSIA, HISTORY AND RELIGION OF); taken over by Judaism in the exilic and postexilic periods; and mediated by Judaism to early Christianity. Taking firm roots there, it has continued as an important element in popular Christian belief down to the present. It may be defined as the dualistic, cosmic, and eschatological belief in two opposing cosmic powers, God and Satan (or his equivalent); and in two distinct ages—the present, temporal and irretrievably evil age under Satan, who now oppresses the righteous but whose power God will soon act to overthrow; and the future, perfect and eternal age under God's own rule, when the righteous will be blessed forever. See ESCHATOLOGY; DUALISM.

Literary works embodying this belief, of which there are many examples both in ancient Judaism and in early Christianity, are known as apocalypses (see DANIEL; REVELATION, BOOK OF; ENOCH, BOOK OF; BARUCH, APOCALYPSE OF; etc.; see also PSEUDEPIGRAPHA). Our term has often been defined so loosely and broadly as almost to lose any distinctiveness. Thus books or portions of them as divergent as Joel, Amos, Zechariah, Daniel, Isa. 24-27, Jubilees, I Enoch, the Testament of Abraham, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Paul, II Esdras, Revelation, the Psalms of Solomon, Er's vision of the next world in Plato's *Republic*, and the Apocalypse of Peter have all been termed apocalyptic by one writer or another. (See JOEL, BOOK OF; AMOS; ZECHARIAH, BOOK OF; JUBILEES, BOOK OF; ABRAHAM, TESTAMENT OF; HERMAS, SHEPHERD OF; PAUL, APOCALYPSE OF; ESDRAS, BOOKS OF; SOLOMON, PSALMS OF; PETER, APOCALYPSE OF.) Such vagueness of definition is due to a failure to distinguish between elements in the basic pattern of apocalypticism and various secondary features often present in apocalypses but by no means normative or constitutive.

1. The basic pattern
 - a. Dualistic
 - b. Eschatological
 2. Secondary features
 - a. Vision
 - b. Pseudonymity
 - c. A messiah
 - d. Angelology and demonology
 - e. Animal symbolism
 - f. Numerology
 - g. Predicted woes
 - h. Astral influences
 3. The relevance of apocalyptic
- Bibliography

START

1. **The basic pattern. a. Dualistic.** Apocalypticism is essentially dualistic. This is not a metaphysical DUALISM of spirit and matter; instead, it is the dualism of two opposing personified forces in the universe, a good god and an evil one, hence a cosmic dualism. In ancient Persian thinking the two opposing gods of good and evil, Ormazd and Ahriman, were co-equal, but were as different as light from darkness. In Jewish thinking Yahweh, of course, was the good God, whereas SATAN (or his equivalent), no longer merely Yahweh's agent as the tempter of mankind, was both God's opponent and man's oppressor. Because of the traditional monotheism of Judaism the dualism was not so marked as it was in Persian thinking. Satan was clearly inferior to God, at times was considered to be just a fallen angel. In general, God is in over-all control, with Satan ruling merely at God's good pleasure. In IV Ezra the dualism is attenuated, so that, in the main, a person's wicked deeds are attributed to the evil Yetzer; however, in the Apocalypse of Abraham, which is almost contemporaneous with IV Ezra, the dualism is much more in evidence. In Christian thinking Satan (or the Devil) is quite active as both the opponent of God and the tempter and oppressor of mankind; even so, he is inferior to God, not his equal in power.

This type of thinking may be termed cosmic dualism, since the entire cosmos, the earth, the underworld, and heaven, along with their inhabitants, are all involved in the opposition between the powers of good and evil. In Persian thinking all living creatures, both men and supernatural beings, are divided according to their allegiance to Ormazd or Ahriman. This division is also evident in Jewish and Christian apocalypses; it is most apparent, perhaps, in Revelation, where the greater number of the human and supernatural followers of God have their counterparts among Satan's human and supernatural forces.

b. Eschatological. The eschatological element in the apocalyptic pattern is combined with the cosmic dualism. For both time and beyond-time are involved; there are two distinct and separate ages; the second is not the outgrowth of the first, but is a new creation. The first, this present age of human history, is under the dominion of the power of evil. Consequently, it is evil and corrupt, and many of the inhabitants of earth are the evil followers of Satan, the evil power. The righteous followers of God are oppressed and persecuted and may even be put to death by their wicked contemporaries. There is no hope for them in this present age, which not only is evil but is irretrievably so. Conditions will become worse rather than better. The righteous are helpless.

Their only hope, then, is that God will soon intervene with might and power, engaging Satan in a cosmic conflict that will involve the whole of creation. After his victory God will inaugurate a new age under his immediate control. The righteous followers of God will live under his rule in an eternity of blessedness as their reward for their loyalty and faithfulness to him. Thus, the apocalyptic hope is otherworldly—pessimistic concerning this present age of history, but optimistic concerning the age to come. Frequently, but not always, in apocalypticism, this earth, as well as this age, is brought to an end, to be replaced by a newly created, incorrupt earth, or by

the descent of a heavenly city. This dualism of the two earths, however, seems to have been subordinate to, and dependent on, the dualism of the two ages.

Apocalypticism, then, provides both an explanation of the evil that is so evident in this present age and a solution of the concrete problem of the righteous. In some way or other, Satan, who is evil, has gained control of this present age, and he is responsible for its wickedness and corruption and for the evils and oppression suffered by the righteous. However, with the overthrow of Satan by God and with the end of his age, all evil disappears; and the new age, ruled over by God, will be perfectly good and righteous.

Apocalypticism, then, may readily be differentiated from prophetism, messianism, and the expectation of the kingdom of God; for these are not dualistic, cosmic in scope, and eschatological, as is the apocalyptic hope. Instead, they are based upon the belief that God is in control of this age, not Satan, and that this age will not come to an end, but is improvable. A hope of the resurrection was in time added to this belief, but even so the basic position of apocalypticism is quite different.

2. **Secondary features.** The secondary features of apocalypticism add color and interest to the basic pattern, by imparting mystery and an appearance of complexity. But they should not obscure the relatively uncomplicated and simple nature of the basic pattern; nor should they be mistaken for the primary, essential elements of the pattern.

a. Vision. Because the term "apocalypse" is from a Greek word meaning a disclosure, a revelation, a vision, it is often asserted that an apocalypse must be a purported vision or series of visions. True enough, apocalypses are often of this kind (e.g., Daniel, II Esdras, and Revelation). On the other hand, Isa. 24-27, an apocalyptic interpolation into the book of Isaiah, does not claim to be the report of a vision; neither do the little apocalypses in Did. 16; Asmp. Moses 10. Paul, although professing to be a visionary, does not state that his apocalyptic teachings (cf. I Cor. 15:20-28) are visionary in origin. Lactantius presents his lengthy apocalypse in book VII of his *Divine Institutes* without any suggestion that it came to him in a vision. Likewise, certain apocalyptic sources which are embedded in longer works proposing to be visionary, such as the Apocalypse of Weeks in Enoch 93; 91:12-17, may not originally have claimed to be visions.

Actually, instead of being primary characteristics of apocalypses, purported visions are but a vehicle of presentation, a literary technique to gain attention and authority for a writing. A careful study of these apocalyptic visions will reveal their artificial character; they are not records of actual experiences, but are literary productions, using sources and conforming to traditional patterns.

Since an apocalypse is usually considered to be a vision, a number of works that are not apocalypses, but profess to be records of visionary experiences, are at times considered to be apocalyptic. This term is applied to works like EZEKIEL; HERMAS; and JUALES, but it is even more frequently used in speaking of reputed visions of the next life or of the next world, such as are found in the Testament of Abraham, the Life of Adam and Eve, II Cor. 12:1-4, Er

vision of the next world as related in Plato's *Republic*, the so-called Apocalypse of Paul, and Plutarch's account of the three-day visit by the soul of a certain Thespisus to the realm of the dead, where he saw the wicked being tortured. Some of these experiences are eschatological in character, but this does not necessarily make them apocalyptic, for apocalypticism evolves a distinctive type of eschatology.

b. Pseudonymity. It is also stated quite frequently that pseudonymity (the literary device of ascribing a work to someone other than the actual author, usually a person of importance, like Elijah, Enoch, Abraham, or Peter) is a basic characteristic of apocalypticism. Certainly it is characteristic of quite a number of apocalypses, among them I Enoch, Daniel, Peter, II Esdras, and the Ascension of Isaiah. But Paul uses his own name in writing I Cor. 15:20-28, as does Hippolytus in his *On Christ and Antichrist* and Lactantius in book VII of his *Divine Institutes*. It is quite possible that a certain Christian named John, but not John the apostle, wrote the book of Revelation. Isa. 24-27 apparently was originally anonymous, but it gains a certain aura of pseudonymity by being interpolated into the prophecy of Isaiah. Possibly still other apocalyptic sources now found in pseudonymous works were also originally anonymous. Pseudepigraphy, like purported visionary experiences, is an old but effective literary device for obtaining sanction and authority for an apocalyptic prediction. It is not a primary element in apocalypticism.

In this connection it should be noted that the pseudonymous nature of most of the extant apocalypses has a relationship to the visionary experiences reported in these writings. All too frequently when it is admitted that a given work is pseudonymous, it is also stated that the author was a true visionary, obtaining his knowledge through his visionary experiences. Daniel (from 7:2 on) is pseudonymous according to the great majority of scholars, written during the Maccabean period by someone unknown by name to us, who attributed his work to a much earlier person named Daniel. Yet it is stated at times that the author of Daniel was a visionary, relating his own personal experiences. If so, why did he attribute his visions to someone else—to Daniel—instead of claiming them for himself? The answer is rather obvious: the author of Daniel, whoever and whatever he was, was not a visionary—otherwise he would have claimed the marvelous visions in his book for himself (rather than attributing them to an ancient worthy). Thus there may be a relationship between pseudonymity and reputed apocalyptic visions in that both are literary devices to gain sanction for the author's message.

c. A messiah. Strangely enough, a messiah is also a secondary feature of apocalypticism, although, to be sure, the Christian apocalypses, perforce, have a messiah—namely, Jesus Christ (in his second advent, not his first). Jewish apocalypses may or may not have a messiah. None is presented in Isa. 24-27, and none in Daniel, for the Danielic Son of man is actually the personification of the righteous remnant of Israel. There is no messiah in the source known as the Apocalypse of Weeks in Enoch, nor in Asmp. Moses 10. The Elect One (Messiah) appears in

a limited role in the final chapters of the Apocalypse of Abraham, but these chapters may be later additions to the book. On the other hand, the SON OF MAN, a glorious and powerful pre-existent heavenly messiah, plays an important part in the Similitudes of Enoch (cf. chs. 46; 48; 62-63; 69). A messiah of quite a different kind, a human being, symbolized as a bull with large horns, comes after the judgment in the dream-visions of Enoch (90:37), but he has no particular function. In II Esd. 7:28-29 the messiah appears without prior announcement, and dies after playing a rather vague role during the four-hundred-year messianic interval. The relatively unimportant role of the messiah in certain apocalyptic sources, together with his absence from others, indicates that he is an addition to the Jewish apocalyptic tradition and is not a primary element of the pattern. Christianity, as we have noted, of necessity introduced the heavenly Christ into its apocalypticism; but even in Revelation various angels perform functions that might more naturally be assigned to him in the cosmic drama that is taking place. This suggests that the Messiah was missing, perhaps, from a number of the sources used in Revelation.

With the introduction of a messiah of one kind or another into apocalypticism, it was in order to balance him with a Satanic counterpart, the antimessiah or ANTICHRIST. The Antichrist was introduced into Christian apocalyptic at an early period, and became increasingly significant. Even so, he is even more a secondary characteristic of apocalypticism than the messiah is.

Strictly speaking, without a messiah there can be no messianic kingdom between the present age ruled over by Satan and God's future age. An interim "week" between these two ages, but without a messiah, is predicted in the Apocalypse of Weeks in Enoch. As stated previously, II Esd. 7:28-29 provides a messianic interval with a messiah; however, nothing is said about this period save that the messiah and the righteous who survive the first age will rejoice during the four hundred years, and then will die. This messianic interim will be followed by the new age and the general resurrection. The neo-Hebraic Apocalypse of Elijah predicts a messianic interim of forty years, which are described as years of plenty. On the other hand, there is no messianic reign in such apocalyptic sources as Isa. 24-27, Daniel, the Assumption of Moses, and the Apocalypse of Abraham. Evidently it is an addition to the apocalyptic tradition, representing the merging of the apocalyptic hope with messianism; hence, it is a secondary feature, not a primary element of the basic apocalyptic pattern. Even in Christian sources like Mark 13 and parallels; II Thess. 2:1-12; II Pet. 3:1-12; Did. 16, the Second Coming is mentioned without any specific reference to an interim kingdom of Christ. Paul allows for such a reign, but its duration is not definite (I Cor. 15:24-26). Even in Revelation, Christ's interim kingdom of a thousand years is not accorded much significance insofar as space is concerned, for it is mentioned but briefly and all too vaguely in but three verses of a total of 404 verses for the entire book. This may indicate that the author did not attach much importance to this interim period, but introduced it into the pattern to

provide a special but indefinite role to Jesus Christ on his return, as well as a unique reward for the Christian martyrs. See MILLENNIUM.

d. Angelology and demonology. Apocalypticism is frequently marked by elaborate angelology and demonology, with archangels and other good angels on God's side in the cosmic drama, and fallen angels and evil spirits on the other side. There is a considerable amount of angelology, and in some cases demonology as well, in sources like Daniel, the Ascension of Isaiah, Revelation, and certain sections of Enoch. On the other hand, there is little or none in other sources, such as Isa. 24-27; the Apocalypse of Weeks; Did. 16; Asmp. Moses 10; or even in the much later book VII of Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*. Angelology and demonology were much more in evidence in Judaism following the Persian period than in earlier times, and are to be found in nonapocalyptic as well as in apocalyptic sources. Angels and evil spirits found their way into some apocalypses, but not into all. With God becoming a transcendent deity in the apocalypses, it was but natural that hosts of angels of one kind or another were assigned to do much of his work in the world. Accordingly, in Revelation the angels are very numerous and perform various functions. In order to maintain a cosmic balance, fallen angels and evil spirits were introduced as their Satanic counterparts. It need not be considered, however, that angels and demons are essential to apocalypticism; they are secondary, not primary, features.

e. Animal symbolism. A further secondary characteristic is that of animal and bird symbolism, at times bizarre in character, and in part mythological or astrological in origin. Such symbolism is not restricted to apocalypticism, but is provided by Ezekiel (the four living creatures); II Esd. 11 (the eagle vision, a messianic passage); II Bar. 29 (Behemoth and Leviathan); Pss. Sol. 2:29 (a dragon); and in other nonapocalyptic sources. On the other hand, this type of symbolism is present in certain apocalypses. The beasts of Daniel and Revelation are well known. Animal symbolism is also present in Isa. 24-27; in the dream-visions of Enoch 83-90; and in the Apocalypse of Abraham, e.g. But such symbolism is missing from the Similitudes and from the Apocalypse of Weeks in Enoch, from Asmp. Moses 10; from Did. 16; from the Ascension of Isaiah; and from the Apocalypse of Peter. Surely this type of symbolism, despite its frequent appearance in apocalypses, must be considered a secondary, not a primary, element of apocalypticism. Still other types of symbolism are used in apocalyptic writings, as is true of certain prophetic works as well. Indeed, some of the apocalyptic symbolism was borrowed from the prophetic books, as a comparison of Revelation, e.g., with certain of the OT prophets will readily show. On the other hand, there are other prophetic and apocalyptic writings that are practically devoid of colorful symbolism of any type.

f. Numerology. It is also averred that apocalypticism is characterized by numerology. This, in part, is true of Daniel, and to a considerable degree of Revelation, but the latter is by no means typical in this respect. Certainly ancient peoples, Jews and Christians among them, considered that numbers had

some mystical significance. Consequently, numerology is to be found in both apocalyptic and nonapocalyptic writings. Furthermore, there are sources of both types in which no numerology is in evidence. Here, again, numerology is a popular belief that has been used in some apocalypses, disused in others.

g. Predicted woes. Another purportedly characteristic feature of apocalypticism is a list of stereotyped woes preceding the end of this present age. True enough, lists of this type, predicting terrestrial disasters and cosmic disturbances, are found in apocalypses, in Asmp. Moses 10, the Apocalypse of Abraham, and Revelation, e.g. But they are also present in prophetic books (as in Joel 3:14 ff) and in messianic sources (cf. II Bar. 70). There is no list of woes in Daniel, which merely states that before the end there will be a time of trouble such as there has never been before (12:1). This general statement may have been an occasion for the inclusion of specific woes in later apocalypses. However, there is an embryonic list in Isa. 24:18-20, an early source, which may have suggested later lists. Terrestrial disasters and cosmic disturbances involving irregularities in the heavenly bodies are not unrelated, for in keeping with astral thinking, what is to occur on earth has already been determined in heaven by the stars.

h. Astral influences. According to astral beliefs, the zodiac with its constellations was a heavenly tablet or book predetermining the deeds and fate of mankind. Judaism, and later, Christianity, appropriated this concept, so that in both apocalyptic and nonapocalyptic sources heavenly books of various types are mentioned—those that predict the future, and those that record the deeds which men have already committed. These heavenly books, when mentioned, are interesting additions to the apocalyptic tradition. In a sense, it might be noted, each apocalypse, or portion thereof, which predicts the future on the basis of a visit to heaven by the writer or a revelation made to him by an angel is a heavenly book (as are the Ten Commandments or the Koran).

The belief in a heavenly city, misnamed the New Jerusalem, which is the perfect heavenly pattern of its earthly counterpart, goes back, again, to astral thinking. Actually, the New Jerusalem is not "new," since it existed in heaven before the earthly one could come into being. Comparable to this belief in a heavenly city is that of a heavenly Garden of Eden, and a heavenly tree of life. These astral concepts appear in a few of the apocalypses, with the additional view that in the age to come the righteous would live in the heavenly Jerusalem or in the heavenly Garden of Eden, or in a combination of both (Enoch 90:29; II Esd. 7:26; 10:25-28; Apocalypse of Abraham 21; Apocalypse of Peter 15-16; Rev. 21-22; the neo-Hebraic Apocalypse of Elijah; see ELIJAH, APOCALYPSE OF). In some instances (e.g., Revelation and Elijah) the heavenly city and garden descend to earth.

As has been noted, determinism has been in evidence in apocalyptic thinking. In part this stems from astralism, in part from faith in the omnipotence of God. The end is predetermined; Satan is to be overcome and his age brought to an end; God's new age is to be established; those who are to be saved are predetermined; likewise, the time when

the end is to take place has been set. Marked though this aspect of determinism is, it is not in order to say that it was an original and indispensable part of the apocalyptic pattern. It is possible that apocalypticism itself is a development of astralism, with its concept of the perfect heavenly pattern and the imperfect earthly copy, which could have led to a dualism in space of heaven and earth and in time of this age and the next, the first related to the earth, the second to heaven. This, however, is a surmise for which adequate evidence is lacking.

3. The relevance of apocalyptic. Apocalypticism is hopelessly pessimistic concerning this present age of human history, which is evil and corrupt, with no prospect whatever of betterment or improvement. Since it is irredeemable, it must be brought to a calamitous end by divine intervention. Along with this pessimism there went the related conviction that there is nothing the righteous can do to make this age a better time in which to live. Everything awaits God's expected intervention. Thus mankind is relieved of responsibility for the evils of this age. The doctrine of the kingdom of God is quite different. According to it God has not abdicated this earth to Satan; furthermore, this present (and only) age is capable of improvement if men will only learn and do God's will. Consequently, the kingdom-of-God concept is optimistic insofar as this present age is concerned, and requires that men help to improve it. The defeatism of apocalypticism may well account for the almost complete absence of ethical and social teachings from the apocalypses (II Enoch 49 ff is indeed an exception). Righteousness, for the most part, consists of loyalty and devotion to God, and is related in the main to nation or to cultus. Wickedness, on the other hand, is marked by idolatry and by the oppression of the righteous, or it may consist of being a member of a nation other than Judaism or of a religion other than Christianity.

Even so, apocalypticism has had and will continue to have a great influence, and in the main the more difficult, dismal, arduous, and perplexing the times are, the greater the influence will be. In general, it has been most widely accepted among the have-nots, the poor, the dispossessed, the oppressed, and the persecuted; this, no doubt, partly accounts for the adoption of it by the early Christians. In fact, oppression and persecution seem to have been strong incentives for the writing of apocalypses.

The strong appeal of apocalypticism down through the centuries is also in part due to its uncomplicated explanation for the existence of evil and to its strikingly dramatic solution of this age-long problem. Moreover, as the cosmic drama of the conflict between the forces of good and evil is portrayed, the reader or listener may come to think of himself as being involved in a great cosmic process; as being, indeed, not merely an interested spectator, but more a personal participant in the triumph of the forces of good over the forces of evil.

Mistaken though apocalypticism has been in its world view and in its concept of a transcendent avenging deity, it has not been without significance in the history of both Judaism and Christianity. It strengthened both Jews and Christians in times of persecution, when the former were persecuted by the

Syrians and when both were persecuted by the Romans. Although it assumes that for the time being God has removed himself from the world and his people, it teaches that before long he will assume his sovereignty so that finally right will triumph over wrong. If man should believe that he, unaided, can work out his own salvation and correct the ills of the world, apocalypticism may serve as a corrective to human pride, but not necessarily the best corrective. Its emphasis upon eternal rewards for the persecuted and eternal punishments for the persecutors marks a step in the development of Christian views concerning life after death, including the resurrection, the judgment, and rewards and punishments. Revelation in particular has made its imprint upon Christian art, music, and liturgy. Much of our present theological thinking has been influenced directly or indirectly by apocalypticism. Consequently, it is essential to have an understanding of its basic features.

See also DANIEL § 2h.


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M. RIST


END

APOCRYPHA əpōk'rəfə. The title applied, in ordinary Protestant usage, to a collection of fourteen or fifteen books, or parts of books, which at one time stood in our English Bibles between the OT and the NT. These books are, according to the RSV, the following: I and II Esdras; Tobit; Judith; the Additions to the Book of Esther; the Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach; Baruch, including the Letter of Jeremiah; the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men; Susanna; Bel and the Dragon; the Prayer of Manasseh; I and II Maccabees. See the individual entries for the discussion of each of these works. (For discussion of the NT Apoc., see APOCRYPHA, NT.)

These books, with one or two exceptions, came to be included in the SEPTUAGINT, or Greek translation of the OT, but not in the Hebrew scriptures as finally "canonized" by the Council of Jamnia (ca. A.D. 90). They were all written during the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. Among the Apocrypha may be found books of history, like I and II Maccabees; romantic tales, like Tobit and Judith; a beautiful liturgical psalm in the Prayer of Manasseh; two masterpieces of the wisdom school, Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon; and an apocalyptic work in II Esdras. There are also additions to the canonical books of Esther, Jeremiah, and Daniel. All these books were written originally in Hebrew or Aramaic, with the exception of the Wisdom of Solomon and II Maccabees, which were composed in Greek. The fact that the Hebrew and Aramaic works were translated into Greek, and, together with the Wisdom of Solomon and II Maccabees, were circulated with the Greek OT, shows how popular this literature was in the intertestamental period. Other Jewish writings from this time include the so-called PSEUDEPIGRAPHA, hitherto unknown works discovered in the library of MSS at Qumran (see DEAD SEA SCROLLS), and numerous books now lost, but



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fold. (1) The OT, outside the book of Daniel, speaks of a legendary figure, Daniel or Danel (Ezek. 14:14, 20; 28:3). (2) Nonbiblical texts mention a legendary Daniel. The fourteenth-century B.C. Egyptian texts (see UGARIT) speak of a Daniel noted for his wisdom and judgment. In the book of Jubilees (in the PSEUDEPIGRAPHA), a Daniel is the great-grandfather of Noah. In some of the Aramaic QUMRAN or DEAD SEA SCROLLS a Daniel appears who offers summaries of world history. (3) The Greek version of Daniel has preserved additional legends about the man not found in the Hebrew text. (4) The nature of the book of Daniel suggests that he was a legendary figure of wisdom and piety rather than an actual historical person.

J.H.

DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265–1321). Italian poet, philosopher, and statesman, acclaimed for his *Divine Comedy* and *Concerning Monarchy*. Born in Florence, he grew up in middle-class surroundings, losing his parents at an early age, but little is known of his boyhood. Philosopher Brunetto Latini directed Dante's education toward philosophy and languages. He first met Beatrice (probably Beatrice Portinari) about 1274, but she married someone else and died at the age of twenty-four in 1290. Dante expressed his affection and pathos in *New Life*. Idealized, Beatrice inspired numerous works, especially the *Divine Comedy*. Dante married Gemma Donati of prominent Guelph lineage and fathered two sons and one daughter. His early works included a series of allegorical odes on Lady Philosophy, Liberality, Nobility, etc. After 1289 he became active in politics. For opposing Pope Boniface VIII, Florence exiled him, confiscated his property, and sentenced him to death in absentia. He wandered from town to town, finally dying in Ravenna, where he was buried.

His two greatest works were written in exile. Impressed by Emperor Henry VII, Dante wrote *Concerning Monarchy*, probably between 1311 and 1318. He believed humanity's temporal happiness could best be promoted by a universal earthly ruler independent of the papacy and equally empowered by God. Dante, an orthodox Catholic, drew heavily on Aquinas, but he marshaled historical-biblical data against papal supremacy and demanded that the church relinquish all temporal possessions and concentrate on spiritual matters. His strong anti-clericalism points to the future, and yet his thoughts reflect medieval tradition. *Concerning Monarchy* was declared heretical in 1329.

His greatest work, *Divine Comedy*, completed during his last years, pictures an imaginary trip through hell, purgatory, and paradise. Virgil, symbolizing reason, guides him through hell; Beatrice and St. Bernard, symbolizing faith, guide him to heaven, where he finds only one pope. Dante vividly portrays many contemporaries. A recurring theme insists that good works without faith will not

merit salvation. At the end, Dante stands before God in an ecstasy of mystic love. The *Divine Comedy* places him among the greatest poets of all time.

C.M.

DARBY, JOHN NELSON (1800–82). Founder of DISPENSATIONALISM and the PLYMOUTH BRETHREN, he was educated at Westminster and received a B.A. in law from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1819. Ordained in the Church of Ireland, he served a parish in County Wicklow before resigning in 1827.

Dispensationalism grew out of conferences hosted in the 1830s at the Wicklow estate of Theodosia Wingfield, Viscountess Powerscourt. In discussions of prophecy, Darby formulated a futurist interpretation of Revelation and invented the secret, any-moment RAPTURE. He saw the "church age" as a parenthesis between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel. His *Collected Works* run thirty-four volumes.

He began to draw together small groups of dissatisfied believers, which eventually formed the Plymouth Brethren. After a schism at Plymouth (1845) and Bristol (1847), Darby led the stricter group known as Darbyites. He visited the United States and Canada seven times between 1862 and 1877. He also spent considerable time on the Continent and in Australia.

N.H.

DARIUS. The Greek (and Latin) spelling of the name under which three of the kings of ancient Persia (Iran) have entered into biblical and later Western literature.

Darius I Hystaspis (522–486 B.C.). Also called Darius the Great, he was the king of Persia who honored the decree of his predecessor CYRUS THE GREAT, to the extent that the liberated Jews of Babylon should not only be allowed to restore a homeland in Palestine but also be assisted in rebuilding there a temple to their God (Ezra 4:5; 5:3–17; 6:1–15). Darius was separated from the great Cyrus by Cyrus' son Cambyzes, who had in 525 B.C. added Egypt to the Persian Empire. He was only distantly related to Cyrus, nevertheless he fulfilled perfectly the image of Achaemenid tolerance and ecumenicity that is drawn in the OT. The doctrinaire Zionists from Babylon, having repulsed offers of assistance from Yahwists indigenous to Judah and the surrounding areas whom they rejected as unfit to contribute to the new Israel, whose contours had been revealed in Babylon, were understandably opposed by their slighted suitors in their attempt to establish a new and exclusive Jewish polity in a land they called their own. Furthermore, these indigenous peoples were well established, part and parcel of the Persian bureaucracy Abar Nahara, "across the River (Euphrates)." It is significant, therefore, that Darius, having carefully ascertained the facts and searched out the relevant documents, found against the claims of

START

END

the realm, and no specific church receives official status and favor.

In 1776 various churches were established in nine of thirteen American states. Because no church was large enough to claim national allegiance, the majority of Americans were Protestant, and most were indifferent to religion entirely, disestablishment came easily. The Church of England was disestablished in Virginia in 1785. Congregationalism was disestablished in Connecticut in 1818, New Hampshire in 1819, and finally in Massachusetts in 1831. N.H.

START

DISPENSATIONALISM. A form of biblical interpretation derived from the teachings of JOHN NELSON DARBY (1800-82) of Dublin, Ireland, a leader of the Plymouth Brethren, and popularized by C. I. SCOFIELD (1843-1921) in his Scofield Reference Bible (1902-1909 and revised in 1917). This system is based on the belief that God deals with the human race in different ways at different times. Scofield said that there are seven dispensations, or epochs of time, and interpreted a dispensation (from the Greek *oikonomia*) as "a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God." The Darbyite term "dispensation" is taken from the Authorized Version (King James) translation of *oikonomia* as "dispensation." Darby, Scofield, and other Dispensationalists use this system to interpret the OT and NT.

While various Dispensationalists offer differing details, they generally accept C. I. Scofield's sevenfold series of dispensations. These are: (1) Innocence (Gen. 1:28) to the loss of Eden; (2) Conscience or moral responsibility (Gen. 3:7) up to the Great Flood; (3) Human government (Gen. 8:15) up to the call of Abraham; (4) Promise, the test of Israel's response to God (Gen. 12:1) down to the covenant at Sinai; (5) Law, to the death of Christ (Exod. 19:1); (6) the church, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1) to Christ's return (Second Coming); and (7) the millennial kingdom to eternity (Rev. 20:4).

Scofield held that while there is but one dispensation or overall plan of God in both the OT and NT, that is, redemption in Christ, nevertheless God progressively deals with humanity through the sevenfold series of dispensations. Specifically, Scofield thought that each of these epochs was a time of testing, in which God sets the human race to a particular test. He said "No particular portion of Scripture is to be intelligently comprehended apart from some concept of its place in the whole." Many scholars believe that this is an imposition or eisegesis since, according to them, there is no evidence of any dispensational thinking in the Scriptures, although the Greek term *oikonomia* (which means "economy" or "administration") does occur in I Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 1:20; 3:2; and Colossians 1:25.

Dispensationalism is above all a system of biblical interpretation for the religious education of lay

people. For the Bible reader, the Sunday school class, and for students in Bible schools who lacked knowledge of the ancient languages and ancient history, some simple, overall plan seemed needed so as to interpret the Bible as a whole. This need is both the reason for Darby's and Scofield's system and the cause of its early and continuing popularity. Although there are schools devoted to dispensationalism among fundamentalists in the U.S.A. and Britain, most of the system's influence flows from the steady popularity of Scofield's Reference Bible, which was revised again as recently as 1966.

J.C.

DISPERSION. See DIASPORA.

END

DISSENTERS. The word was first used of the five "Dissenting Brethren" at the WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY of Divines, 1643-47. They were called NONCONFORMISTS in the penal acts following the RESTORATION (1660) and the Act of Uniformity (1662).

These terms generally apply to all English Protestants including Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Unitarians, Quakers, Plymouth Brethren, Moravians, Churches of Christ, the Salvation Army, and sects.

N.H.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT. An elder in the Methodist churches who supervises ministers in the districts of a conference. Usually several district superintendents aid the bishop in charge of a conference. In the Christmas Conference of 1784, "district elder" denoted a district superintendent, and in 1797 the title was changed to "presiding elder." District superintendent now prevails.

C.M.

DITTOGRAPHY. A double writing in paleography. A scribe sometimes mistakenly copied twice what should only have been written once. It was a mechanical or unconscious repetition of a series of letters or words and is the opposite of haplography. For example, "Great is Artemis . . ." (Acts 19:34) is given twice in Codex Vaticanus.

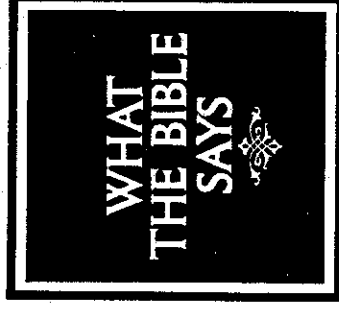
J.R.M.

DIVES. From the Latin word for "rich." A name given in the Middle Ages to the rich man in the parable of Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), arising from the mistaken notion that the Latin Vulgate translation of the phrase "there was a certain rich man" was naming the person rather than simply stating that the man was rich.

J.R.M.

DIVINATION. Magical practices by which men and women in ancient times sought to obtain information about the future. Such practices are now generally considered superstitious, but some (for

END-TIMES
RAPTURE, ANTICHRIST,
MILLENNIUM



James M. Efird

ABINGDON PRESS
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biblical texts. No theology or system or individual teaching should be called biblical if it does not reflect the proper meaning which the original inspired authors intended. Further, no teaching should be understood as biblical unless it is first understood as it was by the original hearers/readers. It will be the purpose of this discussion to examine the key teachings of this system against the biblical passages used by its advocates to support these teachings to ascertain if the ideas of rapture, antichrist, and millennium are presented in the biblical texts as the proponents of the dispensational system argue.

A Brief Sketch of Darbyism

The system of biblical interpretation which its proponents proudly call "Bible prophecy" is quite well known. The devotees of that system have done an excellent job of making this type of interpretation easily accessible to laypersons in a form that is understandable, simply described, and confidently propounded. There are numerous characteristics of this system, most notably the emphasis upon the end-times and the events that are to constitute and accompany that momentous occasion. Of those events perhaps the three most well known are the rapture, the antichrist, and the millennium. The purpose of this book is to present a brief history of this widely known system of interpretation and to examine specifically these three "doctrines" to ascertain what the Bible actually teaches about them.

Contrary to what many persons have thought, this system of interpretation, known properly as dispensationalism, has not been around since the time of Jesus and the New Testament church. It is only about a hundred and fifty years old yet it has exercised a tremendous, but disproportionate, amount of influence in its short existence. Dispensational spokespersons have argued, correctly, that the relative newness of their ideas does not automatically make them invalid. What makes a system valid or invalid is

whether the proponents of that system and its teachings have understood and interpreted the Bible correctly.

Generally speaking, in order to understand and interpret the Bible properly a person must come to the biblical writings with one primary concern in mind. What did the original author(s) intend in their inspired writing, and how did the original readers/hearers understand that message? In order to interpret the biblical books correctly, therefore, modern readers must attempt as much as possible to place themselves in the time and context when the book originally appeared. To do this requires some painstaking work, but without that effort the modern interpreter cannot really understand the Scriptures. The biblical teachings about eschatology, i.e., "the study of the end," therefore, must be understood in such a manner. What, then, was the setting for the New Testament teachings about eschatology?

Most of the New Testament teaching about the return of Christ was presented in a literary style known as apocalyptic. This movement, which began in postexilic Judaism (ca. 300-200 B.C.), was at first a "thought pattern" which developed a literary style to serve as a vehicle for speaking to persecuted people. At base the apocalyptic ideology held that there was in the world a cosmic battle going on between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Since the earth is a part of the cosmic order the battle also rages within human history; and persons are called upon to ally themselves with one side or the other. In apocalyptic literature there is really no room for "gray" areas. The battle, it was believed, would be long and hard. There were times when good had the upper hand; there were times when things were about "even"; but there were also times when evil had the upper hand, and in such situations those on the side of good suffer and are persecuted.

Even though it was thought that there would be a final end to all this conflict, where good would ultimately triumph over evil, the Hebrew concept of history kept them from thinking of only one great conflict at the "end." The idea of Jewish apocalyptic writings centered on "ages," specifically a present age which has come under the domination of the forces of evil and which can only be redeemed by the intervention of God. God alone could take away the persecution and restore the people to a "normal" life once more. This led to the idea of a two-age system in Jewish thought, a present evil age under the dominion of the forces of evil and a soon-to-come new age in which the persecution would be removed. The main point to remember here is that history continues to move along, and in the course of events a new period of evil may be born, thus repeating the cycle again.

One can readily ascertain that such thinking was especially appealing in periods of persecution or "hard times." Since the Jewish community in Palestine had returned from exile in Babylon in 538 B.C., their lot had been anything but good. They were politically powerless, economically poor, and militarily defenseless. For many years they languished in such a situation, vulnerable to any who decided to come into their area and loot or pillage. It is no wonder then that apocalyptic thinking became a part of this people's mind-set during this stage of their existence. To facilitate the dissemination of these ideas a literary style was created which was characterized by the use of weird symbols and images. For persons who were a part of that culture and time these symbols and images were readily recognizable, much in the same way as persons today recognize the meaning of political cartoons. No one has to explain the grotesque figures and images to us; most people know the intent of them

because that is a literary device which is a part of our culture and time.

In apocalyptic symbolism beasts stood for nations; heads on beasts represented rulers; numbers had specific but symbolic meaning; so too did colors. In any apocalyptic work (as with any biblical book) the interpreter must know something about the historical setting in which the book was written so as to interpret the book as the inspired author intended it to be understood and to listen to the text as one of those for whom the book was originally written. Only by doing this can the interpreter really understand the meaning of a biblical text, especially an apocalyptic text. The modern interpreter must be extremely careful not to read into the text ideas that were not in the original setting and that would not have been in the mind of the original author and the original hearers/readers. (The reader is referred to the reputable commentaries and studies on the biblical books, especially Daniel and Revelation, which are included in the bibliography at the conclusion of this book.)

Apocalyptic ideas and symbolism can be found in numerous parts of the New Testament, and the last six chapters of the Book of Daniel (7-12) are apocalyptic. The most thoroughly apocalyptic book in the Bible, however, is the book of Revelation, also known as "The Apocalypse." This type of thinking and writing flourished from about 200 B.C.-A.D. 100, but after that time the movement ceased. The Christian church entered into the Gentile, Greco-Roman world which did not really understand apocalyptic writing. The Jewish community which was being expelled from Jerusalem and Palestine during this period also gave up apocalyptic writing and thinking, partly because of the strong apocalyptic emphasis of the early Christian movement.

In those days there were no printing presses or storage places to keep alive these literary products; thus, apocalyptic writing soon disappeared from the scene and with it the key to the understanding of the phenomenon.

The early Christians believed strongly that Jesus was going to return *soon*, in their generation, to consummate the kingdom of God which he had inaugurated during his earthly ministry. When this did not occur, many still looked forward to Jesus' return. In attempting to determine when this might take place, many church fathers looked to Revelation and other apocalyptic passages for some guidance. One of the passages which they focused on was the "millennium" section of Revelation 20 (20:4-6). This portion of Scripture speaks about a thousand-year reign of the saints with Christ, thus the designation millennium.

By this time the understanding of apocalyptic thought and literature had just about vanished, causing the church fathers much anguish in attempting to understand Revelation correctly. Partly because they did not feel comfortable with the interpretation of the book and partly because some groups were using these teachings wrongly and disturbing many of the faithful, numerous church leaders felt that Revelation should not become a part of the New Testament canon. By the end of the fourth century A.D., however, the canon had been basically accepted and included Revelation.

It had also become clear by this time that the return of Jesus had at least been postponed until the indefinite future. This made the thousand-year passage more attractive to those who were speculating about these matters. It came to be the overwhelming opinion of church leaders that the presence of the church in the world was in fact the millennium and that after one thousand years

Jesus would return to consummate the kingdom. (Since Jesus was to return *after* the one thousand years, the idea came to be known later as *postmillennialism*.) As time passed and the year A.D. 1000 approached, people began to be apprehensive and talked about the return of Jesus. As the date came and went, however, there was naturally a reinterpretation. Many held that the one thousand years was a symbolic period of time and that Jesus would return at the end of that time frame, still basically retaining a postmillennial interpretation.

Others began to speculate that since a thousand years was such a specific figure that the one thousand years may not have yet begun, and in fact would not begin until after Jesus returned. This idea began to develop and came to "full flower" in the nineteenth century. The idea that Jesus was to return *before* the millennium came to be known as *premillennialism*. Couple this situation with growing speculation about who the "anti-christ" might be, and one has the beginnings of a potential scenario in which speculation about "time, place, and characters" could indeed develop rather dramatically.

In order to understand the setting that gave rise to the system of interpretation that has such wide dissemination today, the reader must recall what kind of world was extant in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was political upheaval, e.g., the revolution of the American colonists, the rise and fall of Napoleon, revolutions all over Europe, political changes in Great Britain; there was social unrest and, of course, there was the Industrial Revolution with its economic impact on the scene followed by differing types of philosophies and ideologies which attempted to make sense of all this confusion. Not to be ignored either was the work of the scientists, especially Charles Darwin and his associates with

their shocking doctrine of evolution. Space does not permit even a partial listing of all the mind-boggling and even shattering changes that were occurring in those years. They were truly apocalyptic times, times when people of true sensitivity were trying to make sense of all the chaos that swirled around them.

Many persons came to believe that the end-times had drawn very close. Many of these same persons had come to be, very disillusioned with the established churches, especially in Great Britain. There were "cell" groups which began to meet apart from normal church functions for prayer and the study of the Scripture. Most of the people involved with these groups were very much disappointed and disillusioned with the church structure, leadership, and doctrine. From these groups emerged a movement that came to be known as the Plymouth Brethren.

At this point it is necessary to begin to concentrate on a single individual who was closely associated with the Brethren movement and whose name is, for some, synonymous with it (even though he did not begin the phenomenon). In 1800 an Irish child, who was to leave his imprint on the history of the church in many lands, was born in London. His name was John Nelson Darby. This young man was brilliant and a tireless worker. At first he studied law but soon became disillusioned with that and subsequently studied for the priesthood of the Church of England (Anglican). He was ordained and took an appointment in the town of Dublin in Ireland. In 1827 he sustained an injury to his leg which required surgery and an extended period of convalescence. During this time he had a religious experience of some sort which served to reinforce his growing disillusionment with the established church. He never tired of saying that the church was "in ruins."

Because of this disenchantment with the established church, Darby became associated with the "cell" groups which were meeting apart from the regular church activities. So strongly did he feel an affiliation with this movement that he renounced his ordination and became the major figure in the movement that came to be known as the Plymouth Brethren. The emphasis in this group and with Darby was upon the interpretation of the Scriptures.

Through his study of the biblical books Darby began to construct his "theology" which later grew into a full-blown system. Many of the ideas now held by proponents of that system were Darby's, supplemented by other persons attracted to this type of interpretation. The major components of the system, however, were set into place by Darby and his followers, beginning about 1829.

First of all, Darby was so disillusioned with the formal established church that he felt it was basically corrupt and therefore useless. Because of the uncertainties of the time, the apocalyptic portions of the Bible appealed to him so much that he became preoccupied with the return of Jesus and the events surrounding the end-times. Darby (and his followers today) believed that the biblical teachings must be understood literally. When this was not always possible, the accepted procedure was to take the meaning of the text at its "normal" or "plain" meaning. Of course, Darby and his followers determined which of the approaches was appropriate in any given passage and decided what the "normal" or "plain" meaning was.

Because Darby (and his followers) became so preoccupied with end-times, the entire biblical text came to be understood as "Bible prophecy" pointing throughout to the end. Prophecy to this group was always "a prediction of the future." Closely related to this idea and in a sense evolving from it emerged what is one of the basic tenets of

the system, namely that God has two plans and two different groups of people to carry out his purposes. The two groups are: (1) Israel (meaning the Jewish nation of Israel) and (2) the church. Israel is God's earthly kingdom and the church is God's heavenly kingdom. In fact, the church is really only an afterthought, a "parenthesis," in God's dealing with the world which resulted when the Jewish nation rejected Jesus as its Messiah.

One of the primary reasons for this idea came from a misunderstanding of Old Testament history and a misinterpretation of certain prophetic passages. When the nation of Judah fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C., the city of Jerusalem sacked and destroyed, and the people carried off into exile in Babylonia, the prophets told them to hold fast, that they would ultimately be restored to the land and be made a nation again. For those who study the prophetic books carefully, it is clear that most of the prophetic oracles are poetic. In almost any culture, poetry is not intended to be taken with an absolutely literal meaning. This was also true in ancient times with the Hebrew people. Many of the prophetic oracles pertaining to the restoration of the Jewish people in the land of Judah and their development into a nation were poetic. Therefore, to hold these teachings to an absolute literalism in every word would be an imposition on the materials of a meaning or meanings not originally intended by the prophets.

Darby and his devotees, however, understood this as "prophecy" that has never been fulfilled. Since God's word is absolute truth, they hold that this prediction must come to pass or else God's word is wrong. The problem with such an interpretation is that it does not understand poetry properly, nor does it admit that the prophecy was fulfilled! In 538 B.C. the Hebrew people in Babylon were told that they could return home, rebuild the cities, rebuild their

temple, and worship their God as they chose. Some of the people returned, and between 520 and 515 B.C. the temple was rebuilt. Under the leadership of Nehemiah in 444 and 432 B.C., Jerusalem was rebuilt and repopulated. During this time, however, the people of Judah were politically part of the Persian Empire and had not become a separate state.

There seems to have been an abortive attempt to break away from the Persian Empire under a descendant of David during the period 520-515 B.C. This attempt failed, however, and the Jewish people in Palestine remained a part of the larger political systems of the times. First, there was the Persian Empire, and later the Greek Empire, which arose after the conquest of the area by Alexander the Great and his early death. The Jewish people remained part of those political structures until 141 B.C. when Judah became an independent political state. This situation continued for almost a hundred years until the Romans took over the area. Thus both of the so-called "unfulfilled prophecies" were in fact fulfilled. The prophetic oracles were not referring to the nineteenth or twentieth centuries A.D.

Darby and his followers believed strongly, however, that God had to deal with the world through the nation, Israel, and continued to "decipher" how that could happen since the establishment of the church. They believed that the church was only a temporary afterthought which began at Pentecost (or with Paul's ministry or when Paul went to Rome). It became necessary because the Jewish nation had rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Now in order for God to renew dealing with the earth through Israel something had to occur that would remove the church from the world and that would inaugurate the "final" history of the world.

The answer to the problem of the removal of the church was found in the concept of the "rapture." The church, it was believed, would be caught out of the world, i.e., raptured, removed from earth to heaven, so that God could once again act in history through the nation Israel. Since Darby believed that the church was corrupt and "in ruins," it was not a great loss for the world to lose the church. After all, only a few people in the church were really true believers. The idea of a rapture came from I Thessalonians 4:17 which says, "Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." In this passage it seems clear that whatever Paul intended by this idea (cf. pages 45-49) he intended it to be understood as occurring *at the time of the Parousia*, i.e., the time of Jesus' return. Darby moved the rapture, however, to accommodate the necessity for the removal of the church in his schema.

Since this rapture of the church was to occur before Christ's coming, some of Darby's followers devised the idea of a two-stage return of Jesus, something the biblical passages do not support at all. One can see that the biblical passages have been forced to fit the preconceived notion. Darby believed that the end was very near, and the emphasis upon the rapture came to be known as the "at-any-moment coming of Jesus." Some of his followers held that the rapture would be a secret event, that is, it would happen but no one would really be aware of it. Some Darbyists still hold to this idea, but most have put that idea behind them.

As already mentioned the majority of people in the church through the centuries have basically held to a postmillennial view of the return of Jesus. Jesus was to return after a one-thousand-year rule of the saints on earth. According to Darby's ideas, however, such a view

could not possibly be correct. Jesus still had to sit on David's throne on the earth and rule over the nation Israel. In order for this to occur Jesus would have to return *before* the millennium; thus Darby and his followers have been consistently premillennial in their interpretation regarding the return of Jesus.

There is yet another motif which was developed and refined by Darby and his followers. This idea has come to be known by the term "the Great Tribulation." One of the key ideas in apocalyptic thinking was that before a new age dawned there would be a period of persecution and suffering for the people of God. Many of the New Testament passages that refer to Jesus' return and the establishment of the new age naturally follow the apocalyptic formula with a period of persecution immediately preceding those events. (Whether these ideas were intended to be understood literally or symbolically need not detain us at this point.) Darby and his followers have made the "seventy weeks of years" of Daniel 9 a key point of understanding with regard to this "tribulation."

According to them the seventy weeks of years began sometime after the return of the Jewish people from Babylonia to Palestine. According to their interpretation 490 years after this prediction in Daniel 9:24-27 the new messianic kingdom was supposed to begin. The popular term to describe this 490 years seems to be "God's prophetic stopwatch." By beginning to count at various historical times and by using 360 days as the length of a year (depending on the group within the system), the Darbyists have come up with the idea that it was 483 years from the time mentioned in Daniel until Jesus was publicly proclaimed Messiah. Since Jesus was rejected by the Jewish people, however, "God's prophetic stopwatch" was put on hold. It will ~~not~~ begin again until the Great Tribulation,

which will last for seven years (i.e., the last "week of years" of the Daniel passage). The fact that the Book of Daniel knows nothing of a stopping of the clock and that the passage refers to the kingdom ultimately set up in 141 B.C. does not bother these interpreters at all.

Another of the problems which had to be solved resided in the question of when the rapture would occur: before, during, or after the Tribulation. That question is still hotly debated among those who hold to this system. If the rapture takes place during or after the Tribulation, the church (or those true believers who are to be taken) will have to participate in the suffering. If the rapture takes place before the Tribulation, naturally the favored ones will escape any pain or suffering associated with that evil time. While the debate still continues, the most popular of these ideas is the pre-tribulation rapture.

This entire system of interpretation has come to be known as dispensationalism because of its insistence that God deals with the human race differently in different ages, i.e., *requires* different actions and activity from humanity in the different ages or dispensations of human history. The Darbyists claim that the Bible itself speaks of different ages in human history, which it does, but the question arises as to whether these ages were predetermined by God and are therefore part of "God's great plan" or whether the biblical writers spoke of ages of human history simply because history does run through eras or times. The emphasis in the dispensational system on these ages is quite different from what the biblical texts seem to understand.

One of the key passages which led to the idea of pre-determined ages came from II Timothy 2:15, the last part of which reads, "rightly dividing the word of truth" (KJV). The fact is that this is a misleading translation, if not

wrong, and the Revised Standard Version does not improve on it very much. If one took the plain meaning of the text (in the translations), it would appear that the author is urging a correct and proper interpretation of "the word of truth." This is not how Darby and his followers have interpreted this text, however. Their idea is that the entire Bible is a pre-written history of the world and of God's dealing with it, and the trick is to decipher the "word" so as to learn how and when and where the end of all the ages will occur. This can be done by deciphering when all the other ages began and ended. In the dispensational system, however, there is no unanimity of agreement as to how many of these dispensations there are or when and how they were to begin and end.

(If the modern reader is willing to wade through some of the more precise arguments and differing ideas, there are several well-written books which can give summaries of the various dispensational systems. These will be listed in the bibliography at the conclusion to this book.)

The Spread of Dispensationalism in America

One may rightly wonder how these ideas, begun by J. N. Darby in Ireland and England, came to be so well known and widely disseminated in this country. The story is rather simple in some ways, rather complex in others, a rather clear thread runs through the development of this system of theology in this country.

First, it must be recognized that Darby was not only a zealot for his theological ideas but an indefatigable worker. In spite of his injured leg he traveled extensively in Europe and even went to New Zealand. He also made seven visits to the North American continent between 1862-77, partly because some of those who were

associated with the Brethren movement had come to the United States.

Darby came to this country during the bleak years of the Civil War and the following period of Reconstruction. The times were ripe for a message of imminent judgment by God. The fervor of his presentation and the impact of his considerable intellect caused many ministers in significant pulpits to be attracted to him and his system. Darby wanted the true believers in the American churches to come out and form a new group to prepare themselves for the return of Jesus. Much to his surprise and disappointment the people remained in their denominations, but many of them "bought into" Darby's system of interpretation.

Numerous persons were helpful in the early stages of the movement in the United States. Naturally, there was a need for publishing and distributing books and pamphlets that explained the new system. This was done by an editor named James Inglis who helped explain and distribute Darby's ideas through a journal, *Waymarks in the Wilderness*. Further, there was a publishing firm founded by two brothers, Paul and Timothy Loizeaux, who had become part of the Brethren movement, and through this publishing firm much dispensational literature was made available.

Another influential person in the development of this movement was a Presbyterian minister in St. Louis, James H. Brookes. Brookes was fascinated with Darby and his teaching and became a leading exponent of the system in the United States. Others too were caught up in the excitement of this new thing. Brookes helped found a series of Bible conferences which met in the summer; these came to be known as the Niagara Bible Conferences (held from 1875 to 1897). This event became a focal point for the leading exponents of Darby's system to come

together and share their ideas and research about this teaching.

At first the conferences were a rousing success, attracting many persons and exciting them by holding out the hope that the Lord would return before the conference concluded, perhaps even before the present meeting was over! It was heady wine, but after a number of years the claims of Jesus' return at-any-moment began to wear a bit thin. Further, some people began to question how one could justify taking bits and pieces of passages from various parts of the Bible, disregarding their original setting and meaning, and weaving them into such a system. The stock answer came from Darby himself when he argued that true faith is guided by God's power, not by man's wisdom.

Toward the latter years of the Niagara Bible Conferences, a young attorney became enamored with the system and began to study with Brookes. He learned well and even was invited to lecture at Niagara. This man was so enthusiastic about the teaching and zealous for spreading abroad the truth that he hit upon an idea which would, in a sense, revolutionize Bible study. His idea was to publish a Bible with study notes so that laypersons could understand and learn the Darbyist system. He took this idea to the leaders of the Niagara Bible Conference, hoping to enlist their support. They refused to go along. Not long after that the Niagara Bible Conference folded.

At this point another figure emerges on the scene, a German immigrant named Arno C. Gaebelein. This man worked among the Jewish community in New York, and he was influenced by some persons who were members of the Plymouth Brethren. Gaebelein came into contact with the attorney and the two began to work closely together. In fact, when the Niagara Bible Conference folded, the two

continued to hold similar conferences in New Jersey. Gaebelein's friend told him about his dream for a Bible that would contain notes to assist persons in understanding this marvelous new system. It so happened that Gaebelein had some wealthy friends whom he was able to convince to support this new project. The attorney became a theologian, went to work, and in 1909 published the first edition of the *Scofield Reference Bible*. The attorney's name was Cyrus I. Scofield!

The *Scofield Reference Bible* has had a tremendous influence on the American religious scene. In fact, many persons still refer to the Bible as "the Scofield Bible," and this is said with awe, even reverence. What one has to remember is that the "Scofield Bible" is the text of the King James Version with Scofield's notes. And one must not forget that the notes are basically the system and interpretations and ideas that originated with John Nelson Darby and the Brethren movement. There have been several revisions of the *Scofield Reference Bible* which have altered some teachings here and there, but overall the original system remains intact. If one wishes to rely on the "Scofield Bible," one must remember where the ideas originated and what presuppositions lie behind that system of interpretation.

Soon after the appearance of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, Scofield and others believed that it was time to establish schools where the dispensational system could be taught. To this end in 1919 he founded an institution called the Philadelphia School of the Bible. One of the first faculty members was a man named Lewis Sperry Chafer. Chafer had met Scofield earlier and had become a devoted follower. As Scofield aged and became less effective (he died in 1921), Chafer took on the mantle of his teacher. He became convinced that a school of higher education

should be founded for the purpose of refining and propagating the Darbyist teachings. Thus in 1924 there was founded the Evangelical Theological College which was later renamed Dallas Theological Seminary (1936). Chafer became president and wrote a lengthy *Systematic Theology*, setting forth his mature reflections and ideas on the dispensational system.

Today the most well known of the popular teachers of the Darbyist system is Hal Lindsey. Through numerous books and records, Lindsey has captured the imagination of millions with his teaching. It is, however, the basic teaching enunciated by John Nelson Darby, and it has been around for about a hundred and fifty years.

One cannot but wonder about the continuing fascination which many people have for this type of interpretation. Why is it that after predicting the "end" every few years for over a hundred and fifty years, and always being wrong, people would want to be a part of such a system of interpretation? There are probably numerous answers to such a question. First of all, many people are simply overwhelmed with the confidence and seeming brilliance of the Darbyist interpretation. Many passages from the Bible are quoted and the system of interpretation *appears* to be very profound.

Further, these persons do hold an extremely high view of the Scriptures. They believe that it is God's inspired Word, the Revelation of God to the human race. For Protestant Christians especially this is extremely important, for this branch of Christendom has always given pride of place to the Bible. Many, if not most, Protestant clergypersons are asked at ordination if they believe the Bible to be God's inspired Word, the "only infallible rule of faith and practice." One should note carefully the wording of what is asked, however. There is nothing said or implied

about infallible science, geography, history, politics, sociology, or the like. The Scripture contains God's revelation which is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, i.e., it is infallible at the point of its religious ideas and understandings. The history of the world and a literal description of the end of history, the Bible does not give us!

Closely connected with the Darbyists' high view of Scripture is their sincerity. They really do believe what they say they believe. This is the reason for their zeal and industry in espousing their views and seeking to share those views with others. Sincerity, unfortunately, is no guarantee of being right. History is strewn with the bones of many persons, religious and otherwise, who were thoroughly convinced about the rightness and correctness of their cause. The fact that the dispensationalists are sincere does not lend support to this interpretation.

This system of interpretation also appeals to that inner urge in humankind to "know" something that others either cannot know or cannot understand. Such an attitude is known as "gnostic," from the Greek word, *gnosis*, meaning knowledge. Some people think they can be saved by knowledge, or since they are saved they think they know and understand matters that remain hidden to others. There is a kind of security in such an idea, and it is this security that appeals to many persons who are attracted to this type of interpretation. Not only do they *know* things others do not know, but they are also going to be protected in the last days by that knowledge or by the system that gives them that knowledge. When engaging persons of this persuasion in debate, many of them react with great emotion because they are not really discussing a matter of interpretation. To these persons any challenge

to their interpretation is a threat to their entire faith-security system.

Those who hold to this system of interpretation argue that it should not be rejected simply because it has been around only about a hundred and fifty years. They are correct in this assertion. These advocates argue that the system and its interpretations should be measured by the Scripture itself. Again they are correct. However, they argue that the Scripture is a collection of God's revelation which describes the history of the world and especially predicts the events and personalities which are to be connected with the final days. It is at this point that they go astray. The only presupposition that should be made in approaching the biblical books is to examine the text as honestly and openly as possible to determine as best one can what the inspired writer originally said and meant. And further, how did the original hearers/readers understand the book? It is only when the original meaning is ascertained that one can then begin to build systems of theology. If one comes to the text already knowing what it is going to say, all one finds is what one wishes to find. This, in effect, is saying that our thoughts are the inspired word of God, not the original biblical books, and that our understandings of what the Scripture can and cannot say and mean must be superimposed on the original meaning. It is, in short, the canonization of our thoughts and ideas, and thus the biblical texts are not allowed to speak as originally intended.

To understand the biblical message properly, therefore, the interpreter must be willing to learn about the history, the culture, the settings, and the literary forms and styles of the original author and his intended audience before interpretation can be made. Further, it means that the "proof-text" method used so widely by the Darbyists must

be set aside because sentences and phrases taken out of context may be grossly misunderstood and misinterpreted. To take bits and pieces of various Scripture texts out of their contexts and weave them together into a scenario that *none* of the biblical writers knew anything about is to do violence to the sacred revelation of God. Such an approach makes human schemes the revelation of God.

What must be done now is to examine the three major areas of the Darbyist system, the rapture (with a look at the Church-Israel idea), the antichrist, and the millennium, to ascertain what the Bible says about each. To that task we now turn.

ADDITIONAL READING

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