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CHAPTER ONE

The Apocalyptic Genre

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Two famous slogans coined by German scholars may serve to illustrate the ambivalent attitudes of modern scholarship toward the apocalyptic literature. The first is Ernst Käsemann's dictum that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."¹ The other is the title of Klaus Koch's polemical review of scholarly attitudes, *Ratlos vor der Apokalypik*, "perplexed" or "embarrassed" by apocalyptic.² Both slogans are, of course, deliberately provocative and exaggerated, but each has nonetheless a substantial measure of truth. Apocalyptic ideas undeniably played an important role in the early stages of Christianity and, more broadly, in the Judaism of the time. Yet, as Koch demonstrated, the primary apocalyptic texts have received only sporadic attention and are often avoided or ignored by biblical scholarship.

The perplexity and embarrassment that Koch detected in modern scholarship has in part a theological source. The word "apocalyptic" is popularly associated with fanatical millenarian expectation, and indeed the canonical apocalypses of Daniel and especially John have very often been used by millenarian groups. Theologians of a more rational bent are often reluctant to admit that such material played a formative role in early Christianity. There is consequently a prejudice against the apocalyptic literature which is deeply ingrained in biblical scholarship. The great authorities of the nineteenth century, Julius Wellhausen and Emil Schürer, slighted its value, considering it to be a product of "Late Judaism" which was greatly inferior to the prophets, and this attitude is still widespread today. In his reply to Käsemann, Gerhard Ebeling could say that "according to the prevailing ecclesiastical and theological tradi-

1. E. Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," *JTC* 6 (1969) 40.

2. K. Koch, *Ratlos vor der Apokalypik* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970); English trans., *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1972).

tion, supremely also of the Reformation, apocalyptic — I recall only the evaluation of the Revelation of John — is to say the least a suspicious symptom of tendencies towards heresy.”³ Whatever we may decide about the theological value of these writings, it is obvious that a strong theological prejudice can impede the task of historical reconstruction and make it difficult to pay enough attention to the literature to enable us even to understand it at all. It will be well to reserve theological judgment until we have mastered the literature.

Not all the perplexity is theological in origin. In some part it also springs from the semantic confusion engendered by the use of the word “apocalyptic” as a noun. The word has habitually been used to suggest a worldview or a theology which is only vaguely defined but which has often been treated as an entity independent of specific texts.⁴ Scholars have gradually come to realize that this “apocalyptic myth” does not always correspond to what we find in actual apocalypses. Koch already distinguished between “apocalypse” as a literary type and “apocalyptic” as a historical movement. More recent scholarship has abandoned the use of “apocalyptic” as a noun and distinguishes between apocalypse as a literary genre, apocalypticism as a social ideology, and apocalyptic eschatology as a set of ideas and motifs that may also be found in other literary genres and social settings.⁵

These distinctions are helpful in drawing attention to the different things traditionally covered by the term “apocalyptic.” The question remains whether or how they are related to each other: Does the use of the literary genre imply a social movement? Or does an apocalypse always contain apocalyptic eschatology? Before we can attempt to answer these questions we must clarify what is meant by each of the terms involved.

The Genre Apocalypse

The notion that there is a class of writings that may be labeled “apocalyptic” has been generally accepted since Friedrich Lücke published the first com-

3. G. Ebeling, “The Ground of Christian Theology,” *JTC* 6 (1969) 51.

4. See the comments of R. E. Strum, “Defining the Word ‘Apocalyptic’: A Problem in Biblical Criticism,” in J. Marcus and M. L. Soards, ed., *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (JSNTSup 24; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 37.

5. M. E. Stone, “Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature,” in F. M. Cross et al., eds., *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976) 439-43; *idem*, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in M. E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT 2/2; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 392-94; P. D. Hanson, “Apocalypse, Genre,” “Apocalypticism,” *IDBSup*, 27-34. See the comments of M. A. Knibb, “Prophecy and the Emergence of the Jewish Apocalypses,” in R. Coggins et al., eds., *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter Ackroyd* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 160-61. Knibb and Stone prefer a twofold distinction between the apocalypses and apocalyptic eschatology.

prehensive study of the subject in 1832.⁶ Lücke's synthesis was prompted in part by the recent edition of *1 Enoch* by Richard Laurence (who also edited the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which Lücke discussed as a Christian apocalypse). The list of Jewish apocalyptic works included Daniel, *1 Enoch*, 4 Ezra, and the *Sibylline Oracles*, and he adduced this literature as background for the book of Revelation. Subsequent discoveries have enlarged the corpus and modified the profile of the genre: 2 and 3 *Baruch*, 2 *Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and the *Testament of Abraham* were all published in the later part of the nineteenth century. While there has been inevitable scholarly dispute about the precise relation of this or that work to the genre, there has been general agreement on the corpus of literature that is relevant to the discussion and can be called “apocalyptic” at least in an extended sense.

Most of the works that figure in discussions of the Jewish apocalyptic literature were not explicitly designated as apocalypses in antiquity. The use of the Greek title *apokalypsis* (revelation) as a genre label is not attested in the period before Christianity. The first work introduced as an *apokalypsis* is the New Testament book of Revelation, and even there it is not clear whether the word denotes a special class of literature or is used more generally for revelation. Both 2 and 3 *Baruch*, which are usually dated about the end of the first century C.E., are introduced as apocalypses in the manuscripts, but the antiquity of the title is open to question. Morton Smith concludes from his review of the subject that “the literary form we call an apocalypse carries that title for the first time in the very late first or early second century A.D. From then on both the title and form were fashionable, at least to the end of the classical period.”⁷ The subsequent popularity of the title has recently been illustrated by the Cologne Mani Codex, where we read that each one of the forefathers showed his own *apokalypsis* to his elect, and specific mention is made of apocalypses of Adam, Sethel, Enosh, Shem, and Enoch.⁸ These

6. F. Lücke, *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis und in die gesamte apokalyptische Literatur* (Bonn: Weber, 1832). For the early discussions of apocalyptic literature see J. M. Schmidt, *Die jüdische Apokalyptik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), and P. D. Hanson, “Prolegomena to the Study of Jewish Apocalyptic,” in *Magnalia Dei*, 389-413. A sampling of the older (and some recent) literature can be found in K. Koch and J. M. Schmidt, eds., *Apokalyptik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982). More recent essays are collected in P. D. Hanson, ed., *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

7. M. Smith, “On the History of *Apokalypitō* and *Apokalypsis*,” in D. Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983) 9-20.

8. R. Cameron and A. J. Dewey, trans., *The Cologne Mani Codex: “Concerning the Origin of his Body”* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979) paragraphs 47-62 (pp. 36-48). The codex dates from the late fourth or early fifth century C.E. See the comments of W. Adler, “Introduction,” in J. C. VanderKam and W. Adler, eds., *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (CRINT 3/4; Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 11-12, and

apocalypses tell of heavenly ascents. The series concludes with the rapture of Paul to the third heaven.

The ancient usage of the title *apokalypsis* shows that the genre apocalypse is not a purely modern construct, but it also raises a question about the status of early works (including most of the Jewish apocalypses) that do not bear the title. The question is complicated by the fact that some of these works are composite in character and have affinities with more than one genre. The book of Daniel, which juxtaposes tales in chaps. 1–6 and visions in chaps. 7–12, is an obvious example. This problem may be viewed in the light of what Alastair Fowler has called the life and death of literary forms.⁹ Fowler distinguishes three phases of generic development. During the first phase “the genre complex assembles, until a formal type emerges.” In the second phase the form is used, developed, and adapted consciously. A third phase involves the secondary use of the form — for example, by ironic inversion or by subordinating it to a new context. In historical reality these phases inevitably overlap, and the lines between them are often blurred. It would seem that the Jewish apocalyptic writings that lack a common title and are often combined with other forms had not yet attained the generic self-consciousness of Fowler’s second phase, although the genre complex had already been assembled. We should bear in mind that the production of apocalypses continued long into the Christian era.¹⁰

The presence or absence of a title cannot, in any case, be regarded as a decisive criterion for identifying a genre. Rather, what is at issue is whether a group of texts share a significant cluster of traits that distinguish them from other works. A systematic analysis of all the literature that has been regarded as “apocalyptic,” either in the ancient texts or in modern scholarship, was undertaken by the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project, and the results were published in *Semeia* 14 (1979).¹¹ That analysis will serve as our point of departure. The purpose of *Semeia* 14 was to give precision to the traditional category of “apocalyptic literature” by showing the extent and limits of the conformity among the allegedly apocalyptic texts.

The thesis presented in *Semeia* 14 is that a corpus of texts that has been traditionally called “apocalyptic” does indeed share a significant cluster of traits that distinguish it from other works. Specifically, an apocalypse is

D. Frankfurter, “Apocalypses Real and Alleged in the Mani Codex,” *Numen* 44 (1997) 60-73, who doubts the existence of these apocalypses.

9. A. Fowler, “The Life and Death of Literary Forms,” *New Literary History* 2 (1971) 199-216. The metaphor of life and death suggests too organic a view of forms and genres, but the insight into phases of development remains valid.

10. VanderKam and Adler, eds., *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage*; P. J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); B. McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1979).

11. J. J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (*Semeia* 14; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979).

defined as: “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”

This definition can be shown to apply to various sections of *1 Enoch*, Daniel, 4 Ezra, *2 Baruch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *3 Baruch*, *2 Enoch*, *Testament of Levi* 2–5, the fragmentary *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, and with some qualification to *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Abraham* (both of which also have strong affinities with other genres). It also applies to a fairly wide body of Christian and Gnostic literature and to some Persian and Greco-Roman material.¹² It is obviously not intended as an adequate description of any one work, but rather indicates what Klaus Koch has called the *Rahmengattung* or generic framework.¹³ The analysis in *Semeia* 14 differs, however, from Koch’s “preliminary demonstration of the apocalypse as a literary type.” Koch listed six typical features: discourse cycles, spiritual turmoils, paraenetic discourses, pseudonymity, mythical imagery, and composite character.¹⁴ He did not claim that these are necessary elements in all apocalypses. In contrast, the definition above is constitutive of all apocalypses and indicates the common core of the genre.¹⁵ More important, it constitutes a coherent structure, based on the systematic analysis of form and content.

The form of the apocalypses involves a narrative framework that describes the manner of revelation. The main means of revelation are visions and otherworldly journeys, supplemented by discourse or dialogue and occasionally by a heavenly book. The constant element is the presence of an angel who interprets the vision or serves as guide on the otherworldly journey. This figure indicates that the revelation is not intelligible without supernatural

12. Analysis of the Christian material in *Semeia* 14 was contributed by Adela Yarbro Collins, the Gnostic material by F. T. Fallon, the Greco-Roman material by H. W. Attridge, and the rabbinic material by A. J. Saldarini.

13. G. von Rad argued that “apocalyptic” is not a single genre but a “mixture compositum” of smaller forms; *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (2 vols.; 4th ed.; Munich: Kaiser, 1965) 2:330. It is true that any apocalypse contains several subsidiary forms — visions, prayers, exhortations, etc. This fact cannot preclude the presence of a generic framework that holds these elements together. In the case of a composite work like Daniel we can still claim that the apocalypse is the dominant form of the book. For discussion of the subsidiary forms, see J. J. Collins, *Daniel, with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (FOTL 20; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

14. This list may be regarded as a refinement of the more diverse characteristics of the apocalyptic writings presented and discussed by D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 104-39.

15. In this respect it also differs from the “family resemblance” approach advocated by J. G. Gammie, “The Classification, Stages of Growth, and Changing Intentions in the Book of Daniel,” *JBL* 95 (1976) 192-93. Gammie is correct that a broader corpus of related literature is relevant to the discussion.

aid. It is out of this world. In all the Jewish apocalypses the human recipient is a venerable figure from the distant past, whose name is used pseudonymously.¹⁶ This device adds to the remoteness and mystery of the revelation. The disposition of the seer before the revelation and his reaction to it typically emphasize human helplessness in the face of the supernatural.

The content of the apocalypses, as noted, involves both a temporal and a spatial dimension, and the emphasis is distributed differently in different works. Some, such as Daniel, contain an elaborate review of history, presented in the form of a prophecy and culminating in a time of crisis and eschatological upheaval.¹⁷ Others, such as *2 Enoch*, devote most of their text to accounts of the regions traversed in the otherworldly journey. The revelation of a supernatural world and the activity of supernatural beings are essential to all the apocalypses. In all there are also a final judgment and a destruction of the wicked. The eschatology of the apocalypses differs from that of the earlier prophetic books by clearly envisaging retribution beyond death. Paranesis occupies a prominent place in a few apocalypses (e.g., *2 Enoch*, *2 Baruch*), but all the apocalypses have a hortatory aspect, whether or not it is spelled out in explicit exhortations and admonitions.

Within the common framework of the definition, different types of apocalypses may be distinguished. The most obvious distinction is between the "historical" apocalypses such as Daniel and 4 Ezra and the otherworldly journeys. Only one Jewish apocalypse, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, combines an otherworldly journey with a review of history, and it is relatively late (end of the first century C.E.). It would seem that there are two strands of tradition in the Jewish apocalypses, one of which is characterized by visions, with an interest in the development of history, while the other is marked by otherworldly journeys with a stronger interest in cosmological speculation.¹⁸ These two strands are interwoven in the Enoch literature. Two of the earliest "historical" apocalypses, the Animal Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Weeks, are found in *1 Enoch*. These books presuppose the Enoch tradition attested in the Book of the Watchers (*1 Enoch* 1-36) and may in fact presuppose Enoch's otherworldly journey, although they do not describe it. The Similitudes of Enoch also shows the influence of both strands, although it does not present an overview of history. *1 Enoch* as we

16. A few Christian apocalypses, most notably Revelation and *Hermas*, are not pseudonymous.

17. On the apocalyptic treatment of history, see R. G. Hall, *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography* (JSPSup 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 61-121.

18. M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983) 61, takes these as two distinct genres.

now have it is a composite apocalypse embracing different types. Yet we can find an apocalypse such as 4 Ezra (late first century) which sharply rejects the tradition of heavenly ascent and cosmological speculation, whereas *2 Enoch* and *3 Baruch*, from about the same time, show no interest in the development of history.

Within the otherworldly journeys it is possible to distinguish subtypes according to their eschatology: (a) only the *Apocalypse of Abraham* includes a review of history; (b) several (Book of the Watchers, Astronomical Book, and Similitudes in *1 Enoch*; *2 Enoch*; *Testament of Levi* 2-5) contain some form of public, cosmic, or political eschatology; (c) a number, *3 Baruch*, *Testament of Abraham*, and *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, are concerned only with the individual judgment of the dead. No apocalypse of this third subtype is likely to be earlier than the first century C.E. The distribution of the temporal and eschatological elements may be illustrated as follows:

	otherworldly journeys						"historical" apocalypses								
	<i>Apoc. Zephaniah</i>	<i>T. Abraham</i>	<i>3 Baruch</i>	<i>T. Levi</i> 2-5	<i>2 Enoch</i>	Similitudes	Astronomical Book	<i>1 Enoch</i> 1-36	<i>Apoc. Abraham</i>	<i>2 Baruch</i>	4 Ezra	Jubilees	Apoc. of Weeks	Animal Apocalypse	Daniel
Cosmogony					•					•	•				
Primordial events			•			•		•	•	•	•				
Recollection of past									•	•	•				•
<i>Ex eventu</i> prophecy									•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Persecution						•			•		•	•	•	•	•
Other eschatological upheavals				•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Judgment/destruction of wicked	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Judgment/destruction of world	?				•		?	•	?	•		•			
Judgment/destruction of otherworldly beings						•	•	?	•			•	•	•	•
Cosmic transformation				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	?	•	•
Resurrection						•			•	•			?	•	•
Other forms of afterlife	•	•	?	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	?	?	

[This grid is adapted from *Semeia* 14, p. 28, where a more complete form may be found.]

The study of the genre is designed to clarify particular works by showing both their typical traits and their distinctive elements. It is not intended to construct a metaphysical entity, "apocalyptic" or *Apokalyptik* in any sense independent of the actual texts. The importance of genres, forms, and types for interpretation has been axiomatic in biblical studies since the work of Hermann Gunkel and the rise of form criticism. It is also well established in literary and linguistic theory and in philosophy and hermeneutics.¹⁹ E. D. Hirsch, Jr., a literary critic, has expressed the essential point well.²⁰ Understanding depends on the listener's or reader's expectations. These expectations are of a type of meaning rather than of a unique meaning "because otherwise the interpreter would have no way of expecting them." Consequently, utterances must conform to typical usages if they are to be intelligible at all. Even the unique aspects of a text (and every text is unique in some respect) can only be understood if they are located relative to conventional signals. As Hirsch has lucidly shown, "the central role of genre concepts in interpretation is most easily grasped when the process of interpretation is going badly, or when it has to undergo revision." An interpreter always begins with an assumption about the genre of a text. If our expectations are fulfilled, the assumptions will need no revision. If they are not fulfilled, we must revise our idea of the genre or relinquish the attempt to understand. There can be no understanding without at least an implicit notion of genre.

The generic framework or *Rahmengattung* indicated in the definition of apocalypse above is important because it involves a conceptual structure or view of the world. It indicates some basic presuppositions about the way the world works, which are shared by all the apocalypses. Specifically, the world is mysterious and revelation must be transmitted from a supernatural source, through the mediation of angels; there is a hidden world of angels and demons that is directly relevant to human destiny; and this destiny is finally determined by a definitive eschatological judgment. In short, human life is bounded in the present by the supernatural world of angels and demons and in the future by the inevitability of a final judgment.

This conceptual structure already carries some implications for the function of the genre, since it provides a framework for viewing the problems of life. The appeal to supernatural revelation provides a basis for assurance and guidance, and establishes the authority of the text. The prospect of a final

19. L. Hartman, "Survey of the Problem of Apocalyptic Genre," in Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism*, 329-43; D. Hellholm, *Das Visionenbuch des Hermas als Apokalypse* (Lund: Gleerup, 1980) 14-95; J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); M. Gerhart, "Genre Studies: Their Renewed Importance in Religious and Literary Interpretation," *JAAR* 45 (1977) 309-25.

20. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) 68-102.

judgment creates a context for the clarification of values. The specific problems may vary from one apocalypse to another, and so may the specific guidance and demands. Two apocalypses such as 4 Ezra and 2 *Baruch* may disagree on particular issues, but their differences are articulated within the framework of shared presuppositions. If we say that a work is apocalyptic we encourage the reader to expect that it frames its message within the view of the world that is characteristic of the genre.

The literary genre apocalypse is not a self-contained isolated entity. The conceptual structure indicated by the genre, which emphasizes the supernatural world and the judgment to come, can also be found in works that are not revelation accounts, and so are not technically apocalypses. So, for example, the Qumran *War Scroll* is widely and rightly regarded as "apocalyptic" in the extended sense, although it is not presented as a revelation.²¹ Furthermore, the generic framework is never the only factor that shapes a text. The visions of Daniel, for example, must be seen in the context not only of the genre but also of the tales in Daniel 1-6 and of the other literature inspired by the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Consequently there is always a corpus of related literature that is relevant in varying degrees to the understanding of a particular text. Any discussion of apocalyptic literature must also take account of oracles and testaments, which parallel the apocalypses (especially the "historical" ones) at many points. Yet the definition is important for providing a focus for the discussion and indicating a core to which other literary types may be related.

Other Views of the Genre

It may be useful to contrast the view of the genre presented here and in *Semeia* 14 with other views that have been recently advocated. On the one hand, E. P. Sanders has proposed a return to an "essentialist" definition of Jewish apocalypses as a combination of the themes of *revelation* and *reversal* (of the fortunes of a group, either Israel or the righteous).²² The attractiveness of this proposal lies in the simplicity with which Sanders can then view the social function of the genre as literature of the oppressed. However, the proposal suffers from two crucial disadvantages. First, the combined themes of revelation and reversal are characteristic of the whole tradition of biblical prophecy,

21. See further J. J. Collins, "Genre, Ideology, and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism," in J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth, eds., *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium* (JSPSup 9; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991) 23-24 (= Collins, *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* [Leiden: Brill, 1997] 25-38).

22. E. P. Sanders, "The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses," in Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism*, 447-59.

as well as of the political oracles of the ancient Near East. All of this literature is, of course, related on a very broad level (the genre apocalypse is a subgenre of "revelatory literature"); but a definition that fails to distinguish between Amos and Enoch is of limited value. Second, it takes no account at all of the cosmological and mystical tendencies in the apocalypses, which have been repeatedly emphasized in recent studies.²³ It may also be that Sanders's view of the social function is too simple. While several major Jewish apocalypses (especially those of the historical type) can be viewed as literature of the oppressed, this is seldom evident in otherworldly journeys, although the latter type frequently bore the label "apocalypse" in antiquity. In the Middle Ages, we also find apocalypses of the historical type used in support of the empire and the papacy.²⁴

On the other hand, a number of scholars have argued that definitions of "apocalypse" or "apocalyptic" should make no mention of eschatology.²⁵ So an apocalypse might be defined simply as a revelation of heavenly mysteries.²⁶ Such a definition is unobjectionable as far as it goes. It would of course cover a much wider corpus than the definition given above, but it is certainly accurate for all apocalypses. If one wishes to give a more descriptive definition of the literature that has been traditionally regarded as apocalyptic, then the question arises whether some revelations of heavenly mysteries are distinguished from others by their content. The issue here has usually centered on eschatology. It is true that the scholarly literature has been preoccupied with eschatology to a disproportionate degree and that it is by no means the only concern of the apocalypses. Yet an approach that denies the essential role of eschatology is an overreaction and no less one-sided.

Yet another, highly original approach to the apocalyptic genre has been pioneered by Paolo Sacchi, and has been very influential in European scholarship.²⁷ Sacchi's approach is distinguished by its diachronic character. Rather

23. M. E. Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things"; idem, *Scriptures, Sects, and Visions* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980); I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980); C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

24. B. McGinn, *Visions of the End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) 33-36.

25. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*; J. Carmignac, "Qu'est-ce que l'Apocalyptique? Son emploi à Qumrân," *RevQ* 10 (1979) 3-33; H. Stegemann, "Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde für die Erforschung der Apokalypstik," in Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism*, 495-530.

26. Compare Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 14: "To speak of apocalyptic, therefore, is to concentrate on the theme of the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity." Rowland later (p. 50) posits a threefold structure of legends, visions, and admonitions, but neither the legends nor the admonitions are consistent features of the genre.

27. P. Sacchi, *L'apocalittica giudaica e la sua storia* (Brescia: Paideia, 1990); English translation: *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). See G. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Contribution of Italian Scholarship," in Collins and Charlesworth, eds., *Mysteries and Revelations*, 33-50, with bibliography up to 1990.

than look for essential characteristics of the corpus as a whole, Sacchi identifies the underlying problem of the oldest apocalypse, which he takes to be the Book of the Watchers, and traces its influence on a developing tradition. The underlying problem is the origin of evil, and the distinctively apocalyptic solution lies in the idea that evil is prior to human will and is the result of an original sin that has irremediably corrupted creation. This motif can be traced clearly in the Enoch corpus and identified in a somewhat different form in 4 Ezra and 2 *Baruch*. F. García Martínez has effectively shown the influence of this trajectory in the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁸

It is to Sacchi's credit that he has highlighted an important motif in apocalyptic literature, especially in the Enochic corpus. But the genre cannot be identified with a single motif or theme, and the early Enoch literature, important though it is, cannot be regarded as normative for all apocalypses. Gabriele Boccaccini has pointed out that by Sacchi's definition, the book of Daniel should not be classified as apocalyptic.²⁹ Other themes and motifs, including eschatology, are no less important than the origin of evil. Nonetheless, Sacchi has had a salutary impact on the discussion by directing attention to the diachronic development of apocalyptic traditions.

Apocalyptic Eschatology

The debate over the definition of the genre leads us back to the question of apocalyptic eschatology. The touchstone here must be the kind of eschatology that is found in the apocalypses. Two problems have been raised. First, some have questioned whether the apocalypses exhibit a consistent eschatology.³⁰ We must bear in mind that as there are different types of apocalypses, there are correspondingly different types of apocalyptic eschatology. The common equation of "apocalyptic" with the scenario of the end of history is based only on the "historical" type like Daniel, and scholars have rightly objected that this is not typical of all apocalypses. All the apocalypses, however, involve a transcendent eschatology that looks for retribution beyond the bounds of history. In some cases (3 *Baruch*, *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*) this takes the form of the judgment of individuals after death, without reference to the end of history. We should bear in mind that retribution after death is also a crucial

28. F. García Martínez, "Les traditions apocalyptiques à Qumrân," in C. Kappler, ed., *Apocalypses et voyages dans l'au-delà* (Paris: Cerf, 1987) 201-35.

29. G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 126-60.

30. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 29, 71. J. Carmignac argues that the term "eschatology" is too diffuse to be of any service ("Les Dangers de l'Eschatologie," *NTS* 17 [1971] 365-90).

component in a "historical" apocalypse like Daniel and constitutes a major difference from the eschatology of the prophets.³¹ The fact that apocalyptic eschatology has often been erroneously identified with the "historical" type in the past does not justify the denial that there is any apocalyptic eschatology at all.

Second, neither the judgment of the dead nor even the scenario of the end of history is peculiar to apocalypses: hence the objection that there is no *distinctive* apocalyptic eschatology.³² Insofar as this objection bears on the definition of the genre, we must note that visions and heavenly journeys are not distinctive either. The genre is not constituted by one or more distinctive themes but by a distinctive combination of elements, all of which are also found elsewhere. A more significant problem arises if we wish to speak of apocalyptic eschatology outside of the apocalypses, for example, in the Gospels or Paul. What is at issue here is the affinity between the eschatological allusions and the scenarios which are found in more elaborate form in the apocalypses. Affinities vary in degree, and, although the label "apocalyptic eschatology" may be helpful in pointing up the implications of some texts, we should always be aware that the adjective is used in an extended sense.

Apocalypticism

We may now return to the relation between the apocalypses and apocalypticism. Koch's "preliminary demonstration of apocalyptic as a historical movement" singled out eight clusters of motifs: (1) urgent expectation of the end of earthly conditions in the immediate future; (2) the end as a cosmic catastrophe; (3) periodization and determinism; (4) activity of angels and demons; (5) new salvation, paradisaic in character; (6) manifestation of the kingdom of God; (7) a mediator with royal functions; (8) the catchword "glory."³³ Koch does not claim that all these elements are found in every apocalypse, even in his rather limited list, which essentially corresponds to the "historical" apocalypses of *Semeia* 14. It is apparent, however, that these characteristics do not correspond at all to an apocalypse like 2 *Enoch* and that they ignore much of the speculative material that is prominent even in the earliest works of the Enoch tradition. So Michael Stone has argued that "there are some of the books which are conventionally regarded as apocalypses which

are for all practical purposes devoid of apocalypticism" and that "truly apocalyptic apocalypses are the exception rather than the rule."³⁴ Hence the conclusion that a clear distinction must be maintained between apocalypses and apocalypticism.

It is obvious that there are indeed distinctions to be made, but to speak of apocalypses that are not apocalyptic can only compound the semantic confusion. We may begin by clarifying the valid distinctions and then try to sort out the terminology. Insofar as apocalypticism is a historical movement or "refers to the symbolic universe in which an apocalyptic movement codifies its identity and interpretation of reality,"³⁵ it is not simply identical with the content of apocalypses. There are apocalypses that are not the product of a movement in any meaningful sense. Equally, there are movements, such as the sect of Qumran and early (pre-70 C.E.) Christianity, that did not produce apocalypses but are nonetheless commonly regarded as apocalyptic. The question remains, however, when a movement can appropriately be called apocalyptic. Since the adjective "apocalyptic" and the noun "apocalypticism" are derived from "apocalypse," it is only reasonable to expect that they indicate some analogy with the apocalypses. A movement might reasonably be called apocalyptic if it shared the conceptual framework of the genre, endorsing a worldview in which supernatural revelation, the heavenly world, and eschatological judgment played essential parts. Arguably, both the Qumran community and early Christianity are apocalyptic in this sense, quite apart from the production of apocalypses. We should remember, however, that the argument depends on analogy with the apocalypses and that the affinity is always a matter of degree.

If the word "apocalypticism" is taken to mean the ideology of a movement that shares the conceptual structure of the apocalypses, then we must recognize that there may be different types of apocalyptic movements, just as there are different types of apocalypses. Koch's list of features corresponds well enough to the "historical" type. We must also allow for mystically oriented movements which are "apocalyptic" insofar as they correspond to the "heavenly journey" type of apocalypse. We are only beginning to explore the historical setting in which Jewish mysticism developed.

The debate over the relation between apocalypses and apocalypticism arises from the fact that previous scholarship has been preoccupied with the "historical" apocalypses and neglected those that incline to mysticism and cosmic speculation. One of the more significant developments of recent years has been the rediscovery of the mystical side of apocalyptic literature. The mystical component cannot be neatly isolated from the historical, but is an integral factor in all apocalyptic literature. A comprehensive understanding of

31. J. J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death," *CBQ* 36 (1974) 21-43 (= *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages*, 75-98).

32. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 29-37, 71.

33. Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, 28-33.

34. Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things," 440, 443.

35. Hanson, *IDB Sup.* 30.

the genre apocalypse in its different types also calls for a more complex view of the social phenomenon of apocalypticism.

Apocalyptic Language

Up to this point we have been concerned with the generic framework that enables us to identify the apocalypses as a distinct class of writings. We must now turn to two other aspects of the genre that were not examined in *Semeia* 14: the nature of apocalyptic language and the question of setting and function.

The literary conventions that determine the manner of composition and the nature of the literature are no less important than the generic framework. On this issue we may distinguish two fundamentally different approaches, one of which is associated with the name of R. H. Charles and the other with that of Hermann Gunkel. This is not, of course, to suggest that the approaches of these scholars were always incompatible with each other or that every subsequent scholar can be neatly aligned with one or the other. They do, however, represent two divergent tendencies in the study of apocalyptic literature.³⁶

The Influence of R. H. Charles

The study of apocalyptic literature in the English-speaking world has to a great extent been influenced by R. H. Charles. His textual editions, translations, and notes remained standard reference works for most of the twentieth century, and his knowledge of the material was undeniably vast.³⁷ Yet such a sober critic as T. W. Manson wrote that "there was a sense in which the language of Apocalyptic remained a foreign language to him. He could never be completely at home in the world of the Apocalyptists. And this made it impossible for him to achieve that perfect understanding which demands sympathy as well as knowledge."³⁸ Charles's lack of empathy with the material is apparent in two characteristics of his work. First, he tended to treat the texts as compendia of information and paid great attention to identifying

36. See my essay, "Apocalyptic Literature," in R. A. Kraft and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, eds., *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) 345-70.

37. In addition to his monumental *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, Charles published editions of *1 Enoch*, *Ascension of Isaiah*, *2 Baruch*, *Jubilees*, *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Assumption of Moses*, and (with W. R. Morfill) *2 Enoch*.

38. Cited by J. Barr, "Jewish Apocalyptic in Recent Scholarly Study," *BJRL* 58 (1975) 32 (from the *Dictionary of National Biography* [1931-40] 170).

historical allusions and extracting theological doctrines. In contrast, he gave little attention to such matters as literary structure or mythological symbolism. The second characteristic is related to this. Since he assumed that the original documents presupposed a doctrinal consistency similar to his own and that the canons of style that governed them were similar to those of his own day, he posited interpolations and proposed emendations rather freely. So F. C. Burkitt wrote in his obituary of Charles: "If he came to have any respect for an ancient author he was unwilling to believe that such a person could have entertained conceptions which to Charles's trained and logical western mind were 'mutually exclusive,' and his favorite explanation was to posit interpolations and a multiplicity of sources, each of which may be supposed to have been written from a single and consistent point of view."³⁹

Of course Charles was a child of his age. The principles of literary/source criticism typified by J. Wellhausen were still dominant in biblical studies when he wrote. It is to Charles's credit that he did not share Wellhausen's negative evaluation of apocalypticism. The underlying assumptions of this type of approach have continued to play a prominent part in the study of apocalyptic literature. In large part this has been due to the persistence of a tradition that "has tended towards clarity and simplicity, and . . . has tended to lose from sight the essential problem of understanding the apocalyptic books as literary texts with their own strange form and language."⁴⁰ This tendency has been especially, though not exclusively, evident in British scholarship. The two most comprehensive and widely read books on "apocalyptic" in the last half century were by British authors — H. H. Rowley and D. S. Russell.⁴¹ Both books contain much that is still valuable, but as James Barr has pointed out, they are characterized by the "reduction of the very enigmatic material to essentially simple questions."⁴² It is also significant that Charles, Rowley, and Russell all sought the sources of apocalyptic language primarily in Old Testament prophecy. While prophecy may indeed be the single most important source on which the apocalyptists drew, the tendency to assimilate apocalyptic literature to the more familiar world of the prophets risks losing sight of its stranger mythological and cosmological components.

The problem with the source-critical method is obviously one of degree. No one will deny that it is sometimes possible and necessary to distinguish sources and identify interpolations. We have learned, however, that the apocalyptic writings are far more tolerant of inconsistency and repetition than Charles and his collaborators realized. Consequently, we must learn the con-

39. Cited by Barr, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 31.

40. *Ibid.*

41. H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London: Athlone, 1944; reprint, Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1980); D. S. Russell, *Method and Message*.

42. Barr, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 32.

ventions that are actually employed in the text rather than assume that our own criteria of consistency are applicable. In short, our working assumptions should favor the unity of a document, unless there is cogent evidence to the contrary. The burden of proof falls on the scholar who would divide a text into multiple sources.

The methodological assumptions that posit sources and interpolations to maintain an ideal of consistency are frequently coupled with a lack of appreciation of symbolic narratives. The tendency of much historical scholarship has been to specify the referents of apocalyptic imagery in as unambiguous a manner as possible. This enterprise has indeed contributed much to our understanding of passages like Daniel 11. Yet Paul Ricoeur has rightly protested against the tendency to identify apocalyptic symbols in too univocal a way.⁴³ This tendency misses the element of mystery and indeterminacy that constitutes much of the "atmosphere" of apocalyptic literature. In short, Ricoeur suggests that we should sometimes "allow several concurrent identifications *play*" and that the text may on occasion achieve its effect precisely through the element of uncertainty. It has been common to assume that apocalyptic symbols are mere codes whose meaning is exhausted by single referents. So Norman Perrin contrasted the rich and multidimensional use of the "kingdom of God" in the teaching of Jesus (a "tensive" symbol) with what he conceived to be the one-dimensional usage of the apocalypses ("steno-symbols").⁴⁴ Such a contrast shows little appreciation for the allusive and evocative power of apocalyptic symbolism, but we must admit that Perrin's approach was consistent with much English-language scholarship.

The Influence of Hermann Gunkel

Hermann Gunkel, who pioneered so many creative developments in biblical study, also pointed the way to a more satisfactory appreciation of the apocalypses.⁴⁵ Much of Gunkel's work on apocalyptic literature was directed to the recovery of traditional, and especially mythological, materials embedded in the apocalypses. On the one hand, this work suggested that the various seams detected by the so-called literary critics (e.g., when an interpretation ignores

43. P. Ricoeur, preface to A. Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979) xxii-xxiii.

44. N. Perrin, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics: Reflections on Method in the Interpretation of the New Testament," *JBL* 93 (1974) 3-14. See my critique, "The Symbolism of Transcendence in Jewish Apocalyptic," *BR* 19 (1974) 5-22.

45. H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895); idem, "Das vierte Buch Esra," in E. Kautzsch, ed., *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1900) 2:331-401. See J. M. Schmidt, *Die jüdische Apokalyphtik*, 195-204; Hanson, "Prolegomena," 393-96.

some elements in a vision) need not point to multiple authorship but only to the use of traditional material by a single author. In short, authors who work with traditional material do not conform to the standards of consistency and coherence presupposed by Charles and Wellhausen but may well allow loose ends and even contradictions to stand in their work. On the other hand, by pointing to the mythological roots of much apocalyptic imagery, Gunkel showed its symbolic and allusive character. Apocalyptic literature was not governed by the principles of Aristotelian logic but was closer to the poetic nature of myth.

Gunkel's critique of the principles of "literary" criticism was long neglected by students of apocalyptic literature but has been repeatedly vindicated in recent study. The insight that the apocalypses did not aspire to conceptual consistency but could allow diverse formulations to complement each other is especially important. The juxtaposition of visions and oracles which cover essentially the same material, with varying imagery is a feature of a great number of apocalypses and related writings — Daniel, *Sibylline Oracles*, Similitudes of Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Revelation. This phenomenon cannot be adequately explained by positing multiple sources, since we should still have to explain why sources are consistently combined in this way. In fact, repetition is a common literary (and oral) convention in ancient and modern times. A significant parallel to the apocalypses is found in the repetition of dream reports — for example, the multiple dreams of Joseph or of Gilgamesh. The recognition that such repetition is an intrinsic feature of apocalyptic writings provides a key to a new understanding of the genre.

Biblical scholarship in general has suffered from a preoccupation with the referential aspects of language and with the factual information that can be extracted from a text. Such an attitude is especially detrimental to the study of poetic and mythological material, which is expressive language, articulating feelings and attitudes rather than describing reality in an objective way. The apocalyptic literature provides a rather clear example of language that is expressive rather than referential, symbolic rather than factual.⁴⁶

Traditional Imagery

The symbolic character of apocalyptic language is shown especially by its pervasive use of allusions to traditional imagery. Like much of the Jewish and early Christian literature, the apocalypses constantly echo biblical phrases. This point has been demonstrated especially by the Swedish scholar Lars

46. On the various nonreferential aspects of biblical language see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

Hartman. The title of Hartman's basic book, *Prophecy Interpreted*, may be somewhat misleading, if it is taken to suggest that the use of the biblical material is primarily exegetical. To be sure, the direct interpretation of older prophecies is a significant factor in apocalyptic writings; the interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy in Daniel 9 is an obvious example. In many cases, however, the use of older texts consists only in the use of a phrase that brings a biblical passage to mind without claiming to interpret it in a definitive way. So the opening chapter of *1 Enoch* is a patchwork of biblical phrases, alluding *inter alia* to Balaam's oracle in Numbers 23–24.⁴⁷ This allusiveness enriches the language by building associations and analogies between the biblical contexts and the new context in which the phrase is used. It also means that this language lends itself to different levels of meaning and becomes harder to pin down in a univocal, unambiguous way.

The importance of biblical allusions in apocalyptic literature is generally admitted. Far more controversial is the use of mythological allusions. In part, the controversy arises from the notorious diversity of ways in which the word "myth" is used: sometimes as a genre label, sometimes as a mode of thought, sometimes implying an association with ritual, and sometimes even as a derogatory term for what is false or "pagan."⁴⁸ A case can be made, I believe, for using "myth" as a genre label (on a broader level than apocalypse) in any of a number of senses — for example, as a paradigmatic narrative (à la M. Eliade) or as a story that obscures or mediates the contradictions of experience (à la C. Lévi-Strauss). In view of the ambiguity of the word, however, such a generic use of "myth" is scarcely helpful. The word is used in biblical studies primarily to refer to the religious stories of the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world. When we speak of mythological allusions in the apocalyptic literature we are referring to motifs and patterns that are ultimately derived from these stories.

The importance of Near Eastern mythology for understanding the apocalyptic literature was forcefully suggested by Gunkel in his famous book *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* in 1895. The insight was kept alive by writers of the "myth and ritual" school such as S. H. Hooke and especially by A. Bentzen and S. Mowinckel.⁴⁹ In English-language scholarship it has been revived especially by Paul D. Hanson, building on the work of Frank M. Cross.⁵⁰ Whereas Gunkel sought his mythological parallels in

47. L. Hartman, *Asking for a Meaning: A Study of 1 Enoch 1–5* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979)

22.

48. J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974).

49. S. H. Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern in Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic," in idem, *The Labyrinth* (London: SPCK, 1935) 213–33; A. Bentzen, *Daniel* (2d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1952); S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955).

50. Hanson, "Jewish Apocalyptic Against Its Near Eastern Environment," *RB* 78 (1971) 31–58; Cross, "New Directions in the Study of Apocalyptic," *JTC* 6 (1969) 157–65.

the Babylonian material then available and subsequent scholars posited vast Persian influence, more recent scholarship has looked to the Canaanite-Ugaritic myths — especially in the case of Daniel.

There is still widespread resistance to the idea that Jewish apocalypses use mythological motifs.⁵¹ In large part this resistance is theological, when the myths are viewed as "false" or "pagan." In fact, however, Canaanite motifs had been domesticated in the religion of Israel from very early times.⁵² In some measure, the resistance arises from misconceptions. The Ugaritic texts come from the middle of the second millennium B.C.E., more than a thousand years before the earliest apocalypses. However, no one would claim that the authors of Daniel or Enoch had before them the exact texts we now have. We have very little documentation of the Canaanite religious tradition. The Ugaritic myths provide examples of a tradition that is largely lost. They are not the immediate sources of the apocalyptic imagery, but they illustrate the traditional usage that provides the context for the allusions. Before the Ugaritic texts were discovered, Gunkel appealed primarily to the Babylonian myths. The Ugaritic parallels now appear more adequate at some points. Future discoveries may yield even better comparative material. Gunkel was not wrong to appeal to the Babylonian material, since the issue is not the exact derivation but the kinds of allusions involved.

It should also be clear that a mythological allusion does not carry the same meaning and reference in an apocalyptic context as it did in the original myth. If the "one like a son of man" who comes on the clouds in Daniel 7 alludes to the Canaanite figure of Baal, this is not to say that he is identified as Baal, or that the full story of Baal is implied. It merely suggests that there is some analogy between this figure and the traditional conception of Baal. In the same way, the "Son of Man" passage in Mark 13:26 alludes to Daniel, but the figure in Mark does not have the same reference as it had in Daniel, and the full narrative of Daniel 7 is not implied. Mythological allusions, like biblical allusions, are not simple copies of the original source. Rather they transfer motifs from one context to another. By so doing they build associations and analogies and so enrich the communicative power of the language.

The Quest for Sources

The recognition of allusions, and of the sources from which they derive, is an important factor in the study of apocalyptic literature. Yet it is important

51. For elaboration of the following see my essay, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions in Daniel," *JSOT* 21 (1981) 83–100.

52. F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

to distinguish the *generic* approach advocated here from the *genetic* approach which has long been dominant in this field of study.

An extraordinary amount of the scholarly literature has been devoted to the quest for the "origins of apocalyptic." For much of this century opinion was divided between those who viewed "apocalyptic" as the child of prophecy (e.g., Rowley) and those who regarded it as a "foreign" adaptation of Persian dualism.⁵³ More recently Gerhard von Rad suggested that it was derived from wisdom.⁵⁴ The renewed interest in mythological, especially Canaanite, sources is usually combined with the derivation from prophecy.

Much of this quest must be considered misdirected and counterproductive. Any given apocalypse combines allusions to a wide range of sources. The book of Daniel has obvious continuity with the prophets in the vision form and the use of Jeremiah's prophecy among other things. Yet we will argue that Canaanite imagery plays a crucial role in Daniel 7, and the schema of the four kingdoms is borrowed from the political propaganda of the Hellenistic Near East. While the importance of Persian dualism was greatly exaggerated in the past, it cannot be dismissed entirely. It is widely admitted in the Qumran scrolls and is quite compatible with the extensive use of Israelite traditions. Ultimately the meaning of any given work is constituted not by the sources from which it draws but by the way in which they are combined.

The quest for sources has often led scholars to view apocalypticism as a derivative phenomenon, a product of something other than itself. This tendency reflects a theological prejudice, inherited from the Wellhausen era, which views the apocalyptic writers (and postexilic Judaism in general) as inherently inferior to the prophets. In fact, the designation of sources has often been used as a covert way of making theological judgments. If "apocalyptic" is the child of prophecy it is legitimate; if it is a Persian import it is not authentically biblical. This logic is patently defective. The sources from which ideas are developed do not determine the inherent value of those ideas. Many of the central biblical ideas were in any case adapted from the mythology of the Canaanites and other Near Eastern peoples.

The designation of sources also sometimes serves as an indirect way of expressing the character of the phenomenon. Scholars who relate the apocalyptic literature exclusively to prophecy tend to concentrate on the eschatology and neglect the cosmological and speculative concerns that are also found in the apocalypses. Von Rad's theory that apocalypticism is derived from wisdom sought to correct that emphasis, but the issues have

53. For example, W. Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter* (3d ed; ed. H. Gressmann; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1926).

54. G. von Rad, *Theologie*, 2:315-30. A connection between wisdom and apocalyptic literature was proposed as early as 1857 by L. Noack.

been confused by the genetic formulation of his thesis. The apocalypses do indeed present a kind of wisdom insofar as they, first, offer an understanding of the structure of the universe and of history and, second, see right understanding as the precondition of right action. This wisdom, however, is not the inductive kind that we find in Proverbs or Sirach, but is acquired through revelation. The wisdom of Daniel and Enoch has close affinities with the *mantic* wisdom of the Babylonians.⁵⁵ The quest for higher wisdom by revelation is well attested in the Hellenistic age,⁵⁶ and it is significant that the biblical wisdom book that shows most correspondence with the apocalypses is the Hellenistic (deuterocanonical) Wisdom of Solomon.⁵⁷ There is also an analogy between the wisdom literature and some apocalypses on the level of the underlying questions, insofar as both are often concerned with theodicy or the problem of divine justice. The use of the dialogue form in 4 Ezra recalls the book of Job in this regard, although the culminating revelations in the two books are very different.⁵⁸ The relation to wisdom is seldom a matter of derivation but concerns the way we perceive the nature of the apocalypses. The most fruitful effect of von Rad's proposal has been to redirect attention to those aspects of the apocalypses which are cosmological and speculative rather than eschatological.

The Settings of the Genre

The study of the apocalyptic genre rejects the genetic orientation of previous scholarship and places its primary emphasis on the internal coherence of the apocalyptic texts themselves. It is apparent that the apocalypses drew on various strands of tradition and that the new product is more than the sum of its sources. There is, however, a different genetic question that must be considered, concerning the historical and social matrix of the genre. In 1970 Klaus Koch could still assume that "if there was really a community of ideas and spirit between the different books which we now call apocalypses, these

55. H.-P. Müller, "Mantische Weisheit und Apokalyptik," in *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971* (VTSup 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972) 268-93; J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (HSM 16; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977) 67-88; J. C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS 16; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984) chapter 3. Note also the critique of von Rad by P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik in ihrem Verhältnis zu Prophetie und Weisheit* (Munich: Kaiser, 1969).

56. M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 1.210-18.

57. J. J. Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic in the Hellenistic Age," *HR* 17 (1977) 121-42 (= *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages*, 317-38).

58. Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, 205-8.

books must go back to a common sociological starting point; they must have a comparable *Sitz-im-Leben*."⁵⁹ Koch went on to complain that "the secondary literature shows an unsurpassed jumble of opinions" and concluded that apocalypse is a genre whose *Sitz im Leben* we do not yet know.

More recent study has shown that this formulation of the problem is inadequate. In an important critique of Old Testament form criticism in 1973, Rolf Knierim argued that "the conclusion seems unavoidable that 'setting' in the sense biblical form criticism has understood it, cannot be regarded indispensably as one of the factors that constitute genres."⁶⁰ The reason is not only the obvious practical one that we often do not have the necessary information to establish the setting of a text. More fundamental is the realization that settings are of different sorts, and so there is need of a typology of settings. The "jumble of opinions" about which Koch complains is due in large part to the lack of such a typology.

It is generally agreed that apocalypse is not simply "a conceptual genre of the mind"⁶¹ but is generated by social and historical circumstances. On the broadest level "the style of an epoch can be understood as a matrix insofar as it furnishes the codes or raw materials — the typical categories of communication — employed by a certain society."⁶² Much of the traditional debate about the sources of apocalypticism is relevant here insofar as the "codes and raw materials" are thought to be provided by late prophecy, Persian dualism, etc. On another level we may consider Philip Vielhauer's thesis that "the home of Apocalyptic is in those eschatologically excited circles which were forced more and more by the theocracy into a kind of conventicle existence."⁶³ A more specific variant of this type of setting would assign the apocalypses to a particular party, such as the Hasidim or the Essenes. A different type of setting is reflected in Vielhauer's further claim that the apocalypses "were frequently written out of actual distresses and for the strengthening of the community in them."⁶⁴ There is no necessary assertion about the existence of apocalyptic groups on this level. Yet another type of setting concerns the manner of composition. Do apocalypses reflect authentic visionary experience? Are they products of learned scribes? Or do they articulate popular beliefs? Finally, one may discuss the function of a text without specifying a social or historical setting at all. Recently Lars Hartman and David Hellholm have focused on the *illocution* of a text, or that which it does

59. Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, 21.

60. R. Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered," *Int* 27 (1973) 441.

61. *Ibid.*, 438. Knierim suggests that "myth" may be considered such a genre.

62. *Ibid.*, 464.

63. P. Vielhauer, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols.; ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) 2:598.

64. *Ibid.*

in saying what it says.⁶⁵ Hartman suggests that exhortation and consolation are typical illocutions of apocalypses. Even on this level, the function of a text may be more or less specific. Exhortation to pacifism is distinctly different from exhortation to violence, and either may be the function of a given text. We should also note that a text remains in existence and may be reused in various settings at different times.

The General Matrix

Postexilic Prophecy

We may begin with the question of the matrix of the genre on the most general level. In an influential study published in 1975, Paul Hanson argued that "the dawn of apocalyptic" should be located in postexilic prophecy in the late sixth century B.C.E.⁶⁶ Hanson was well aware that the main corpus of apocalyptic literature comes from a much later time. His point was that the basic configuration of apocalyptic thought can already be found in the late prophetic texts.

Hanson distinguishes two parties in the postexilic community: the hierocratic party represented by Haggai, the early chapters of Zechariah, and Ezekiel 40–48 and the visionary heirs of Second Isaiah, represented by Isaiah 56–66, Zechariah 9–14, and a number of other passages, most notably Isaiah 24–27.⁶⁷ The closest formal analogies to the apocalypses are found in the "hierocratic" literature, especially in the visions of Zechariah that are interpreted by an angel.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Hanson sees in the visionary literature the dawn of apocalyptic eschatology, which he associates with the eclipse of human instrumentality in the divine intervention in history. The oracles of Isaiah 56–66 are written out of a growing sense of alienation from the hierocracy. The prophet calls on God to "rend the heavens and come down"

65. Hartman, "Survey"; Hellholm, *Das Visionenbuch*, 1.52–58. The term is taken from J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (2d ed.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975) 98–108.

66. P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*. On the significance of the Persian period for the development of apocalypticism, see further J. J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in J. J. Collins, B. McGinn, and S. Stein, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (New York: Continuum, forthcoming) vol. 1.

67. Hanson, *IDBSup*, 33.

68. H. Gese, "Anfang und Ende der Apokalyphtik dargestellt am Sacharjabuch," *ZThK* 70 (1973) 20–49; R. North, "Prophecy to Apocalyptic via Zechariah," in *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971* (VTSup 22) 47–71. See now E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of the Watchers, and Apocalyptic* (OTS 35; Leiden: Brill, 1996), and S. L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 123–65.