JEWISH APOCALYPTIC IN RECENT SCHOLARLY STUDY

By JAMES BARR, M.A., B.D., F.B.A.
PROFESSOR OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

In 1972 a book was published in this country by the young, productive and stimulating German Old Testament scholar Klaus Koch. Its title was *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, and much that will be said in this lecture may count as a commentary on it. The first thing to say is that there is a curious irony in the very title of this little book, and this irony may serve as a symbol of much that has to be said. The English title just quoted might suggest that apocalyptic, a difficult and esoteric literary and religious phenomenon, is now being rediscovered and understood afresh. The original German title, however, suggested something quite different. It was *Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik* (Gütersloh, 1970); literally translated, this means something like "at a loss (or, more vulgarly, without a clue) what to do with apocalyptic". Something of the essential message of Koch’s book was thus lost in the more optimistic title of the English version. In his book Koch traces in an interesting manner the way in which apocalyptic, for a long time neglected in German biblical study, has recently come to the fore again, but in different ways as it affects Old Testament studies, New Testament studies, and general theological thinking; and he argues that this new interest in apocalyptic, far from fitting easily into the prevailing practices and categories of biblical study, constitutes a challenge which cannot be met without a thorough rethinking of the categories with which biblical study works. And, before we penetrate more deeply into the question, one more general remark about Koch’s book; it has the merit of looking not only at the continental discussion but of taking a sympathetic and

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1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester on Wednesday, the 12th of February 1975.

2 I shall take the opportunity also to assist the reader of Koch’s book by correcting certain minor misunderstandings in the English version: e.g., on p. 44, for *imminent motivation* read *immanent motivation* (German, p. 42).
often even laudatory interest in the study of apocalyptic in the English-speaking world, and sometimes it points out ways in which British research has been ahead of German work in the same field. This has prompted me to give some thought to the peculiarly British tradition of studies in apocalyptic, as seen from within, and to complement Koch's discussion with some comments both on this aspect and on the subject as a whole.

I shall begin therefore by reminding you of the tradition of apocalyptic studies in this country. The grand old man of the subject was, of course, R. H. Charles (1855–1931), an Ulsterman, later of Merton College, Oxford, who devoted his entire life to the apocryphal, pseudepigraphic and apocalyptic books, edited the texts of many of them and wrote commentaries upon them, and left solid textual and historical foundations for others to work with. He is best known to modern students through his great two-volume edition, in translation with introductions and notes, entitled *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913); in this work he had the able assistance of other experienced workers in the same field such as G. H. Box.

Charles, then, is certainly the first great figure in apocalyptic studies of a modern type in this country, and later we shall have more to say about the character of his work. Within the walls of this great library, however, it is not out of place to indulge in a little self-congratulation and note that the city of Manchester seems to have made a particular contribution to this field of study. I have not been able to find any connections between Charles himself and this city, but many of a later generation had special connections here. Already his contemporary R. Travers Herford, who was long minister of the Stand Unitarian Church, wrote extensively on the intertestamental period in general and on Pharisaism in particular, and some of his opinions on apocalyptic are still found quoted.¹ Herford's emphasis, however, was strongly anti-apocalyptic: he made a sharp distinction between apocalyptic and Pharisaism: both, he said, were children of prophecy, but one was a Jacob and the other (apocalyptic) was an Esau. Apocalyptic was full of promises that had never been fulfilled. Herford thus represents that line of

¹ So Koch, pp. 50 f.
JEWISH APOCALYPTIC scholarship, represented also by George Foot Moore in his magisterial work *Judaism,*¹ which takes the Pharisaic direction as the norm and by contrast pushes apocalyptic into the corner or into the shade.

But much the most significant name after Charles is that of my honoured predecessor, the late Professor H. H. Rowley. From the beginning of his scholarly work Rowley was interested in the apocalyptic area. In his published bibliography² the first work listed is one on "The Belshazzar of Daniel and of History", in *The Expositor* of 1924. In 1926 he published an article on the Sibylline Oracles, in 1928 another on Daniel, and in 1929 his complete book on *The Aramaic of the Old Testament*, a work which among other things was deeply concerned with the impact of linguistic evidence on the dating of Daniel—a matter of the greatest importance for the historical understanding of apocalyptic, and also a matter of intense controversy between liberal and conservative schools of biblical criticism, and to some degree still so today.³ Other articles on Daniel appeared in 1930, 1932 and 1933, and in 1935 there appeared another very thorough treatise, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel:* a historical study of contemporary theories. This again was among other things concerned with the upholding of critical views against conservative attacks. The work was marked by one of Rowley's propensities which was to become famous, namely his love for prolific and cumulative bibliographical annotation: he furnished precise documentation for all sorts of ideas and theories which some others might have considered scarcely to merit attention at all.

All this, however, was before Rowley came to Manchester, and even his main general work in the field, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (first published 1944), was written when he was at Bangor and before he came here. It was, interestingly enough, originally given as a course of lectures at the Vacation Term for

¹ Published in 1927–30; for recent comment see Koch, p. 50.
² Compiled by G. Henton Davies and published in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East, Vetus Testamentum* Supplements, iii (Leiden, 1955), xi–xix.
Biblical Study held in Oxford in August 1942. This time—a few months after Pearl Harbour and the fall of Singapore, and only a month before the investment of Stalingrad—was perhaps not a bad time to be thinking about apocalyptic. The remark is not an idle one, for it is connected with something that Koch says. He remarks (pp. 67 f.) that in Germany after the outbreak of the second World War nearly all discerning Christians had finally lost faith in a divinely-willed progress in history, particularly in view of the initial victories of the German army. Koch continues: "This meant, however, that all apocalyptic longing for the speedy approach of the kingdom of God in time became suspect. (It is significant that in England at the same period Rowley produced a very different estimate of apocalyptic.)" (Koch, pp. 67 f.).

This is an interesting remark, for it raises the question whether the war situation had any part in the choice of the subject by Rowley or in his treatment of it, and this in turn is relevant to the question why Rowley was so interested in apocalyptic. In fact, I cannot see that the war situation had any definite effect on Rowley's thinking on the matter, and the lectures could, so far as one can see, have been given equally well five years earlier, before the war, or five years later. Rowley's thought did not work with any idea of a correspondence between the apocalyptic writings and the modern situation: his ideas were more based on the distinction between the ephemeral and the permanent. He wanted to separate out that which was spiritually true and eternally valid from particular and contingent aspects that were valid for one moment in history alone. He was well aware that there were plenty of people who looked into the details of Daniel or of Revelation in order to trace there the prefiguration of current events, but in Rowley's view this was a mistaken approach. All through history people had tried this, and always they had been wrong, always they had been shown to be mistaken. The apocalyptists had an exaggerated idea of the critical importance of the times in which they were living (p. 157); they believed that "they were suffering the last great persecution, and that never before had evil been so evil, and never again could it so raise its head, for its final destruction was nigh." In this,
however, they were mistaken, and those who tried to relive the same sentiments in the present day were equally mistaken. It is thus of no use to seek to identify in a contemporary oppressor, an Antiochus Epiphanes or a Nero, the final oppressor. Even Hitler, certainly history's best candidate so far for identification as the Antichrist, should not be so identified (pp. 157 f.): "where for more than two thousand years a hope has proved illusory, we should beware of embracing it afresh."

In other words, so far as one can see, Rowley's interest in apocalyptic did not arise from a relating of it to contingent events of his own time; rather, his entire exegetical impulse was one that sought to separate the permanent and abiding values of apocalyptic from the forms, details and historical circumstances with which it was related. The judgement that the apocalyptists had an exaggerated idea of the importance of their own times, and that they were "mistaken" in identifying a contemporary oppressor as the final embodiment of evil, seems to cut the nerve of any possible inner sympathy with the basic purposes of the movement. Rowley's interest in the entire subject seems to have been an academic interest: having started in it, and having written a long series of works that greatly illuminated books like Daniel, he eventually came to synthesize this knowledge and to seek to state the permanent relevance of it. That chiliastic enthusiasm which saw contemporary events prefigured and reflected in Daniel was something well known to Rowley but, it seems, entirely foreign to his own understanding. He was an expert on apocalyptic, but hardly an apocalyptist at heart. In his later book The Faith of Israel (1956), which was a sort of theology of the Old Testament and a statement of the basic theological truths contained in it, apocalyptic scarcely figures at all.

Anyway, after Rowley came to Manchester in 1945 he revised his book for a second edition (1947), and a third was published in 1965. A mark of the distinction of this book is that it was translated into German: Apokalyptik, ihre Form und Bedeutung zur biblischen Zeit (1965), and according to Koch (pp. 38 f.) this was for a considerable time the most comprehensive recent work on the subject available in German, at a time when the entire field was seriously neglected by German scholarship.
Moreover, Rowley's interest in the post-biblical period was soon to be rekindled through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the end of the forties. It soon appeared that the scrolls came from a time squarely within the period when apocalyptic was flourishing, and apocalyptic literature had to be searched through for parallels that might illuminate the new documents. In this work Rowley was active: in 1957, for example, he delivered and published his Ethel M. Wood Lecture on exactly this theme, *Jewish Apocalyptic and the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

Further, if there is a general survey in English which has to some degree superseded Rowley's *Relevance*, it is D. S. Russell's *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (1964); but Russell owed a great deal to Rowley and acknowledged this debt; he followed Rowley in many tendencies of interpretation; and he also was connected with Manchester, being Principal of Manchester Baptist College and later co-Principal of the Northern Baptist College. And Rowley's New Testament colleague, the late Professor T. W. Manson, though he did not write so much about the subject as Rowley did, had two articles entitled "Miscellanea Apocalyptica" in the *Journal of Theological Studies* (xlvi (1945), 41–45; xlviii (1947), 59–61) and published an article called "Some Reflections on Apocalyptic" in the volume of *Mélanges* presented to Goguel (1950, pp. 139–45). The Dutch scholar Marinus de Jonge, who wrote an epoch-making study of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, did one year of his research here in Manchester under Manson. It is fitting that in this last year (1974) the Manson Memorial Lecture was delivered by Father Barnabas Lindars on the theme "The Apocalyptic Myth and the Death of Christ". We have therefore some justification in claiming that the Manchester tradition in apocalyptic studies is a very rich one.

But before we go any further we would do well to define what we are talking about. What is apocalyptic, and what are apocalyptic books like? Where are they to be found? The problem of defining apocalyptic is one characteristic symptom of the difficulty of the whole subject. Scholars have been divided over one question in particular, namely whether they should use
the term apocalyptic as the designation for a literary form, a type
or genre of literature, or for a mode of thinking, a religious
current. Historically, it would seem that the term arose from
that New Testament book, the Book of Revelation or Apocalypse
of St. John, a book which actually has this term, apocalypse, as
its name. The book has certain strongly marked characteristics:
its dominant interest in eschatology or the coming of the end, its
heavenly visions, its drastic separation between the good and the
evil, its interest in final judgement, in resurrection and the new
heaven and new earth, its symbolism of beasts and dragons, and
its use of numbers—the seven angels, their seven trumpets, the
seven plagues, the twenty-four elders, the 666 which was the
number of the beast, the 144,000 of the twelve tribes of Israel, the
thousand years for which the ancient serpent Satan should be
chained. If we take this book as the starting point for our use
of terms, then we can say that apocalyptic is a sort of literature
which shares some or all of these characteristics: it is literature
that is like the Book of Revelation. But, as we shall see in a
moment, some of these characteristics belong to literary form,
others are matters more of ideas and content. It seems to me
reasonable to use the word apocalypse for the literary form: i.e.
a book is an apocalypse if its design and pattern, on the level of
language and literature, correspond to certain features. But on

1 According to J. M. Schmidt, Die jüdische Apokalyptik (1969), p. 174, it was
E. Schürer who first strictly confined the term apocalyptic to the designation of
a literary form, using "messianic" as the term for the religious current. This
restriction was imposed in the second edition of Schürer's Geschichte des jüdischen
Volkes (1886) and went along with the abolition of the separate section devoted
to apocalyptic in the first edition. It will be interesting to see how this is handled
in the forthcoming volumes of the new English version of Schürer (ed. G.
Vermes and F. Millar, vol. 1, 1973). Incidentally, the English version of Koch's
book might confuse the reader here: p. 37 says that "he only devoted one separate
paragraph to apocalyptic", which might suggest that Schürer (in his first edition)
neglected the subject by unseemly brevity. In fact the "paragraph" in question
was fifty pages long (pp. 511-63). What Koch means is that in his first edition
he devoted a separate section to apocalyptic, while in the second he lumped it
together with the general messianic hope.

the Apocalypse of John is really of apocalyptic character; but this, even if valid,
does not alter the historical development of terminology, which is our subject here.
the other hand many aspects of the content and ideas may be found also in books that in form are not apocalypses, and for the whole field of ideas, doctrines and points of view we can conveniently use the term apocalyptic. Thus apocalyptic can, at least provisionally, be considered as something of a religious current, and one of the main ways in which the apocalyptic frame of mind expressed itself was through the books which in form are apocalypses.

In fact a simple dual distinction between form and content seems to be insufficient for our purpose; rather we have to distinguish a considerable number of levels, of which four as a minimum will be mentioned here. On the level of simple language use we could list features like the following: repetitiveness in language, the use of long discourses, the prevalence of counting and listing, the symbolism of numbers, the imagery of birds and beasts and dragons. A second (and perhaps “higher”) level belongs to the structure of apocalypses: commonly the writer’s name is not mentioned (the Book of Revelation is here an exception, perhaps), and the matter is put into the mouth of a person of primeval times, like Noah, or Lamech, or Enoch, or at least one of late biblical or exilic times, like Baruch, Daniel or Ezra; this person of ancient times is represented as having received a vision, being taken up into a heavenly world, and shown mysterious things which then have to be explained to him. The explanation often comes from an angel, and angels are part of the mechanism of much apocalyptic. The experiences of the visionary cause violent inner disturbances, fainting, falling down and so on. Yet a third level is the sort of thing that is told: often we have the retelling of long historical sequences, usually in hidden symbolic forms, where conflicts between animals—bulls, sheep, lions, eagles—are used to symbolize historical human conflicts. We have the description of the heavens, of winds, of the tree of life, of strange mountains. On a fourth level we have something that could be taken more as doctrine: for instance, ideas of resurrection, or of the dawning of a new age, the coming of a crisis in world history.

This differentiation of levels seems to be essential, because

1 Cf. Koch’s adumbration of a description of apocalyptic, pp. 23–33.
some of the content, the world of ideas, typical of the apocalypses is found also in works that in point of form do not count as true apocalypses. Two good examples are the Book of Jubilees and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. The Book of Jubilees is a sort of rewrite of Genesis, just as (say) the Books of Chronicles were a rewrite of Samuel-Kings in another manner and with a change of emphasis. Jubilees thus comes close to the category of midrash, that is, a sort of pictorial and anecdotal rewriting of biblical narrative material. But there seems to be one difference: most midrash, as known from later Judaism, assumes the clear and central fixity of the actual biblical text, while Jubilees seems to come from a time (not far after Chronicles) when the actual rewriting and restatement of the original, rather than a commentary upon it, seems to be envisaged. In one aspect of form Jubilees is a sort of narrative story, like Genesis; in another it is like Deuteronomy, since the whole is specially revealed to Moses. The book derives its name from the fact that its history is numbered and dated according to jubilees, i.e. the 49-year periods mentioned in biblical law. This gives a very exact chronology—from our point of view, needless to say, a legendary one—for all sorts of events: thus the year of the Exodus from Egypt is precisely and expressly dated as 2410 years from the beginning of the world (a corresponding, but different, date can be worked out from the familiar books Genesis and Exodus, but there it is implied rather than explicitly spelled out). The whole book is in fact full of numbers: the writer can tell us exactly how high the Tower of Babel was (5433 cubits and 2 palms). Only in a very limited sense could the book be called an apocalypse; but it has many contacts with apocalyptic. Here and there within it we have poetical passages in which the future is foretold, e.g. xxiii. 23–32, which foretell a coming oppression and the ensuing inauguration of a reign of peace and justice. But the most important emphasis in the book is on the calendar: the keeping of the sabbath, but still more the keeping of the correct religious calendar, determined solely by the sun and giving a year of 364 days, so that all festivals would fall every year on the same day of the week; and this calendar is now known to have been kept by the Dead Sea Scroll community.
Take again the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. This too is not an apocalypse in form; its literary form is rather that of the ethical testament, that is, each of the twelve sons of Jacob leaves to his descendants a document of experience, advice and moral suasion. Of these twelve testaments, many concern themselves with a particular vice to be avoided or a particular virtue to be cultivated: thus Simeon discourses about envy, Judah about courage, love of money and fornication, Issachar about simplicity, Dan about anger and falsehood. The general external form is thus that of testament literature with an ethical content, but within this we find, in one of the testaments, that of Levi, a small but typical apocalypse: Levi saw that the world was corrupt, he grieved, he prayed for salvation, a sleep fell upon him, he found himself in a high mountain, the heavens were opened and an angel invited him in. There he received a view of the different heavens and learned something of their functions. Thus the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, though not itself an apocalypse, has an apocalypse (or several) within it, just as the Gospel of St. Mark, though not itself an apocalypse, contains an apocalypse within it (ch. xiii). Moreover, apart from the inclusion of short apocalypses in this way, many of the testaments have a threefold structure: (a) a rehearsal of events that have happened to the patriarch; (b) an exhortation based on this experience; (c) a forecast of things that will happen at the end of days. This last element often has a similarity to the basic interests of apocalyptic.

Thus, to sum up, when we use the term apocalyptic we generally have in mind content and point of view rather than simply form: we think of a set of ideas and attitudes, which find typical expression in the apocalypse form more strictly so called but which are also found over a much wider range of literature. The wringing of hands over the difficulty of defining a term like apocalyptic seems to me to be misplaced, and to arise from a mistaken preconception of what can constitute a definition in matters of this sort. What we have is bundles of features on various levels; perhaps no work is so perfect and ideal an example of apocalyptic that it embodies all of these features, but substantial clusters of these features normally constitute sufficient
reason to use the term apocalyptic, and still larger groupings of them, under more rigorous criteria, constitute adequate grounds for the use of the term apocalypse. The situation is not substantially more difficult than with other definitions of genres and literary forms.

The period during which apocalyptic flourished was about 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. Historically apocalyptic has stood in a strange and ambivalent relationship with the two religions, Judaism and Christianity, and with their holy scriptures. Most of the apocalyptic and related writings failed to gain entry into that library of holy writings which we call the Bible. The Old Testament contains one book, Daniel, that is mostly apocalyptic, plus some fragments that may perhaps be counted as early forerunners of apocalyptic. It also contains, indeed, the book that more than any other single book must be considered the fountain from which the apocalyptic river flowed, i.e. the book of the prophet Ezekiel, with its vision of the heavenly chariot, its strange transportations of the prophet from place to place, its use of the symbolism of eagle and tree (ch. xvii), its allegory of the sisters Oholah and Oholibamah (ch. xxiii), its vision of the dry bones and the revivifying of the people of Israel (ch. xxxvii), its picture of Gog and Magog and the final conflict with the enemies of Israel, and its vision of the future city, temple and land. But Ezekiel, though a major fount of apocalyptic, could hardly be counted itself as apocalyptic. Thus within the Old Testament canon only the one small book of Daniel really represents this major religious tendency. The New Testament contains one complete apocalypse, of which we have already spoken, and a short section (one chapter) within the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Thus the apocalyptic books are for the most part not within the Bible, and in this sense most of them are "apocryphal". But they are not to be found in what is traditionally known as the Apocrypha either. Of the books contained in our traditional English Apocrypha, only one is really apocalyptic, i.e. the one called II Esdras (actually chapters iii–xiv of that book, the others being considered to be of Christian origin), which is also found in many Latin Bibles, in an appendix and confusingly called the
Fourth Book of Ezra or Esdras. Only in the more peripheral areas of Christendom did the apocalyptic books and related literature find their way more freely into the canon of holy writings—for example in Ethiopia, where both the Book of Enoch and the Book of Jubilees count as biblical books. Thus in spite of the clear importance of the apocalyptic literature in a crucial formative stage of Judaism and Christianity, comparatively little awareness of this was passed down to later generations through the actual canon of scripture. The exotic languages in which most of the books have been preserved increased their unfamiliarity: though many of them were originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, few of them came down to us in these languages, and many are to be found only in Ethiopic, in Syriac or in Old Church Slavonic. Neither in Judaism nor in Christianity, therefore, have these books, apart from the one or two within the biblical canon, functioned as part of the given tradition of religious culture; and this fact has only emphasized the unfamiliarity that is intrinsic to their exotic and outlandish character. This lack of historically given cultural contact increases the hermeneutical difficulties, in a way that does not obtain with the canonical scriptures, for which a long chain of customary interpretation links modern man with the ancient sources.

For the Jewish public the subject is made more complicated in that, though most of the books are of Jewish origin, and it is of them that we speak today, the transmission of them has been very closely tied up with Christianity. Jewish apocalyptic books were taken over by Christian groups, who then wrote additions and interpolations, in roughly the same style, which brought them more into line with the new religion. But this brings us to one of the main points of uncertainty in the entire study of apocalyptic. There are some passages which can be unquestionably identified as Christian—III Baruch iv. 15 refers to "Jesus Christ the Immanuel" by name—but it is often a serious question whether a passage is Jewish or Christian.

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs offers a good example. The older view of scholars was that this was a Jewish book, into which later Christian interpolations had been made.
De Jonge in his study already mentioned claimed to overturn this view. According to him the work was a basically Christian composition, written about 200 A.D.; it was not produced through interpolating Christian elements into a Jewish original, but it was a complete original Christian work, within which however many Jewish elements were incorporated. Only two individual testaments, those of Levi and Naphtali, had existed in separate Jewish forms; the scheme of twelve was original to the new Christian author. Such was de Jonge's thesis; later he himself modified it considerably. The very reverse position came to expression with the French scholars Dupont-Somer and Philonenko. According to them the messianic passages of the Testaments, which had generally been regarded as Christian interpolations, were in fact Essene materials and came from the same circle of ideas found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the Teacher of Righteousness was (supposedly) crucified, was believed to have been resurrected, and where his return was awaited. Thus, apart from very few small elements, the work is basically a Jewish work of Essene origin. I do not propose to argue out this case; I use it simply as an illustration of the difficulty in sorting out what is Jewish from what is Christian in such materials.¹

A similar situation arises with the Book of Enoch. This work has five main sections, and in the second (xxvii–lxxi), known as the Similitudes or Parables of Enoch, there is mention of a figure called the Son of Man, a term found in Daniel but also, as is well known, frequently used in the Gospels in connection with Jesus. It was therefore long considered likely that Enoch represented a development of the term Son of Man coming somewhat after Daniel but long before Christianity. But now

¹ Study of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs has been fertile in recent publications. Apart from periodical articles (see O. Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: an Introduction (1965), pp. 631, 775 for a selection), the following books may be noted: M. de Jonge, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Assen, 1953); M. Philonenko, Les interpolations chrétiennes des Testaments des Douze Patriarches et les manuscrits de Qourmán (Paris, 1960); Chr. Burchard, J. Jervell and J. Thomas, Studien zu den Testamenten der zwölf Patriarchen (Berlin, 1969); J. Becker, Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen (Leiden, 1970).
fragments of many parts of the Book of Enoch have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, but so far no fragment coming from these chapters. In such a case the argument from silence is a strong one, and there is thus a good chance that this whole section of Enoch is post-Christian, even if the remainder is Jewish.

Thus, to sum up this point, the apocalyptic literature has remained basically rather strange to many currents of both Judaism and Christianity in spite of its having gained a small foothold within the biblical canon. In Judaism Daniel stands fairly far on the edge of the canon, and in Christianity Revelation had some considerable difficulty in being accepted. In a later age Luther was once again to demote it to a position in an appendix, complaining that it did not clearly teach or recognize Christ; and there long was, and still is (but, I suspect, more strongly in continental than in English-speaking Christianity), a sense that apocalyptic is something dangerous and irresponsible, not to be encouraged in the mainstream of religion.

These are, then, some reasons why apocalyptic literature has been somewhat neglected: it does not belong to the traditional consciousness of mainstream religion, either in Judaism or in Christianity. What then have been the reasons for a revival of interest in it in recent years? Here we have to distinguish several kinds of forces.

First of all, purely historically, scholarship has long been conscious of apocalyptic as a stage lying between the end of the Old Testament and the Tannaitic sources, like the Mishnah, which form the basic stage for Judaism as we know it. But the attempt to define clearly the place of apocalyptic and its situation in life cannot be said to have been settled. Was it a movement antithetic to Pharisaism, complementary to it, or sympathetic with it? Did it belong to an esoteric learned class, or was it the real religion of that elusive but much-invoked entity, the "common people"? Such questions have proved very difficult to answer; so long as no more was available than the traditional

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1 G. Ebeling in his article "The Ground of Christian Theology", Journal for Theology and the Church, vi (1969), 51, documents both Luther's remarks about Revelation and the general idea that apocalyptic "is to say the least a suspicious symptom of tendencies towards heresy". See again below, p. 34.
sources, like the rabbinic literature, Josephus, Philo and the New Testament, it was perhaps vain to expect that one could get much further than the scholarship of the beginning of this century.

A big difference was made by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here we have not only a big find of new documents, but clear evidence that some of the long-known apocalyptic texts were known by the same community. Portions from the Book of Enoch, the Testament of Levi and other such sources were found—in small fragments, it is true, but enough to show clearly that the Qumran community possessed and read such materials. Moreover, some of the newly discovered texts had clear resemblances to the apocalyptic type of thinking. The Manual of Discipline has the idea of the two spirits, of truth and of falsehood, and it has the two Messiahs, the priestly Messiah of Aaron and the secular Messiah of Israel, just as we find in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. The so-called War Scroll has something like apocalyptic in its carefully planned depiction of a ritualized final war against the Gentile world; the enemy nations are depicted with biblical titles like Kittim and Assyrians. The Dead Sea sect also had in their possession some other true apocalypses which had previously been unknown. Whether or not such books were actually written within the Qumran sect, it is clear that the sect at least studied and revered them. Thus the greatly enriched background provided by the Scrolls makes possible a much more promising course of research into the milieu in which apocalyptic existed.

Meanwhile, and with this we come closer to the living concerns of modern religion and theology, interest in apocalyptic has been stimulated equally by certain currents in New Testament studies. There had always been certain lines of interpretation which emphasized apocalyptic as the background for the life of Jesus and the origins of Christianity, but many such opinions had remained isolated curiosities rather than central or representative views: this was true, for instance, of Albert Schweitzer and his view of Jesus as something of a deluded apocalyptic fanatic. Among British New Testament scholars Koch (p. 56) singles out C. K. Barrett as a scholar of central position and of the highest
distinction who has assigned central importance to apocalyptic. But on the continent the scholar who seems to have drawn fresh attention to the matter is the influential exegete E. Kasemann, who in an article in 1960 argued that apocalyptic was "the mother of all Christian theology": it was the source through which historical thinking within the Christian faith was made possible. This conviction had a universal effect: "the ways of God are not directed towards the justification of the individual alone... God's aim is not the salvation of the individual, it is the justification of the world." Though apocalyptic is thus the basis of Christian theology, Kasemann does not also draw the conclusion that Jesus himself was an apocalyptist. I shall not attempt to trace the further debate that has been occasioned by Kasemann's views, except to say that the strength with which he asserted them has been equalled by the strength with which others have contradicted them. Kasemann's position, whether right or wrong, does something to put apocalyptic on the map as a relevant question for discussion. Koch himself (pp. 92 f.) estimates that the prevalent opinion among German New Testament scholars is still that apocalyptic is a marginal phenomenon: although it undoubtedly played a certain role in some early Christian circles it is on the whole unimportant.

A stimulus of a different kind arose from within Old Testament studies. In the late fifties and early sixties the leading study in Old Testament theology was undoubtedly that of von Rad; his emphasis lay on the history of salvation as it was interpreted in the various traditions of Israel. But von Rad produced a rather strange view of apocalyptic: in particular he cuts it off from the prophets who went before and says that, far from being a continuation of the prophetic heritage—a view that


2 The major contributions to the discussion, including a further article by Kasemann himself, are conveniently collected in Journal for Theology and the Church vi. See also more recent periodical articles like that of W. G. Rollins, cited above, p. 15, n. 2. One of the main historical arguments directed against Kasemann is the argument that the apocalyptic element was not there at the earliest beginnings of Christianity but entered later.
for British scholars like Rowley and Russell was so obvious as hardly to require argument—its intellectual connections were with the Wisdom movement.¹ Now clearly there is something in this, but the position as a whole seems peculiar to the point of incredibility: much as Wisdom traditions may have contributed to apocalyptic, Wisdom was, as Koch also argues (p. 45), conspicuously lacking in that element which is most clearly basic to apocalyptic, namely a burning interest in eschatology, in the idea of the coming end of the world. Without seeking here to document the assertion, I would say that von Rad's difficulties with apocalyptic arise not from the character of the texts and their interpretation, but from the basic conception of history and salvation history with which he works, one which applies reasonably well to earlier sources such as the Deuteronomic history and earlier Pentateuchal sources but which is seriously distorting in its application to all late-biblical and post-biblical materials. But von Rad's view, even if wrong, has again done something to stimulate interest in apocalyptic as a potentially important field of study, if only to discover a way round the impasse presented by his position.

Finally, there has been a fresh interest in apocalyptic on the part of theologians. The emphasis on revelation in history, on the idea that—especially in ancient Israel—God had made himself known to man through history, so that history—rather than (say) law or religious doctrine—was the milieu through which he expressed himself, has been very influential in modern biblical theology. But one of its effects was to anchor faith very definitely in the past: faith may have a future dimension, but that future dimension is strictly dependent on data given in the past. From about 1960 we see a turn in theology towards an emphasis on the future. The powerful German theologian W. Pannenberg—working, incidentally, within the intellectual heritage of von Rad—accepted that history was the milieu of divine revelation,

¹ A somewhat similar view, however, was put forward—apparently quite independently of von Rad—by E. W. Heaton in his Torch Commentary on Daniel (London, 1956). Heaton's view disengages Daniel, however, from all later apocalyptic, which is contrasted to its disadvantage with Daniel. Cf. Heaton, pp. 34–37, etc.
but revelation, to be real revelation, could not be given by this bit or that bit of history, and must therefore be placed at the end of history, when history could be viewed as a whole. Pannenberg, seeking to validate this conclusion, found support in apocalyptic. It is, he says, in apocalyptic that history is seen as universal history: here for the first time, as distinct from Old Testament prophecy, we have not particular messages relating to individual situations but an attempt to grasp the problem of universal history and to relate it to a revelation brought about at the end. Thus apocalyptic is seen as the indispensable foundation for the rise of Christianity.

A similar future thrust is seen in another theologian, J. Moltmann, in his book *A Theology of Hope* (1967). Apocalyptic, as interpreted by him, is a symbol of ongoing revolutionary change, not only in historical and political realities but in the cosmos as a whole. The universe is not a sum total or a static entity: once taken up into apocalyptic, it splits into aeons, ages, into a world that is passing away and a world that is coming to be. In the technical jargon, cosmology becomes eschatological and the cosmos is taken up in terms of history into the process of the *eschaton* (Moltmann, p. 136). Thus, at least on the continent, we find that some systematic theologians are taking a strong interest in apocalyptic and appealing to it as an indispensable source. Clearly such a trend will stimulate fresh research into apocalyptic, even if only in order to discover whether apocalyptic will really bear the weight that such interpretations lay upon it. I do now know whether theologians of the English-speaking world are likely to follow this apocalyptically-influenced trend.

Now it would be impossible for me to review in the space available the numerous studies of apocalyptic documents that have been published in recent years, and only certain central examples will be cited. First of all, a comprehensive history of the past study of the subject was furnished by J. M. Schmidt with his *Die jüdische Apokalyptik: die Geschichte ihrer Erforschung von den Anfängen bis zu den Textfunden von Qumran* (Neukirchen, 1969); this was written under the supervision of H.-J. Kraus, who had himself published a general history of the critical study
of the Old Testament. Such a work provides a suitable basis in the understanding of past scholarship, without which fresh studies would often be confused or would waste effort. Secondly, we should mention the new efforts to provide adequate editions and textual foundations; many of the older text editions have now become out of date or are unobtainable. Among recent achievements may be mentioned the series *Pseudepigrapha veteris testamenti graece*, with newly edited texts of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (de Jonge), the Testament of Job (Brock) and the Apocalypse of Baruch (Picard), and the Greek fragments of Enoch (Black) along with other fragments of Jewish historians and writers using Greek (Denis); publication at Leiden, 1964, 1967 and 1970. An American series, sponsored by the Society of Biblical Literature, has begun to issue other texts: Paraleipomena Jeremiou (Kraft and Purintun, 1972); The Testament of Abraham (Stone, 1972); the Hebrew Fragments of Pseudo-Philo (Harrington, 1974). We may mention an introduction, translation and commentary to the Testament of Abraham by M. Delcor (Leiden, 1973) and a general introduction to the Greek Pseudepigrapha by A. M. Denis (Leiden, 1970). It is understood that work is progressing on other projects for modern translations of apocalyptic books and commentaries on them. In addition to these we can expect to see a large number of special studies on particular books, or on strata within books, or on particular ideas and themes of the apocalyptic movement. A number of such studies on the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs have been mentioned above, and among other recent instances one may mention the monograph of G. L. Davenport on *The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden, 1971), and that of W. Harnisch on the ideas of time and history in the fourth Book of Ezra and the Baruch Apocalypse, *Verhängnis und Verheissung der Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1969).

This cannot, however, be the place for us to extend long lists of bibliography of recent studies in apocalyptic. I propose rather to conclude this lecture with certain thoughts about the basic problems that have to be overcome.

The first point is this, that the present discussion of apocalyptic seems to make manifest something that I have emphasized
already elsewhere in other connections, namely that modern biblical study has not yet found an adequate means for giving a theological evaluation to the development of Jewish tradition between the Old Testament and the New. Here my thinking is allied to that of Koch (pp. 124-30 of his book). Modern Christian biblical theology has been fundamentally a movement concerned with the canonical books of the Bible, Old and New Testament. Naturally, as good historical scholars, biblical theologians have taken the intertestamental development into account as essential background; but they have not, on the whole, learned to accord it theological value in any way comparable to that which they accord to the canonical books of either Testament. Old Testament theology, at least in its development so far, far from giving theological value to late and non-canonical writing, has not been able or willing to value even the later developments within the Old Testament with anything like the same degree of sympathy and acceptance that is shown towards the central biblical materials. And, correspondingly, though it was one of the main aims of biblical theology in its mid-century development to understand the two Testaments as a unity and to make explicit the links between them, this was commonly done in a strangely abstract, unreal and unhistorical way, as if the Old Testament simply had its own direct theological connections with the New, quite other than the historical links through Jewish interpretation.

The reason for this did not lie in ignorance or in wilful neglect: it lay rather in the conceptual structure upon which much biblical theology has been built. In this structure there was one central dogmatic standpoint, namely the profound opposition between revelation and religion. Revelation was an ultimate positive value and the canonical books were studied for the revelation that lay behind them or that might come through them. Religion was, if not a bad thing, then at the best a neutral

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entity, a historical quantity which must at all costs not be confused with revelation. But, just as one was supposed to study the canonical books not for the sake of the religion of which they gave evidence, but for the sake of the revelation that lay behind them or came through them, no one in biblical theology seriously thought about non-canonical books being based on revelation or communicating it. What happens now, when apocalyptic is brought into the centre of interest, whether rightly or wrongly, is that the entire conceptual mechanism of traditional biblical theology is seen to be evidently incapable of handling the problem. For, though there has always been an awareness of the existence of apocalyptic as a fact, it is surely now for the first time that absolute theological centrality is being attributed to a current of ideas which is thinly evidenced within the biblical canon and which has its home almost entirely in non-canonical books. For this must mean, either that non-canonical books can be as central in the process of revelation as canonical books are, or that the whole distinction between revelation and religion, and the whole distinction in principle and in point of theological value between the Old and New Testaments on one side and the intertestamental literature and Jewish interpretative tradition on the other, has broken down.

This point must be made, independently of whether we approve or disapprove of the new attempts to consider apocalyptic as central to all biblical theology. It is not so much that apocalyptic is in fact thus central; it is rather that the mere proposal of the idea brings to a head a crisis which was already inherent in the structure of twentieth-century biblical theology. The difficulty is not that the centrality of apocalyptic is a right, or is a wrong, idea; it is rather that the means for deciding the question are lacking, or rather are confused by the inheritance of a system of concepts which was not designed to deal with such a question and is unable to do so.

In principle, the problem therefore goes beyond apocalyptic and affects the entire status of all kinds of Jewish tradition after

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1 I believe that this argument runs parallel with Koch's on pp. 122-30, but I use the term revelation where he uses kerygma; the latter seems to be less well accepted in English-speaking discussion.
the latest stages of the Old Testament and down to (and even after) the New. There is, I submit, a certain danger that apocalyptic should come to be valued and prized just because it is supposed to be particularly akin to Christian theology or even to be the basis of it, and that this high valuation of apocalyptic will carry with it a corresponding depreciation of those other trends in Jewish religion and interpretation which are felt to be less akin to Christian belief. What is needed is not that we should pick out from the tradition of post-biblical Judaism one current that seems to be congenial or that seems to be apologetically useful as a basis for or as a foil to Christianity, but that we look dispassionately on all currents of Judaism as a historical problem and, if theological valuation has to be added, that this should be so wide and comprehensive as to include Judaism as a whole and not a "favoured" current within it. Neither our Old nor our New Testament theology has begun to face this problem, nor, as it seems to me, can it do so without a basic rethinking of its categories.

The second main point is this: future thinking about apocalyptic will have to face above all the problem of the relation between detailed study and generalization, of the way in which we conceptualize and express the real interests and concerns of the apocalyptists. The consideration of this will bring us back to some thoughts about the British tradition of study in apocalyptic, and the contrast of it with the continental.

If we begin from recent continental study, and especially as we see it among the theologians (rather than among specialized scholars of the text), the question often seems to be: given the assertions made about apocalyptic, can these often grandiose and abstruse assertions be made meaningful and really attached to the texts themselves, in such a way that they could be properly confirmed or falsified by information within the texts? When we hear from Pannenberg that apocalyptic was the first locus for the idea of a universal history, what can that mean in terms relatable with the texts? Is it right to suspect that the terms of such an idea were first developed within the circle of modern

1 My argument here again runs parallel to that of Koch, pp. 126 f., but again uses slightly different terms.
theological problems and then imposed upon apocalyptic? When we read in Moltmann (p. 137) language like this:

... while apocalyptic does conceive its eschatology in cosmological terms, yet that is not the end of eschatology, but the beginning of an eschatological cosmology or an eschatological ontology for which being becomes historic and the cosmos opens itself to the apocalyptic process...

... do we feel that these are insights which can be truly checked and controlled through detailed study, or do we feel rather as Enoch himself felt when he said (Enoch xxi. 1) "then I proceeded to where things were chaotic"? I shall not seek to answer this here; I simply remark that the German theological tradition, which has so stimulated the revival of interest in apocalyptic, has indeed produced some obscure and abstruse assertions; but these do have one advantage: they suggest that the message of apocalyptic is in fact something abstruse, obscure, difficult to interpret and extremely strange to us and our own natural interests and instincts.

Now the problem with much of our British tradition has been the reverse: it has never produced such contorted and abstract statements about the nature and function of apocalyptic as those which I have just cited. On the contrary, it has tended towards clarity and simplicity, and in this it has tended to lose from sight the essential problem of understanding the apocalyptic books as literary texts with their own strange form and language. I shall exemplify this from both Charles and Rowley.

In spite of the enormous services that a man like Charles rendered to apocalyptic studies in this country and all over the world, there were certain marked defects in his approach which were visible already to discerning contemporaries. F. C. Burkitt, another of the great names of the period, wrote as follows in his obituary of Charles in the Proceedings of the British Academy (xvii (1931), p. 443):

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 favourite 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.

This remark is entirely right; and the fact is that Charles's
many tireless contributions are often very hard to read, because his comments often depend not on the text as it stands but on hypothetical reconstructions and identifications which the reader may not share, or which he may be willing to share but only after he has first of all been able to assess the text as it stands. Of course we must be fair and recognize that the same procedure was then more characteristic of biblical studies in general than it now is, and that at that stage there was indeed a prime need of hypotheses of identification and reconstruction; but I doubt whether in any sphere of biblical study these procedures produced so much difficulty and exasperation for the user of standard texts and reference works as was the case with apocalyptic under Charles’s influence. And a similar point is sagaciously made by T. W. Manson, writing of Charles in the Dictionary of National Biography 1931-1940, p. 170:

He was a man of powerful intellect and unflagging industry who, by years of concentrated study, made himself master of the language of the Apocalypses. His knowledge was vast in extent and accurate in detail, and his commentaries are a wonderful storehouse of exact information. Yet 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.

These are wise words and a fair judgement. In fact the main trend in British scholarship in our field seems to have shown a marked rationalist tendency, and this can be seen in Rowley as well as in Charles. It has approached the complicated and obscure mixtures which form the apocalyptic books with rather clear and simple questions, to which in principle a yes-or-no answer may be obtained. This applies to questions of dating and historical circumstance: does such and such a passage refer to a known historical figure, like John Hyrcanus—yes or no? It applies also to religious affiliation: does this book represent a Pharisaic point of view—yes or no? And, most serious of all, it applies to the description and generalization of the religious ideas or theology of the apocalyptic circles: did this source believe in the resurrection of the dead—yes or no? Or did it believe in the immortality of the soul—yes or no? This reduction of the very enigmatic material to essentially simple questions
seems to me to be a feature of much of our British tradition of scholarship in apocalyptic. And this means, if we may go back to the various levels which I earlier distinguished in the form and content of apocalyptic, that too much effort was put into taking the material as doctrine, i.e. the material was taken too much as evidence for the fourth level above distinguished, while too little went into eliciting the values and trends implicit in the apocalyptic works, understood as literature on all the levels they contained. And this fits with that apologetic purpose which we saw to attach to Rowley’s method in dealing with apocalyptic, the attention he gave to extracting from apocalyptic those elements which had abiding value—abiding value, that means, in a situation that is basically non-apocalyptic in its attitudes and sympathies.¹

In all currents of study, Jewish and Christian, continental and English-speaking, scholarship still suffers from the fact that there is no strong religious-cultural tradition connecting us through the centuries with these books, apart from Daniel and Revelation, so that most of them have come down to us neither as holy scriptures nor as complementary tradition. In German scholarship and religious tradition, if I understand the situation rightly, there seems to have been a more consistent tendency to push apocalyptic aside. In this we should not neglect the great influence of Luther, already mentioned, and also the effect of that manifestation of the radical Reformation, the rule of the

¹ I have not discussed the assessment of Russell’s work. While it seems to me to share in Rowley’s method of evaluating evidence, it is not in the same way concerned with the apologetic question of relevance. It suffers from too much use of two themes which were much in vogue at the time of writing but were soon to fall under a cloud: firstly the supposed Hebrew concept of corporate personality (cf. now J. R. Porter in Vetus Testamentum, xv (1965), 361-80 and J. W. Rogerson in Journal of Theological Studies, xxi (1970), 1-16, especially p. 11); and secondly the contrast of Greek thought and Hebrew thought. Whatever the validity of this latter contrast when applied to the central Old Testament period, a study of apocalyptic was a golden opportunity for showing that by these late times it did not apply in the same way and that “Hebrew thought”, even if different from Greek, was by now substantially different also from the Hebrew thought of Old Testament times. But Russell, rather than showing that the customary contrast is no longer valid, seems to oscillate between the two, first trying to fit the apocalyptists with Hebrew thought, then trying to take account of Greek influence, then coming back to the “inevitable” effect of their Hebrew tradition.
saints in Münster (1533–5), which left a lasting legacy of ill-will towards apocalyptic fanaticism and towards all ideas that the kingdom of God might shortly come, or might be established, upon earth. It is my impression that apocalyptic religion has in its time had more toleration in the English-speaking world and has had wider effects on the history of ideas. The idea, cited by Ebeling with some sort of approval, that apocalyptic savours of heresy in the eyes of the main theological and ecclesiastical tradition, would surely seem rather out of place here; for such sections of opinion as are still conservative enough to use the concept of heresy at all would almost certainly, at least within Protestantism, jealously guard the full canonicity of Daniel and Revelation. And this greater tolerance and openness towards apocalyptic no doubt fits with the distinctions drawn by Koch in his book.

But in scholarship, at least in modern times, we seem to have seen an interest in apocalyptic that nevertheless does not grow out of any great empathy with the essential forms, the accepted language and literary style, and above all the religious core, of the movement. British scholarship has detached from apocalyptic concepts and doctrines which were “relevant” because they could be understood and assimilated within a religious outlook in which eschatology was not a very vital element. Perhaps, of course, nothing else can be done, and we do not have it in ourselves to be at home in apocalyptic. But it is at least my hope that the new period of interest in apocalyptic, which has clearly already begun, will take the form of a greater feeling for the literature and the mentality, the language and the imagery, of the apocalyptists, whose part in the development of our religious and intellectual heritage, even if still obscure, is certainly important.

Finally, it must be expected that the new examination of apocalyptic now taking place will upset many of the generalizations about the movement which have become current coin. The standard formulae, which speak about the “dualism” of apocalyptic, its “determinism”, its “doctrine of the two ages” and so on, all require careful retesting. Some of them are probably inaccurate in any case, or too vague to be useful. Others apply to one apocalyptic work but not to another. A
historical examination will probably enable us in due course to see a considerable difference of historical stages within apocalyptic. The “doctrine of the two ages”, just mentioned, may be a good example of this: those who cite this “doctrine” as typical of apocalyptic often give the standard example of IV Ezra vii. 50, “The Most High has made not one Age but two”. Quite so; but one cannot simply extend this view over the entirety of apocalyptic, for it is probable that just at this point IV Ezra differs characteristically from the other apocalyptic documents, and this difference is a historical one, related also to the situation in life from which IV Ezra has come. The terminology of “this age” and “the age to come” depends on a semantic shift in the use of the Hebrew ‘olam which is certainly post-biblical, and not only that but still not evidenced in the main Qumran writings; it is well established, on the other hand, in rabbinic Hebrew. It is probable that in just this kind of “doctrine” a late apocalyptic work like IV Ezra lies far removed from the earlier sources of Jewish apocalyptic like Daniel and the older parts of Enoch. We may begin to see therefore that apocalyptic is not the unfolding of one body of doctrine but a kind of conversation, in which over two or three centuries different religious issues are argued out and different points of view are propounded, yet all of them within certain conventions of form and presentation.

1 On this see the work of W. Harnisch, cited above, e.g. his conclusions on pp. 323-7.