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THE BOOK OF THE APOCALYPSE
AS
THE APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the academic degree Ph.D

by

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This study is dedicated to my mother

Mrs. Mary D'Souza

who taught me the first alphabet and the first word

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ABBREVIATIONS

1. The Biblical Books

A. The Books of the Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Ex	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Jgs	Judges
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Kgs	2 Kings
1 Chr	1 Chronicles
2 Chr	2 Chronicles
Neh	Nehemiah
Tob	Tobit
Ps	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Eccles	Ecclesiastes
Wis	Wisdom
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
Is	Isaiah

Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Bar	Baruch
Ez	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi
1 Mac	1 Maccabees
2 Mac	2 Maccabees

B. The Books of the New Testament

Mt	The Gospel According to Matthew
Mk	The Gospel According to Mark
LK	The Gospel According to Luke
Jn	The Gospel According to John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	The Letter of Paul to the Romans
1 Cor	The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians
2 Cor	The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians
Gal	The Letter of Paul to the Galatians
Eph	The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Phil	The Letter of Paul to the Philippians
Col	The letter of Paul to the Colossians
1 Thes	The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians
2 Thes	The Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians
Tit	Titus
Philem	Philemon
Heb	The Letter to the Hebrews
Jas	The Letter of James
1 Pet	The First Letter of Peter
2 Pet	The Second letter of Peter
Ap	The Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation)

2. The Apocrypha

Sib Or	Sibylline Oracles
Ap Zeph	Apocalypse of Zephaniah
4 Ezra	Fourth Book of Ezra
2 Bar	2 Baruch
Ap Elijah	Apocalypse of Elijah
Ap Dan	Apocalypse of Daniel
T Levi	Testament of Levi
T Naph	Testament of Naphtali
T Judah	Testament of Judah
Ps Sol	Psalms of Solomon
Ap Ab	Apocalypse of Abraham
T Ash	Testament of Asher

INTRODUCTION

The Bible, is one of the most revered and widely read books in the world. The nomenclature is a simple translation from the Greek 'Ta Biblos' which, literally, means 'the book'. It contains a collection of books considered divinely inspired and, hence, sacred both by the Jewish people and the Christians. It is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). The Catholics have 46 books in their canon of the OT. They divide them into two categories: proto-canonical (39) and deuterocanonical (07). The latter consist of Tobit, Judith, I Maccabees, II Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch (and parts of Esther as well as Daniel); whereas the Protestants accept only 39, the 'protocanonical' in the Catholic terminology. There is unanimity about the 27 books of the NT.

The English Bible

Most of us who have no knowledge of the original Biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek) are familiar with the Bible only in translation. The translation of the Bible in English has a long history. It is interesting to note that 'the history of the English Bible is the history of the movement of the Bible from its possession and use by clergy alone to the hands of the laity. It is also the history of the formation of the English language from a mixture of French, Anglo-Norman, and Anglo-Saxon.'¹ The first attempts of rendering the Bible in English began during the Anglo-Saxon period. Within a century after the conversion of England (AD 600 by Augustine), poetic and prose paraphrases together with translations of the Bible began to appear. We can mention here the works of Caedmon (flourished 658-680) and Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne (died 709). Bede wanted the common people to have the Scriptures in their own tongue. Even on Version (also known as the Authorised Version). The King James Version was prepared by a commission comprising of the best scholars in England, appointed by James I, in 1611. It was a revision of the Bishops' Bible. - A modernization of punctuations, pronouns and his death bed (735) he was busy translating the Gospel according to St John. The other names associated with the Anglo-Saxon

translations are King Alfred (849-901) and the abbot Aelfric (955-1020). The Norman conquest (1066) arrested for a while the movement toward the production of the Bible in English.

The age of Chaucer (1340-1400), with the flourishing of Middle English, witnessed translations of different portions of the Bible, specially the NT, into various English dialects. But the first complete translation of the Bible (1382-84) from the Vulgate is associated with John Wycliffe.

The Reformation movement in England saw a chain of translations. The chief among them are: Tyndale's Bible (1525-31); Coverdale's Bible (1535); Great Bible (1539-41); Geneva Bible (1560); and Bishops' Bible (1568). They served as the background for the King James archaic vocabulary appeared as the New King James Version (1979-82). It was followed by the Revised Version (1881-85) done by British Protestant scholars. In 1901, appeared the American Standard Version, i.e., the Revised Version with readings preferred by American scholars.

Authorised by the National Council of Churches, the American scholars prepared a revision of the Authorised Version (1946-52). This is known as the Revised Standard Version. A major revision appeared as the New Revised Standard Version in 1980. The Revised Standard Version received the Catholic imprimatur from Cardinal Cushing of Boston in the unaltered form in which the text appears in the Oxford Annotated Bible (1966 ed.). The Second Vatican Council opened the doors for an ecumenical Bible. The other important translations of the Bible include Chicago Bible (1931), New English Bible (1961-70), Today's English Version-Good News Bible (1966-79), New International Version (1973-78), and The Living Bible (1962-71).

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) in its fourth session on April 8, 1546 decreed that the "ancient Vulgate version which has been preserved by the Church for so many centuries is to be regarded as the authentic

translation for public reading, disputations, sermons and expositions..."² In keeping with this enjoinder it was standard practice to prepare Catholic vernacular translations from the Vulgate. It was about 400 years later, on September 30, 1943, with the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* issued by Pope Pius XII, urging the exegetes to explain the text in the original languages which, since it was written by the sacred author himself, has greater weight and authority than even the best translation, either ancient or modern,³ that the policy of the church changed and vernacular translations from the original languages were officially encouraged.

Vatican II in *Dei Verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, promulgated on November 18, 1965 endorsed this: the Church with maternal concern sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred books.⁴ It permitted the use of such translations in the pericopes of the vernacular Mass. Hence, we find two types of Catholic translations: from the Vulgate and from the Original Languages. Douay-Rheims (1582-1609), Challoner Revision (1749-63), Confraternity Revision of NT (1941), and Knox Bible (1944-50) are translated from the Vulgate whereas Westminster Version (1935-49), Kleist-lilly NT (1950-54), New American Bible (1952-70; 1987), and The Jerusalem Bible (1966; 1985), which was translated from the French Catholic Bible de Jerusalem, are from Original Languages.⁵

The Influence of the Bible

The influence of the books of the Old Testament in the preservation of the Hebrews and their descendants as a people and Judaism as a religion can never be exaggerated. After the kingdoms of Israel and Judah had fallen in 722 BC and 587 BC respectively, the Hebrews outlived the trauma of defeat and exile largely because they had with them the writings which preserved their history and traditions. Many of them did not return to Palestine from the exile. Those who did, did so to re-build a temple and reconstruct a society in terms of religious unity rather than a political entity. The religion found expression in the books of the

Old Testament : the Law (Torah), history, prophecy, and poetry. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD sounded the death knell of the historical, priestly sacrificial worship around which the Jewish faith revolved. But, by then, the Jewish religion had gone with them into many lands where it not only preserved its distinctive character but also retained its vitality thanks to the constant nurture provided by the Biblical literature. The people had their Bible with them. In their local synagogues it was read, prayed and taught. It preserved their identity, inspired their worship, determined their calendar, moulded their ethical ideals, directed their personal and family life, sustained them during persecutions, and shaped their intellectual outlook. Hence, the survival of the Jewish religion and its subsequent incalculable influence on the Western culture can never be adequately estimated independent of the Biblical writings.

Joined to the books of the New Testament, they formed the Bible of the Christianity. The importance of the Bible in history and culture of the modern world, particularly the West, is too evident to necessitate explitation. It went with the Christian Church to every land in the world.

Eversince, it has contributed to the shaping and enrichment of the lives and activities of the people of all races in no small degree. Its belief in one God as the Creator of all that exists; its view that all things have a place in God's plan; its message on the essential unity of human race, with no race existing for its own sake; its stress on the inalienable rights of the individual and forthright opposition to the abuse, exploitation, or neglect of human beings by the rich and the powerful or by the government itself; its insistence on the necessity of attention to the widows, orphans, strangers, friendless, and homeless; its exacting sense of justice and truth; and its ideals of love and forgiveness have been influencing and moulding the opinions and activities of people in all spheres of life. The Church's call to ethical and social responsibility, to a life accountable to God, to a life of universal brotherhood based on equality, dignity and charity, to sonship in the family of God, to citizenship in the kingdom of God, is founded on the Bible. The Bible, thus, pointing

to a new way of life, not yet embodied in any society, calls man for a better and nobler lifestyle. Notwithstanding the wide difference between the ideal and the actual, it continues to act as the conscience of the people in pronouncing judgement over issues and persons with its stress on what should be can still be.

Millions of modern people who do not consider themselves as religious adhere to the basic presuppositions underlying the Biblical literature. It is not possible to determine precisely the effect of such presuppositions on the changing ideas and attitudes of the Western people with regard to the nature and purpose of government, social institutions, and economic theories. Nevertheless, what is clear is that the West has given up the claim of kingship as a divine right and recognised the divinely given right of every individual citizen; moved from slavery to equality; recognised the right of everyone to live with dignity and honour with equal access to resources, playing down the right to own property.

The deepest influence of the Biblical literature may be found in the arts of Western people, their music and, in particular, their best poetry, drama, and creative fiction. A great number of Biblical expressions have become part and parcel of the English usage: 'a broken reed', 'the eleventh hour', 'sweat of the brow', 'the apple of (one's) eye', 'let the dead bury their dead', 'put new wine into old bottles', 'repent in sackcloth and ashes', 'a house divided against itself', 'the tree is known by its fruit', 'the blind leading the blind', 'the signs of the times', 'physician, heal yourself', 'shake off the dust from (one's) feet', 'no prophet is honoured in his own country', 'the labourer deserves his wages', 'the good Samaritan', 'to turn the other cheek', 'spare the rod and spoil the child', 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', and so on. It has exercised considerable influence on the style of some of the greatest writers in English. Edmund Gosse remarks that 'not a native author but owes something of his melody and his charm to the echo of these Biblical accents, which were the first fragments of purely classical English to attract his admiration in childhood'.⁶ The following extract from Compton Rickett is a beautiful summary of what the Bible is to

English Literature: Bacon owed little to the Bible; his style was framed chiefly on classical models; but Milton's debt is a considerable one, in as much as whenever he achieves distinction in prose, it is by means of the Hebraic cadences. The historians, Clarendon and Fuller, catch some measures of the stately rhetoric of the Old Testament; while Sir Thomas Browne in his quaint *Religio Medici*, Robert Burton with his discursive *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and Jeremy Taylor, in varying ways, testify to its influence. Nor is the Old Testament the only literary force. Mention has been made of the conversational element in the New Testament. Both Old and New are seen in Bunyan, whose style owes more to the Bible, probably narrative of the Evangelists. The colloquial ease and force of the parabolic teaching meet us in almost every page of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Addison's conversational essay is certainly influenced by them; just as Swift reflects the sterner qualities of the prophetic books. While in our own day, it is sufficient to recall the stormy vigour of Carlyle and the ironic eloquence of Ruskin, to realise the spell of Hebraic over our masters of prose.⁷ 'It may be said further,' says Henry Rogers, 'that there is no other book and I think I might say no other ten books, that have left so deep or so many traces on human literature; none that are so often cited or alluded to none which have supplied so much matter for apt illustration, or been so often resorted to for vivid imagery and energetic diction. The remark is applicable to modern literature generally on which the traces of the influence of this book are incomparably deeper and more legible than those left by any other single volume. None but those who have been in the habit of inspecting the best portions of modern literature with the express view of tracing the influence of the Bible upon it, can have an adequate idea of the extent to which it has moulded thought and sentiment, or given strength or grace to expression. Its literary excellencies in general have insensibly exhorted the homage, tinged the style of the greatest masters of eloquence and poetry... Its apothems, its examples, its historic illustrations of human life and character, its moral maxims, its lesson of conduct, its vivid and intense imagery come spontaneously to the lips, as more exactly or forcibly expressing thought and feeling than anything found elsewhere. In re-perusing lately some of the greatest masters of prose - Bacon, Milton, Cowper, Macaulay - expressly with a view to this subject, I have been surprised to note how

often struggling to give emphasis to their thought or intensity to a feeble expression of it, they have laid hold unconsciously, as it were, of scripture phrase or metaphor... As to Shakespeare, no less than three works have been expressly written to trace the influence of the Bible on his genius and writings. The matchless energy of Milton's diction in many parts of his prose writings is in no slight degree due to the use of scripture.⁸ 'It is impossible to exaggerate,' says Legouis, 'the benefit wrought to literature by the reverent reading and repetition of these admirable chapters. The most literate were preserved from affectation and pedantry; the philosophers acquired an alternative to dry and disfiguring abstractness; the ignorant received an ideal which lifted their speech above the level of the rude and the vulgar. A wandering tinker like Bunyan was able, with no model but the Bible, to become a great English prose-writer.'⁹ Among other writers, we can clearly identify the Biblical influence on Cromwell, Wesley, Richard Baxter, George Fox, Browning, Tennyson, John Bright, Emerson, Walt Whitman, Abraham Lincoln, and Mahatma Gandhi.

The Major Forms of Literature in the Bible

To an uninformed person the Bible seldom means more than a religious book of the Christians. Even in the literary circles, it has not attracted as much attention as is due mainly because of the nature of its content and the sentiments of religiosity and sacredness with which it is looked upon.

Every study, worth its name, on the Bible as a whole, or in part, revolves around its religious connotations, and, hence, is restricted in its outlook and scope. However, many critics have recognised the literary character of the Bible. R.D.Trivedi says, 'it's a pity that students in India are apt to think of the Bible as merely the scripture of Christians. It is something more. It is a great book of literature and the greatest classic of English prose.'¹⁰ Legouis, commenting on the Bible, says, 'The Old Testament condenses a whole literature in one book, with such unity of passion and sequence as the literature of no other country presents.'¹¹ According to J.N.Mundra and S.C. Mundra the Bible "contains not less than four styles." But

their quote from Middleton Murry lists only three, i.e., high poetry, dramatic narrative and religious legend.¹² But the list is not exhaustive. The Old Testament contains many kinds of literature: narratives combined with rules and instructions (Pentateuch, or Torah); anecdotes of Hebrew priests, prophets, kings, and some women (Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings); stories: an antiracist love story (Ruth), romance (Esther, and Judith), a preacher who succeeded too well (Jonah); collection of epigrams and prudential wisdom (Proverbs); philosophical view of existence with pragmatism and pessimism delicately poised (Ecclesiastes); poetry of high rank: devotional (Psalms), erotic (Song of Songs), elegiac (Lamentations); dramatic theological exposition of the problem of evil and suffering (Job); and oracles (Prophets). The New Testament, too, comprises of several types of literary forms. The major portion of the New Testament consists of epistolary literature (of the 27 books, 21 are called 'letters'); there is also historical narrative (Acts); reminiscences of Jesus' life, activities and sayings, retold with a view to elicit faith (Gospels); and apocalyptic (Apocalypse).

However, a caveat seems necessary. We are in the realm of religious literature which may not exactly conform to our modern scientific yardstick. The books of the Bible were written by different individuals at various times with a particular community in view. As such we cannot look for homogeneity in style, thought patterns or social and cultural values. Further, 'the Bible is the literature of faith, not of scientific observation or historical demonstration... The great Biblical themes are about God, his revealed works of creation, provision, judgment, deliverance, his covenant, and his promises. The Bible sees what happens to mankind in the light of God's nature, righteousness, faithfulness, mercy, and love. The major themes about mankind relate to man's rebellion, his estrangement and perversion. Man's redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, the gifts of grace, the new life, the coming kingdom, and the final consummation of man's hope are all viewed as the gracious works of God.'¹³

Uniqueness of the book of the Apocalypse

The Book of the Apocalypse is unique in the New Testament. It is full of bizarre images, frightful visions, esoteric descriptions, mysterious symbols, and allegorical presentations, setting it apart from the rest of the New Testament literature.

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (Ap 1:12:16)

At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald. Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God; and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing... (Ap 4:2-8)

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword.

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand; and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine!"

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth...

When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place... (ch 6)

The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, which fell on the earth; and a third of the earth was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter.

The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night...

And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key of the shaft of the bottomless pit; he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth... they were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it stings a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them. (8:7-9:6)

Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe." So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia. (14:14-20)

The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the

throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath. And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; and great hailstones, heavy as a hundredweight, dropped on men from heaven, till men cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague. (16:17-21)

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.(19:17-21)

This literary form of fantastic imagery which the Apocalypse uses makes the book unparalleled in the NT, at the same time making it the most difficult book to understand for the modern reader. Yet, it is not an isolated piece of work. It is, as we shall see, the representative of a form of religious literature rather common in late Judaism and early Christianity: the apocalyptic. Though the imagery employed and the visions portrayed therein seem weird and frightful to the modern reader, the contemporary people would easily have recognised the form as we differentiate the various present day literary forms such as the novel, the drama, the scientific fiction, the newspaper report, the essay, the story and so on. They would have expected such a work to be dominantly symbolical as weeks made up of years, numbers standing for

names, beasts representing the nations and empires of the time, gemstones and metals suggesting character traits... Beasts, war in the heavens, destruction of the earth - all these things which we find so strange would have been expected by the first readers of the Apocalypse, just as we expect to find horses, gunfights, posses, and cowboys in a Western.¹⁴

The present study purports to delve into the rich imagery and symbolism employed in the book by studying it closely. It also attempts to unravel the meaning and significance of this symbolism by unearthing the sources from which these images are derived or allude to, and aims at critically examining to what extent it conforms to the apocalyptic genre.

The thesis consists of seven chapters, in deference to the author's schematic arrangement of the material in units of seven, with an introduction and a conclusion. Introduction deals briefly with the history of the Bible in English, describes the influence of the Biblical literature on the life and literature of the West, and points out the major literary forms in the Bible. It also provides a glimpse of the unique literary style the book of the Apocalypse employs: weird imagery and frightening visions Chapter 1 concerns the authorship, outline, and the summary of the book. In chapter 2, the salient features of Jewish apocalyptic literature are examined. The historical development of this genre is dealt with in chapter 3. In chapter 4, the extant canonical and non-canonical apocalyptic works are briefly surveyed. The Apocalypse is compared with the rest of the books of the Bible in chapter 5. In chapter 6, the Apocalypse is compared with the apocryphal books. The rich symbolism made use of in the various vision narratives in the Apocalypse and its significance is studied in chapter 7. Conclusion comprises of the finding of this study: the book of the Apocalypse is a great apocalyptic literary work fitted in an epistolary framework, borrowing heavily from the prophetic literature and exhibiting some likeness to the Greek Tragedy.

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Title

The 'Apocalypse' is the original title of the last book of the Bible. It is derived from 'apokalupsis', a Greek word, which means 'revelation' or 'disclosure'. The book is also known as the 'Revelation'.

Authorship and Date of Composition

The author identifies himself as John (1:1,4,9; 22:8). He is one of the prophets (22:9). He calls himself 'servant' of Jesus Christ (1:1) and 'brother and companion in tribulation' of those whom he is addressing (1:9). He is on the island of Patmos (1:10) probably banished by the Roman authorities. That he is a person of authority in the Christian community is evident from the fact that he is writing to the seven churches (2:1-3:22). But who is this "John"? Is he one of the Twelve, and known as the 'beloved disciple'? If not, what was the relationship between him and the apostle John? Is the seer of the Apocalypse and the author of the Johannine Gospel and the Epistles one and the same? Some internal indications seem to suggest some sort of a common origin of the Gospel of John and the Apocalypse. It is interesting to note that some details found in these two books are not available in any other books of the NT: Christ is presented as 'the Lamb' (Jn 1:29,36; Ap 5:6; 6:16 etc.), as 'Word of God' (Jn 1:1,14; Ap 19:13); the people of God are referred to as 'the spouse' (Jn 3:29; Ap 21:2,9; 22:17); water is referred to as life-giving in expressions like 'the living water' (Jn 4:10f; 7:38) and 'water of life' (Ap 7:17; 21:6; 22:1,17). Both the books cite Zech 12:10 (Jn 19:37; Ap 1:7). The absence of the temple in the heavenly Jerusalem (Ap 21:22) reminds us of Jn 4:21. However, there are numerous details pointing to the contrary, the most important being the language and the eschatological perspective. The eschatology of the Apocalypse is dominated by the apocalyptic tradition hoping for a future salvation. The Gospel, on the other hand, has no trace of the apocalyptic tradition and considers salvation as already possessed by the believer. Several key themes of the Gospel like 'to believe' (appears 98 times in the Gospel), 'the world

'(in the dualistic sense), and 'the truth' do not appear in the Apocalypse at all. 'Faith' which comes four times in the Apocalypse is not found in the Gospel¹. It is also significant that the author of the Apocalypse repeatedly mentions his name while that of the Gospel studiously avoids it. Further, he does not call himself an apostle, but on the contrary, speaks of the twelve apostles of the Lamb on the twelve foundations of the new city of Jerusalem ((21:14), which is more likely of a person who was not an apostle but one who looked back on the apostles and spoke. Hence, there is no unanimity among the Biblical scholars on the issue of the identity of the author of the Apocalypse. Nevertheless, the Apocalypse is not considered a pseudoepigraphon. It is generally admitted that the author has left us his real name. "There is not a shred of evidence, not even the shadow of a probability, for the hypothesis that the Apocalypse is pseudonymous," says R.H.Charles.² A.Feuillet also holds that the "John" is not the son of Zebedee, one of the Twelve but someone associated with the Johannine school of thought.³ 'After AD 70 (the fall of Jerusalem), apocalypticism was introduced into Asia Minor and c 80-90 a prophetic circle was formed near Ephesus. It's leader was John, who might well have been the author of Revelation, which is deeply steeped in apocalyptic tradition. The "Johannine circle" bearing the tradition of John, the Apostle of the Lord, and from which emerged the Gospel and the Letters bearing his name, might have been a continuation of the prophetic conventicle of Ephesus in which John was prominent. The various writings do not have to be consistent except in their basic faith in Jesus Christ; and, as the situations to which they addressed themselves were different, different styles and content were required."⁴ Scholars are at variance with each other while suggesting the date of composition of the Apocalypse. Some propose a date as early as the reign of Claudius (AD 41-54) while some suggest a date as late as the reign of Nerva (AD 96-98). Some even think of the persecution of Nero (AD 54-68) while a few others situate it during the reign of Vespasian (A.D.69-79). But a majority of scholars opt for a date during the persecution towards the end of the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96). The letters (chs 2-3) show that the seven churches were established churches. Ephesus (2:4), Sardis (3:3) and Laodicea (3:15) have lost their initial zeal. Hatred for Christians has spread. It had already claimed one victim (2:13) and John foresees a

time of persecution for those who profess faith in Christ (2:10; 2:15; 3:10). He sees 'the souls of those who were slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne' under the celestial altar (6:9). Rome 'is drunk with the blood of saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus' (17:6). All are required to worship the Roman Empire and bear its mark on them (13:4; 14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20). The author refers to the emperor numerically. His number is 666 (13:18; 17:9-11). But the identity of the person is still an enigma. Nevertheless, as the text bears witness, the persecution was the result of the refusal of the early Christians to comply with this stipulation. The persecution under Nero was not for refusing to worship the emperor. Moreover, Christians at that time were accused of setting fire to the city of Rome. Further, there is no proof of this persecution spreading outside Rome. But the next one, under Domitian, tallies with the textual evidence of the Apocalypse. Emperor Domitian, toward the end of his life, demanded emperor worship and decreed that he be worshipped as 'dominus et deus noster'. Hence, we can situate the book around this time (AD 90-96).

Outline

A. Introduction (1:1-8)

B. Series of Visions (1:9-22:5)

a. First Cycle of Visions (1:9-11:19)

i. Epiphany of Christ to John with messages to seven churches (1:9-3:22)

ii. The Scroll with Seven Seals (4:1-8:1)

iii. The Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)

b. Second Cycle of Visions

i. Symbolic Visions Revealing Secrets of the Past, Present and Future (12:1-14:20; 15:2-4)

ii. The Seven Bowls (15:1; 15:5-19:10)

iii. Vision of the Last Things (19:11-22:5)

C. Conclusion (22:6-21)

Synopsis

The Apocalypse is a revelatory narrative. The revelation is about 'what must soon take place'. It is given by God to Jesus Christ who in turn passes it on to John through an angel. It came to John on a Sunday on the island of Patmos situated in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor. He is commanded to write down all that he sees and to send it to the seven churches of Asia (1:1-11).

John has a series of visions. In the inaugural vision, Christ gives him seven messages to the seven churches. Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicea have become slack in their fervour; Laodicea glories in her earthly prosperity. Hence they need to repent. Smyrna and Pergamum are warned against the Nicolaitans; Thyatira has not to tolerate the woman Jezebel. Philadelphia has nothing against her. Christ is coming soon. At his coming, all those persecuting the Christians or actively misleading them with their false teachings will be destroyed. But those who persevere in the true faith will be rewarded with eternal life (1:9-3:22).

The next vision concerns the scroll with seven seals. It opens with the glimpse of the heavenly court. God is enthroned, attended by 24 elders and four living creatures (4:1-11). This vision is closely linked to the following: the scroll and the Lamb (5:1-14) and they form the backdrop for the heptad of the seals. The opening of the first six seals (6:1-17) provides us with a symbolic description of the content of the sealed document. The opening of the first four seals forms a homogeneous group by the image of the four horsemen and by identical introductory words. It indicates disastrous times: war, famine and pestilence (6:1-8). The fifth seal (6:9-11) discloses the call of the souls of the persecuted for justice and the assurance thereof. The sixth seal announces the events that should precede the end of the world (6:9-17). The seventh seal does not follow immediately. There is an interlude of two visions. In the first vision (7:1-8), John sees the faithful under divine protection against the impending adversity; the second vision (7:9-17) brings out the ultimate salvation of the righteous more clearly than the first. The seventh seal

(8:1) heralds the next heptad : the seven trumpets.

The arrangement of the trumpet heptad is similar to that of the seals. There is a heavenly scene (8:2-6) which serves as a setting. The first four trumpets (8:7-12) form a block as did the first four seals. The fifth (9:1-12) and the sixth trumpet (9:13-21) form a contrast due to the wide development accompanying them. Finally a double interlude of visions (10:1- 11:13) precedes the seventh trumpet blast (11:15-19).

The series of visions related to the seven trumpets also concerns the eschatological events. They concern the universe: heaven, earth, the waters and the under-world. The first four trumpets are directed against the cosmos while the last three affect humanity more directly. The content is a free adaptation of the ten plagues mentioned in Exodus chs 7-10. The visions in the interlude, the mighty angel with a little open scroll (10:1-11) and the temple and two witnesses (11:1-13), anticipate the second cycle of visions and thus provide a link between the two halves of the book. John receives a new commission, and a new scroll is brought in the contents of which are depicted in chs 12-22. The vision of the temple and two witnesses (11:1-13) prepares for chs 12-22 by introducing the two key themes: the time limit for the eschatological woes and the beast ascending from the abyss.

The second cycle of visions begins with a number of symbolic visions revealing the past, present and future (12:1-14:20). There are seven of them, not explicitly numbered though. The first is about the conflict between a woman and the dragon (12:1-17). The second concerns the beast from the sea (13:1-10). The third is of the beast from the earth (13:11- 18). The fourth one depicts the Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5). The fifth deals with the three angels (14:6-13). The sixth presents the picture of the harvest and vintage (14:4-20). The seventh shows those who had conquered the beast (15:2-4). All these visions have one underlying theme: persecution.

The vision of the seven bowls (15:1, 5-19:10) portrays the divine judgement upon the earth and the wicked.

It resumes and elaborates the announcements of the three angels in 14:6-13, specially the fall of 'Babylon' (14:8). This series also has the same subject matter as the visions of the seals and of the trumpets, i.e., the events of the end-time. But the perspective is different. As in the seven seals, the themes of justice and vindication are predominant here. As in the seven trumpets, the natural elements and the themes from Exodus are present. The bowls differ from the trumpets in so far as they specify the adversaries of God and the reasons for divine judgement.

The vision of the seven angels with the last plagues (15:1, 5-16:1) reminds us of 12:1,3. The vocabulary takes us back to the sixth trumpet (9:18,20), and points to Exodus (11:1; 12:13). The first four bowls (16:2-9) are unified by their association with natural elements: the earth (v 2), the sea (v 3), the fresh waters (v 4), and the sun (heavenly body) (v 8). The last three bowls (16:10-21) have a historical and political perspective. In this section, too, John receives seven visions: receiving of the bowls of plague (15:5-8); pouring out of the bowls (16:1-21); a harlot sitting on the beast (17:1-18); an angel announcing the doom of Babylon (18:1-3); a voice calling out for the faithful to leave the doomed city (18:4-8); a symbolic action depicting the destruction of Babylon (18:21-24) and a great multitude singing a canticle of joy in heaven (19:1-10).

John now has the vision of the last things (19:11-22:5). He has a vision of the second coming of Christ (19:11-16) followed by the call of an angel to all the birds to 'the great supper of God' (19:17-18). Then he sees the final battle in which the beast and the false prophet are defeated (19:19-21). After this, he is shown the binding of 'the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan' (20:1-3). Now John beholds the thousand-year reign of the faithful with Christ (20:4-10). The next vision unfolds before him the last judgement (20:11-15). The final vision brings before his eyes the new heaven, the new earth and the new Jerusalem (21:11-22:5).

The visions being over, John adds a few sayings to his book (22:6-20). The angel bears witness to the authenticity of the contents of the book (22:6-7). Then there is an oracle implicitly attributed to Christ. This is followed by John's attestation of the book. After this John records his reaction to the angel and the angelic response (22:8-9). Next comes the directive to John (22:10) and the threat of judgement together with the promise of salvation (22:11-12). Then there is another oracle implicitly referring to Christ (22:13). After this we find a promise of salvation and a threat of judgement (22:14-15) followed by the self-identification of the revealer (22:16). Then there is an invitation extended to all to the 'water of life' (22:17). It is followed by a warning given against any violation of the integrity of the book (22:18-19). The section ends with the promise of Christ to come soon and a fervent cry of the faithful to this effect (22:20). The book ends with an epistolary blessing (22:21).

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The Nomenclature

The Apocalyptic Literature is a nomenclature given to a particular type of literary genre that flourished from about 200 BC to about 200 AD, especially in Judaism and Christianity. The genre gets its name from the title of the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse, also known as the Revelation. The word 'apocalypse' is derived from the Greek 'apokalupsis' which is composed of two words, 'apo' meaning 'off' and 'kalupto' meaning 'to cover'. It can be rendered in English as 'revelation' or 'disclosure' or 'unveiling'; the verb form, 'apokaluptein' means 'to reveal' or 'to disclose' or 'to unveil'. Thus, the name 'apocalyptic literature' indicates a narrative literature of revelatory character.

The Nature of Apocalyptic Literature

Many hold that the apocalyptic literature pertains to predictions of the end of time. According to them, it consists of 'the disclosure of future events by means of a lengthy and detailed dream or vision report' in 'highly symbolic and often bizarre images, which in turn are explained and interpreted' and 'generally reflect the author's historical view of his own era as a time when the powers of evil are gathering to make their final struggle against God, after which a new age will be established.'¹ This may be due to the fact that 'apocalyptic' is viewed as 'eschatology'. The latter term coined from two Greek words, 'eschatos' meaning 'last' and 'logia' meaning 'study' or 'knowledge', refers to 'the last things' in Christian theology: death, judgement, heaven, and hell. But the domain of apocalyptic literature cannot be limited just to eschatological matters. It is true that eschatological matter is apocalyptic but not all apocalyptic material is eschatological in nature. A study of the contents of the various apocalyptic works unearths a wealth of subject matter other than eschatological. In the Similitudes of 1 Enoch (chs 37-71), we find a fascination with astronomy and cosmos. In the Book of the Luminaries, sometimes called 'Astronomical Treatise' (chs 72-82), the main concern is the calendar. It advocates a solar calendar, and

links human morality and proper calendar observance with the balance of the natural order. 2 Enoch is preoccupied with cosmogony. Enoch ascends to heaven in angelic form where the secrets of creation are revealed to him. Enoch, then, makes them known to his children and gives his own moral teaching. This is followed by a review of history before the flood. 2 Baruch grapples with theological issues arising out of the destruction of the Temple. 3 Baruch is a revelation of the universe and its mechanics as well as the role of the archangel Michael. Thus, we see that the frontiers of apocalyptic literature are far wider and include cosmology, theodicy, and angelology in addition to eschatology. J.G. Collins defines the apocalyptic 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.'² This definition needs some modification. Most, but not all, apocalypses have the narrative framework, the book of the Apocalypse, which has an epistolary form, being the most notable example. Further, as Gottwald points out, some apocalyptic works have only temporal revelations and others have only spatial revelations, while yet others have both.³ Also, there are some works which contain material which is not strictly apocalyptic, such as Daniel and 2 Enoch.

The apocalyptic literature is of a revelatory character. The revelation is a mediated revelation. It is mediated in that the visionary does not receive it directly from the deity, as an oracle, but through some other heavenly being such as an angel or risen Christ. The mediation may have a variety of forms: epiphany, vision, audition, otherworldly journey, and access to a heavenly book or scroll. The content of revelation concerns secrets of the cosmos and the secrets of the future. The cosmic secrets involve the nature and working of the stars, the sun, the moon, the planets, winds, and rains, including the fixing of the calendar and the causes of the weather. The names, organisations and activities of angelic beings, and the places of reward for the righteous and of punishment to the wicked assume great importance. The secrets of future involve political and historical events as well as the ultimate destiny of the elect, the

humanity, heaven and earth. The function of the revelation seems to be to console the particular community in distress during a time of crisis, like persecution. The ideological or propagandistic factor is not of less importance. Secrets are revealed in order to present a particular interpretation of the times and events so that the audience may seriously reflect on their faith vis-a-vis the contemporary events and live in a particular manner. As such it differs from the narratives incorporating the supernatural or the grotesque in many authors. The only masterly imitation, perhaps, is *The Divine Comedy* of Dante.

Thus, we may define the apocalyptic as a genre of literature characterised by a revelation pertaining to end-times and/or the supernatural realm and/or general secrets, granted to a human being by an otherworldly mediator.

The Rationale Behind the Emergence of Apocalyptic Literature

To have a grasp of the circumstances in which such a unique type of literature originated and developed, we need to understand the religious ideology and the political outlook of the Jews. The Jews prided themselves as the 'Chosen Race', the 'People of God'. They were the offspring of Abraham to whom God had promised that He would give him many descendants and make of him a great nation; the promise was reiterated to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 12:2; 15:5; 17:4-5; 18:18; 22:17; 28:14; 32:12; 35:11; 46:3). For them, the promise translated into concrete terms implied that they would be a mighty power in the real geo-political sense, occupying the centrestage in the comity of nations. This necessarily meant that all their enemies would be destroyed and they would rule the nations. Some day they would reach this preeminence and glory which was theirs by right, by virtue of their special privileged status. But the reality belied their hope. It is true that David established the Kingdom of Israel which reached its zenith under Solomon. Yet it did not make the Israelites a preeminent nation, a super-power. However, they must have seen this as the beginning of their ascendancy to that position.

But catastrophe struck in 931 BC. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom, small enough to begin with, split into two: Israel and Judah, under Rehoboam and Jeroboam, Samaria and Jerusalem as their capitals. The kingdom of Israel was razed to the ground by the mighty Assyrians in 721 BC, never to appear again. The kingdom of Judah, on which now the hope centered, did not last long either. It was reduced to slavery by the Babylonians in 587 BC. It was the most tragic chapter in the history of Israel. It struck at the very core of the faith and the life of the Israelites. The Babylonian army did the unthinkable. It destroyed the 'indestructible': the Jerusalem Temple, the inheritance of the Promised Land and the supposed permanence of the Davidic dynasty. Henceforth, the 'Israelite' was to be called the 'Jew'. Judah was never to regain its sovereignty. It was later to be a subject state of the Persians (539-333 BC), the Greeks (333-63 BC), and the Romans (63 BC onwards).

Thus, history for the Jews was a catalogue of disasters. Yet, they were keenly aware of their status as the chosen race destined to rule the nations, and they believed stubbornly that it would be so. But this belief had to adjust itself to the historical reality. The prophecy was dead (1 Mac 4:46; 9:27; 14:41); the last prophecy we hear is that of Malachi (c 460 BC). This was probably because prophecy was no longer relevant in the existing circumstances. The prophet was replaced by the apocalyptic visionary. The prophetic promises of glorious restoration of Israel remained largely unfulfilled. As Bauckham points out, 'In the extended period of contradiction between God's promises and the reality of Israel's historical experience, the apocalyptists sought to assure the faithful that God had not abandoned his people, that the promised salvation was coming. To this end they stressed the divine sovereignty over history: God has predetermined the whole course of world history and the End will come at the time he has appointed.'⁴

So, they worked out a scheme of history based on a dualistic concept of time: 'the present age' and 'the age to come'. The former was replete with evil, injustice, lawlessness, immorality, and godlessness.

Consequently, it was beyond redemption; there was no way it could be reformed; the only destiny, therefore, awaiting it was total destruction. So, the Jews anticipated a complete obliteration of the things in their present form. In the latter goodness, righteousness, peace, and prosperity would abound. This was supposed to be the golden age in which God would vindicate His people, vanquish their enemies and set them over them. The Jews were well aware that such a transformation was beyond human capabilities; no historical force could meet the contemporary world power, which had reduced them to a nonentity, on equal terms. Therefore, they began to dream of an event that was transhistorical: a direct divine intervention in human history. This definitive involvement of God in human affairs would come about on 'The Day of the Lord'. It would be a time of terror, destruction, and judgment; a time which would witness the shattering out of existence of all things, the total collapse of the existing order, and the tempestuous inauguration of the 'age to come'. The expression of these dreams was beyond the parameters of the existing literary genres, alien to any tread path. The apocalyptic literary genre, thus, originated and developed among a people who no longer had the power of self-determination, a people reduced to slavery by the conquering powers, a people who were the victims of history rather than its agents, to give expression to their dreams of vindication, a vehicle for pouring forth their desires and aspirations. Thus, we see that the pivot of apocalyptic belief is a transcendent eschatology whereby the future is envisaged in terms of direct divine intervention - a universal judgment of the nations and a new age of salvation, in which the universe will be radically transformed.⁵

It is a 'literature of the oppressed who looked beyond history to the intervention of God who would set right the injustices done to his people. God will vindicate his people and accomplish his promises, and thus bring to consummation his purpose and plan for all mankind. This literature is thus a great affirmation of faith in the overruling purpose of God which could not and would not be frustrated by the devices of evil men, however powerful they may be. The people are called upon not to compromise with their oppressors as the time appointed by God for his intervention is close at hand, and this will end in

victory.⁶ Consequently, the method of apocalypse is to project the present world as totally evil with no hope for improvement and that history will end with a cosmic catastrophe at which time the apparently victorious wicked will be punished and the persecuted righteous restored to glory⁷ and to outline by striking symbolic imagery those things which are to be perceived as dangers and be beware of, and the ways in which divine intervention was to be expected.⁸

The mid second century BC saw the first great flowering of the apocalyptic literature in the Jewish crisis of faith under the Hellenistic onslaught of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC) when the apocalyptic was the literary vehicle of the Hasidic movement, which stood for national repentance, uncompromising opposition to Hellenisation, and eschatological faith in God's imminent intervention on behalf of His people.⁹ The four apocalypses in the Book of Daniel (chs 7-12) composed between 168 and 164 BC make it the first masterpiece of the apocalyptic literary genre,¹⁰ whose style was imitated in a succession of works. As Daniel-Rops writes 'Apocalyptic works abounded everywhere at this time, expressing themselves in a strange kind of poetry, packed with semi-sublime, semi-nonsensical dissertations in which the heart-stirring dream of an anguished nation mingled with intellectual speculations which were entirely divorced from the disciplining boundaries of scientific knowledge.'¹¹ They include 1 Enoch, Sibylline Oracles, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, the Fourth Book of Ezra, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and the Book of Jubilees. The last great Jewish apocalypses, as Bauckham notes, come from the period between the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD ending the first revolt (AD 66-70) and the failure of the second revolt (AD 132-135) led by Bar Cochba (Simon ben Kosibah).¹²

Common Features of Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalyptic writings portray the present crisis, whether it be the persecution of Antiochus or the fall of Jerusalem, against a background of world history, the present struggle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, the powers of evil arrayed against the righteous, and the defeat and destruction

of the immediate enemy as the actual final victory of God over the evil powers.

All apocalyptic works delineate the tumultuous events, the events associated with the sudden breakthrough of the age to come. It highlights the sinful state of the present age, the terrors of the transitory stage, and the blessings of the age to come. It is dominated by dreams and visions of the end. Hence, the apocalyptic literature is necessarily cryptic; it makes copious use of symbols and pictures, allusions and analogies. This is inevitably so because it tries to present in human terms things that 'no eye has ever seen and no ear has ever heard'. It attempts to describe the indescribable, to express the inexpressible, to paint the unpaintable, and to articulate the inarticulable. It deals with events which no human being knows anything about, and expresses things which are beyond human experience or speech. Naturally, the symbols and images turn out to be obscure and, often, grotesque.

The apocalyptic works sought to communicate a disclosure of a transcendent perspective of this world. This was usually accomplished by a detailed account of the seer being taken in vision on a heavenly journey to learn the secrets of the divine purpose. Such is the case in 1 Enoch (chs 14-16, 46, 60, 71); 2 Enoch (ch 20); the Apocalypse of Abraham (chs 9-18) as well as the book of the Apocalypse (ch 4 where John is told, 'Come up hither,' through the open door in heaven).

The use of code language further complicates the issue. The apocalyptic literature is the expression of the indomitable spirit and the undying hope of a persecuted community. It is, therefore, only natural that the intensity of the literary output was directly proportionate to the intensity of the persecution. The more tyrannical and oppressive the alien power was, the more intense their dream of the destruction of that power and the manner of their own vindication became. But it would have further worsened the situation if the literature containing such dreams fell in the hands of the oppressing power and they understood it. It would have been considered rebellious and revolutionary activity, and all those

associated with it dealt with as traitors. So, the apocalyptists often used code language; they deliberately couched their references to persons and events in cryptic language making them unintelligible to outsiders.

Apocalyptic literature, by and large, is pseudonymous, i.e., bears false names of authorship. The various works are attributed to ancient personages such as Moses, Abraham, Ezra, Baruch, Enoch, the twelve Patriarchs, etc. This was not a fraudulent device intended to deceive the reader. On the other hand, this device helped the writers, as Daley has pointed out, to identify with the central figures of Judaism¹³ and act as interpreters of the prophecies of old, assuming the authority of the revered figure. This inevitably resulted in writing from a viewpoint in the past and 'predicting' the history which had already taken place. Also, as Beasley-Murray says, the apocalyptists' copious use of existing materials, continual feeding on OT sources, both prophetic and apocalyptic, serving as vehicles for their message, may have necessitated this practice.¹⁴

The Jewish apocalyptic presents a divine Messianic figure of power and glory who would descend from heaven into the world to conquer the evil powers; he existed in heaven before the creation of the world, before the sun and the stars were made; he was preserved in the presence of the Almighty (1 Enoch 48:3,6; 62:7; 4 Ezra 13:25f).

At that hour, that Son of Man was given a name, in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits, the Before Time; even before the creation of the sun and the moon, before the creation of the stars, he was given a name, in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits (1 Enoch 48:3).

The apocalyptic does not present a human or gentle Messianic figure. On the contrary, he is a divine figure of avenging power and glory before whom the earth trembles. He would come to put down the mighty from their seats, to dethrone the kings of the earth, and to destroy the sinners and to restore the righteous (1 Enoch 45:2-6; 48:2-9; 62:3-13; 69:26-29).

On the day of judgment, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and the landlords shall see and recognise him... Then pain shall come upon them as a woman in travail with birth pangs... One half portion of them shall glance at the other half; they shall be terrified and dejected; and pain shall seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory... The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted, and all the elect ones shall stand before him. On that day, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and those who rule the earth shall fall down before him on their faces, and worship and raise their hopes in that Son of Man; they shall beg and plead for mercy at his feet. But the Lord of the Spirits himself will cause them to be frantic, so that they shall rush and depart from his presence. Their faces shall be filled with shame, and their countenances shall be crowned with darkness. So he will deliver them to the angels for punishment in order that vengeance shall be executed on them... It shall become quite a scene for my righteous and elect ones. They shall rejoice over (the kings, the governors, the high officials, and the landlords) because the wrath of the Lord of the Spirits shall rest upon them and his sword (shall exact) from them a sacrifice. The 38 righteous and elect ones shall be saved on that day, and from thenceforth they shall never see the faces of the sinners and the oppressors (1 Enoch 62:3-13).

The coming of the Messiah was to be preceded by Elijah who was to stand on the hills of Israel and announce the coming of the Messiah with a voice so loud that it would be heard from one end of the earth to the other.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes..."
(Mal 4:5).

The last terrible times preceding the Messianic age were known as 'the travails of the Messiah', they were described as 'birth-pangs' (Mt 24:8; Mk 13:8).

For nations will rise against nations, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in

various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs (Mk 13:8).

The last days will be a time of terror. During those days even the mighty will weep bitterly,

The great day of the Lord is near,

near and hastening fast;

the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter,

the mighty man cries aloud there.

A day of wrath is that day,

a day of distress and anguish,

a day of ruin and devastation,

a day of darkness and gloom,

a day of clouds and thick darkness,

a day of trumpet blast and battle cry

against the fortified cities

and against the lofty battlements (Zeph 1:14-16);

the inhabitants of the land will tremble,

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,

for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near (Joel 2:1);

men will be frightened and will seek some place to hide but will find none,

In those days, when he hurls out against you terror of fire, where will you flee and where shall you find safety? When he flings his word against you, will you not faint and fear? All the luminaries shall faint and tremble and panic... The children of the earth will seek to hide themselves from the presence of the Great Glory, trembling and confounded (1 Enoch 102:1-3).

It will be a time of cosmic upheavals when the universe will be disintegrated: the stars will be extinguished; the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood (Is 13:10; Joel 2:30-31; 3:15),

"And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes (Joel 2:30-31);

the firmament will crash in ruins; there will be a cataract of raging fire, and creation will become a molten mass,

... then all the elements of the universe will be bereft, when God who dwells in the sky rolls up the heaven as a scroll is rolled, and the whole variegated vault of heaven falls on the wondrous earth and ocean. An undying cataract of raging fire will flow, and burn earth, burn sea, and melt the heavenly vault and days and creation itself into one and separate them into clear air (Sib Or 3:80-87);

the seasons will lose their order, and there will be neither night nor dawn,

There will no longer be twinkling spheres of luminaries, no night, no dawn, no numerous days of care, no spring, no summer, no winter, no autumn (Sib Or 3:88-90).

It will be a time when the structure of human relationships will be destroyed, the very fabric of familial affinity will be disrupted: hatred, enmity, and dissension will rule the earth,

And on that day a great panic from the Lord shall fall on them, so that each will lay hold on the hand of his fellow, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other (Zech 14:13);

brothers will kill each other; parents will murder their own children; from dawn to dusk they shall slay one another,

In those days, the father will be beaten together with the sons, in one place; and brothers shall fall

together with their friends, in death, until a stream shall flow with their blood. For a man shall not be able to withhold his hands from his sons nor from sons' sons in order to kill them. Nor is it possible for the sinners to withhold his hands from his honoured brother. From dawn until the sun sets, they shall slay each other (1 Enoch 100:1-2).

There will be scant regard for human values: wise men will be rare to find; honour will be turned into shame, strength into humiliation, beauty into ugliness; men will become violent and give in to every kind of passion,

For in that time there will not be found many wise men and there will also be not many intelligent ones, but in addition, they who know will be silent more and more. And there will be many tidings and not a few rumours, and the works of the phantoms will be visible, and not a few promises will be told, some idle and others affirmed. And honour will change itself into shame, and strength will be humiliated to contempt, and the strong one will be broken down, and beauty will become contemptible... And when one thinks about these things, jealousy will arise in those who did not think much of themselves; and passion will take hold of those who were peaceful; and many will be agitated by wrath to injure many; and they will raise armies to shed blood; and they will perish with those at the end (2 Bar 48:33-37).

...The wise will be silent, and the foolish will speak... (2 Baruch 70: 2-6)

...then shall reason hide itself, and wisdom shall withdraw into its chamber, and it shall be sought by many but shall not be found, and unrighteousness and unrestraint shall increase on earth (4 Ezra 5:10).

It will be a time of judgment. God will come like a refiner's fire and none can face that day,

But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

"For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he

will purify the sons of Levi and refine them... (Mal 3:2-3);

by fire and sword God will deal with men:

"For behold, the Lord will come in fire,

and his chariots like the storm-wind

to render his anger in fury,

and his rebuke with flames of fire.

For by fire will the Lord execute judgment,

and by his sword, upon all flesh;

and those slain by the Lord shall be many (Is 66:15-16).

The Son of Man will destroy sinners from the face of the earth,

The Lord of the Spirits has sat down on the throne of his glory, and the spirit of righteousness has been poured out upon him. The word of his mouth will do the sinners in; and all the oppressors shall be eliminated from before his face (1 Enoch 62:2);

But those who have led the world astray shall be bound in chains; and their ruinous congregation shall be imprisoned; all their deeds shall vanish from before the face of the earth (1 Enoch 69:28);

they will be burned up as Sodom and Gomorrah,

And on the day of turmoil and execration and indignation and wrath, with devouring burning fire just as he burned Sodom so too he will burn up his land and his city and everything which will be his (Jubilees 36:10);

and the smell of brimstone will fill the earth,

For it will come, when the smell of brimstone spreads among all men (Sib Or 3:60).

In those days, the Jews who had been scattered and exiled throughout the four corners of the world will

be gathered in the Holy city again: they will come back from Assyria and from Egypt and worship the Lord on His holy mountain:

In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the Lord will thresh out the grain, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel. And in that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem (Is 27:12-13);

Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height

and look toward the east,

and see your children gathered from west and east,

at the word of the Holy One,

rejoicing that God has remembered them.

For they went forth from you on foot,

led away by their enemies;

but God will bring them back to you,

carried in glory, as on a royal throne (Bar 5:5-6);

Stand on a high place, Jerusalem, and look at your children,

from the east and the west assembled together by the Lord.

From the north they come in the joy of their God;

from the distant islands God has assembled them (Pss Sol 11:2-3).

Nature will rejoice at this turn of events: the hills will be removed, the valleys will be filled in, and the trees will gather to provide shade for them as they come back,

For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hill be made low

and the valley filled up, to make level ground,

so that Israel may walk safely in the glory of God.

The woods and every fragrant tree

have shaded Israel at God's command (Bar 5:7-8).

He flattened high mountains into level ground for them;

the hills fled at their coming.

The forests shaded them as they passed by;

God made every fragrant tree to grow for them (Pss Sol 11:4-5).

The Gentiles are not mute spectators to these events, they are very much a part of the whole scheme of things. But their participation is variously mentioned as being completely destroyed: Babylon will become a desolation,

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,

the splendour and pride of the Chaldeans,

will be like Sodom and Gomorrah

when God overthrew them.

It will never be inhabited

or dwelt in for all generations;

no Arab will pitch his tent there,

no shepherds will make their flocks lie down there.

But wild beasts will lie down there,

and its houses will be full of howling creatures;

there ostriches will dwell,

and there satyrs will dance.

Hyenas will cry in its towers,

and jackals in the pleasant palaces;

its time is close at hand

and its days will not be prolonged (Is 13:19-22);

God will tread down the Gentiles in His anger,

"... I trod them in my anger

and trampled them in my wrath;

their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments,

and I have stained all my raiment...

I trod down the peoples in my anger,

I made them drunk in my wrath,

and poured out their lifeblood on earth." (Is 63:3,6);

or as gathered in a last battle against Jerusalem and being totally routed (Ez 38:14-39:16; Zech 14:1-5; Sib Or 3:660-697):

"Therefore, son of man, prophesy, and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord God: On that day when my people Israel are dwelling in security, you will bestir yourself and come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army; you will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land...

"But on that day, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, says the Lord God, my wrath will be roused... I will summon every kind of terror against Gog, says the Lord God; every man's sword will be against his brother. With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples that are with him, torrential rains and hailstones, fire and brimstone.

"...then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples that are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the wild beasts to be devoured. You shall fall

in the open field...

"On that day I will give to Gog a place of burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travellers east of the sea; it will block the travellers, for there Gog and all his multitude will be buried; it will be called the Valley of Hamon-gog. For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land... (Ez 38:14-39:16);

or as getting converted through the light of Israel (Is 45:20-22; 49:6; 1 Enoch 48:4-5; Pss Sol 17:34),

I will give you as a light to the nations,

that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth (Is 49:6);

He will become a staff for the righteous ones in order that they may lean on him and not fall. He is the light of the Gentiles and he will become the hope of those who are sick in their hearts. All those who dwell upon the earth shall fall and worship before him; they shall glorify, bless, and sing the name of the Lord of the Spirits (1 Enoch 48:4-5).

The city of Jerusalem preserved in heaven in all her glory, beauty and splendour will descend from heaven in the last days (4 Ezra 10:44-59; 2 Bar 4:2-6):

Or do you think this is the city of which I said: On the palms of my hands I have carved you? It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him - as also Paradise. After these things I showed it to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims. And again I showed it also to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels (2 Bar 4:2-5);

the new Jerusalem will be unparalleled in her dazzling beauty with foundation of sapphires, windows of agate, gates of carbuncles, borders of pleasant stones,

"O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,

behold, I will set your stones in antimony,

and lay your foundations with sapphires.

I will make your pinnacles of agate,

your gates of carbuncles,

and all your wall of precious stones (Is 54:12);

For Jerusalem will be built with sapphires and emeralds,

her walls with precious stones,

and her towers and battlements with pure gold.

The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with beryl and ruby and stones of Ophir (Tob 13:16-17);

the latter house, i.e., the new Jerusalem, will be more glorious than the former,

For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendour, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts (Hag 2:6-9).

In the last days the dead will be raised,

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan 12:2);

In those days Sheol will return all the deposits which she had received and hell will give back all that which it owes. And he shall choose the righteous and the holy ones from among them, for the day when they shall be selected and saved has arrived (1 Enoch 51:1-2).

The Messiah will rule the earth with his saints. The most usual view of the duration of the Messianic kingdom was that it would last for ever,

And the kingdom and the dominion

and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven

shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;

their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,

and all dominions shall serve and obey them (Dan 7:27);

but some believed it to last 400 years; it was computed by comparing Genesis 15:13 and Psalm 90:15.

The Apocalypse mentions a reign of a thousand years at the end of which a final battle will take place in which Satan will be vanquished and the new age will be inaugurated.

The apocalyptic literature also describes various blessings of the new age. The Jews earnestly believed that the unification of the divided kingdom will take place in the last time. The prophets declared that the house of Judah would walk again with the house of Israel (Jer 3:18; Is 11:13; Hos 1:11).

In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage (Jer 3:18).

The land would be extremely fertile (Is 51:3; 35:1; 2 Bar 29:5-8; Sib Or 3: 744-750); it would bring forth in abundance. It would become like the garden of Eden,

For the Lord will comfort Zion;

he will comfort all her waste places,

and will make her wilderness like Eden,

her desert like the garden of the Lord;

joy and gladness will be found in her,

thanksgiving and the voice of song (Is 51:3);

the desert would rejoice and blossom like a rose

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,

the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing (Is 35:1).

Baruch stretches the expectation to its very limit: the earth will yield ten thousandfold; on each vine there will be a thousand branches, on each branch a thousand clusters; in each cluster a thousand grapes; and each grape will give a cor (12 gallons) of wine (2 Bar 29:5-8).

The coming age will bring an end to weariness, sorrow, pain, and moaning. The people will have plenty and languish no more,

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall be like a watered garden,
and they shall languish no more (Jer 31:12);

they will enjoy everlasting joy,

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Is 35:10).

People will be blessed with long life, no one will die an untimely death, they will enjoy the fruit of their toil,

No more shall there be in it

an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the child shall die a hundred years old,
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;

for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands (Is 65:20- 22);

death will be swallowed up in victory and God will wipe all tears from their faces,

He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken (Is 25:8);

disease will withdraw; anxiety, anguish and lamentation will pass away; childbirth will have no pain; the reaper will not grow weary and the builder will not be toilworn,

...then joy will be revealed and rest will appear. And then health will descend in dew, and illness will vanish, and fear and tribulation and lamentation will pass away from among men, and joy will encompass the earth. And nobody will again die untimely, nor will any adversity take place suddenly. Judgment, condemnations, contentions, revenges, blood, passion, zeal, hate, and all such things will go into condemnation since they will be uprooted... And women will no longer have pain when they bear, nor will they be tormented when they yield the fruit of their womb. And it will happen in those days that the reaper will not become tired, and the farmer will not wear themselves out... (2 Bar 73:2-74:4).

Unrighteousness will be unheard of in the age to come. It will be an age of perfect holiness and

righteousness. The mankind will be good, living in fear of the Lord in the days of mercy (Pss Sol 17:28-43; 18:9-10),

And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God.

There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days,

for all shall be holy,

and their king shall be the Lord Messiah (Pss Sol 17:32).

There would be total peace and harmony in the new age. There would be no wars. The swords would be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning hooks

He shall judge between the nations,

and shall decide for many peoples;

and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,

and their spears into pruning hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

neither shall they learn war any more (Is 2:4);

the children of God would enjoy great peace

All your sons shall be taught by the Lord,

and great shall be the prosperity of your sons.

In righteousness you shall be established;

you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear;

and from terror, for it shall not come near you (Is 54:13-14);

there would be no sword or battle-din, there would be a common law for all men and a great peace throughout the earth, and kings would be friendly with each other,

There will be no sword on earth or din of battle,...

King will be friend to king to the end of the age.

The Immortal in the starry heaven will put in effect
a common law for men throughout the whole earth
for all that is done among wretched mortals (Sib Or 3:751, 756-759).

The apocalyptic literature portrays the restoration of the original harmony in Nature: the leopard and the kid, the cow and the bear, the lion and the fatling will play and lie down together (Is 11:6-7; 62:25; Sib Or 3:789- 793),

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall feed;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox (Is 11:6-7);

there will be a new covenant between man and the beasts of the field

And I will make for you a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground... (Hos 2:18);

even a child will be able to play where the poisonous reptiles have their holes and their dens (Is 11:8-9; 2 Bar 73:6; Sib Or 3:794f),

The suckling child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den,

They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain... (Is 11:8-9).

Thus, in all nature, between man and man, between people and people, between beast and beast, and between man and beast there will be universal cordial relationship, a reign of uninterrupted peace and

harmony. The Apocalypse makes use of all these details in the portrayal of the new earth and new Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER 3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT FROM PROPHETIC TO APOCALYPTIC

The apocalyptic literature arose in Israel as a crisis-management endeavour to reassure and strengthen the Jews by instilling in them a strong faith that God would intervene to vindicate them and punish their oppressors. The traumatic experience of the exile which had the most profound effect on the thought patterns and lifestyle of the people had to be countered with equally strong and effective message of consolation and rehabilitation. The prophets had to speak with a totally different diction and tenor. Their style of speaking and writing, naturally, underwent a dramatic change: the prophetic preaching was transformed into apocalyptic writing. In order to put this significant transformation in perspective, it is necessary to examine three major periods of Israelite history: the late pre-exilic, the exilic and the post-exilic.

The Late Pre-exilic Period (640-587 BC): The late pre-exilic period is characterised by two important events: the prophetic revival inspired by Jeremiah and the Deuteronomic reform spearheaded by Josiah.

The Prophetic Revival: The death of Ashurbanipal (668-633 BC) sounded the death knell of the mighty Assyrian empire. His successors could not arrest the death and destruction unleashed by the invaders: the Scythians from the north, the Medes from the southeast and the Babylonians from the southwest. This tumultuous political upheaval is sounded in the preaching of the prophets Zephaniah (640-630), Nahum (663-612) and Jeremiah (627-587). They reintroduced the theme of the 'day of the Lord' first heard about a century ago. Amos (786-746 BC) had announced it as a day of 'darkness and not light' (5:18) and Isaiah (783-687), as that day when men will 'hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord' (2:10-11). Zephaniah relates it to widespread destruction (1:1-3). Nahum calls it a day of salvation to Judah (1:12-13; 2:2) but of complete destruction to the enemies of Judah (1:8-10; 2:8ff). This note of God destroying all His adversaries became a key theme among the apocalyptists. They announced cosmic wars and the

establishment of Yahweh's universal rule.

Another important development during this period was the antiquarian interest. Nebuchadnezzar (604-562 BC) used the long-discontinued script and language of early Babylonia for some of the royal inscriptions. Nabonidus (556-539 BC) attempted to revive the primitive cult and ritual while in Egypt, the kings of the 26th Dynasty (660-525) tried to recapture the glory of the Pyramid Age (2800-2400 BC). This interest in the ancient personages and events is also reflected in the apocalyptic writings.

Jeremiah who exercised a tremendous influence on the apocalyptists, was, in many ways, the opposite of the apocalyptic. The "I" is predominant in his discourses; the apocalyptists, on the other hand, assumed fictitious names. Jeremiah dealt with individual persons and particular events; the apocalyptists assumed cosmic dimensions:

a thousand thousands served him,

and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him (Dan 7:10b).

But it was his insistence on the cosmic effect of Judah's sins that became a take off for the apocalyptic writing. The following lines give a graphic description of the cosmic desolation:

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;

and to the heavens, and they had no light.

I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,

and all the hills moved to and fro.

I looked, and lo, there was no man,

and all the birds of the air had fled.

I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,

and all its cities were laid in ruins

before the Lord, before his fierce anger. (Jer 4:23-26)

He also speaks of God as the creator of the whole universe:

It is he who made the earth by his power,
who established the world by his wisdom,
and by his understanding stretched out the heavens. (Jer 10:12)

The second factor in Jeremiah's preaching to exercise considerable influence on the apocalypstists was his recognition of individual responsibility:

In those days they shall no longer say:

'The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on edge.'

But every one shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes,
his teeth shall be set on edge. (Jer 31:29-30)

and that it was not enough to be an Israelite to inherit God's blessing:

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke,.. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:31-34)

The same idea appears in Ezekiel also (Ez 18:2; 36:26; 37:26).

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. (Ez 36:26-27)

Of course, the treatment of this subject differed with the apocalyptic writers but they did insist upon the involvement of the whole universe in the new creation.¹

Finally, unfulfilled prophecies too had a major impact on the development of the apocalyptic. The 'seventy years' (Jer 25:12; 29:10) occur repeatedly in apocalyptic works (Zech 1:12; 7:2, Dan 9:2; Enoch 85-90) and is a source of quandary and speculation. The apocalyptists sought to look more deeply into the book of divine secrets when the fulfilment was delayed.

Josiah's Deuteronomic Reform: The "Book of the Law" (Deuteronomy) was discovered in the Temple in 621 BC. Josiah's religious reform was based on this book. Hence, the epithet 'deuteronomic'. This reform had political overtones. It amounted to an assertion of independence from Assyria. It was in the 'eighth year of his reign,' (632) i.e., just one year after the death of Ashurbanipal, that Josiah 'began to seek the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the graven and the molten images...' (2 Chr 34:3ff). The same account is also found in 2 Kings chs 22-23.

Three characteristic features of the deuteronomic movement, clearly evident in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, reappear in the apocalyptic writings: a theology of history, an actualisation of the past and a strong antipathy to the Jerusalem Zadokite priesthood.

The deuteronomic theology may be summed up as sin - punishment - repentance - deliverance. Israelites were to worship Yahweh and shun other gods.

But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good." And the people said to

Joshua, "Nay; but we will serve the Lord." Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." He said, "Then put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel." And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey." So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. (Jos 24:19-24)

But the people broke the covenant and incurred God's anger.

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were round about them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord, and served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them; and he sold them into the power of their enemies round about, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them; and they were in sore straits (Jgs 2:11-15).

The same theme is repeated in 2 Kings: Ahaz did what was evil in the sight of the Lord (ch 17). The chs 27-28 of the book of Deuteronomy has a summary of blessings and curses associated with the fidelity and infidelity to Yahweh.

"And if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, he Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your beasts, the increase of your cattle, and

the young of your flock. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out..." (Deut 28:1-14)

"But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle, and the young of your flock. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out..." (Deut 28:15-68)

But whenever the people repented and cried out to the Lord, he delivered them from the hands of their oppressors.

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them. Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them. (Jgs 2:16,18)

A similar pattern is discernible in the apocalyptic literature. The apocalyptic style of curses and blessings is reflected in Jesus' eschatological discourse in Matthew chs 23-25, too.

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves... You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth ... O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!..." (Mt 23:13- 39).²

The deuteronomic penchant to view the present as the actualisation of the the past is reflected in the interpretation of the immediate event of salvation as the renewal of the Sinai Covenant.

And Moses summoned all Israel, and said to them, "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your hearing this day, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day (Deut 5:1-5).

The various 'statutes and ordinances' of the past are concrete acts of help from God (Deut 1:21,31; 4:1-8; 8:1-5); God is awesome and inscrutable (Deut 4:32-36; 5:22-24; 10:14,21) but nothing is so mysterious as his goodness and love (Deut 4:31,37; 6:4-12; 7:6-9; 10:15). The apocalyptists lacked this tenderness but insisted on the awesome presence of God; they spoke of the transformation of the world into the promised paradise and saw it as the renewal of the past salvific acts.

Finally, the antagonistic attitude of the deuteronomic movement toward the Jerusalem priesthood has left its stamp on the apocalyptic spirit and style. Josiah, in his efforts to renew the religious life of Judah, made use of the legislation, traditions and personnel of the kingdom of Israel. In keeping with the liberal tendencies of Deuteronomy, he wanted to open the priesthood to the levites.

"The Levitical priests, that is, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings by fire to the Lord, and his rightful dues... For the Lord your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons forever. And if a levite comes from any of your towns out of all Israel,... then he may minister in the name of the Lord his God, like all his fellow levites who stand to minister there before the Lord."
(Deut 18:1-7)

But Ezekiel, Zechariah and other early representatives of the apocalyptic movement, being the members

of the Zadokite priesthood of Jerusalem - Solomon had replaced Abiathar with Zadok (I Kgs 2:27,35) - opposed it.

"But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment... They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my sacred things and the things that are most sacred... But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me; and they shall attend to me to offer me the fat and the blood, says the Lord God; they shall enter my sanctuary, and they shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge." (Ez 44:10, 13, 15-17)

After 250 BC, however, the apocalyptic movement no longer found leadership among the Jerusalem priests who became more and more conservative. But Pharisees (a lay group advocating rigorous legalism originated about 140 BC) and the Qumran community continued the apocalyptic beliefs in angels, cosmic war and world transformation.³

The Exilic Period (587-539 BC): In exile, with nothing but the word of God (Torah) and the threat of the persecuted prophets, the people took a hard look at their past. Their realistic and genuine reflection echoes in the writings of Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah.

Ezekiel: Both in the first part of his book, where his prophetic office predominates (ch 1-24, 33-37), and the last part, the priestly concern is more manifest (ch 40-48), Ezekiel speaks, acts, and writes as an apocalypticist: the enigmatic vagueness of his style, the juxtaposition of the weird signs and symbols, the angelic mediators explaining the visions and the theme of astounding reversal from total destruction to complete renewal are striking.

Ezekiel not only spoke but also acted enigmatically. In his actions, he himself was "a sign for the house of Israel"(Ez 4:2, 12:6,11; 24:24,27).

"In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face, that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel... Say, 'I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.'"

(Ez 12:6,11)

He cut his hair, burnt one-third of it, kept another third within the city and struck it with a sword, and let the rest be scattered by the wind (ch 5). These curious actions performed in silence became all the more terrifying when explained : "This is Jerusalem !" (Ez 5:5)

Ezekiel's style of writing, too, is predominantly apocalyptic. He clothes his ideas in the imagery of very ancient, sacred traditions: In chapter 1 he uses the 'Cherubim' tradition of Genesis (3:24) and Exodus (37:7) but the description here is elaborate and frightening; even Noah, Daniel and Job, the righteous trio would not be able to help others during the time of desolation (14:12ff); the creation story of Gen 2:2-3:24 finds its overtones in Ez 28:11-19; Ezekiel prophesies against Gog of Magog (38:1- 39:6).⁴

What made Ezekiel change his apocalyptic style of action into the apocalyptic form of writing ? We can discern two compelling causes of this change: influence of the visions of the earlier prophets and his own ecstatic experience. Amos had a series of visions accompanying his commissioning: of locusts (7:1-3); of fire (7:4-6); of the plummet (7:7-9); of the fruit basket (8:4-14) and of the altar (9:1-6). So did Isaiah. He saw the heavenly court (ch 6). Secondly, Ezekiel's visions described in chs 1-3, 8-11, and 37 must have had a tremendous influence on him.

Ezekiel as a priest of Jerusalem exercised considerable influence on the apocalyptic literature. War

between Yahweh and his world-wide enemies is a theme common to both ancient liturgy and the apocalyptic literature. The ancient liturgy presided over by the priests celebrated Yahweh's victory in liturgical settings, as depicted in psalms (Ps 7:6-9; 9:5-8; 18; 82; 93; 95, etc.)

Thou hast rebuked the nations, thou hast destroyed the wicked;
thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever.

The enemy have vanished in everlasting ruins;
their cities thou hast rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.

But the Lord sits enthroned forever,
he has established his throne for judgement;
and he judges the world with righteousness,
he judges the people with equity. (Ps 9:5-8)

The apocalyptists envisaged an eschatological struggle between good and evil, conducted almost in terms of a liturgical ceremony, with the final victory centered in Jerusalem. The books of Zechariah and Joel clearly bring out this phenomenon (Zech 2:5-9; 3:1-10; 4:1-3, 11-14; 8; 9:8,9-10; 12-14).

'...For I will be to her a wall of fire round about, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within her.'

Ho! ho! Flee from the land of the north, says the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, says the Lord. Ho! Escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon. For thus said the Lord of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye: "Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them..." (Zech 2:5-9)

"And in that day
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and the hills shall flow with milk,

and all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water;
and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord
and water the valley of Shittim..." (Joel 3:18-21)

These struggles are often described in mythological terms. The post-exilic Jews were narrow-minded and chauvinistic.

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to the Lord, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, "Let us build with you; for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who brought us here." But Zerubabel, Joshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses in Israel said to them, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." (Ezra 4:1-5)

It must have been Ezekiel's use of mythological allusions - cherubim (chs 1-3), garden of Eden (28:11-19) and the giants of primeval age (chs 38-39) that gave legitimacy to the use of mythological elements in the apocalyptic literature without any eyebrows being raised. Ezekiel was also instrumental in the continuity of the P tradition of the Pentateuch - scholars see a definite Ezekielian touch in the closing chapter of Leviticus (ch 26). This factor is important because the abundant use of Pentateuch in apocalyptic literature: the creation story, names of pre and post-diluvian patriarchs, the disappearance of Enoch, the universal covenant replacing the Sinai covenant and the tables of nations are the apocalyptists' favourites.

Deutero-Isaiah: The influence of Deutero-Isaiah (chs 40-55) on the post-exilic thought does not seem to be great, though he is the other great prophet of the exile. It may be due to the nonrealisation of his utopian dreams or his too great demands on the faith of the people.

He heralds the glorious salvation:

A voice cries:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up,

and every mountain and hill be made low;

the uneven ground shall become level

and the rough places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,

and all flesh shall see it together,

for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Is 40:3-5)

He announces that the kingdom of God is at hand:

Get you up to a high mountain,

O Zion, herald of good tidings;

lift up your voice with strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,

lift it up, fear not;

say to the cities of Judah,

"Behold your God!" (Is 40:9)

He asserts that it is the poor and the lowly, rather than the Davidic family, who will have the prominent place in the new restored kingdom (Is 42:6-7; 43:1-7; 55:3-5).

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
When you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour,
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honoured, and I love you,
I give men in return for you,
peoples in exchange for your life.
Fear not, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
I will say to the north, Give up,
and to the south, Do not withhold;
bring my sons from afar
and my daughters from the end of the earth,
every one who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made." (Is 43:1-7)

He sees every divine promise as on the point of fulfilment. Thus, he praises God for his justice
(Is 41:2,16; 42:6)

"I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations." (Is 42:6)

From his opening statement (Is 40:5,8) to his final conclusion (Is 55:10-11), he dwells at length on the invincible power of the divine word. Note the effectiveness of the imagery.

"... And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand for ever. (Is 40:5,8)

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and return not thither but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Is 55:10-11)

Finally look at this passage.

But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me,
my Lord has forgotten me."

"Can a woman forget her suckling child,
that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?

Even these may forget,

yet I will not forget you.

Behold, I have graven you on the palm of my hands;

your walls are continually before me....

Kings shall be your foster fathers,

and their queens your nursing mothers.

With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you,

and lick the dust of your feet." (Is 49:14-16,23)

The people are in the exile. They are reduced to slavery. And the prophet wants them to believe that Yahweh loves them, cares for them, salvation is at hand and that they are on top of the world. What a demand to make!

But many of the apocalyptic features appear in his writing. According to him, the secrets of the eschatological age are first spoken in the divine assembly of Yahweh and his angels. They then echo upon the earth so that the prophet may hear them. He hears Yahweh commanding his angels to carry the good tidings to his people:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,

and cry for her

that her warfare is ended,

that her iniquity is pardoned,

that she has received from the Lord's hand

double for all her sins. (Is 40:1-2)

Yahweh is supreme in his majesty and his wisdom surpasses all. This is explained with reference to the majesty and mystery of creation (Is 40:10,12-24).

Behold, the Lord God comes in might,

and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him. (Is 40:10)

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance ? (Is 40:12)

Yahweh possesses fullness of life; knows every secret of earthly events; no one can know his ways.

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary,
his understanding is unsearchable. (Is 40:28)

It is Yahweh who destroys and recreates: he caused the exile; he will also effect a complete renewal, new creation.

"Your first father sinned,
and your mediators transgressed against me.

Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary,
I delivered Jacob to utter destruction
and Israel to reviling." (Is 43: 27-28)

"Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.

Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Is 43:18-19)

The new creation is described in mythological language. It is seen as the victory of Yahweh over other gods:

Bel bows down, Nebo stoops, ...

They stoop, they bow down together,

they cannot save the burden,

but themselves go into captivity. (Is 46:1-2)

This utter defeat of the gods makes the prophet turn to the theme of Yahweh as creator again and again (40:28; 41:20; 42:5; 45:6-7)

Have you not known ? Have you not heard ?

The Lord is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary,

his understanding is unsearchable. (Is 40:28)

These factors, viz., the theme of the 'day of the Lord', with its terror and hopes, involving both Jews and Gentiles; the anticipation of a new covenant as fulfilling, even surpassing, the Mosaic covenant; the actualisation of history as found in deuteronomistic tradition; the opposition to Zadokite priesthood; Ezekiel's signs and symbols along with uncanny visions, and his role in the continuity of the P tradition; Deutero-Isaiah's vision of battle among gods, with Yahweh as the supreme creator who accomplishes his designs with his omnipotent word falling on earth from the heavenly council resulted in the emergence of a new form under the traumatic exilic experience; the crucible of the exile gave rise to a new literary genre.

The Post-exilic Age (BC 539 onward) : Post-exilic thinking strengthened this new movement further by incorporating in it such features as weird symbolism, unearthly and cosmic visualisation, reference to

antiquity as well as announcement of imminent eschatological age. This period may be divided into two parts: the Persian age and the Hellenistic age.

The Persian Age (539-332 BC): The Persian age has a threefold influence on the apocalyptic movement: an anti-Gentile spirit, end of prophetism and the eschatological psalms. The post-exilic Jewish community was intolerant towards its neighbours. This exclusiveness is depicted in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. They did not want their help even in building the temple.

"You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord..."
(Ezra 4:3).

Ezra prohibited mixed marriages; he commanded the people to send the 'foreign women' away.

"Now then make confession to the Lord the God of your fathers, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives." (Ezra 10:11)

"In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab ... And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women...?" (Neh 13:23-26)

About BC 351 the Jews revolted against Persia. Artaxerxes III Ochus (358-338 BC) put down this mutiny with severity. During this period we find anti-Gentile apocalyptic outbursts from Isaiah (ch 24-27), Ezekiel (ch 38-39), Trito-Isaiah (63:1-6), Obadiah, Zechariah (ch 9-12) and Joel.

"I have trodden the wine press alone,
and from the peoples no one was with me;
I trod them in my anger
and trampled them in my wrath;
their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments,

and I have stained all my raiment.

For the day of vengeance was in my heart,

and my year of redemption has come.

I looked, but there was no one to help;

I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold;

so my own arm brought me victory,

and my wrath upheld me.

I trod down the peoples in my anger,

I made them drunk in my wrath,

and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth." (Is 63:3-6)

The last prophecy we hear is that of Malachi (c 460 BC). But he is subservient to the Jerusalem priest and his hopes centre around the Temple. Even Haggai and Zechariah who prophesied about 80 years earlier too were similar in this respect (Zech ch 3-5). Formerly, the prophets braved the wrath of the priests to announce God's judgement but no more is the case. The prophets have clearly 'degenerated' into apocalyptic visionaries. Prophecy is dead, as the author of I Maccabees poignantly admits (I Mac 4:46; 9:27; 14:41).

So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them. (4:46)

Ezekiel, too, records the demise of prophetism; and so does the author of the book of Lamentations.

Disaster comes upon disaster, rumour follows rumour; they seek a vision from the prophet, but the law perishes from the priest, and counsel from the elders. (Ez 7:26)

Her gates have sunk into the ground;

he has ruined and broken her bars;

her king and princes are among the nations;

the law is no more,
and her prophets obtain
no vision from the Lord. (Lam 2:9)

The eschatological Psalms such as Psalms 95-98 do not refer Davidic line but proclaim Yahweh's universal kingship.

The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!
Clouds and thick darkness are round about him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
Fire goes before him,
and burns up his adversaries round about.
His lightnings lighten the world;
the earth sees and trembles.
The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,
before the Lord of all the earth. (Ps 97:1-5)

In short, the Persian period continues in the Ezekielian framework as far as the apocalyptic style is concerned. The priestly domination continues. The external observance of laws becomes very important: circumcision, Sabbath observance, fasting, and following dietary laws are considered the mark of a true Jew. They thought that as the result of the faithful observance of these laws, God will make Jerusalem the world capital; and through the outpouring of the spirit, he will shake the earth and thus fulfill all the ancient promises. Extravagant symbolism is generally employed as, for instance, in Zechariah Chs 1-6.

The Hellenistic Age (332 BC-63 AD): During this period, Judaism separated itself into two principal groups, groups which were at each other's throat: the Jerusalem priesthood, later to be known as the

Sadducees, and a fervent lay sect, later to be called the Pharisees. The latter believed in resurrection and retribution after death which found expression in the apocalyptic literature (2 Mac 7; Dan 12:1-3).

"... you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life..." (2 Mac 7:9)

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan 12:2)

It took another century and a half for the apocalyptic form to break free from the parameters set by Ezekiel and establish itself in a transcendent extravaganza of symbolism. Only an occasion of violence could explain such a forward thrust in imagery and expression found in Daniel ch 7-12. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BC), the Seleucid ruler, tried to force the Jews in Palestine to abandon their ancient religious and cultural practices and adhere to the common pagan worship of the realm. The popular resistance to this attempt resulted in a bloody persecution, ultimately leading to the Jewish revolt as depicted in the 1-2 Maccabees. The chapters written between 168 and 164 to encourage the Jews to remain faithful to their religion consist of four apocalypses. The literary style employed in these chapters manifests clearly the spirit and features of the apocalyptic form: surreal imagery, explanations of heavenly secrets by angels, battle between superhuman forces of good and evil, expectation of a sudden and glorious breakthrough of the heavenly kingdom, attribution of the writing to an ancient person (here, Daniel of the Babylonian exile).

Thus we see that apocalyptic is an exilic and post-exilic development of prophetic style. The continuity with Biblical prophecy is evident in the apocalyptic literature. It has been said that the apocalyptic was really an attempt to rationalise and systematise the predictive aspect of prophecy. To a certain extent it may be called the 'heir of prophecy'.⁵ Like the prophets, the apocalypists see in the unfolding of history a purpose. The evil in the world may confound and confuse man but the divine will cannot

be frustrated; the present ungodly phase and the consequent trials and tribulations will be replaced by the just and righteous rule of God established after vanquishing the evil forces and their agents. There are, however, significant variations: of message and of method. The prophet thought in terms of the 'here and now'. His message, more often than not, is a cry against social, economic, or political injustice; a summon to shun evil and do justice, to obey God and do away with idols. To him it was the present world and the present system that had to be reformed and refined; it was in this world that God's kingdom would come and His will would ultimately be done. He was a man of history. He believed that God worked out His designs and accomplished His plans in and through the various persons and events of history. The prophet was an optimist. He condemned the present injustice in the harshest and sternest unequivocal terms but always believed that if the people concerned heeded to his warnings and mended their ways, the catastrophe would not befall them or the present hardships would pass away. Hence, he constantly attempted to reform and renew the present set up all the while hoping that a change of heart and a change of ways were possible. The apocalypticist, on the other hand, was fully convinced that the present world was so corrupt that it was beyond reform, beyond redemption; no mending was ever possible. He, therefore, looked forward not to the recreation of the present world but to its complete destruction and the creation of a new world. In this sense, we may call him a pessimist, one who saw no cure to the present ailments, the gangrene affecting the present world having too far advanced. Yet, we must concede that he did not despair for he knew that the new age of unlimited blessedness was sure to come. The prophet received his message directly from the deity in the form of an oracle and, to a large extent, communicated it orally, the written form being later codification. On the contrary, the apocalypticist received his message in the form of a revelation and conveyed it in writing. The *raison d'être* of the apocalyptic being a literary production is not difficult to understand. The prophetic message was in plain speech and direct so that the people who saw or heard the prophet understood what he did or spoke then and there. But the apocalyptic, frequently expressed through the fabric of elaborate visions and revelations full of obscure images and weird symbols, required serious study and reflection to comprehend it. Further, the prophet

generally spoke in his own name but the apocalypticist, for the most part, had recourse to pseudonymity: attributing his work to a person of antiquity, like Daniel, Enoch, Ezra, Baruch, Noah, Moses, the Twelve Patriarchs, etc., to give authority and dignity to the message contained in his work and to review the past history as future.

The Canonical and the Non-Canonical Apocalypses

The apocalyptic literary form flourished between c 200 BC and 100 AD. Numerous apocalypses appeared during this period. The canons of the Old Testament and the New Testament were still open then. But, for some reason, not more than one each found its way into the canons of the Old Testament and of the New Testament : the Book of Daniel and the Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), respectively. Nevertheless, in both the sections, we find important passages of the apocalyptic genre (Ez 40-48; Is 24-27, 34-35, 56-66; Zech 9-14; Mk 13; Mt 24; Lk 21; I Thes 4; and I Cor 15).

Many of those that did not find official acceptance as sacred scripture seem to have been lost or perished. The following list of the extant apocalypses and testaments containing apocalyptic sections will give us an idea of the popularity this genre enjoyed. Though the bulk of the literature was produced between 200 BC and 100 AD, it retained its appeal much longer. We have compositions well up to the 9th century AD, sporadic though. The Old Testament Apocalypses available are:

1 Enoch or The Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch (2nd cent.BC to 1st cent.BC)

2 Enoch or The Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch (late 1st century AD)

Sibylline Oracles (2nd century BC to 7th century AD)

The Treatise of Shem (1st century BC)

The Apocryphon of Ezekiel (1st century BC to 1st century AD)

The Apocalypse of Zephaniah (1st century BC to 1st century AD)

The Fourth Book of Ezra (late 1st century AD)

The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra (2nd to 9th century AD)

The Vision of Ezra (4th to 7th century AD)

The Questions of Ezra (date unknown)

The Revelation of Ezra (before 9th century AD)

The Apocalypse of Sedrach (2nd to 5th century AD)

2 Baruch or The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (early 2nd century AD)

3 Baruch or The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (1st to 3rd century AD)

The Apocalypse of Abraham (1st to 2nd century AD)

The Apocalypse of Adam (1st to 4th century AD)

The Apocalypse of Elijah (1st to 4th century AD)

The Apocalypse of Daniel (9th century AD)

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (2nd century BC)

The Testament of Job (1st century BC to 1st century AD)

The Testaments of the Three Patriarchs

Testament of Abraham (1st to 2nd century AD)

Testament of Isaac (2nd century AD)

Testament of Jacob (2nd to 3rd century AD)

The Testament of Moses (1st century AD)

The Testament of Solomon (1st to 3rd century AD)

The Testament of Adam (2nd to 5th century AD)

In the New Testament times we have apocalypses ascribed to two Jamses, the Virgin Mary, Paul, Peter, Philip, Stephen, and Thomas. Only the Apocalypse of Peter (written in 125-150 AD) won any significant acceptance and importance, probably owing to its vivid description of the punishment of the wicked.

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 4. According to Gen 10:2, Magog was the son of Japheth, a descendant of Noah.
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CHAPTER 4 A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

The apocalyptic literary genre, as we have seen, was born in the exilic and post-exilic Judaism and an abundance of apocalyptic literature was produced from about 200 BC to about 200 AD in the Judeo-Christian world. But only a few found official recognition and were accepted as canonical.

The Canonical Apocalyptic Literature

The Old Testament contains only one apocalypse : the Book of Daniel. The New Testament adds one more: The Apocalypse (also known as the Book of Revelation). These were selected from numerous apocalypses that were popular during the time when the canons of the Old Testament and the New Testament were still open. Both canons, however, contain important apocalyptic sections, viz., Ezekiel chs 40-48; Isaiah chs 24-27, 34-35, 56-66; Zechariah chs 9-14; Mark ch 13; Matthew ch 24; Luke ch 21; 1 Thessalonians ch 4; 1 Corinthians ch 15).

The Book of Daniel

The title of the book does not indicate its author but its protagonist who is presented as living in Babylon during the reign of the last king of the Neo-Babylonian empire and their first successors, viz., the early kings of the Medes and the Persians, which covers most of the 6th cent. BC. The book has 14 chapters. The first six chapters contain six edifying stories about the protagonist and his three companions at the Babylonian court: the food test (1:1-21); Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the composite statue (2:1- 49); Daniel's companions in the fiery furnace (3:1-97); Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great tree (3:98-4:34); the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast (5:1-6:1); and Daniel in the lion's den (6:2-29). The next six chapters record four apocalypses which Daniel was granted in symbolic images concerning the four successive kingdoms which the Jews lived in from the time of the Babylonian conquest of Judea until God established their own kingdom: the four beasts (7:1-28); the ram and the he-goat (8:1-27);

the interpretation of the 70 weeks (9:1-27); the revelations of the Hellenistic wars (10:1-12:13). The first two consist primarily of symbolic visions explained to the seer by an angel; the other two are direct revelations to him by an angel without the symbolic camouflage. The last two chapters deal with Daniel's exploits: Daniel's rescue of the chaste Susanna (13:1-64); Daniel and the priests of Bel (14:1-22); and the destruction of the dragon by Daniel (14:23-42).

The close relationship between apocalypticism and Biblical prophecy is quite evident in chapter 7 of Daniel which composed at the height of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes IV unfolds the central vision of the book: the four beasts rising from the sea and one like a son of man riding on the clouds. This imagery is indebted to the myth of God's battle with the sea monster (Is 27:1; 51:9-11). In the Canaanite version of the myth, Baal who vanquishes the sea is depicted as riding on the clouds. The idea of a cosmic battle is a very prominent theme among the apocalyptists. Further, four other characteristics clearly sets the book of Daniel apart as apocalyptic. They are (i) the use of the expression 'son of man' to refer to a divine saviour, which is employed in later apocalypses (1 Enoch chs 37-71; 4 Ezra ch 13 and the ascription of the title to Jesus); (ii) the prominence accorded to angels (8:15; 9:21; 10:18,21; 12:1,6-7): revelation mediated by an angel through interpretation of a vision (chs 7 and 8), interpretation of scripture (ch 9), or direct speech (chs 10-12); (iii) the review of history (ch 11 recounts the Hellenistic history accurately down to Antiochus Epiphanes IV) - such a phenomenon is a characteristic feature of the apocalyptic genre (1 Enoch chs 85-90; 91:11-17; 93); (iv) the affirmation of life after death (resurrection) in unequivocal terms (12:1-3).

The Book of Ezekiel (chs 38-39; 40-48)

Ezekiel after whom the book is named began his ministry in 593 BC in Babylonia among the Judean exiles (1:2). His last prophecy is in the year 571 BC (29:17). He must have been one of the 8000 captives Nebuchadnezzar carried to Babylon in 598 BC after the fall of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:16). It appears that

the bulk of his ministry took place between 593 and 586 BC, viz., during the reign of king Zedekiah (last king of Judah who ruled between 597 and 587 BC) and the devastation that followed the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The book of Ezekiel is remarkable among the prophetic books in that it combines prophetic oracles with judicial reflections, prosaic narratives with poetic descriptions, elaborate historical accounts with highly imaginative mythical allusions, sober judgement with grotesque visions, verbose discourses with vivid dramatic presentation as no other prophet does. The book has 48 chapters, divided into 3 sections by scholars, in terms of the 3 stages in the prophet's ministry: oracles of judgement (chs 1-24); oracles against foreign nations (chs 25-32); and oracles of salvation (chs 33-48). The last section has two parts: promise of a new exodus and conquest of the land, viz., return from the exile (chs 33-39), and a new division of the land and rebuilding of the holy city (chs 40-48).

The chs 38-39 contain the prophecy against Gog. They describe in fantastic terminology, like Joel 4, the vengeance of God against nations. A cosmic battle in which all adversaries of God would be completely destroyed features prominently in all apocalyptic works. The Apocalypse makes use of this imagery from Ezekiel (Ap 19:17-21; 20:8-10).

The chs 40-48 depict the vision of the glorious restoration of Jerusalem. Ezekiel is guided by a mediating angel in this vision. The vision begins with Ezekiel's guided tour of the new Temple and the description of the return of God's glory (40:1-43:12). It is followed by a detailed account of the cultic requirements to be adhered to in the Temple, similar to the ordinances in the book of Leviticus (43:13-46:24). Then the seer is given a vision of the stream of water issuing forth from the Temple (47:1-12). The vision of the restored Jerusalem ends with the delineation of the division of land in the new city (47:13-48:35).

The Book of Isaiah (chs 24-27; 34-35; 56-66)

Isaiah received his call to prophesy 'in the year King Uzziah died' (6:1), i.e., in 742 B.C, shortly after

Tiglathpileser III (745-727) acceded to the throne of Assyria. His ministry lasted during the reign of Shalmaneser V (726-722), Sargon II (721-705), and Sennacherib (704-681) in Assyria and Ahaz (735-715) and Hezekiah (715-687) in Judah. The book of Isaiah consists of 66 chapters. The material clearly indicates that it is not the work of one author nor of one period: the content, outlook, and the style differ widely. The scholars have pointed out that chapters 1-39 belong to the pre-exilic period; chapters 44-55, to the exilic period; and chapters 56-66, to the post-exilic period. Hence they are called Proto-Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Trito-Isaiah, respectively. The chs 24-27 known as the 'Apocalypse of Isaiah' depict in vivid imagery the final end of the earth. Though these chapters are made up of oracles and do not employ the apocalyptic genre (accounts of visions or heavenly journeys), the perspective and themes encompassed therein like the punishment of cosmic powers, the final destruction of death, and the resurrection of the dead are apocalyptists' favourites. The vivid poetic description of the destruction of earth (24:1-20) is followed by that of Yahweh's triumph. The vengeance is pronounced on cosmic powers: the heavenly hosts (24:21-22) and the monsters of the sea (27:1). After defeating the heavenly hosts, Yahweh is enthroned as king on Mt Zion (24:22-23). A hymn to Yahweh follows (25:1-5). Then there is a divine banquet on Mt Zion in celebration of the victory over death (25:6-10). A song entreating divine protection concludes this section (26:1-21). The apocalypse ends with the pronouncement of weal of the people of God (27:2-13).

In chs 34-35 is presented the judgement on Edom and the joy of the people of God saved from their enemies. Edom, one of Judah's enemies, located across the Dead Sea serves as a paradigm of a general slaughter of all the nations together with an end to the heavens and their armies of stars (34:1-17). The imagery of the flowering of the southern desert (35:1-10) indicates the salvation of the people in terms of a new creation from the ruins.

Trito-Isaiah (chs 56-66)

After depicting a struggle between the faithful and the false leaders (56:1-59:21), the author goes on to present the glorious new Zion (60:1- 62:12), and a complete new creation - the new heaven and new earth (63:1- 66:16).

The Book of Zechariah (chs 9-14)

Zechariah is the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo (1:1,7). The book of Nehemiah includes Iddo among the priests who returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile (Neh 12:4). In Ezra we read that 'Zechariah son of Iddo' exhorted the people to build the Temple (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Again Nehemiah refers to Zechariah as the head of the priestly clan of Iddo (Neh 12:6). He exercised his ministry from 520 BC (1:1) to the beginning of the following century (Neh 12:16).

The book of Zechariah has 14 chapters. There is general agreement among the scholars that chs 1-8 and chs 9-14 cannot be the work of the same prophet. The oracles in the latter manifest an eschatology in apocalyptic overtones: they are less directly concerned with contemporary historical events but exhibit more interest in a future salvation in mythical tone. The oracles in chapters 9-11 refer to God as a warrior taking the side of his people (9:1-8); to God as King of peace (9:9-10); to the Divine Warrior leading His people to victory (9:11-17); to abusers of confidence (10:1- 3); to God's victorious followers (10:3-12); to destruction of Lebanon and Bashan (11:1-3); and to bad shepherds and bad flocks (11:4-17). The last three chapters are made up mostly of eschatological oracles, introduced by the formula 'on that day' with the dominant theme of 'the destruction of all nations that come against Jerusalem'. They deal with the victorious Jerusalem (12:1-9); mourning and cleansing in Jerusalem (12:10-13:1); removal of idols and prophets (13:2-6); the sorting of shepherd and flock (13:7-9); and trial and exaltation of Jerusalem (14:1-21).

The Book of the Apocalypse

As we have seen, in the book of the Apocalypse, it is God who gives the revelation to Jesus Christ to be shown through an angel to his servant John who is in exile on the island of Patmos in order that John may become his seer and prophet to the church. John is to write down what he has seen, what is, and what is to come.

After this introduction the book continues first as a series of seven letters to the seven churches in the province of Asia, and to the whole church. The letters sent by Christ through John (chs 2-3) exhort, comfort, or censure the churches in accordance with their condition under persecution or danger of heresy.

From chapter 4, there are series of visions in three main cycles (seals: chs 6-7; trumpets: chs 8-10; and bowls: chs 15-16), each recapitulating and expanding the former in greater and clearer details. These visions are interspersed with the vision of God in His heavenly court, the visions of various catastrophe, the appearance of two witnesses and the glorious martyrs to spur the people to endurance, the victory of archangel Michael over the dragon (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb (Christ), the beasts (powers of emperor cult and false prophecy) leading the people astray, and the heavenly woman and her messianic son being protected by God from the dragon. The beasts then persecute the Christians. The second beast is a man identified by his number '666' (in a variant reading '616'). Then the judgement on the harlot Babylon (Rome), the victory of Christ over Antichrist and his followers followed by his thousand year reign with those who witnessed unto death, the loosening of Satan who is finally vanquished by fire from heaven along with the beasts, and the last judgement heralding a new heaven, a new earth, and the new Jerusalem are depicted.

The Gospel According to St Mark (ch 13)

There is no evidence in the Gospel that identifies its author. We know of a John Mark who was a companion of Paul (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5-13; 15:37-39; Col 4:10; Philem 24; 2 Tim 4:11). Peter also speaks of 'my son Mark' (I Pet 5:13). The book is traditionally ascribed to Mark, the interpreter of Peter, and placed in Rome after the death of Peter, c 64-67 AD.

The Gospel according to Mark is divided into 16 chapters. The author's intention in writing the book was to deepen the faith of the members of his community in Jesus so that they face the persecutions with courage and resist the temptation to embrace the worldly comforts. Hence, he shows them how the prophecies and traditions about the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus who died and rose again to give them a new hope.

The prologue (1:1-15) purports to identify Jesus as the 'coming one' in fulfilment of the OT prophecies. The rest of the Gospel may be divided into two equal parts. The first (1:16-8:21) depicts Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee. The second (8:22-16:20) describes his journey to Jerusalem (8:22-10:52), his teaching in Jerusalem (11:1-13:37); his passion and death (14:1- 15:47) and his resurrection, appearances, and ascension into heaven (16:1-20).

Jesus' final discourse in Jerusalem (13:1-37) is generally considered as a Jewish or Jewish-Christian apocalypse edited or adapted by Mark and ascribed to Jesus, containing some of Jesus' sayings notwithstanding. It begins with the prediction of the destruction of the Temple (13:2). It goes on to describe the beginning of sufferings (13:5-13); the great tribulation (13:14-23); the final triumph of the Son of Man (13:24-27); and exhorts the faithful to be vigilant and steadfast (13:28-37).

The Gospel According to St Matthew (chs 24-25)

The Gospel according to Matthew is a mature synthesis in Aramaic of the Gospel according to Mark and an early collection of Jesus' sayings. It contains the universally acclaimed Sermon on the Mount. The book is a Jewish-Christian in its outlook. The excommunication of Matthew's community by the rabbis of Jamnia in about 80 AD by a ban called 'birkat hamminim' seems to have had a major influence on its composition. The harsh polemics in ch 23 against the rabbis strengthens such an assumption. The rabbinic academy of Jamnia/Yavneh sat from about AD 75 to 90. Hence, we can reasonably situate the book between AD 80-90.

The book has 28 chapters: the genealogy and birth of Jesus (ch 1); the visit of the Magi, flight to Egypt, slaughter of the innocent, and return from Egypt (ch 2); the preaching of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus (ch 3); the temptation, beginning of Galilean ministry, and call of the first disciples (ch 4); the Sermon on the Mount (chs 4-7); Jesus' healing ministry (chs 5-9); mission of the twelve Apostles (ch 10); rejection of Jesus (chs 11-12); parables about the kingdom of God (ch 13); healing ministry with various teachings (chs 14-17); social teachings (ch 18); healing ministry, parables, and teachings (chs 19-22); woes and lament (ch 23); eschatological discourse (chs 24-25); suffering and death of Jesus (chs 26-27); resurrection and the commission to the Apostles (ch 28).

The eschatological discourse of Jesus is full of apocalyptic features. He pronounces woes against the scribes and Pharisees (23:1-36); laments over Jerusalem (23:37-39); predicts the destruction of the Temple (24:1-14); speaks of the coming of the Son of Man (24:29-31); gives the example of the fig tree (24:32-35); tells about the end of the world as on a day and an hour not known to anybody (24:36-44); exhorts to be vigilant for the coming of the Son of Man (24:45-50); and describes the last judgement in which all people would receive according to their acts of commission or omission (25:31-46).

The Gospel According to St Luke (ch 21)

Luke, the author of the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, was a Syrian from Antioch. His Gospel presupposes that the Jerusalem Temple had been destroyed (21:5-38). It does not mention anything about the persecution under Domitian (81-96) nor does it refer to the rift between the church and the synagogue after the decree of Jamnia. Therefore, it is reasonably presumed that the book must have been written about 80-85.

The Gospel according to Luke consists of 24 chapters: annunciation of the birth of John to Zechariah and of Jesus to Mary, the pronouncements of Elizabeth and Mary about Jesus' place in God's plan, the pronouncement of Zechariah of John's place in God's plan (ch 1); the pronouncement of the angel of the baby Jesus in the manger, the pronouncement of Zechariah of the baby Jesus brought to the Temple (ch 2); the preaching of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus (ch 3), Jesus' overcoming his temptations and his Galilean ministry (4:1-8:50); Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (8:51-19:27); Jesus in Jerusalem (19:28-21:38); the Last Supper, suffering and death (22:1-23:56); resurrection, promise of the Spirit, commissioning, and ascension (23:56-24:53).

As in Mk ch 13 and Mt chs 24-25, Lk ch 21, too, is clothed in apocalyptic imagery. Jesus exhorts his disciples to be steadfast (21:8-9); predicts cosmic disasters (21:10-11); foretells events that precede the end of the world: persecution of the Christians (21:12-19), and destruction of Jerusalem (21:20-24); again speaks of cosmic disasters (21:25-33); and exhorts his followers to be vigilant (21:34-36).

The First Letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians (4:13-5:11)

According to the Acts of the Apostles, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy came to Thessalonica, a port city in Macedonia, during Paul's Mission II. Paul's success in winning the Jews over to the new faith caused resentment among the Jews and they expelled them from the city. So, they came to Berea (Acts 17:1-

9). Due to the Jewish opposition in Berea, Paul had to move on to Athens (Acts 17:10-15). Later Silvanus and Timothy joined him there. Paul longed to visit Thessalonians but due to the strong opposition from the local Jewish population was unable to do so. He sent Timothy instead (I Thes 2:17-3:3) and moved on to Corinth. Timothy joined him there (Acts 18:5). Timothy's report of the Thessalonian community, the misunderstanding among them concerning the fate of the dead in particular (4:13), must have occasioned this letter. A majority of the Biblical scholars hold that this letter was written in 50 AD while a few date it a year later.

The I Letter to the Thessalonians contains five short chapters. The traditional salutation (1:1) followed by a lengthy thanksgiving (1:2-3:13) leads on to exhortation on chastity and on charity (4:1-12). Then we find Paul's eschatological discourse (4:13-5:11) followed by further exhortation to respect the order in the community (5:12-13) and assiduously carry out various functions (5:14:22). The letter ends with the final leavetaking (5:23-28).

It is the earliest written book of the NT and the eschatological expectation of the early Christian community, (4:13-5:11) couched in apocalyptic terminology bears ample proof of the popularity the genre enjoyed in the contemporary religious milieu. Paul uses this discourse allegedly to allay the fears of the Thessalonians and to clear some of their misconceptions with regard to the life after death. He speaks about the Parousia, that is, the Second Coming of Christ to judge the world (4:13-18) and the day of the Lord which will come like a thief in the night (5:1-11).

The First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (ch 15)

Paul himself informs us that he wrote this letter in the spring from Ephesus (16:8) but he does not mention the year. The suggested dates range from AD 52 to 57, and most scholars opt for the golden mean and suggest the spring of 54. The letter was written advising the Corinthians on a number of problems

they faced in their day to day life.

The letter is divided into 16 chapters. It begins with the typical Pauline greeting and thanksgiving (1:1-9). Then various issues are addressed: dissension and division in the community (1:10-4:21); sexual Immorality (5:1-6:20); marriage and sex (7:1-9); marriage and divorce (7:10-16); partaking of food offered to idols (8:1-11:1); the conduct of liturgical gatherings (11:2-14:40); the resurrection of the body (15:1-58). The conclusion includes an appeal to contribute to the church in Jerusalem (16:1-4); Paul's travel plans (16:5-9); recommendations regarding Timothy, Apollos, the household of Stephanos (16:10-18), and the final leavetaking (16:19-24).

On arguing about the fact and necessity of bodily resurrection (ch 15), Paul makes use of apocalyptic imagery. He postulates the creed of the Church (15:1-11); delineates the Corinthians thesis (15:12-19) and counters it with his own (15:20-28); puts forward arguments for resurrection (15:29- 34); describes the resurrected body (15:33-49); and dwells upon the need for transformation of the resurrected body (15:50-58). Mark the apocalyptic scenario in the last section:

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised, and we shall be changed... When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O death, where is thy victory?"

O death, where is thy sting?"

The Non-Canonical Apocalyptic Literature

Many of the apocalypses that did not find official acceptance as sacred scripture seem to have been lost

or perished. The following list of the extant apocalypses and testaments containing apocalyptic sections will give us an idea of the popularity this genre enjoyed. Though the bulk of the literature was produced between 200 BC and 100 AD, it retained its appeal much longer. We have compositions well up to the 9th century AD, sporadic though.

The Enoch Literature

The genealogy of Adam places Enoch in the seventh generation. He was the father of Methuselah, the grand father of Noah (Gen ch 5). He "walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Gen 5:24). This idea of God having taken him also appears in the book of Sirach (44:16; 49:14). The mysterious disappearance of Enoch produced legends about him and his life-span of 365 years caused astronomical speculations. There are three books attributed to Enoch : The Ethiopic Enoch (also known as 1 Enoch or simply Enoch); the Slavonic Enoch (or 2 Enoch) and the Hebrew Enoch (or 3 Enoch).

1 Enoch or the Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch (2nd cent. BC to 1st cent. BC)

1 Enoch is divided into five sections: The Book of Watchers (chs 1-36); The Book of Parables or Similitudes (chs 37-71); The Astronomical Book of the Heavenly Luminaries (chs 72-82); The Book of Dreams (chs 83-90); and The Epistle of Enoch (chs 91-108). The first section has an introduction (chs 1-5) which describes the eschatological era and the final judgement of the righteous and the wicked, and a narrative (chs 6-36) which portrays the fallen angels (6:1-4), their corruption of all men, Enoch's unsuccessful intercession on their behalf, a prediction of their doom, and Enoch's tour of the earth, sheol and heaven. The second section deals with the coming judgement of the righteous and the wicked; the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Righteous One, and the Elect One; the exposition of additional heavenly secrets; the measuring of Paradise; the resurrection of the righteous; and the punishment of the fallen angels. The third section concerns the reckoning of time by the sun, the nature of solar year of 364 days, and the cosmic disorders of the last days. The fourth section consists of two visions of future

history (from Enoch's antediluvian viewpoint) of the world and Israel: the coming of the deluge as punishment for sins, and the history of Israel from Adam to the Maccabees presented in symbolic imagery - oxen symbolise patriarchs; sheep, the faithful Israelites; beasts and birds of prey, the heathen oppressors of Israel; a great horned sheep, a rising Jewish leader; a white bull with great horns, the Messiah. There is also additional material on fallen angels, the throne of judgement, and the new Jerusalem. The fifth section recapitulates the theme of the spiritual blessedness of the righteous and the sorrowful end of the wicked. Woes are pronounced on the sinners who are repeatedly identified with the exploitative wealthy and oppressive powers. It has a summary of events that would unfold upon the earth during ten world weeks (91:12-17 and 93:1-10).

The 2 Enoch or the Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch (late 1st century AD)

2 Enoch is an amplification of Genesis 5:21-32: it covers events from the life of Enoch to the onset of the Flood. The first part (chs 1-68) depicts the journey of Enoch through the seven heavens and his return to his family to report what he saw. The second part (chs 69-73) deals briefly with the life of his descendants, Methuselah and Nir, and ends with the story of the birth and ascension of Melchizedek, just before the Flood.

The 3 Enoch or the Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch (5th to 6th cent AD)

3 Enoch is an account of R Ishmael's journey into heaven, his visions of God's throne and chariot, his receiving revelations from archangel Metatron, and his vision of the upper world. The book may be divided into four sections: The Ascension of Ishmael (chs 1-2); The Exaltation of Enoch (chs 3-16); The Heavenly Household (chs 17-40); and The Sights of Heaven (chs 41-48). The Ascension of Ishmael concerns Ishmael's prayer to God when challenged by the guardian angels at the gate of the seventh heaven; God's response in sending the angel Metatron; Ishmael's entry into seventh heaven with the help of Metatron; and his joining the angels in singing the sanctus. The Exaltation of Enoch consists of the

disclosure of the identity of Metatron as Enoch; his transfer from earth to heaven, his transformation in mind and body and his elevation above all angels; the description of his insignia and the heavenly duties he performs. The Heavenly Household portrays the organisation and the activities of the heavenly world: angelic hierarchies, a session of the heavenly assize, performance of the climactic act of the angelic liturgy - the recitation of the celestial sanctus. The Sights of Heaven contains the cosmological, eschatological and psychological marvels: the cosmological mysteries include the cosmic letters by which the universe was created, and the cosmic 'opposites' (such as fire and water) held in balance by the power of divine names; the eschatological secrets comprise of the whole course of human history from Adam to the coming of the Messiah represented on the curtain before God's face, and the right hand of God waiting for the appointed time of Israel's redemption; the psychological wonders consist of the souls of the righteous enjoying God's presence while those of the wicked in Sheol, the souls of the patriarchs interceding for Israel, the souls of the stars, and the souls of the angels banished from God's presence and imprisoned behind walls of fire for their failure in the performance of the sanctus.

Sibylline Oracles (mid 2nd cent BC to 7th cent AD)

The Sibylline Oracles are preserved in 14 books. They are dominated by eschatology: the destruction of the world by fire, the inauguration of a glorious kingdom and the transformation of the earth. The periodisation of history is another remarkable feature of the Sibylline Oracles. The history is divided into ten generations. They also incorporate popular legends, such as the legend about Nero returning as an eschatological adversary at the head of a Parthian army. The Christian books exhibit a keen interest in resurrection and after life. The Oracles, in general, denounce idolatry, greed, and sexual immorality, homosexuality in particular.

The first two books constitute one unit. The work consists of an original Jewish oracle and an extensive Christian redaction. The Jewish oracle was structured on the division of the world history into ten

generations. The first seven generations are preserved without any interpolation (1:1-323). Then a Christian passage on the incarnation and life of Christ follows (1:324-400). The original sequence (2:6-33) follows a transitional passage (2:1-5). There is no reference to the 8th and 9th generation, indicating that a considerable portion of the work is lost.

The third book contains 829 verses which may be divided into three sections: verses 1-96 probably constitute the conclusion of a different book; verses 97-349 and 489-829 contain oracles about the fall of tower of Babylon, war of the Titans against Cronos and his sons; and a list of world kingdoms; and verses 350-488 consist of oracles against various nations. The eschatology of the book is political in character and revolves around the expectation of an ideal king or kingdom, in terms of renewal of the earth and the exaltation of the Temple (701-761; 767-795). This ideal rule is preceded by chaos and tribulations (611-615; 660-701) and the destruction of adversaries by God.

The fourth book has 192 verses. They consist of various oracles that may be divided into two sections. The first (49-101) speaks the twofold division of history into ten generations and four kingdoms: the Assyrians will rule for six generations, the Medes for two, and the Persians for one. The Macedonian empire is the tenth generation as well as the fourth kingdom. There is also a reference to Rome and its downfall (145-148) which probably is a later addition as Rome is not mentioned in the numerical schema of history. The second relates to various events and legends (102-151) and the moral and religious outlook of the redactor (1-48; 152-172). The conclusion deals with the end-time (173-192).

The fifth book is made up of 530 verses. We may divide them into two sections: the review of history from Alexander to Marcus Aurelius, the emperors being referred to by gematria (1-51); and oracles against nations (52:434) showing a common scheme as oracle against nations, the return of Nero as an eschatological adversary, the coming of a saviour, and destruction, generally by fire. The conclusion

deals with the building of a temple to the one true God in Egypt and its destruction by the Ethiopians followed by God's judgement (493-511), and a battle of stars (512-530).

The sixth book is a hymn to Christ in 28 verses. It describes briefly the life of Christ, beginning with his divine origin. The last three verses is an apostrophe to the cross on which Jesus was crucified.

The seventh book has 162 verses containing loosely collected oracles. They deal with the Flood (7-15) and an eschatological scenario foretelling a conflagration, the everlasting punishment of the sinners, and the restoration of the earth (118-151), catastrophe against various nations and places (1-6; 16-23; 40-63; 96-117), rise of Rome after the fall of Macedonia (108-111) interspersed with eschatological passages about a conflagration (24-28), a messianic prophecy (29-39), the baptism of Jesus (64-75), and some ritual prescriptions (76-95).

The eighth book contains 500 verses which may be divided into two parts: 1-216 and 217-500. The former deals with political prophecies, specially directed against Rome. It begins with the fall of the tower of Babylon and a list of kingdoms annunciated in the third book vss 159-161 (1-16), and an admonition against greed (17-36). Now Rome becomes the target of the oracles: against idolatry (37-49), against Hadrian with a reference to Nero's return (50-72), woes to come upon Rome (73-130), the rule of the fifteenth king of Egypt (131-138), return to the Nero legend (139-159), oracles against various gentile nations (160-168), chaotic upheavals of the end-time (169-193), and the eschatological reign of a woman (194-216). The second section is centered on Christology. It begins with an acrostic poem on Christ (217-250): *Iesous Christos Theou Huios Soter Stauros* (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour, Cross). There follow a long poem on Christ, sketching his earthly life (251-336); a description of eschatological upheavals (337-358); a speech of God emphasizing the denunciation of idolatry (359-428), a hymn in praise of God (429-455), the incarnation (456-479), and some ethical and ritual exhortations (480-500).

The last four books (11-14) outline history from the Flood to the Arab conquest, with a very brief conclusion with eschatological imagery (14:351- 361). Each book begins with similar introductory verses and ends with a prayer by the Sibyl (11:315-324; 12:293-299; 13:172-173), picking up the content from where the previous book left off. The eleventh book reviews history from the Flood to the death of Cleopatra: the kingdoms of Egypt (19-32), Persia (47-50), Media (51-60), Ethiopia (61-79), Assyria (79-105), Macedonia (186-223), Egypt (232-260), and Rome (261-314). There is a major digression after verse 105: on Romulus and Remus (109- 121), the Trojan War (122-143), Aenas (144-162), and Virgil (163-171).

The twelfth book of 299 verses, after an introduction (eleven verses directly borrowed from book 5), continues the political review of book 11. It begins with Augustus and ends with the death of Alexander Severus. The thirteenth book has 173 verses. It deals with a brief period: from Gordianus III (AD 240-244) to Odenath of Palmyra, during the reign of Gallienus (AD 260-268). The fourteenth book is a random collection of oracles. Further, as the text is hopelessly corrupt, not much importance is attached to this book. It is possible that vss 1-283 refer to Roman emperors but none can be identified with certainty. The rest of the book (284-361) deals with Egypt. The reference to a battle involving the Jews, Arabs, and 'Fair heads' (340-349) is interesting in that the last may be indicating Europeans (or Americans).

The Ezra Literature

In addition to the canonical book, there are five other apocryphal books ascribed to Ezra: the Fourth Book of Ezra, the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, Vision of the Blessed Ezra, Questions of Ezra, and the Revelation of Ezra.

Fourth Book of Ezra (late 1st century AD)

The Fourth Book of Ezra is also known as 2 Esdras or IV Ezra. It has three sections: an introduction (chs 1-

2), the apocalypse of Ezra (chs 3-14) and the conclusion (chs 15-16). The introduction and the conclusion are Christian works appended to the apocalypse of Ezra, a Jewish composition. The introduction concerns with the call of Ezra (1:1-3); his censure of the Jews for not remaining faithful to God (1:4-2:32); his turning to the gentiles (2:33-41); his vision of a great multitude that stands on Mount Zion, each receiving a crown from 'the Son of God, whom they confessed in the world' (2:42-48).

The apocalypse consists of seven visions of Ezra (also called Salathiel) in Babylon. In the first vision (3:1-5:19), presented in a dialogue form, Ezra bewails the fate of his people and raises perplexing questions about the origin of sin and suffering and is assured that the end of the age is near; the vision concludes with the enumeration of the signs of the approaching end of the age. The second vision (5:21-6:34) contains a complaint that God has delivered his chosen people into the hands of the gentiles; Ezra's query about the lot of those who die before the end of the present age and an assurance that their lot will be similar to that of those living at the inauguration of the new age; and the signs of the end of the age. The third vision delineates the final judgement and the future state of the righteous and the wicked; Ezra's dilemma of reconciling God's mercy with the destruction of the wicked; his intercession on their behalf; an admonition to Ezra to ponder over his future rather than brood over the fate of sinners; and the recapitulation of signs which will precede the end of the world. The fourth vision (9:26- 10:59) portrays a woman in mourning for her only son and her sufferings; and the sudden transformation of this woman into a glorious city identified as heavenly Jerusalem in the day of salvation. The fifth vision (11:1- 12:39) depicts the future course of history by means of the allegory of the eagle rising from the sea: the eagle, Ezra is told, represents the Roman Empire, which will be punished by God's Messiah for persecuting his chosen people. The sixth vision (13:1-58) concerns the figure of a man rising from the sea and riding on the clouds leading a great army and destroying his adversaries with the fire issuing from his mouth. The final vision details the production of ninety four books - twenty four canonical and seventy apocryphal - by five men under dictation from Ezra according to the command of the Lord. The

conclusion (chs 15-16) concerns God's judgement against the nations, and exhortation for the people of God to put their trust in the Lord.

The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra (2nd to 9th century AD)

The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra has seven chapters containing the visions received by Ezra. They deal with Ezra's prayer, his being taken up into heaven, his intercession for the sinners who are being punished there, and God's answer that He rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked (ch 1); Ezra's remonstrance with God requesting God to be merciful to mankind, vision of judgement, and the signs of the end-time (chs 2-3); his descent into Tartarus where he sees Herod being punished, his descent into the bottom of Hell where he sees sinners of various crimes being punished, his vision of the Antichrist (ch 4); Ezra's journey into heaven where he learns about the creation of man, saints in heaven, certain cosmological secrets, and details of judgement (ch 5); Ezra's struggles with the angel for his own soul, God's comfort to him as death is near, his concluding prayer, death and burial, and a doxology (chs 6-7).

The Vision of the Blessed Ezra (4th to 7th century AD)

The Vision of the Blessed Ezra consists of sixty six verses. Ezra prays God for courage (1-2); has a series of visions at the fiery gates of hell (3-11; descends into Tartarus and sees the punishment of various types of sinners (12-55); enters into Paradise, entreats for the sinners, and is told that what they receive is commensurate with their works (56-66).

The Questions of Ezra (date unknown)

the Questions of Ezra also entitled, The questions of the Prophet Ezra of the Angel of the Lord concerning the Souls of Men is a dialogue between the prophet Ezra and the angel of the Lord on the fate of human souls after death. It survives in two small works of forty and ten verses, respectively. On questioning Ezra is informed that the righteous are destined for 'great joy and eternal life' while the sinners for

'the outer darkness and the eternal fire'. Then follows the seven steps to Divinity, and the freeing of the souls of sinners through expiatory prayers. The second document begins with the discussion about the destiny of the righteous and the sinners and concludes with the prediction of the resurrection and final judgement.

The Revelation of Ezra (before 9th century AD)

The Revelation of Ezra is a almanac describing the nature of the year, seasons, autumn, abundance of crops and cattle or famine, rainfall or drought, sickness or weal, etc., depending on the day of the week on which the year begins.

The Apocalypse of Zephaniah (1st century BC to 1st century AD)

A portion of the text of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah is missing. The missing pages probably describe the seer's heavenly journey. The existing text contains 12 chapters. They may be divided into two parts: The Travelogue (chs 1-9) and the Trumpet Scenes (chs 9-12). The Travelogue begins with a brief fragment mentioning a burial (ch 1). It is followed by scenes from some heavenly location above the city of Jerusalem. The seer witnesses scenes of a city life, discusses the nature of the endless light shining on the righteous, and sees men in torment (ch 2). Then, in the scenes from Mount Scir, he sees three men led by two angels; the angel accompanying him describes the manner in which the angels record the good and the evil deeds of men for the final judgement (ch 3). Next, Zephaniah has a vision of the terrifying angels who bring the souls of the wicked to their eternal punishment. He intercedes for them and his petition is heard (ch 4). Now the seer's attention is drawn to the gates and the city square. He also sees the transformation of his angelic guide (ch 5). Zephaniah turns back and beholds the Hades. He observes a sea of fire. He is confronted by the accuser holding the manuscript containing his sins and shortcomings. But the angel Ermiel comes to his rescue holding the manuscript of his good deeds (chs 6-7). The seer then is put in a boat to cross the river in a journey out

of Hades. Here he puts on angelic garments (ch 8). The Trumpet Scenes consist of the first trumpet heralding the seer's triumph over his accuser, the seer's wish to embrace the angel and the angel's conversation with the Old Testament luminaries (Abraham, Isaac, etc.) (ch 9); the second trumpet announcing the opening of heaven, the vision of the sea of fire in which the sinners are tormented, and the bodies with hair (ch 10); the third trumpet calling the saints for prayer followed by the intercession of a multitude for those in torment ch 11); and the fourth trumpet initiating a discussion on the end-time (ch 12).

Baruch Literature

Besides the deuterocanonical book of Baruch (1 Baruch), there are three apocryphal books of Baruch: 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch and 4 Baruch.

The 2 Baruch (early 2nd century AD)

The 2 Baruch, also known as the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, consists of 87 chapters. They may be divided into 12 sections: the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (1:1-8:5); Baruch's Lament (9:1-12:4); a discussion on the usefulness of righteousness and on long life (12:5-20:4); announcement of twelve disasters, coming of the Anointed One, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgement (20:5-30:5); warning of imminent disasters (31:1-34:1); the vision of a forest and a plain surrounded by mountains, forest changing into a cedar, the vision of the vine and the spring, names of those who will live to see the fulfilment of this vision (35:1-43:3); Baruch's address to the people about God's judgement (44:1-46:7); Baruch's prayer expressing his faith that everything is determined by God (47:1-48:50); Baruch's enquiry about the appearance of the resurrected (49:1-52:7); Vision of a cloud pouring bright and dark waters alternately (53:1-74:4); Baruch's thanksgiving to God and address to the people on the salvation of the righteous (75:1-77:26); a letter to the nine and a half tribes exhorting the Jews of the Diaspora to be faithful to God.

The 3 Baruch (1st to 3rd century AD)

3 Baruch, also known as the Greek Apocalypse of Baruch, is a composition of 17 chapters. The first chapter contains Baruch's lament over the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the Lord sending him an angel to comfort him and guide him through the heavens. Baruch, then, is taken on a tour of five heavens by the angel (chs 2-16): in the first heaven, he sees a plain where those 'who built the tower of the war against God' were kept (ch 2); the second heaven is a prison for those who 'forced men and a multitude of women to make bricks' for the tower (ch 3); in the third heaven he is shown a snake, a sea, primal rivers, the Garden of Eden, the sun with the Phoenix, and the moon (chs 4- 9); the fourth heaven contains a pool and exotic birds as well as the souls of the righteous (ch 10); the fifth heaven with closed gates is the place where angels responsible for men bring the gifts from men to Michael who presents them to God (chs 11-16); the last chapter concerns Baruch's return to earth to tell his fellow men what he has seen in the heavens.

Apocalypse of Abraham (1st to 2nd century AD)

The Apocalypse of Abraham can be divided into two parts: Abraham's Youth (chs 1-8) and the Visions (chs 9-32). The first part concerns with Abraham's youth and his perception of idolatry. He concludes that his father's idols are not gods because some stone idols are crushed and a wooden idol is accidentally consumed by fire. Abraham prays to God to reveal himself; he hears God's voice instructing him to leave his father's house. The second part contains God's command to offer a sacrifice to him and a promise to "reveal great things" (9:6); Abraham's ascension to heaven (15:4); seven visions in heaven - the light and fiery angels (15:5-7), the fire (17:1-3), the throne (18:1-14), the firmaments (19:4-9), the world (21:2-7), the seven sins (24:3-25:2), and the destruction of the Temple (27:1-3); and God's announcement of judgement - punishment of the gentiles through ten plagues (chs 29-30) and the reward of the just (chs 31-32).

Testament of 12 Patriarchs (2nd century BC)

The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs claims to be the final utterances of the twelve sons of Jacob. It is composed on the model of Jacob's last words in Genesis 49. Just before his death each son of Jacob is depicted as gathering his offspring around him, reflecting on aspects of his life, confessing his misdeeds, exhorting his family to avoid his sins and lead a virtuous life, concluding with predictions about the future of Israel and instructions concerning his burial. In the process, each patriarch asks for special honour to be given to the tribes of Levi and Judah, the account in each case ends with a report of the burial of the patriarch. Most of the Testaments include a section in which the destiny of the nation is described in terms of the nation's sin, its exile as divine judgement, and its restoration in the eschatological times.

Treatise of Shem (1st century BC)

The Treatise of Shem contains twelve chapters, following the twelve signs of the zodiac running anticlockwise from Aries to Capricorn, but reversing the order of Pisces and Aquarius. History moves from the worst to the best, gradually, Aries representing the worst year and Pisces, the best: there will be peace and prosperity among men, and love and harmony among all the kings who are on the entire earth (11:8).

Apocalypse of Sedrach (2nd century to 5th century AD)

The Apocalypse of Sedrach (2nd to 5th century AD) has 16 chapters. It begins with a sermon by Sedrach on the necessity of genuine love on the model of the sacrifice of the son of God (ch 1). At the end of it he hears an angel's voice and is taken up into the presence of the Lord (ch 2). A discussion on how far man is responsible for the evil in the world follows (chs 3-8). In the end Sedrach pleads with God to be merciful to man. God directs his only begotten Son to take Sedrach's soul into paradise (ch 9). But Sedrach resists with a series of questions and lamentations highlighting his concern for sinners (chs 10-11). The Lord, then, promises that if a man who lives in sin for a hundred years repents for only three

years, he will be saved (ch 12). Sedrach is not satisfied. He, assisted by archangel Michael gradually persuades the Lord to reduce the period of repentance from three years to twenty days, and allows his soul to be taken to paradise (chs 13-16).

Apocalypse of Adam (1st to 4th century AD)

The Apocalypse of Adam a revelation in Gnostic overtones, which Adam communicates to his son, Seth. The book has eight chapters. Adam begins with the story of the fall of man (ch 1). In his fallen state, inferior to the creator God, devoid of the knowledge of the God of truth, he receives a revelation concerning the future from three mysterious strangers (ch 2). This revelation concerns the Flood (ch 3), the resettlement of the world (ch 4), a cosmic conflagration (ch 5), the persecution of 'the Illuminator of knowledge' by the powers of the world (ch 6). There follows a long poetic passage about the origin of the Illuminator of knowledge: erroneous myths on the part of the thirteen kingdoms (7:1-48) but true knowledge on the part of the descendants of Seth (7:49-52). Then all people realize their error and acknowledge the supremacy of the Gnostics (8:1-8), which is confirmed by a voice from above (8:9-15). The conclusion equates baptism with the 'secret knowledge' (gnosis) (8:16-17).

Apocalypse of Elijah (1st to 4th century AD)

The Apocalypse of Elijah contains five chapters. The first chapter is a prophetic homily encouraging fasting and prayer. The second chapter describes the historical events preceding the coming of the Antichrist (2:2-28, 41-53) interrupted by a lament for Egypt (2:29-38) and the announcement of the appearance of the 'lawless one' (2:39-40). The third chapter announces the advent of the 'son of lawlessness' (3:1) and goes on to narrate the signs of the coming of the true Christ (3:2-4); the works of the Antichrist (3:5-13); the physical characteristics of the Antichrist (3:14-18). The Chapter four is an account of the martyrdom of Tabitha (4:1-6), Elijah and Enoch (4:7-19), persecution of the righteous (4:20-29), and the martyrdom of the sixty righteous men (4:30-31). The fifth chapter portrays the denunciation of the

Antichrist by many and the saving by Christ of those who are sealed (5:1-6), cosmic signs and the rebuke of the Antichrist by the misled (5:7-14), the Antichrist's lament of his end, pursuit of the saints, and the fight against the angels (5:15-21), the cosmic fire (5:22-23), the coming of the judgement (5:24-31), the execution of the Antichrist (5:32-35). The chapter concludes with the description of the thousand-years reign of Christ (5:36-39).

Apocalypse of Daniel (9th century AD)

The Apocalypse of Daniel seems to be primarily dependent on the Apocalypse for its language and imagery. It has fourteen chapters which may be divided into two major sections. The first (chs 1-7) is based on the historical events of the Byzantino-Arab wars of the eighth century and their aftermath leading up to the coronation of Charlemagne in 800 AD. The second section (chs 8-14) deals with the Antichrist, his origin and personal characteristics, his rise to power as king and messiah of the Jewish nation, his brief reign abruptly ended by the coming of the day of judgement and the appearance of Christ.

Testament of Job (1st century BC to 1st century AD)

The Testament of Job is divided into 53 chapters. The prologue (ch 1) gives the title and setting of the book. Job gathers his children around him for last words of advice and for the distribution of his estate. The epilogue (chs 51-53) delineates the death, and burial of the protagonist. The main corpus (chs 2-50) may be divided into four sections: Job and the revealing angel (chs 2-5), Job and the Satan (chs 6-27), Job and the three kings (chs 28-45), and Job and his three daughters (chs 46-50). The first deals with Job's perplexity over idolatry (ch 2-3), angel's disclosure of calamities (ch 4), and Job's destruction of the idol's shrine. The second deals with the consequent attack on Job by Satan disguised as a beggar (chs 6-8) seeking to take advantage of Job's piety and generosity (chs 9-15), Job's tragic losses (chs 16-26), and Job's triumph over Satan. The third narrates the arrival of the three kings (chs 28-30), Eliphaz' laments

over Job's losses (chs 31-34), Baldad's dialogue with Job (35:1-38:5), Sophar's offer of the royal physician (38:6-8), burial and death of Sitis, Job's wife (chs 39-40), Elihu's speech (ch 41), Job's intercession for the kings (ch 42), a curse against Elihu (ch 43), Job's recovery (ch 44), and Job's final counsel and division of inheritance among his sons (ch 45). The fourth describes Job's handing over a magical cord to each of his daughters, which makes them lose interest in the mundane things and speak in the language of angels.

Testament of Abraham (1st to 2nd century AD)

The Testament of Abraham exists in two texts, the longer one with twenty chapters and the shorter, eight. The events preceding the death of Abraham is the setting of this work. When it was time for Abraham to die, God sends archangel Michael to him to inform him to prepare for his death and to make a will (ch 1). Archangel Michael goes to Abraham and he is looked after by Abraham (chs 2-5). Sarah recognises the guest by his speech and informs Abraham (ch 6). Isaac sees a vision and is afraid. The Archangel Michael, while interpreting the vision, conveys the message he had for Abraham. But Abraham refuses to go with him (ch 7). Michael reports the matter to God who sends him again to Abraham to convince him of the fact that all have to die (ch 8). Abraham listens to Michael but requests that he be shown all the inhabited world first (ch 9). Michael takes Abraham on such a tour. Abraham, seeing people committing various sins, calls down death upon them. God immediately commands Michael to stop the tour because He is compassionate to sinners (ch 10). Now Abraham is conducted to the place of judgement to witness the fate of souls once they depart from their bodies, so that he may be kind towards sinners. Abraham learns of a threefold trial of souls: by fire, by record, and by balance; and of a threefold judgement: by Abel, by the twelve tribes of Israel, and, finally, by God (chs 12-13). Moved by what he sees, Abraham intercedes for a soul judged to be neither wicked nor good, and pleads for those whom he had caused to die. God saves the former and restores the latter (ch 14). Abraham is, then, taken back home but he still refuses to surrender his soul to Michael (ch 15). God finally sends Death who shows

Abraham his ferocity and takes his soul by deception (16:1-20:9). The soul of Abraham is conducted to heaven by angels (20:10-15).

Testament of Isaac (2nd century AD)

The Testament of Isaac is made up of narrations, and speeches of the patriarch Isaac. After the Trinitarian formula is stated, Isaac delivers a brief homily on the futility of worldly life and the glorious eternal reward promised by God (ch 1). God sends the archangel Michael to tell Isaac of his approaching death. Isaac is willing to go but is concerned about Jacob. The angel assures him that Jacob will flourish and twelve tribes will come forth from him, and departs (ch 2). Isaac informs Jacob what he learnt from the archangel. Jacob is disturbed. He wants to accompany his father. Isaac explains to him that God's decrees are final and informs Jacob of his great ancestry from Adam on, and of his great future as the progenitor of the twelve tribes, and of Jesus, the Messiah (ch 3). The narrator, then, dwells on Isaac's ascetic life: his frequent fasting and praying, abstention from meat and fruit, his refusal to sleep on a bed, etc. Then we find a lengthy homily of Isaac to the crowd that had gathered, on the obligation to be devout, specially to priests. After this, an angel comes and takes Isaac for a preliminary visit to the next world during which he is shown hell and some of the terrifying tortures inflicted on sinners. Soon he declares that he cannot endure the sight of the horrifying tortures any more. Then the angel takes him to heaven. In heaven, he sees his father Abraham with many saints. They lead him up to a curtain behind which is the throne of God. God speaks a few words of welcome to Isaac but most of the conversation is between God and Abraham. God lays stress on his being very compassionate and forgiving to all earnestly striving to lead a good life. At the end of the conversation, God orders Michael to bring a delegation of angels and saints together with the chariot of seraphim. God mounts the chariot and they descend, with the cherubim and angels in the lead, to bring Isaac back. Jacob is again disturbed and needs to be reassured (ch 6). Then the Lord takes Isaac's soul, white as snow, to heaven in the chariot, with the choir of cherubim and angels leading the procession (ch 7). The narration concludes with a

description of the happiness in heaven, an exhortation to the reader to celebrate the special day of Isaac (ch 8), and a final thanksgiving to God (ch 9).

Testament of Jacob (2nd to 3rd century AD)

The Testament of Jacob contains 8 chapters. It has a similar structure as that of the Testament of Isaac. After stating the Trinitarian formula, the narrator takes up the sending of the archangel Michael to inform Jacob that his death is at hand. Jacob expresses his readiness to die, now that he has seen his son, Joseph in Egypt. Another angel appears and identifies himself as Jacob's guardian angel who had saved him from Laban, Esau, and various dangers (ch 2). The angel departs. Jacob's household gathers around him and express their sadness (ch 3). After this, Jacob makes Joseph promise that he would take his body back to the land of Canaan to be buried in the ancestral tomb. Then there is an account of the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh (ch 4), followed by a brief vision of the blessing on his twelve sons. Then, Jacob is taken on a preliminary tour of the next world, first to hell where he witnesses the horrifying torture of sinners and then to heaven where he sees the happiness of the righteous. He returns to the earth and dies at the age of 147 years. The Lord and his angels come down and take his soul to heaven. Jacob's body is embalmed (ch 5). After many days of mourning his body is brought to Canaan in a great procession and buried at Mamre (ch 6). The book ends with the exhortations: to read the Torah, imitate the patriarchs, pray, fast, and give alms, and to honour the memory of the patriarchs (chs 7-8).

Testament of Moses (1st century AD)

The Testament of Moses is the farewell exhortation of Moses to his successor Joshua just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land. A part of the document is lost. The extant work has ten chapters. Moses calls Joshua and entrusts him with the task of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land (ch 1). Then Moses briefly outlines the history of Israel: the conquest, the period of the Judges, the united kingdom of Israel, and the divided kingdoms (ch 2). After this Moses predicts the fall of Jerusalem,

and the reunion of all Israel in the land of exile (ch 3). Next, is the return from the exile and rebuilding Jerusalem (ch 4). Then follows the unfaithfulness of Israel: their apostasy (ch 5), and its consequence: partial destruction of the Temple, and the persecution of the faithful (ch 6). Chapter 7 continues the thought in chapter 5, and chapter 8, chapter 6. The historical sketch ends with the account of the resolve of Taxo, a Levite, and his seven sons to die rather than betray their ancestral faith (ch 7). Next comes the eschatological hymn depicting the destruction of the evil one by Israel's guardian angel, cataclysmic cosmic events, and the restoration of Israel in the end-time (ch 10). There follows a dialogue between Moses and Joshua in which the latter questions his ability to succeed Moses, and laments that Moses' death will encourage Israel's enemies to attack them (ch 11). Moses reassures Joshua that it was God's will and mercy that protected the people, and the same will continue during Joshua's days, and, in spite of all odds, a nucleus of God's people will survive in accordance with the covenant (ch 12). The rest of the work is lost.

Testament of Solomon (1st to 3rd century AD)

The Testament of Solomon is a folktale about the building of the Temple of Jerusalem combined with the ancient lore about magic, astrology, angelology, demonology, and medicine. It begins with the story of a boy, Solomon's favourite, whose soul was sucked out of him by a demon, Ornias. In response to Solomon's prayer on behalf of the boy, Archangel Michael gives him a magic ring which enables Solomon to summon demons, interrogate them on their plans and activities, and make them work in the construction of the Temple. It is through such interrogations that Solomon learns about Ornias and his nature. With the help of the archangel Quriel, Ornias is sentenced to work in a quarry (chs 1-3). Solomon summons Beelzeboul who shows him Onoskelis, a cliff-dwelling satyra. She is commanded to spin hemp for the construction ropes (ch 4). Next comes Asmodeus, the Great Bear constellation, who makes men mad, plots against newlyweds, spreads madness among women, and commits murders. He was controlled by archangel Raphael and smoke from burning liver and gall of a fish (ch 5). Then Solomon

learns all about Beelzeboul and commands him to cut marble (ch 6). The wind demon Lix Tetrax is assigned the work of hurling stones to the heights of the Temple for the workers (ch 7). The seven heavenly bodies (Deception, Strife, Fate, Error, Power, and The Worst) are made to dig the foundation for the Temple (ch 8). The headless demon, Murder, is ordered to stay with Beelzeboul (ch 9). The doglike demon, Scepter, is asked to provide an emerald stone for the Temple (ch 10). The legions are asked to carry wood for the Temple and the Lion-Shaped Demon, to saw it (ch 11). The three-headed Head of the Dragons is ordered to make bricks for the Temple (ch 12). The female demon, Obyzouth, is bound and hung in front of the Temple (ch 13). The Winged Dragon is assigned the work of cutting marble for the Temple (ch 14). Enepsigos, another female demon, is sealed with a triple-link chain. Then Solomon explains that he wrote his Testament in order to make known to the Israelites the form and power of various demons and the angels who controlled them (ch 15). Then the cruel sea-horse demon, Kunopegos, is sealed and stored away (ch 16). The lecherous spirit born of a giant is locked up (ch 17). The thirty-six heavenly bodies are ordered to bear water for the Temple (ch 18). Now there is a description of various kings, including the queen of Sheba, giving riches to Solomon (ch 19). The demon Ornias tells Solomon how the demons overhear God's decisions in heaven (ch 20). After this the contribution of the queen of Sheeba, ten thousand shekels for the Temple is mentioned (ch 21). Now Adarkes, King of Arabia, requests Solomon's help against the wind demon, Ephippas. Solomon sends his servant boy to Arabia. The servant boy entraps him in a leather flask and brings him to Jerusalem (ch 22). He is requested to put the corner stone of the Temple (ch 23). Ephippas and the demon of the Red Sea bring back the pillar of air from the Red Sea and hold it in place to this day (ch 24). On interrogation of the demon of the Red Sea, Abezethibou, Solomon learns that he was the one who was responsible for the events against Moses and the Israelites in Egypt. He is adjured to hold the pillar (ch 25). The last chapter narrates Solomon's love affair with the Shummanite woman, the sacrifice of five locusts to the foreign gods, Raphan and Moloch to have her, building of temples for her idols, and the consequent departure of the glory of God from Solomon.

Testament of Adam (2nd to 5th century AD)

The Testament of Adam is divided into three sections: the Horarium (hours of the day and night), the Prophecy, and the Hierarchy. The first two are ascribed to Adam. Adam speaks to his son Seth, listing the hours of the day and night and telling him which portion of the world worships God at a particular hour (chs 1-2). The Prophecy includes Adams disclosure to Seth about the creation and fall of man, the Flood, the birth, passion, and death of Christ, and the consummation of the world. The section ends with Seth's attestation of the testament and of the burial of Adam in the Cave of Treasures (ch 3). The Hierarchy (ch 4) deals with the function of the nine orders of the heavenly beings (angels, archangels, archons, authorities, powers, dominions, thrones, seraphim, and cherubim).

CHAPTER 5 THE APOCALYPSE AND THE REST OF THE BIBLE

The author of the Apocalypse draws a lot of ideas and imagery from the other books of the Bible. While making copious use of the Old Testament passages for presenting his narrative, he also refers to the New Testament in order to give a Christological perspective to his auditions and visions.

THE APOCALYPSE AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Apocalypse contains numerous allusions to the Old Testament. Though the book does not quote any passage explicitly, it is full of the Old Testament reminiscences. Of the 404 verses of which it is made up, 278 have at least one Old Testament excerpt. The books that have influenced the Apocalypse most are the Prophets (mainly Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Zechariah), the Psalms and the Exodus.

The Apocalypse is the 'revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants' and 'he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John' (1:1). The word 'servant' is applied only to great persons in the OT: to Abraham (Gen 26:24; Ps 105:42), to Moses (Ex 14:31; Num 12:7; Deut 34:5; Jos 1:1,2,7,13,15; 8:31; 11:12; 1 Chr 6:49; 2 Chr 24:6; Neh 1:7; 10:19; Ps 105:26; 132:10; 144:10; Dan 9:11), to Jacob (Is 44:1,2; 45:4; Ez 37:25), to Caleb and Joshua (Num 14:24; Jos 24:9; Jgs 2:8), to David (1 Kgs 8:66; 11:36; 2 Kgs 19:34; 20:6; 1 Chr 17:4; titles of Psalms 18 and 36; Ps 89:3; Ez 34:24), to Elijah (2 Kgs 9:36; 10:10), to Isaiah (Is 20:3), to Job (Job 1:8; 42:7), and to prophets (2 Kgs 21:10; Am 3:7). The 'seven spirits' before the throne of Christ (1:4) remind us of the 'seven angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One' in the book of Tobit (Tob 12:15). Jesus' work of making 'us a kingdom' (1:6) is the fulfilment of the promise made in Exodus to those who will obey God and keep his covenant: 'and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex 19:6). Christ is coming with the clouds (1:7). In a vision Daniel saw 'with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man' (Dan 7:13). The mourning on account of the 'pierced' (1:7) echoes the prophecy of

Zechariah: 'when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him...' (Zech 12:10). The trumpet (1:10) indicates a theophany (Ex 19:16,19). The 'seven golden lampstands' which John sees (1:12) remind us of the candlestick of pure gold in the Tabernacle, which had six branches and seven lamps (Ex 25:31-37), the five candlesticks of pure gold on either side of the inner sanctuary in Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs 7:49), and the lampstand of gold with seven lamps on it (Zech 4:2). In the midst of the lampstands there was 'one like a son of man' (1:13). Daniel speaks of 'a son of man' who was given dominion by God, 'the Ancient of Days' (Dan 7:13). He was 'clothed with a long robe with a golden girdle round his breast.' The High priest in the Jerusalem Temple used to wear such a robe (Ex 28:4; 29:5; Lev 16:4). It was also the dress of people of high rank, princes, and kings (of Jonathan, 1 Sam 18:24; of the princes of the sea, Ez:26:16; of Saul, 1 Sam 24:5,12). Such a dress was also worn by the divine messenger from God to Daniel (Dan 10:5). John's description of the appearance of the son of man, - 'his head and hair were white as wool, white as snow,' - is an adaptation of the description of God in Daniel: 'his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool...' (Dan 7:9); flame of fire-like eyes and bronze-like feet allude to the angel of Daniel: 'His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze...' (Dan 10:6). In Ezekiel angelic beings are depicted as having feet which 'sparkled like burnished bronze' (Ez 1:7). His voice was 'like the sound of many waters.' In Ezekiel, God's voice is described thus (Ez 43:2). Continuing the description of the 'son of man', John says that 'in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength' (1:16). In the Old Testament, it was God Himself who controlled the stars (Job 38:31-33). The imagery of the sharp two-edged sword indicates the judging power of God's word echoed in the Book of Wisdom where God's word is referred to as 'all powerful' and 'a stern warrior carrying the sharp sword' of His 'authentic command' (Wis 18:14-16). Isaiah speaks of the future king, 'a shoot from the stump of Jesse' ruling the earth with power and smiting the earth 'with the sword of his mouth' (Is 11:4) and of himself, 'He made my mouth like a sharp sword' (Is 49:2). When the seer saw the risen Christ, he

fell at his feet (1:17). This was also the experience of the prophet Ezekiel when God spoke to him (Ez 1:28; 3:23; 43:3); the reassurance, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last,' reminds us of God telling the prophet Isaiah, 'I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god' (Is 44:6, also 48:12). He tells John that he is 'the living one' and has the 'keys of death and Hades' (1:18). The epithet, 'living' was predominantly applied to God in the Old Testament (Jos 3:10; Ps 42:2; Hos 1:10); the Jews pictured Death as having its gates (Ps 9:13; 107:18; Is 38:10).

The conqueror will be granted 'to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God,' (2:7) refers to the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8-9). The reference to Balaam and Balak (2:14) takes us back to the Book of Numbers where the interaction of Balaam, a Canaanite diviner, with the Israelites is recounted (Num ch 22-24). Balaam and Balak influenced the Israelites to intermarry with the Moabites and worship their gods (Num 25:1-2). Jezebel (2:20) was the daughter of the king of Sidon; she married Ahab, the king of Israel (1 Kgs 16:31) and advocated the worship of Baal. The promise of 'power over nature' (2:26-27) is a paraphrase of Ps 2:8-9

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,

and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron,

and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The imagery of the 'morning star' (2:28) is borrowed from Dan 12:3

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

The 'soiled garments' (3:4) refer to iniquity, sinfulness as in Zechariah. The prophet sees a vision where Joshua's 'filthy garments' are removed.

Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments... (Zech 3:3-5)

The book of life' (3:5) alludes to the 'book of remembrance' in Malachi where the names of 'those who feared the Lord and thought on his name' were written (Mal 3:16-4:3). The risen Christ 'who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens' (3:7), is the only mediator between God and man. This fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah:

And I shall place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open (Is 22:22).

The vision of God enthroned, surrounded by various attendants (4:1-11) has precedents in Isaiah ch 6 and Ezekiel Ch 1. God sitting on a throne is a common picture in the OT (1 Kgs 19:22; Ps 47:8; Is 6:1). John sees 'in heaven an open door' (4:1); Jacob had seen the 'gate of heaven' in his dream (Gen 28:17):

And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

There issued from the throne 'flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire' (4:5). In the OT we often find descriptions similar to this portraying the presence of God: when God descended on the mount Sinai, 'there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast' (Ex 19:16); the psalmist sings of God, 'The crash of thy thunder was in the whirlwind; thy lightning lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook' (Ps 77:18); in his vision, Ezekiel sees in the midst of the living creatures 'something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro... and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning' (Ez 1:13). Before the throne of God, John sees something like 'a sea of glass and round the

throne, 'four living creatures' (4:6). The imagery of the sea of glass may have been drawn from the belief that there is water above the firmament (Gen 1:7; Ps 148:4) or it may simply be the sight of the Aegean Sea on a summer day seen from the heights of the Patmos. John must have borrowed the idea of the four creatures from the vision of Isaiah (ch 6) and of Ezekiel (ch 1), differences notwithstanding:

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up... Above him stood the seraphim... (Is 6:1-2).
And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men, but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's feet; and they sparkled like burnished bronze... Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands... As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle at the back,... Over the head of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament,... And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, ... and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form... (Ez ch 1)

Further, the OT often represents cherubim as attendants of God (Gen 3:24; Ex 25:18-21; 1 Kgs 6:23-30; 2 Kgs 19:15; 2 Chr 3:7; Pss 18:12; 80:1; 99:1; Is 37:16).

The scroll with seven seals (5:1-14) reminds us of 'the book of truth' (Dan 10:21) containing the events of the end-time. The one who can open the seal is called 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' (5:5). The first title takes us back to Genesis where Jacob tells his sons:

Judah is a lion's whelp;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him up?
The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,

nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Gen 49:9-10)

The other title is from Isaiah. Isaiah refers to the Messianic figure from the dynasty of David twice in chapter 11:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots. (Is 11:1)

In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious. (Is 11:10)

The figure of the slain Lamb (5:6) strongly suggests that Exodus chapter 12 or Isaiah chapter 53, or both, have influenced the author in the formation of this symbol. In the former the slain lamb is a symbol of the wrath of God on the Egyptians but God's protection of the Israelites and their subsequent deliverance from the Egyptian slavery. In the latter the slain lamb is depicted as performing a redemptive role and being rewarded for it:

But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed...
Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong...

The Lamb had 'seven horns'. This imagery may have been influenced by the horned ram of Daniel (8:20-21). The picture of the horn is common in the OT (Deut 33:17; 1 Kgs 22:11; Ps 75:4; Zech 1:18; 1 Sam 2:1; Ps 89:17; 112:9; 148:14). The idea of the 'seven eyes' is also found in the book of Zechariah (Zech 4:10). The twenty four elders are depicted as holding harps, and golden bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the saints (5:8). The harp was the traditional musical instrument used

while singing psalms (Ps 33:2; 98:5; 147:7), and in the psalms the prayers are likened to incense (Ps 141:2). They were singing a new song. The expression, new song, was very common in psalms (Ps 33:3; 40:3; 98:1; 149:1); it is also found in Isaiah (Is 42:9-10).

The sixth chapter deals with the opening of the seven seals. The first four seals have the common image of the horses: white, red, black and pale respectively. Each rider has a different task to perform, 'to conquer', 'to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another', 'to harm the crops, and 'to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth' (6:1-8). The disasters listed here are akin to the four sores of judgment in Ezekiel with which God threatens to punish the unrighteous: sword, famine, evil beasts, and pestilence (Ez 14:21), and the seven-fold punishment for disobedience described in Leviticus (Lev 26:21-26). The imagery of the different horses is found in the book of Zechariah.

I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse ! ... and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. (Zech 1:8)

And again I lifted up my eyes and saw, and behold, four chariots came out from two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of bronze. The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, the third white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled grey horses (Zech 6:1-3).

The horsemen in Zechariah were commissioned to patrol the earth (1:8-11; 6:1-8).

So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.' And they answered the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees, 'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest' (Zech 1:10-11).

When the steeds came out, they were impatient to get off and patrol the earth. And he said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth (Zech 6:7).

When the sixth seal was opened 'there was an earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full

moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth...' spreading terror among the people of the earth; it was the day of the wrath of the Lamb and 'who could stand before it?' (6:12-17). This terrifying scenario is akin to the description of the 'day of the Lord' in Joel:

The earth quakes before them,

the heavens tremble.

The sun and the moon are darkened,

and the stars withdraw their shining.

The Lord utters his voice

before his army,

for his host is exceedingly great;

he that executes his word is powerful.

For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible;

who can endure it? (Joel 2:10-11)

There are many other passages in the OT where earthquake features as a characteristic of the day of the Lord (Amos 8:8; Ez 38:19; Hag 2:6), and so also the darkening of the sun and the moon (Is 13:13; 50:3; Ez 32:7; Joel 2:31); the falling of the stars (Is 34:4); the rolling of the sky as a scroll (Is 13:13; 34:4; Ps 102:25-26); and the moving of the mountains and the islands (Jer 4:24; Nah 1:5). The pain and suffering caused by the various disasters preceding the end-time (6:15-17) is an amalgamation of various OT and other Jewish writings: people will be in pain like a woman in travail (Is 13:6-8); even the mighty would cry bitterly (Zeph 1:14); trembling will seize them (Joel 2:1); God will be a witness against sinners (Micah 1:1-4); no one can stand the day of His coming (Mal 3:1-3; Joel 2:11).

The four winds held back by four angels (7:1) are agents of divine punishment as in Jeremiah: and I will bring upon Elam the four winds from the four quarters of heaven; and I will scatter them to all those winds, and there shall be no nation to which those driven out of Elam shall not come (Jer 49:36).

The sealing of 'the servants of God' (7:3) is inspired by Ezekiel 9:4-6 where an angel makes a mark on the foreheads of those who have avoided idolatry, a mark which causes their lives to be spared.

And the Lord said to him, "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." And to the others he said, "Pass through the city after him, and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one upon whom is the mark..."

The list of the sealed (7:4-8), 12,000 each from all the tribes of Israel, does not mention the tribe of Dan. The reason is, probably, theological: the tribe of Dan is idolatrous (Jgs 18; 1 Kgs 12:28-30) and is punished by God (Jer 8:17). A great multitude sings a victory song (7:10ff) which resembles the song of Moses in Exodus ch 15 and the song of Deborah in Judges ch 5. One of the elders tells John that the victorious martyrs 'shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes' (7:16-17). This imagery is found in the Psalm, commonly known as the Good Shepherd Psalm (Ps 23).

The vision of an angel offering the prayers of the saints (8:3-5) indicates the mediatory role of the angel. The angel Raphael, we are told, has that role:

I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One. (Tob 12:15).

The content of the seven trumpets (8:2-11:19) is a free adaptation of the ten plagues in Exodus chs 7-10. The effect of the blowing of the first trumpet, 'hail and fire, mixed with blood' causing destruction recalls the seventh plague of heavy hail with flashes of fire against the Egyptians (Ex 9:22-26); the sea becoming blood (8:9), the first plague which turned the Nile into blood (Ex 7:14-24); the fresh water

turning to wormwood (8:11), Jeremiah's oracle against the unfaithful (Jer 9:15-16), the plague in the heavens causing darkness (8:12), the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex 10:21-23), but the imagery resembles the one in Amos 8:9, Joel 3:15 and, by contrast, Isaiah 30:26.

"And on that day," says the Lord God,
"I will make the sun go down at noon,
and darken the earth in broad day light." (Am 8:9)

The sun and the moon are darkened,
and the stars withdrew their shining. (Joel 3:15)

Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord binds up the hurt of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow. (Is 30:26)

Pagans believed that stars were divine beings while the Jews identified them with angels. In this context 'a star fallen from heaven' (9:1) would suggest a fallen angel. We have a reference to the fallen angels in Genesis 6:1-4 and Isaiah 14:12-15.

"How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!... (Is 14:12)

...the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took to wife such of them as they chose. (Gen 6:2)

The locusts let loose on earth (9:3) allude to the eighth plague against the Egyptians (Ex 10). The likening of the locusts to an army is similar to Joel 2:4-9

Their appearance is like the appearance of horses,
and like war horses they run.

The 'demons' (9:20) refer to the gods of the Gentiles as in Deuteronomy:

They sacrificed to demons which were no gods,
to gods they had never known,
to new gods that had come in of late,
whom your fathers had never dreaded. (Deut 32:17)

The description of idols 'of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk' (9:20) closely resembles that in Daniel 5:23.

... and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know ...

The little open scroll in the hand of the angel (10:2) recalls the vision of the hand with a written scroll in Ezekiel 2:8-3:3.

And When I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and, lo, a written scroll was in it; and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe... (Ez 2:8)

The angel 'standing on sea and land' (10:5) is modelled on the angel (Gabriel) in Daniel (ch 10-12). Daniel describes three angels, one on each bank of the Tigris and one (Gabriel) above its waters.

The time, 'One thousand two hundred and sixty days' or 'forty two months' (11:2-3) is similar to Daniel 12:7 where the angel tells the seer that all these things will be accomplished in 'a time, two times, and half a time.' A 'time' is a year (Dan 7:25; 8:14; 9:27; 12:11-12). John sees 'two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth' (11:4). Zechariah is told by the angel that the 'two branches of the olive trees on the right and one on the left of the lampstand' are 'the two anointed who

stand by the Lord of the whole earth' (Zech 4: 12-14). Anyone harming the olive trees and the lampstands would be consumed by fire pouring from their mouth (11:5). This imagery of fire destroying the foes is reminiscent of 2 Kings 1:9-12 where the soldiers and the captain sent by Ahaziah to Elijah were consumed by fire from heaven as a punishment for their arrogance. Their 'power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying,' once again, alludes to Elijah prophesying before Ahab, '... there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word' (1 Kgs 17:1) as a punishment for the sins of Ahab. In Malachi we read that God would send a messenger to prepare His way (Mal 3:1); and that Elijah would be sent 'before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes' (Mal 4:5). Their power 'over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire,' points to the plagues caused by Moses on Egypt described in Exodus (Ex 7:8-13:6). God had also made a promise that He would raise a prophet like Moses (Deut 18:18). The 'flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail' seen by John in the vision of the heaven being opened reminds us of the Old Testament theophanies (Ex 19:16-19; Jgs 5:4-5; Pss 18:6-19; Ps 29; Ps 77:16-20).

On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people trembled... And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder. (Ex 19:16-19)

John sees a 'great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns' (12:3). The dragon is often portrayed as the opponent of God in the Old Testament and appears under various names: Rahab, Leviathan, and Behemoth (Is 27:1; 51:9; Ps 74:13; 89:11; Job 9:13; 26:12; 40:15-24).

In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea. (Is 27:1)

The imagery of 'ten horns' is derived from the fourth beast in Daniel:

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong... and it had ten horns. (Dan 7:7)

The dragon's tail 'swept down a third of the stars of heaven' (12:4). Daniel sees a he-goat whose horn 'grew great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them' (8:10). The woman fleeing into the desert to escape the dragon where God had prepared a place to nourish her (12:6) has precedents in the OT. Elijah escaped from Ahab and went to the brook Cherith and was nourished by the ravens (1 Kgs 17:1-7); he fled into the desert to escape from Jezebel and was nourished by an angel (1 Kgs 19:1-8); the Jews went to the wilderness to escape the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (1 Mac 2:29). The dragon and his angels, says John, were defeated by Michael and his armies, and were thrown down to the earth (12:7-11); they are, we are told, confined to the abyss, bottomless pit burning with fire and sulphur (19:20; 20:14). We have a detailed passage in Isaiah which speaks of the defeat and punishment of Day Star, son of Dawn,

How you are fallen from heaven,

O Day Star, son of Dawn!

How you are cut down to the ground,

you who laid the nations low!

You said in your heart,

'I will ascend to heaven;

above the stars of God

I will set my throne on high;

I will sit on the mount of assembly

in the far north;

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,

I will make myself like the Most High.'

But you are brought down to Sheol,
to the depth of the Pit.
Those who see you will stare at you,
and ponder over you;
'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
who shook kingdoms,
who made the world like a desert
and overthrew its cities,
who did not let his prisoners go home?'
All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
each in his own tomb;
but you are cast out, away from your sepulchre,
like a loathed untimely birth,
clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword,
who go down to the stones of the Pit,
like a dead body trodden under foot.
You will not be joined with them in burial,
because you have destroyed your land,
you have slain your people. (Is 14:12-20)

The beast from the sea (13:1-10) is linked to the beast in Daniel 7: the 'ten horns,' to the fourth beast (Dan 7:7-8); its leopardlikeness to the third beast (Dan 7:6); its bearlike feet to the second beast (Dan 7:5); and its lionlike mouth to the first beast (Dan 7:4). John informs us that the 'beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words' (13:5). Daniel uses the expression, 'mouth speaking great things' (Dan 7:8,11). The beast rising out of the earth, and having two horns (13:11) recalls the two-horned ram

of Daniel (Dan 8:3).

The 144,000 following the Lamb wherever he goes are the 'first fruits' (14:4). The 'first fruit' has a sacrificial connotation and, as such, alludes to Exodus 23:19 which enjoins on the Israelites the offering of the first fruits of their land to the Lord, and Deuteronomy 12:6, of the firstlings of their herd and flock.

"The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God..."

(Ex 23:19)

'...and thither you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you present, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herd and of your flock...' (Deut 12:6)

The announcement of the fall of Babylon (14:8) forges a link with the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the fall of Babylon in chs 50-51. Isaiah also predicts the fall of Babylon (Is 21:9). The imagery of the terrible punishment of the apostates is drawn from various sources in the OT. The cup of God's wrath from which the wicked will drink is a common picture in OT (Job 21:20; Ps 75:8; Is 51:17; Jer 25:15). The torture 'with fire and sulphur' reminds us of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:28) and the description of the day of the Lord's vengeance in Isaiah (Is 34:8-10). The vision of 'a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man' (14:14) is an adaptation of Dan 7:13. He had a 'sharp sickle in his hand.' This imagery is inspired by Joel 3:13. The 'wine press' refers to God's wrath.

Put in the sickle,

for the harvest is ripe.

Go in, tread,

for the wine press is full.

The vats overflow,

for their wickedness is great. (Joel 3:13)

It was 'trodden' and 'blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle" (14:20).

This association of God's judgement with a battle may have been inspired by Isaiah:

"I have trodden the wine press alone,
and from the people no one was with me;
I trod them in my anger
and trampled them in my wrath;
their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments,
and I have stained all my raiment." (Is 63:3)

The victorious martyrs sing two songs: of Moses and of the Lamb. Moses sang his song praising God after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea (Ex 15:1-19). John does not give that song but the song of the Lamb.

This song has imageries drawn from various Psalms, as:

Great and wonderful are thy deeds (Ps 92:5; 11:2; 139:14);
Just and true are your ways (Ps 145:17);
Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? ...
All nations shall come and worship thee (Ps 86:9);
For thou alone art holy (Ps 99:3; 111:9);
for thy righteous judgments have been revealed (Ps 8:2).

John speaks of the temple being filled with 'smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple' (15:8). Smoke and cloud were the common imagery of God's presence in the OT: When Moses erected the tabernacle, 'the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting... (Ex 40:34); after the dedication of Solomon's temple it is said that a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord' (1 Kgs 8:10-11).

The men who worshipped the image of the Roman emperor were affected with 'foul and evil sores' (16:2). This plague is an adaptation of the sixth plague upon the Egyptians (Ex 9:8-12). The sea 'became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea' (16:3). This plague calls to mind the first plague against the Egyptians (Ex 7:14-24). The fifth bowl producing darkness (16:10) reminds us of the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex 10:21-29). The 'three foul spirits like frogs' issued from the mouth of the beast, the dragon and the false prophets (16:13) allude to the swarm of frogs in Exodus 7:25-8:15.

But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs; the Nile shall swarm with frogs which shall come up into your house, and into your bedchamber and on your bed, and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls; the frogs shall come up on you and your people and on all your servants. (Ex 8:2-4)

The sixth bowl poured on the Euphrates caused it to dry up (16:12). In the OT we often find the drying up of waters indicating God's power (Ex 14:21; Josh 3:17; Is 11:6; Jer 51:36; Zech 10:11). 'Armageddon', the scene of the final battle between God and Satan in the Apocalypse (16:13-16), is drawn from either actual events in the history (Jgs 5:19-21; 2 Kgs 9:27; 23:29-30) or the prophecies of Ezekiel (Ez 38:8; 21; 39:2,4,17). The depiction of the catastrophic events followed by the pouring of the seventh bowl has many similarities in the OT: the seventh Egyptian plague was of a 'very heavy hail' (Ex 9:24); in the battle between the Israelites and the five Amorite kings at Beth-horon, there came a great hail upon the enemies of Israel so that many of them died (Jos 10:11); Isaiah speaks of the tempest of hail and the destroying storm with which God will judge the unrighteous (Is 28:2); Ezekiel describes the judgment of God in terms of 'pestilence and bloodshed,' with 'torrential rains and hailstones, fire and brimstone' (Ez 38:22).

An angel acts as an interpreter of the vision of the woman on a scarlet beast to the seer (17:1). Revelation is often mediated in auditions. The angel speaks to Zechariah (Zech 1:9), makes known to Daniel

the interpretation of the things he saw in the vision (Dan 7:16). The woman was 'seated upon many waters,' an expression that refers to Babylon in Jeremiah (Jer 51:13). The seer was carried away 'in the Spirit into a wilderness' (17:3). The Spirit is often associated in visions. John himself was in the Spirit when the revelation came to him in Patmos (1:10). The Spirit lifts Ezekiel and takes him away to the particular place where he is granted visions (Ez 3:12-15; 8:2-3,7; 11:1; 40:2-4). The woman held in her hand 'a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication' (17:4) and the 'dwellers on earth have become drunk' with the wine of her fornication (17:2). John identifies the woman with the city of Babylon (17:5). The imagery is inspired by Jeremiah 51:7, making the intention of the author quite clear:

Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand,
making all the earth drunken;
the nations drank of her wine,
therefore the nations went mad. (Jer 51:7)

Elsewhere, 'cup of the wine' is an allegory for God's wrath (Jer 25:15-29). It was very common among the prophets of Israel to personify cities (Is 1:21; 66:7-16; Jer 15:9; Ez 16); occasionally Jerusalem was called a harlot (Is 1:21; Ez 16:15-45), at times the enemies of Israel and Judah (Nineveh and Tyre in Nahum 3:4 and Isaiah 23:16-17 respectively). In the Apocalypse, the harlot is the city of Rome.

The fall of Babylon announced in 14:8 is taken up again in 18:2, which was foretold by the prophets (Is 21:9; Jer 51:8). According to John,

It has become a dwelling place of demons,
a haunt of every foul spirit,
a haunt of every foul and hateful bird.

Isaiah foretells the complete destruction of Babylon by the Medes (13:17-22 also 34:11-15). It will be like Sodom and Gomorrah and never be inhabited.

But wild beasts will lie down there,
and its houses will be full of howling creatures;
there ostriches will dwell,
and there satyrs will dance.
Hyenas will cry in its towers,
and jackals in the pleasant palaces... (Is 13:21-22)

The same bleak scenery is presented by Jeremiah as well (Jer 51:39-43). Baruch prophesies that the city will be destroyed by fire 'from the Everlasting' and 'inhabited by demons' (Bar 4:35). The call to leave the fallen city and the rationale for the call (18:4-5) allude to the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 51:45; 51:9).

...Forsake her, and let us go
each to his own country;
for her judgment has reached up to heaven
and has been lifted up even to the skies. (Is 51:9)

The angel's call,

"...Render to her as she herself has rendered,
and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.
As she glorified herself and played the wanton,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.
Since in her heart she says, ~A queen I sit,
I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,'
so shall her plagues come in a single day,
pestilence and mourning and famine,
and she shall be burned with fire;
for mighty is the Lord God who judges her." (18:6-8)

is very similar to the following passage in Isaiah condemning Babylon,

Sit in silence, and go into darkness,

O daughter of the Chaldeans;

for you shall no more be called

the mistress of kingdoms...

You said, "I shall be mistress for ever,"

so that you did not lay these things to heart

or remember their end.

Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures,

who sit securely,

who say in your heart,

"I am, and there is no one besides me,

I shall not sit as a widow

or know the loss of children":

These two things shall come to you

in a moment, in one day;

the loss of children and widowhood

shall come upon you in full measure,

in spite of your many sorceries

and the great power of your enchantments. (Is 47:5, 7-9)

The vision of the mighty angel throwing the stone into the sea and saying,

"So shall Babylon the great city be

thrown down with violence,

and shall be found no more" (18:21)

is based on Jeremiah 51:59-64 and Ezekiel 26: 19-21. According to the book of Jeremiah,

Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, all these words that are written concerning Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah: "When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words, and say, 'O Lord, thou hast said concerning this place that thou wilt cut it off, so that nothing shall dwell in it, neither man nor beast, and it shall be desolate for ever.' When you finish reading this book, bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, and say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the evil that I am bringing upon her.'" (Jer 51:60-64)

In the desolated and devastated Rome there shall not be heard 'the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters.' or 'the voice of bridegroom and bride' (18:22,23). It is very similar to Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre: And I will stop the music of your songs, and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more (Ez 26:13), and Jeremiah's prophecy against Judah: I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp (Jer 25:10).

The final burst of praise, of the victorious martyrs, comprises of a call to rejoice and exult 'for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready' (19:7). The relationship of God and his people in the imagery of bridegroom and bride is common in the OT (Hos 2:19-20; Is 54:5; Jer 3:14, Ez ch 16). The vision of the 'Faithful and True' who is 'clad in a robe dipped in blood' (19:11-13) recalls the fierce image of God's garments soaked with the blood of his enemies in Isaiah 63:1-6. The vision of the birds gathered to eat the 'flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men' (19:17-18) is analogous to the passages in Ezekiel (39:17-20) and Isaiah (34:1-7) describing the sacrificial slaughter:

"As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord God: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field, 'Assemble and come, gather from all sides to the sacrificial feast which I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast upon the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth - of rams, of lambs, and

of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast which I am preparing for you. And you shall be filled at my table with horses and riders, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,' says the Lord God. (Ez 39:17-20)

The battle with Gog and Magog (20:8) is derived from Ezekiel chs 38-39. Prophesying against Gog, Ezekiel says,

I will summon every kind of terror against Gog, says the Lord God; every man's sword shall be against his brother. With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples that are with him, torrential rains and hailstones, fire and brimstone (Ez 38:21-22),

and against Magog

I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands (39:6).

The vision of a new heaven and a new earth (21:1) purports to be the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah (65:17-25).

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind. (Is 65:17)

The restoration of the city of Jerusalem was a constant dream in Judaism. Isaiah dreamt it (Is chs 40-65) and so did Ezekiel (chs 40-48). The imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem likened to a 'bride adorned for her husband' (21:2) is inspired by Isaiah ch 54.

For your Maker is your husband,
the Lord of hosts is his name
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,

the God of the whole earth he is called.

For the Lord has called you

like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,

like a wife of youth when she is cast off,

says your God. (Is 54:5-6)

God dwelling with people and accepting them as his own (21:3) is the reiteration of the promise made in Leviticus.

And I will make my abode with you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people. (Lev 26:11-12)

The same promise is repeated in Jeremiah (Jer 31:33), and in Ezekiel (Ez 37:27). The most intimate imagery comes from the Song of Solomon (Song 6:3). In the new creation there will not be any suffering or sadness for God 'will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more' (21:4). This perfect happiness was foretold by Isaiah.

He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth. (Is 25:8)

The offer of the 'water of life without payment' (21:6) points again to Isaiah:

Ho, every one who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and he who has no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price. (Is 55:1)

God promises to the faithful that He shall be their God and they, His sons (21:7). We read such promises made by God to Abraham (Gen 17:7), to David (2 Sam 7:14) and to the Messiah (Ps 89:27). The heavenly Jerusalem is compared to precious stones. Its radiance was like a 'most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as

crystal (21:11). Isaiah, too, foretells a new Jerusalem in terms of jewels:

O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,

behold, I will set your stones in testimony,

and lay your foundations with sapphires.

I will make your pinnacles of agate,

your gates of carbuncles,

and all your walls of precious stones. (Is 54:11-12)

The city had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb' (21:12-14). Ezekiel's vision of new Jerusalem also envisages such gates: in the north, the gates of Reuben, Judah and Levi; on the east side, of Joseph, Benjamin and Dan; in the south, of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun; and on the west side, of Gad, Asher and Naphtali (Ez 48:30-35). 'The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel... and the twelve gates were twelve pearls...' (21:18-21). Tobit, in his prayer says,

Let my soul praise God the great King.

For Jerusalem will be built with sapphires and emeralds,

her walls with precious stones,

and her towers and battlements with pure gold.

The streets of Jerusalem will be paved

with beryl and ruby and stones of Ophir (Tob 13:15-17).

The reference to the foundation of the apostles of the Lamb is occasioned by the author's Christological compulsions. John does not see a temple in the city 'for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb' (21:22). The Apocalypse was written after the historical Jerusalem and its temple were

destroyed. Further, the earthly temple was but a symbol of God's presence among men and subsequent to the great eschatological victory of God over his adversaries, there will be a close relationship between God and his people which is already referred to in 7:9-17 and 11:1-2. Ezekiel, too, in the vision referred above, presents such a view: And the name of the city henceforth shall be, 'The Lord is there'. (Ez 48:35). The city will be illuminated by the 'glory of God' and 'its lamp is the Lamb' and 'by its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it' (21:23-26). Isaiah, too, foresees such a glorious restoration in ch 60. Note the opening lines:

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising. (60:1-3)

The picture of the day when all nations would flock to Mount Zion and worship the true God was very common among the prophets (Is 2:2-4; 11:12; 49:6; 51:5; 66:19; Jer 3:17; 16:19-21; Zeph 2:11; 3:9; Zech 8:20-23; 14:9; Tob 13:11; 14:6). There shall be no night there (21:25). We come across this statement once again in 22:5. This is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah,

The sun shall be no more
your light by day,
nor for brightness shall the moon
give light to you by night;
but the Lord will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.

Your sun shall no more go down,
nor your moon withdraw itself;
for the Lord will be your everlasting light.

and your days of mourning shall be ended. (Is 61:19-20)

There will be nothing unclean in the city (21:27). Formerly, nothing unclean entered the earthly temple. But now, the whole city is holy, a vision also seen by Zechariah:

And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the Lord." And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar; and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the flesh of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day. (Zech 14:20-21)

The river of the water of life which John sees (22:1) resembles the water 'issuing from the threshold of the temple' and forming a river in Ezekiel (47:1-10). There was a river which watered the Garden of Eden and made it fruitful (Gen 2:8-16). The psalmist sings of 'a river whose streams make glad the city of God (Ps 46:4). Joel says that on that day '... a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord' (Joel 3:18). Zechariah tells us that 'living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem' throughout the year (Zech 14:8). There is 'on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations' (22:2). This vision implies the original bliss of Eden (Gen 2:9) and the hope of restoration envisaged by Ezekiel:

And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their eaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing. (Ez 47:12)

THE APOCALYPSE AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament is made up of 27 books. Most of these were written in the 1st century AD. John,

writing his Apocalypse in the 90s, draws from these books. His use, however, of the books of the New Testament is less vis-a-vis the Old Testament, which probably points to the fact that not all of the works had attained universal acceptance and importance by the turn of the century.

The book of the Apocalypse opens with the statement that the revelation of God which it contained was to 'his servants' through 'his servant John' (1:1). The title 'servant' has a rich meaning. Just as it was applied to the great personalities of OT, it is used for apostles (Phil 1:1; Tit 1:1; Jas 1:1; Jude 1; Rom 1:1; 2 Cor 4:5); and to all Christians (Eph 6:6). John makes use of the New Testament epistle form, standardised by Paul (1:4-6).

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus ...

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus.....

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the lord Jesus Christ. (I Cor 1:1-3)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 1:1-2)

Paul an apostle ...

To the churches of Galatia:

Grace to you and peace from God the father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and father; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Gal 1:1-5)

The three titles of Jesus, 'the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead,' and 'the ruler of kings on earth' (1:5) refer to the passion, resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the pivot of NT writings. The reference to redemption by shedding blood is the theme reverberating throughout the NT, specially the Pauline corpus (1 Cor 15:20-28; Rom 3:21-26; 8:37; Gal 2:20).

They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (Rom 3:24-25)

John depicts Christ as 'coming with the clouds' (1:7) which recalls the description of the Second Coming in Mt 24:30.

... and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

He presents himself as the one who shares the 'tribulations and the kingdom and the patient endurance' of his brethren (1:9). The theme of endurance of sufferings is common to the New Testament writings (Mt 24:13; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 2:12). John was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day' and he heard behind him 'a loud voice like a trumpet' (1:10). 'The Lord's day' is the New Testament terminology for Sunday, the day on which Christians met for worship, the commemoration of Christ's suffering, death and resurrection (Didache 14:1; Ignatius, To the Magnesians, 9:1).¹ The 'sound of trumpet' is not alien to other NT books (Mt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:42; 1 Thes 4:16). John sees 'in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man' (1:13). In the Synoptics (the Gospels written by Matthew, Mark and Luke) Jesus is called the 'son of man' (Mt 8:20; Mk 8:31; Lk 6:5). The 'sharp two-edged sword' issuing from the mouth of Jesus (1:16) denoting the omnipotence of God's word has parallels in the NT, too (Heb 4:12; 2 Thes 2:8). His countenance 'like the sun shining in full strength' is akin to the description of Jesus' face at the transfiguration (Mt 17:2). The reassuring formula, 'Fear not,' (1:17) is the one Jesus used to allay the fear of his apostles (Mt 14:27; 17:7; Mk 6:50).

Each of the commissioning formulas identifies the speaker as the risen Jesus (2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14). But in 2:7, the message is attributed to the Spirit. The implication is that the glorified Jesus and the Spirit are one and the same. Paul, too, considers them as equivalent:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Cor 3:17).

The formula, 'He who has an ear, let him hear' is found at the end of all the letters (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). It was a standard formula in the Synoptics (Mt 11:15; 13:9,43, Mk 4:9,23; Lk 8:8 etc.). The

conquerors, that is, those who will not succumb to false doctrines, fall prey to the guiles of the enemy and give in to idolatry, will be granted 'to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (2:7). Christ knows the 'poverty' of the Christians in Smyrna but he says they 'are rich' (2:9). The poor being rich is a recurring theme in the NT (Mt 5:3; Lk 6:20; 2 Cor 6:10; Jas 2:5). The message terms the Jews 'a synagogue of Satan' (2:10). A harsh indictment, indeed. It may be because they were the ones who instigated people against the Christians. They did it in many places: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Thessalonica (Acts 13:50; 14:2,5; 14:19; 17:15). Paul also distinguishes between the true Jew and the one who calls himself a Jew (Rom 2:28-29; 9:6-7). The idea of attaining the final reward through perseverance and patient endurance is one of the main currents of the New Testament theology (Mt 11:12; Eph 6:10-20). John urges his followers to pay heed to his words of encouragement and persevere in their faith. The 'second death' refers to the eternal punishment, the death of the soul as against the bodily death that they have to endure. Jesus speaks of such a death, too:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Mt 10:28).

The early Christians did face a problem: could they eat the meat of the animal sacrificed to a deity? John refers to such a problem and tells his followers to have nothing to do with it (2:14). Paul also faced a similar situation in Corinth. He deals with the problem at length (I Cor chs 8-10) and exhorts them to 'shun the worship of idols' and not to eat the meat offered to idols because

what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons.

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. (I Cor 10:20-21)

'He who conquers,' will be given 'power over the nations' (2:26). The promise implies that Christians would be given authority over others, i.e., those who persecute them and, therefore, they should keep aloof and not imbibe their practices. We find such an admonition in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, too:

When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be

judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?... (I Cor 6:1-6)

They are also promised 'the morning star' (2:29). This imagery indicates that the faithful will become like morning stars, i.e., they will be immortalized and glorified. Jesus also uses such vocabulary in describing the reward for remaining faithful till the end:

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Mt 13:43)

Paul, too, expresses it in similar terms:

... So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. (I Cor 15:40-44)

John is commanded to write 'the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars' (3:1). The number seven signifies fulness. The risen Christ has power over the angels. This thought is found elsewhere in the New Testament, too (Phil 2:9-11; Heb 1-4-14; 2:5-9).

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9-11)

"... Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, putting everything in subjection under his feet." (Heb 2:5-9)

The exhortation to be awake and be on guard (3:2) is recurring theme in the NT (Mt 24:42-43; 26:41; Mk 13:37; Acts 20:29-31; Rom 13:11, 1 Cor 16:13; 1 Thes 5:6; 1 Pet 5:8). Jesus' warning that he would come 'like a thief that they would not know 'at what hour' he would come upon them (3:3; 16:15) reminds us of Jesus' warning to his followers that the end of this world would come at a time no one knew (Mt 24:42; 25:13; Mk 13:35; Lk 12:40). We find such a motif in Paul and Peter, too (1 Thes 5:2,4; 2 Pet 3:10).

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour. (Mt 25:13)

Watch therefore - for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at

midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning... (Mk 13:35)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief... (2 Pet 3:10)

Soiled garments (3:4) is an allegory for general sinfulness. It should be understood with reference to pure garments or white garments (3:5) which symbolise the victory and the glory of the faithful in their resurrection. Paul expresses this idea in terms of being 'unclothed' and 'further clothed':

For while we are still in this tent, we sigh with anxiety; not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (2 Cor 5:4)

The message to the church of Laodicea (3:14-22) begins with the explicit mention of three titles of Christ (3:14), the last being 'beginning of God's creation.' The NT books frequently relate Jesus Christ with creation (Jn 1:3; Col 1:15,18).

In the vision of the scroll with seven seals (ch 5) John sees the Lamb 'standing as though it had been slain' (5:6). The Apocalypse refers to Jesus Christ with this term as many as twenty nine times. We also find it in the Gospel of John (1:29, 36) and the first letter of Peter (1 Pet 1:19). The four living creatures and the twenty four elders praise the Lamb for having ransomed men by his blood (5:9). This picture comes very often in the NT (Mk 10:45; 1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; Gal 3:13; 1 Tim 2:6; 2 Pet 2:1).

The chapter 6 deals with the opening of the seals. When the fifth seal was opened, John sees 'under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne' (6:9). Jesus had made it very clear that his followers would have to undergo suffering and martyrdom for the sake of their faith (Mt 24:9-10; Mk 13:9-13; Lk 21:12, 18; Jn 16:12). Their being under the altar has sacrificial connotations. Paul uses this imagery in his letters (Phil 2:17; 2 Tim 4:6). The opening of the sixth seal was accompanied by cosmic upheavals: there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and

every mountain and island was removed from its place (6:12-14). The Gospels too speak of the sun and moon being darkened at the end-time (Mt 24:29; Mk 13:24; Lk 23:45).

One of the elders tells John that the great multitude praising God are those who 'have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb' (7:14). The central theme of the NT is that we are cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ (Rom 3:5; 5:9; Eph 1:7; Col 1:20; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19; 1 Jn 1:7). The angel goes on,

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water;
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (7:16-17)

This is a promise which often occurs in the NT, especially in the words of Jesus (Mt 5:6; Jn 4:14; 6:35; 7:37). Jesus also calls himself the Good Shepherd who takes care of his sheep (Jn ch 10).

In chapter 8, John describes the terrible events following the trumpet blast, preceding the end-time. This imagery is used in the NT, too, as associated with the second coming of Christ (Mt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52-53; 1 Thes 4:16).

Many are accused of worshipping demons (9:20). The gods and goddesses of pagan religions are considered to be demons. Paul also uses this terminology in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 10:19-20). These people 'did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts' (9:21). In the NT we often find a list of common vices among the people (Rom 1:29-31; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5; Mk 7:21-22).

They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder,

strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (Rom 1:29-31)

John sees a beast which rose out of the earth and 'had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon' (13:11). This beast is described in 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10 as a false prophet. Jesus spoke of the false prophets, too.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (Mt 7:15)

It works great signs to lead people astray (13:14; 16:13-14). The Synoptic Gospels refer to false Christs and false prophets who will show signs and work wonders to mislead people (Mk 13:22; Mt 24:24).

False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. (Mk 13:22)

According to 2 Thes 2:9-10, the coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by false signs and wonders as the result of which unbelievers will be led astray.

The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

The 144,000 redeemed from the earth are called 'the first fruits' (14:4). The expression refers to those who lay down their lives for their faith in Christ. Paul uses this term to mean resurrection.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are fallen asleep... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Cor 15:20-23)

The depiction of the divine judgment in the imagery of harvest (14:14-20) is also found in the other books

of the NT (Mt 13:24-30, 37-43; Mk 4:29; Jn 4:35-38).

John speaks of a battle on 'the great day of God, the Almighty' (16:14). In the NT the 'Day of the Lord' signifies the Last Judgement when all the righteous shall be rewarded and the unrighteous shall be condemned to eternal damnation (Rom 2:5; 1 Cor 1:8; 2 Thes 2:2; Mt 25:31-46).

But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. (Rom 2:5)

This day will come unexpectedly, like a thief (Mat 24:43-44; Lk 12:39-40; 1 Thes 5:2,4; 2 Pet 3:10).

John is given the vision of an angel announcing judgement on 'Babylon' for her iniquities. She has to be punished according to her deeds (18:5-6). The correlation between sin and punishment is often stressed in the Gospels (Mt 7:1-2; 18:23-35; Lk 6:37-38).

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." (Mt 7:1-2)

The scene concerning the second coming of Christ as judge of the world begins with a glimpse of open heaven (19:11). This is a revelatory formula also found in the other books of the NT (Mat 3:16; Jn 1:51; Acts 7:56).

And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." (Jn 1:51)

John tells us that 'the name by which he is called is The Word of God' (19:13). The Prologue to the Gospel according to John (Jn 1:1-18) uses the expression 'the Word' to refer to Jesus.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (Jn 1:14).

The multitude in heaven rejoices and exults because 'the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride

has made herself ready' (19:7). Marriage symbolism is repeatedly used in the Gospels (Mt 22:2,10-11; 25:1; Mk 2:19; Jn 3:29). Paul, too, uses this symbolism (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:21-33). Christ was followed by 'the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure' (19:14). In the Gospel according to Matthew, we find references to the armies of angels (Mt 13:39-42,49; 16:27; 24:30-31; 25:31).

then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Mt 24:30-31)

But in the Apocalypse it appears that the armies are constituted of the glorified humans, i.e., those who died for their faith, and the angels.

In describing the thousand year reign (20:4-10), John speaks of 'those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands' as the ones 'to whom judgement was committed' (20:4). The evangelists also record Jesus' promise to his followers that they would, in God's kingdom, be the judges (Mt 19:18; Lk 22:28-30).

Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
(Mt 19:18)

He also sees the 'dead, great and small, standing before the throne' for judgement (20:12). We have a mention of a general resurrection in the other apocalyptic sections of the NT, too (Mt 25:31-46; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thes 4:16; etc).

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thes 4:16)

Then, 'Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire' (20:14). This signifies the ultimate defeat and

punishment of the adversaries of God and his faithful. Paul also speaks of Christ reigning until he conquers all his enemies, and death being the last foe to be vanquished.

For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Cor 15:25-26)

The vision of the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem (21:1-8) is accompanied by a loud voice proclaiming, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them..." (21:3). God promises sonship to those who remain faithful to Him (21:7). This theme of a close relationship between God and His faithful is voiced by Paul as well.

... For we are the temple of the living God; as God said.

"I will live in them and move among them,

and I will be their God,

and they shall be my people ...

and I will be a father to you,

and you shall be my sons and daughters,

says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor 6:16,18)

John also hears God saying, 'To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment' (21:6). Jesus, speaking to the Samaritan woman, as recorded in the Gospel according to John, uses similar imagery.

Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (Jn 4:13-14)

The penultimate verse of the book is a fervent cry to the Lord to come soon (22:20). This seems to be an

early Christian prayer (1 Cor 16:22). The book ends with a blessing: The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen (22:21), which corresponds to the epistolary benediction popularised by Paul (1 Thes 5:28; Gal 6:18; Phil 4:23; Philem 25), and completes the epistolary framework of the Apocalypse which opened with a greeting.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen. (Gal 4:23)

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The term 'apocrypha' derives from the Greek 'apocryphos' which means 'hidden'. It is equivalent to a Hebrew term 'ganaz' which means 'to store up'. Referred to books, it meant 'to withdraw from use'. Originally, it must have designated those sacred books withheld from the public due to their 'exalted' content, i.e., some special teachings of certain religious or philosophical sects. The members of the concerned sect alone had access to them.¹ In Dan 12:9-10 we are told that some words are shut up till the end of time - words that the wise shall understand and the wicked shall not. 4 Ezra mentions 94 books of which 24 (the OT) were to be published and 70 were to be handed over to only the wise among the people for 'in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge' (14:44-47). Gradually, the term, 'apocrypha' took on a pejorative meaning as it was found that the orthodoxy of these books was often questionable. It referred to books forbidden to be read during public worship. By Jerome's time (c 400) the term came to be used for noncanonical books. It is used in this sense here. According to the Protestants, the term applies to the books of Tobit, Judith, 1-2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch plus parts of the books of Esther and Daniel (known as deuterocanonical in Catholic parlance) with the addition of 1-2 Esdras, Prayer of Manasseh and, sometimes, 3-4 Maccabees. In the Catholic usage, 'apocrypha' designates ancient Jewish or Christian books of, or pretending to be of, the Biblical period but not a part of the canon (list of accepted scriptures). It covers books of both Jewish (commonly called pseudepigrapha by Protestants) and Christian origin.

The apocalyptic genre flourished c 200 BC-100 AD and there were many well known Jewish apocalyptic writings when John composed his Apocalypse, the most important among them being 1 Enoch (2nd cent BC-1st cent AD), 2 Enoch (late 1st cent AD), Sibylline Oracles (2nd cent BC-7th cent AD), Treatise of Shem (1st cent BC), Apocryphon of Ezekiel (1st cent BC-1st cent AD), Apocalypse of Zephaniah (1st

cent BC-1st cent AD), Fourth Book of Ezra (late 1st cent AD), Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (early 2nd cent AD), Apocalypse of Adam (1st to 4th cent AD); Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (2nd cent BC), Testament of Job (1st cent BC-1st cent AD), Testament of Moses (1st cent AD). John could not have been unaware of them. It is, therefore, really surprising that he is not referring to any non-Biblical apocalyptic literature while making copious use of the Biblical. However, we can find many similarities between the book of the Apocalypse and the Apocryphal writings of the Jewish origin.

The Apocalypse and 1 Enoch

The Apocalypse mentions 'seven spirits who are before his throne' (1:4). These are seven angels of high rank. Enoch, in a vision, sees the Lord summoning the 'seven first snow-white ones' and sending them on particular missions (1 Enoch 90:21). In the epiphany, John describes Christ's head and hair as 'white as white wool, white as snow' (1:13). In 1 Enoch the description fits God.

With them is the Antecedent of Time: His head is white and pure like wool and his garment is indescribable. (1 Enoch 71:11)

The message to Smyrna refers to the 'second death' (2:11) which alludes to 1 Enoch 108:3

... for their names shall be blotted out from the Book of Life and the books of the Holy One; their seeds shall be destroyed forever and their spirits shall perish and die; they shall cry and lament in a place that is a chaotic wilderness, and burn in fire...

The vision of God enthroned, surrounded by different attendants (ch 4), is analogous with 1 Enoch ch 14 and 71. Enoch enters the house which was 'hot like fire and cold like ice.' He sees the 'Great Glory' sitting on a 'lofty throne' and 'no one could come near unto him from among those that surrounded the tens of millions before him...' (1 Enoch ch 14). He also sees 'countless angels - encircling that house. Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, Phanuel and numerous holy angels that are in heaven above, go in and out of that

house... With them is the Antecedent of Time: His head is white and pure like wool and his garment is indescribable...' (1 Enoch ch 71). The command 'come up hither,' (4:1) suggests a heavenly journey which is a very common means of 'seeing' the inscrutable ways of the Providence in apocalyptic literature. Enoch learns about the heavenly secrets during his tour of heaven (1 Enoch ch 1-36; 37-71). But, unlike other texts, the Apocalypse does not describe John's ascent, or tour of various locations in heaven, or his descent back to earth. John has a glimpse of 'a sea of glass, like crystal' in front of the throne (4:6); Enoch, during his tour of heaven, enters a house that was built of white marble and had the 'floor of crystal' (1 Enoch 14:10-13), and sees a lofty throne which had 'the appearance like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun' (1 Enoch 14:18).

The vision of the sealed scrolls (5:1-14) is analogous to the heavenly book in Enoch. In the latter case the angel Uriel tells Enoch to read the book.

Then he said to me, "Enoch, look at the tablet of heaven; read what is written upon them and understand one by one." So I looked at the tablet of heaven, read all the writing, and came to understand everything. I read that book of all the deeds of humanity and all the children of the flesh upon the earth for all the generations of the world. (1 Enoch 81:1-3)

The depiction of the Lamb as horned (5:6) is definitely influenced by the imagery of the ram in Enoch:

Now the dogs, foxes, and the wild boars began to devour those sheep till the Lord of the sheep raised up another sheep, one from among them - a ram which would lead them. (1 Enoch 89:42)

The other reference to the ram is in ch 90, which seems to fit in better in the context of the Apocalypse text.

Then I saw in a vision ravens flying above those lambs, and they seized one of those lambs, and then smashing the sheep, they ate them. I kept seeing till those lambs grew horns; but the ravens crushed their horns. Then I kept seeing till one great horn sprouted on one of those sheep, and he opened their eyes... He cried aloud to the sheep, and all the rams saw him and ran unto him.

In spite of this, all those eagles, vultures, ravens, and kites until now continue to rip the sheep... Those ravens gather and battle with him (the horned ram) and seek to remove his horn, but without any success. (1 Enoch 90:8-12)

John sees the four living creatures and the twenty four elders holding 'golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints' (5:8). In Enoch, it is the angels who have the task of interceding for men before the throne of God (1 Enoch 9:3; 15:2; 39:5; 104:1).

So there my eyes saw their dwelling places with the holy angels, and their resting places with the holy ones, and they interceded and petitioned and prayed on behalf of the children of the people (1 Enoch 39:5).

The opening of the sixth seal is followed by cataclysmic events (6:12-14). Enoch speaks of a strict regularity in the working of the universe which is the sign of God's fidelity but man will incur punishment because of his infidelity (1 Enoch chs 2-5; 41).

John has a vision of four angels 'holding back four winds of the earth' and another 'ascend from the rising sun' (7:1-2). In the post-exilic Judaism God was thought to be regulating the natural elements through his angels. Enoch is shown by an angel the mysteries of the winds, moon, stars, thunders and lightnings, frost, hail, and rain (1 Enoch 60:11-22) and 'the angels of punishment who are prepared to come and release all the powers of the waters which are underground to become judgment and destruction unto all who live and dwell upon the earth,' but 'the Lord of the Spirits gave an order to the angels' to hold on (1 Enoch 66:1-2). Then he sees 'a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb' rendering worship (7:9). The imagery comes again in 14:1 and 19:1. Enoch sees 'a hundred thousand times a hundred thousand, ten million times ten million, an innumerable and uncountable multitude who stand before the Lord of the Spirits' (1 Enoch 40:1).

John's vision of a star falling down from heaven (9:1) is an allusion to the myth of the rebellion of Satan

and of the fallen angels. The falling of a star symbolising the punishment of the angels is a very common imagery in Enoch (1 Enoch 18:13; 19:1; 21:3; 86:1; 88:1). Their crime, according to 1 Enoch is choosing wives from among the daughters of men and begetting children (1 Enoch chs 6-8; 15:1-9).

In those days, when the children of man had multiplied, it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them; and they said to one another, "Come, let us choose wives to ourselves from among the daughters of man and beget us children." (1 Enoch 6:1-2)

We find various reasons for their punishment: it was 'because they did not arrive punctually' (1 Enoch 18:15); or they 'transgressed the commandments' (1 Enoch 21:6); or 'united themselves with women,' and 'have defiled the people,' and 'will lead them into error so that they will offer sacrifices to the demons as unto gods' (1 Enoch 19:1). The description of the 'bottomless pit' here and as 'the lake of fire that burns with sulphur' (19:20; 20:14) is analogous to the one in Enoch (1 Enoch 18:9-14; 21:1-10).

The 144,000 who follow the Lamb wherever he goes are those who 'have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste' (14:4). This imagery by contrast alludes to the fallen angels who are deprived of their privileges in heaven. John's vision of 'the angel who has power over fire' (14:18) reminds us of Enoch learning the mysteries of nature (1 Enoch 60:11-23). The worshipper of the beast will drink 'the wine of God's wrath... and he shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb...' (14:10-11). Enoch also speaks of the wicked being judged in the presence of the righteous or sinners being delivered into the hands of the righteous (27:2-3; 48:9; 91:12; 96:1; 98:12). John describes the last judgement with the allegory of the wine press (14:18-20). According to him 'blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14:20). Enoch, describing the great bloodshed which would precede the final judgement, says:

From dawn until sun sets, they shall slay each other. The horse shall walk through the blood of sinners up to his chest; and the chariot shall sink down up to its top. (1 Enoch 100:2-3)

The angel pouring his bowl into the air (16:8) as in 14:8 is inspired by the description of angels in charge of natural elements in 1 Enoch ch 20:

The judgement against the merchants (18:11-13) is analogous to the woes unto sinners in 1 Enoch 94:7-9

Woe unto those who build their houses with sin!

For they shall all be demolished from their foundations;

and they shall fall by the sword.

Those who amass gold and silver;

they shall quickly be destroyed.

Woe unto you, O rich people!

For you have put your trust in your wealth.

You shall ooze out of your riches,

for you do not remember the Most High.

In the days of your affluence, you committed oppression,

you have become ready for death, and for the day of darkness and the day of great judgment.

The beast and the false prophet were thrown into 'the lake of fire that burns with sulphur' (19:20). In 1 Enoch, this place of punishment is 'a deep pit with heavenly fire on its pillars' (1 Enoch 18:11) where the 'spirits of sinners, blasphemers, those who do evil, and those who alter the things which the Lord has done through the mouth of the prophets' are taken (1 Enoch 108:6).

An angel coming down from heaven 'seized the dragon...and bound him for a thousand years' (20:2). Enoch hears the Lord commanding Raphael to 'bind Azaz'el hand and foot and throw him into the Darkness' (1 Enoch 10:4), and Michael to 'bind them for seventy generations underneath the rocks of the ground until the day of their judgment and of their consummation (1 Enoch 10:12). The Apocalypse speaks of 'a thousand years reign' of Christ with his faithful at the end of which Satan will be loosed from

his prison. The Satan will deceive the nations (20:4-7). Enoch, reviewing history in terms of weeks, describes the increase of unrighteousness on this earth until the final judgment comes (1 Enoch 93:3-10). After the final battle 'the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (20:10). Enoch hears God declare to Michael regarding Semyaza and his followers: In those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire - and in torment - in the prison (where) they will be locked up forever. And at the time when they will burn and die, those who collaborated with them will be bound together with them from henceforth unto the end of (all) generations' (1 Enoch 10:13-14). He also sees 'seven stars of heaven bound together... burning with fire' (1 Enoch 21:3). John then sees 'the dead, great and small, standing before the throne ... And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them' for the Last Judgment (20:12-13). The general resurrection, when all the dead will be judged, is also mentioned in 1 Enoch: In those days, Sheol will return all the deposits which she had received and hell will give back all that which it owes (1 Enoch 51:1); they 'were judged by what was written in the books' (20:12). In Jewish apocalyptic writings angels are depicted as recording the deeds of other angels as well as human beings as evidence for the final judgment. Enoch describes the 'shepherds' being commanded by the Lord to 'write down every excess and destruction that will be wrought through the shepherds' and read aloud before him 'each particular case - how many they destroy and how many they give over to destruction - so that this may become a testimony... against them' so that he may 'know all the deeds of the shepherds' in order to evaluate them (1 Enoch 89:61:63). He also sees the Lord sitting on the throne and the books being opened in his presence (1 Enoch 90:20).

John is given the vision of 'a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away (21:1). In Enoch God promises that on that day He would transform heaven and earth and make them a blessing forever for His elect ones to dwell in (1 Enoch 45:4); Enoch tells his children that

after the eternal judgment 'the first heaven shall depart and pass away; a new heaven shall appear; and all the powers of heaven shall shine for ever sevenfold' (1 Enoch 91:16). John tells us that the holy city of Jerusalem had a great high wall with twelve gates, three in each direction (21:12-13). Enoch has a similar description of the gates of heaven (1 Enoch 33:1- 36:1). In this city all the nations of the earth will gather to worship God and give him the glory, and that nothing unclean shall enter there (Ap 21:24-27). Such a theme is found in Enoch as well. In the age to come, 'all those who dwell upon the earth shall fall and worship before him; they shall glorify, bless, and sing the name of the Lord of the Spirits' (1 Enoch 48:5). The same theme is found in chapter 10 also but here another element is added, 'the earth shall be cleansed from all pollution, and from all sin, and from all plagues, and from all suffering...' (1 Enoch 10:21-22).

In the vision of the new heaven, John is shown the river of the water of life (22:1). Enoch also sees streams of water flowing from the mountains in Jerusalem (1 Enoch 26:2; 28:2-3; 30:1) In 1 Enoch there is a curse pronounced on those who have 'forsaken the fountain of life' (1 Enoch 96:6). John's vision of the 'tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations' (22:2) has a counter part in Enoch (1 Enoch chs 26; 30-32). There will nothing accursed in the holy city (22:3). Enoch had seen an accursed valley in the middle of the beautiful trees, and also the rubbish-smelling tree of judgment (1 Enoch 27:1- 2; 29:2). John thinks that the wicked will not repent, in spite of the warnings and punishment they will continue in their evil ways while the holy would persevere in their good ways (22:11), a theme echoed by 1 Enoch as well:

... For the upright shall announce righteousness to the upright; and the righteous ones shall rejoice with the righteous ones and congratulate each other. But the sinners shall die together with the sinners; and the apostate shall sink together with the apostate (1 Enoch 81:7-8).

John's warning against either adding to or taking away from the words of his prophecy also finds a counterpart in 1 Enoch:

Do not become wicked in your hearts, or lie, or alter the words of a just verdict, or utter falsehood against the words of the Great, the Holy One,... For they (the sinners) shall alter the just verdict and many sinners will take it to heart; they will speak evil words and lie, and they will invent fictitious stories and write out my Scriptures on the basis of their own words... Again know another mystery!: that the righteous and the wise shall be given the Scriptures of joy, for truth and great wisdom.

(1 Enoch 104:9-12)

The Apocalypse and 2 Enoch

John is granted a vision of the heavenly court (4:1-11). Such a vision is also found in 2 Enoch ch 20.

And those men lifted me up from there, and they carried me up to the 7th heaven. And I saw there an exceptionally great light, and all the fiery armies of the great archangels, and the incorporeal forces and the dominions and the origins and the authorities, the cherubim and the seraphim and the many-eyed thrones... And they showed me the Lord, from a distance, sitting on his exceedingly high throne.

The vision of the 'star fallen from heaven to earth' (9:1) recalls the myth of the fallen angels and the rebellion of Satan. 2 Enoch describes it thus:

"These are the Grigori, who turned aside from the Lord, 200 myriads, together with their prince Satanail... And they broke the promise on the shoulder of Mount Ermon. And they saw the daughters of men, how beautiful they were; and they took wives for themselves, and the earth was defiled by their deeds." (2 Enoch 18:3-4)

John speaks of the vision of the great dragon being thrown down from heaven to the earth along with his angels (12:9). In 2 Enoch 29:2-5 we find a similar description

But one from the order of the archangels deviated, together with the division that was under his

authority. He thought up the impossible idea that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to my power. And I hurled him out from the height, together with his angels. And he was flying around in the air, ceaselessly, above the Bottomless.

John sees 'the river of the water of life... flowing from the throne of God' in the new Jerusalem 22:1). In 2 Enoch there is the picture of a river in Paradise, issuing in the third heaven and flowing from beneath the tree of life and dividing itself into four streams of honey, milk, wine and oil (2 Enoch 8:5).

The Apocalypse and the 3 Enoch

John presents the twenty four elders as seated on their thrones (4:4). The apocalyptic literature generally depicts all heavenly being standing around the seated deity.

...The princes of kingdoms stood beside me, to my right and to my left, by authority of the Holy One...

(3 Enoch 16:1)

The Apocalypse and the Sibylline Oracles

In the inaugural vision, John describes the eyes of the 'one like a son of man' as 'like a flame of fire' (1:14). The same expression is used in 19:12 to describe the eyes of the 'Faithful and True'. The Sibylline Oracles also describes the 'fiery eye' of Christ which 'flashes like lightning' (Sib Or 6:28).

In the message to the church of Smyrna John refers to 'the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but a synagogue of Satan' (2:9). A similar polemic is also used in the message to the church of Philadelphia in 3:9. The Sibylline Oracles also refers to those who falsely claim to be Hebrews.

But they will endure extreme toil who, for gain, will prophesy base things, augmenting an evil time; who putting on the shaggy hides of sheep will falsely claim to be Hebrews, which is not their race.

As soon as the Lamb opened the fifth seal John saw `under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" (6:10) The blood crying out to heaven for revenge is a motif found in Sibylline Oracles, too.

Then you will be filled with blood, as you yourself formerly
poured out the blood of good men and righteous men,
whose blood even now cries out to high heaven. (Sib Or 3:312-314)

With the opening of the sixth seal `there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell on the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place' (6:12-14). The Sibylline Oracles draw a similar picture of the cosmic destruction in terms of the sky being rolled up.

... then all the elements of the universe
will be bereft, when God who dwells in the sky
rolls up the heaven as a scroll is rolled,
and the whole variegated vault of heaven falls
on the wondrous earth and ocean. An undying cataract
of raging fire will flow, and burn earth, burn sea,
and melt the heavenly vault and days and creation itself
into one and separate them into clear air.
There will no longer be twinkling spheres of luminaries,
no night, no dawn, no numerous days of care,
no spring, no summer, no winter, no autumn. (Sib Or 3:80-90)

The light of the sun will be eclipsed and the troupes of stars.

He will roll up heaven. The light of moon will perish. (Sib Or 8:232-233)

For I will melt all things and separate them into clear air.

I will roll up heaven, open the recesses of the earth. (Sib Or 8:412-413)

When the third trumpet was blown `a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the water became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter (8:10-11). When the fifth trumpet was blown another star fell on earth and caused terrible destruction on earth (9:1). A parallel can be found in the Sibylline Oracles, too.

But when after the fourth year a great star shines
which alone will destroy the whole earth, because of
the honour which they first gave to Poseidon of the sea
a great star will come from heaven to the wondrous sea
and will burn the deep sea and Babylon... (Sib Or 5:155-159)

The vision of the bottomless pit unfolds before John the torture of the adversaries of God. So great would be their agony `in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them' (9:6). The Sibylline Oracles depict the fate of the wicked in similar words.

They will not have their fill of tears, nor will their voice
be heard as they lament piteously here and there,
but in distress they will shout at length ...
burning in much fire. They will gnash their teeth,
wasting away with thirst and raging violence.
They will call death fair, and it will evade them.

No longer will death or night give them rest. (Sib Or 2:300-328)

All the souls of men will gnash their teeth

with the wailings and panic of the lawless souls,

dissolving with thirst and famine and pestilence and murders,

and they will call death fair and it will evade them.

For no longer death will give rest to those, or night. (Sib Or 8:350-354)

In the trumpet series of visions the four angels bound at the Euphrates were released by the sixth angel 'to kill a third of mankind' and by the 'three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur' issuing from the mouth of the horses and their riders (9:15,18). A prophecy of various disasters in the Sibylline Oracles pronounces that only a third of mankind will survive the catastrophe.

... and cause drought over the whole earth, and make the earth iron.

But then all mortals will weep terribly

for the lack of sowing and ploughing, and the one who created heaven and earth

will set down much lamented fire on the earth.

One third of all mankind will survive. (Sib Or 3:540-544)

John sees two portents in heaven, one of a pregnant woman and the other of 'a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns' (12:3). He also sees 'a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads' in 13:1. The Sibylline Oracles mentions that 'when the purple dragon comes on the waves... then the end of the world and the last day is near' (8:88-91). The dragon's 'tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth' (12:4). The Sibylline Oracles describes the Titans (seventh generation) waging war against the 'starry heavens'.

But they also will have a proud heart

and finally rushing towards destruction will plot

to fight in opposition against the starry heaven. (Sib Or 1:312-314)

The child whom the woman brought forth, and the dragon wanted to devour 'is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron (12:5). The rule with a rod of iron is also referred to elsewhere in the Apocalypse (2:27; 19:15).

The Sibylline Oracles mentions that 'a holy prince will gain control of the scepters of the whole world for all ages' (Sib Or 8:169-170); he is also referred to as the 'heavenly grace' and the 'sacred child' (Sib Or 8:195-196); further, we read that 'An iron shepherd's rod will prevail' (Sib Or 8:248).

John employs gematria in referring to the beast by a number. He writes: This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six (13:8). The author of the Sibylline Oracles refers to God with such a riddle:

I am the one who is ...

I have nine letters, I am of four syllables. Consider me.

The first three have two letters each.

The last has the rest, and five are consonants.

The entire number is: twice eight

plus three hundred, three tens and seven. If you know who I am

you will not be uninitiated in my wisdom. (Sib Or 1:137-146).

The Apocalypse uses the imagery of the harvest to describe the death and destruction on earth. The one who sat upon the cloud 'swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped' (14:16). The prophecy referring to the dispersion of the Jews in the Sibylline Oracles uses a similar imagery.

Then when the Hebrews reap the bad harvest,

a Roman king will ravage much gold and silver.

Thereafter there will be other kingdoms

continuously as kingdoms perish,

and they will afflict mortals. (Sib Or 1:317-391)

John's vision of the judgement and the destruction of the harlot, Babylon (Rome) in chapters 17-18 echoes in the prophecy of disasters in the tenth generation portrayed in the second book of Sibylline Oracles.

But when on earth there are raging earthquakes
and thunderbolts, thunders, and lightnings ...

Then indeed the tenth generation of men will also appear
after these things, when the earth-shaking lightening-giver
will break the glory of idols and shake the people of
seven-hilled Rome. Great wealth will perish,

burned in a great fire by the flame of Hephaestus. (Sib Or 2:6-19)

The vision of the 'judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk' (17:1-2) has a reference in the Sibylline Oracles where it is written

May I not be alive when the abominable woman reigns (Sib Or 8:194).

The angel tells John, 'The beast that you saw was, and is not, and to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition... As for the beast that was, and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition' (17:8ff). This description alludes to the legend, Nero redivivus, and is mentioned in Sibylline Oracles, too.

Then the strife of war being aroused will come to the west,
and the fugitive from Rome will also come, brandishing a great spear,
having crossed the Euphrates with many myriads. (Sib Or 4:137-139)

But the one who obtained the land of the Persians will fight,
and killing every man he will destroy all life
so that a one-third portion will remain for wretched mortals.

He himself will rush in with a light bound from the West,
besieging the entire land, laying it all waste... (Sib Or 5:101-109)

The 'ten horns ... and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked...' (17:16).

The Sibylline Oracles also uses such imagery of nakedness in pronouncing judgement on Rome.

Woe to you, Italian land, great savage nation.
You did not perceive whence you came, naked and unworthy
to the light of the sun, so that you might go again naked
to the same place and later come to judgement...
and you will disappear and will be blazing dust... (Sib Or 8:95- 103)

The doom of Babylon is depicted in graphic imagery by John in chapter 18 of the Apocalypse. We find a brief oracle which pronounces the doom on Babylon in the Sibylline Oracles. The reason for the judgement here is specific: destruction of the Temple.

God prompted me to say this first,
how many grievous woes the Immortal devised
for Babylon, because it destroyed his great Temple.
Woe to you, Babylon, and race of Assyrian men. (Sib Or 3:300-303)

John hears a voice which spelling the doom of Babylon (Rome) says,

"...As she glorified herself and played the wanton,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.
Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit,
I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,'
so shall her plagues come in a single day,
pestilence and mourning and famine,
and she shall be burned with fire..." (18:7-8)

A similar imagery is used in the Sibylline Oracles to depict the destruction of Rome.

Effeminate and unjust, evil city, ill-fated above all.

Alas, city of the Latin land, unclean in all things,

maenad, rejoicing in vipers, as a widow you will sit

by the banks, and the river Tiber will weep for you, its consort.

You have a murderous heart and impious spirit.

Did you not know what God can do, what he devises?

But you said, "I alone am, and no one will ravage me."

But now God, who is forever, will destroy you and all your people,

and there will no longer be any sign of you in the land. (Sib Or 5:167-175)

The same voice presents merchants of the earth weeping and mourning for her, standing far off for fear of her torment. So also the 'shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea' (18:11-19). We find a parallel in Sibylline Oracles.

For the Persian will come onto your soil like hail,

and he will destroy your land and evil-devising men

with blood and corpses, by terrible altars,

a savage-minded mighty man, much-bloodied, raving nonsense,

with a full host numerous as sand, bringing destruction on you.

And then, most prosperous of cities, you will be in great distress.

All Asia, falling to the ground, will lament for the gifts she enjoyed from you. (Sib Or 5:93-99)

John hears the angel saying,

and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters

shall be heard in thee no more (18:22)

The Sibylline Oracles envisages an eschatological time wherein there is

No drum sounds, no cymbal

no flute of many holes, which has a sound that damages the heart.

no pipe, which bears an imitation of the crooked serpent,
no savage-sounding trumpet, herald of wars,
none who are drunk in lawless revels or dances,
no sound of the lyre... (Sib Or 8:114-119)

The beast and the false prophet were captured and 'thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur' (19:20). The Sibylline Oracles describing the woes that were to come upon Rome says
you will come from a height and dwell under the earth
in naphtha and asphalt and brimstone and much fire,
and you will disappear and will be blazing dust forever. (Sib Or 8:101-104)

John beholds 'an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain' (20:1). The Sibylline Oracles describe the 'sacred child, the destroyer of all' as destroying 'the malignant abyss with bonds, opening it up' (Sib Or 8:195-198). After that he sees the thousand year reign of Christ with his followers, after which Satan 'deceives the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle... And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them...' (20:7-10). Sibylline Oracles predicts a great attack on Jerusalem by Gog and Magog which would prove disastrous for them resulting in great slaughter and bloodshed.

But again the kings of the peoples will launch an attack
together against this land, bringing doom upon themselves,
for they will want to destroy the Temple of the great God
and most excellent men when they enter the land (Sib Or 3:663-666);
Woe to you, land of Gog and Magog, situated in the midst
of Ethiopian rivers. How great an effusion of blood you will receive

and you will be called a habitation of judgment among men

and your dewy earth will drink black blood. (Sib Or 3:319-322)

John is given a vision of the new heaven and a new earth. The new city was 'coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (21:2). The Sibylline Oracles describes the city thus,

And the city which God desired, this he made

more brilliant than stars and sun and moon,

and he provided ornament and made a holy temple,

exceedingly beautiful in its fair shrine, and he fashioned

a great and immense tower over many stadia

touching even the clouds and visible to all... (Sib Or 5:420-425).

He hears the one who sat upon the throne saying, '... To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death' (21:6-8). The fate of the righteous and the wicked finds a similar description in the Sibylline Oracles.

And then will all pass through the blazing river

and the unquenchable flame. All the righteous

will be saved, but the impious will then be destroyed

for all ages, as many as formerly did evil

or committed murders, and as many as are accomplices,

liars, and crafty thieves, and dread destroyers of houses,

parasites, and adulterers, who pour out slander,

terrible violent men, and lawless ones, and idol worshippers;
as many as abandoned the great immortal God
and became blasphemers and ravagers of the pious
breakers of faith and murderers of the righteous men... (Sib Or 2:252ff)

John's vision of all nations flocking to the new Jerusalem and worshipping God and the Lamb (21:24-26) is analogous to the description of the gathering of all islands and cities to worship God in His Temple in Sibylline Oracles (Sib Or 3710-726).

The Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Zephaniah

The description of the 'one like a son of man' in the Apocalypse, 'clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace... and his face was like the sun shining in full strength' (1:13-16) resembles that of the great angel in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah.

Then I arose and stood, and I saw a great angel standing before me with his face shining like the rays of the sun in its glory since his face is like that which is perfected in its glory. And he was girded as if a golden girdle were upon his breast. His feet were like bronze which is melted in a fire. (Ap Zeph 6:11-13)

The imagery of the conquest (2:7) is of those who battle against Satan. The Apocalypse of Zephaniah records the reward for the victorious thus,

... I saw a great angel before me saying to me, "Triumph, prevail because you have prevailed and Have triumphed over the accuser, and you have come up from Hades and the abyss. You will now cross over the crossing place." (Ap Zeph 7:9)

The 'son of man' of 1:13-15 is referred to as 'Son of God' in 2:18. Zephaniah, too, thinks that the 'great angel' is the 'Lord Almighty' (Ap Zeph 6:14).

In the vision of the heavenly worship John hears 'around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands...' (5:11). The Apocalypse of Zephaniah also mentions a great number of angels.

Then I walked with the angel of the Lord. I looked before me and saw a place there. Thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads of angels entered through it. (Ap Zeph 4:1-2)

The opening of the sixth seal heralds universal catastrophic events during which men are said to be hiding in caves to escape 'the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?' (6:17) Describing the trumpet blast accompanying the wrath of God, Zephaniah says,

He said to me, "I do not have authority to show them to you until the Lord Almighty rises up in his wrath to destroy the earth and the heavens. They will see and be disturbed and they will all cry out, saying, 'All flesh which is ascribed to you we will give to you on the day of the Lord. Who will stand in his presence when he rises in his wrath to destroy the earth and the heaven?' (Ap Zeph 12:5-7)

Referring to the angel who mediated the vision to him, John tells us that he 'fell down at his feet to worship him'. But the angel prevented him from worshipping him saying, 'You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God' (19:10). A similar incident is also narrated in 22:8. Such an account is also found in the Apocalypse of Zephaniah.

I fell upon my feet and worshipped him. He said to me, "Take heed. Don't worship me. I am not the Lord Almighty, but I am the great angel, Eremiel ..." (Ap Zeph 6:15)

John has a vision of the beast and the false prophet being captured and 'thrown alive into the lake of fire

that burns with sulphur' (19:20). The Apocalypse of Zephaniah also records a vision of a similar place.

Again I turned back and walked, and I saw a great sea... I discovered that it was entirely a sea of flame like a slime which casts forth much flame and whose waves burn sulphur and bitumen. (Ap Zeph 6:1-2)

The Apocalypse and the Fourth Book of Ezra

The vision of the 'son of man' frightens the seer, John. He describes his experience thus: When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one..." (1:17). Ezra was also afraid when he saw the angel. He, too, was comforted by the angel.

... the angel who had come to me at first came to me, and looked upon me; and behold, I lay there like a corpse and I was deprived of my understanding. Then he grasped my right hand and strengthened me and set me on my feet, and said to me, "What is the matter with you? And why are you troubled? And why are your understanding and the thoughts of your mind troubled? (IV Ezra 10:29-31)

The message to the church in Ephesus ends with Jesus' promise, 'To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God' (2:7). The reference to the 'tree of life' is also found in 22:2 and 22:14. The Lord asks Ezra to tell the people of Israel, 'The tree of life shall give them fragrant perfume, and they shall neither toil nor become weary' (IV Ezra 2:12). The tree of life is again mentioned in 8:52.

John is commanded to write to the angel of the church in Sardis, '... Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy' (3:4). The mention of white garments is also found in 6:11 and 7:1, symbolising the victorious and glorified faithful. Such an imagery is also found in IV Ezra. Ezra tells the people of God

Rise and stand, and see at the feast of the Lord the number of those who have been sealed. Those who have departed from the shadow of this age have received glorious garments from the Lord. take again your full number, O Zion, and conclude the list of your people who are clothed in white, who have fulfilled the law of the Lord. (IV Ezra 2:38-40).

John's vision of heavenly worship by 'a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb' (7:9) is akin to the one in IV Ezra.

I, Ezra, saw on mount Zion a great multitude, which I could not number, and they all were praising the Lord with songs. (IV Ezra 2:42)

John has a vision of the 'shaft of the bottomless pit' being opened and a 'smoke like the smoke of a great furnace' rising from it (9:2). In his third vision Ezra also sees a similar pit.

Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of Hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the Paradise of delight. (IV Ezra 7:36)

John sees 'a beast rising out of the sea' to which 'the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority' (13:1-2). Ezra had a dream. In his dream

there came up from the sea an eagle that had twelve feathered wings and three heads... the eagle flew with his wings, to reign over the earth and over those who dwell in it... all things under heaven were subjected to him, and no one spoke against him, not even one creature that was on the earth' (IV Ezra 11:1-7)

John hears an angel announcing the destruction of Babylon: Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion (14:8). In 17:4 her sin is elaborated: The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a

golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication. The description continues in 18:7

As she glorified herself and played the wanton,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.

Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit,
I am no widow, mourning I shall never see...'

Ezra's description of Babylon is similar. He curses Asia for having gone the Babylon's way.

And you, O Asia, who share in the glamour of Babylon and the glory of her person - woe to you, miserable wretch! For you have made yourself like her; you have decked out your daughters in harlotry to please and glory in your lovers, who have always lusted after you. You have imitated that hateful harlot in all her deeds and devices; therefore God says, 'I will send evil upon you, widowhood, poverty, famine, sword and pestilence, to lay waste your houses and bring you to destruction and death. And the glory of your power shall wither like a flower, when the heat rises that is sent upon you. You shall be weakened like a wretched woman who is beaten and wounded, so that you cannot receive your mighty lovers...' (IV Ezra 15:46-51)

In the vision of the harvest of the world he sees the angel who threw the vintage of the earth into the great wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and the blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14:19-20). Ezra has a vision of the horrifying warfare followed by ominous clouds which shall dash against one another and shall pour out a heavy tempest upon the earth, and their own tempest: and there shall be blood from the sword as high as a horse's belly and a man's thigh and a camel's hock. (IV Ezra 15:34-36)

The Apocalypse depicts the beast and the kings of the earth gathered with their armies at Armageddon on the great day of God the Almighty to wage war against the heavenly forces (16:16 read with 19:19). The sixth vision of Ezra, of the man from the sea, gives a detailed account of 'an innumerable multitude of men gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came from the

sea' and being destroyed completely. (IV Ezra ch 13).

In the vision of the last judgement, John sees 'the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done' (20:12). The reference to the books during the end of the age is found in IV Ezra, too: The books shall be opened before the firmament, and all shall see it together (IV Ezra 6:21). The general resurrection and the final judgement portrayed by the Apocalypse (20:12-13) is analogous to that found in IV Ezra.

And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment... (IV Ezra 7:32-33).

John sees the new city of Jerusalem, adorned like a bride, 'coming down out of heaven from God...' (21:2). Ezra also sees a woman who, suddenly, is transformed into a city.

And I looked, and behold, the woman was no longer visible to me, but there was an established city, and a place of huge foundations showed itself (IV Ezra 10:27).

The angel, interpreting this vision, informs Ezra that the woman is the city of Jerusalem (IV Ezra 10:44-59). He is told that the city 'which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed (IV Ezra 7:26).

The new city of Jerusalem, according to the Apocalypse, 'has no need for sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the lamb' (21:23). He has a similar vision in 22:5 also.

These visions have affinity to the promise of God to his people in IV Ezra.

Be ready for the rewards of the kingdom, because the eternal light will shine upon you for evermore. (IV Ezra 2:36)

John is granted a vision of the river of the water of life and on either side of which 'the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations' (22:2). In IV Ezra, too, there is a similar reference. But here twelve trees are mentioned, and the promise is more elaborate.

... I have consecrated and prepared for you twelve trees loaded with various fruits, and the same number of springs flowing with milk and honey, and seven mighty mountains on which roses and lilies grow; by these I will fill your children with joy. (IV Ezra 2:19)

John is shown the new Jerusalem where all those who had been faithful to Christ 'shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads' (22:4). Ezra is told how the righteous shall 'hasten to behold the face of him whom they served in life and from whom they are to receive their rewards when glorified (IV Ezra 7:99). John also is told that 'night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light' (22:5). Ezra is told 'how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on' (IV Ezra 7:97).

The Apocalypse and the 2 Baruch

According to the Apocalypse, on the last day when the son of man comes on the clouds, 'all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him' (1:7). With reference to the end of the world Baruch is told

This then will be the sign: When horror seizes the inhabitants of the earth, and they fall into many tribulations and further, they fall into great torments. (2 Bar 25:2-3)

The Apocalypse refers to God as 'the Alpha and the Omega' and 'who was and who is to come, the Almighty' (1:8). Baruch addresses God as 'the only Living One, the Immortal One and the Inscrutable One' (2 Bar 21:10).

The message to the church of Smyrna reads, 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer... Be faithful unto

death, and I will give you the crown of life' (2:10). The Lord answering Baruch's query on the profit of being righteous says,

For them this world is a struggle and an effort with much trouble. And that accordingly which will come, a crown with great glory. (2 Bar 15:8)

The one who perseveres till the end is promised 'some of the hidden manna' (Ap 2:17). God had fed the Israelites with manna during their sojourn in the desert before reaching Canaan, the Promised Land (Num 11:7-9). The Jewish apocalyptic tradition held that manna will descend on earth in the Messianic age. 2 Baruch reflects this belief:

And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time (2 Bar 29:8).

John beholds 'in heaven an open door' and hears 'the first voice' which he had heard commanding him, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this" (4:1). Baruch also narrates such an experience:

And afterward it happened that, behold, the heaven was opened, and I saw, and strength was given to me, and a voice was heard from on high which said to me: Baruch, Baruch, why are you disturbed? (2 Bar 22:1-2)

And further, it is given to you to hear that which will come after these times. For truly, my salvation which comes has drawn near and is not as far away as before. (2 Bar 23:6-7)

The plagues of fire, war, pestilence and famine are described in vivid imagery in chapter 6 of the Apocalypse. 2 Baruch also describes the terrible events of the end-time:

The Most High then will give a sign to those nations which he has prepared before, and they will come and wage war with the rulers who will then remain. And it will happen that every one who

saves himself from the war will die in an earthquake, and he who saves himself from the earthquake will be burned by fire, and he who saves himself from the fire will perish by famine...

(2 Bar 70:7-9)

John sees 'under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne' being 'given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been' (6:9-11). The reference to the number to be completed is found in 2 Baruch, too. The voice from high tells Baruch, 'No creature will live again unless the number that has been appointed is completed'

(2 Bar 23:5).

John sees 'four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth...' and hears another angel telling them not to harm the earth or the sea or the trees (7:1-3). Baruch sees four angels standing at the four corners of the city of Jerusalem each holding a burning torch and hears another angel telling them to hold their torches and not to light them (2 Bar 6:4-5).

John hears an eagle flying in midheaven pronouncing woes to the inhabitants of the earth (8:13). Baruch sends his letter to the people of Israel with an eagle (2 Bar 77:19-21).

John sees an angel announcing the fall of 'Babylon, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion' (14:8). Baruch tells the nations

You who have drunk the clarified wine,

you now drink its dregs,

for the judgment of the Most High is impartial.

Therefore, he did not spare his own sons first,

but he afflicted them as his enemies because they sinned.

Therefore, they were once punished,

that they might be forgiven.

But now, you nations and tribes, you are guilty,

because you have trodden the earth all this time,

and because you have used creation unrighteously. (2 Bar 13:8-11)

John reports seeing 'seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended' (15:1). In answer to his question whether tribulations will last a long time, Baruch is told

That time will be divided into twelve parts, and each part has been preserved for that for which it was appointed. In the first part: the beginning of commotions. In the second part: the slaughtering of the great. In the third part: the fall of many into death. In the fourth part: the drawing of the sword. In the fifth part: famine and the withholding of rain. In the sixth part: earthquakes and terrors. In the eighth part: a multitude of ghosts and the appearances of demons. In the ninth part: the fall of fire. In the tenth part: rape and much violence. In the eleventh part: injustice and unchastity. In the twelfth part: disorder and a mixture of all that has been before. (2 Bar 27:1-13)

John has a vision of Satan being thrown into the bottomless pit and shutting it and sealing it (20:1-3; 14). Baruch is told by God that

The last ruler who is left alive at that time will be bound, whereas the entire host will be destroyed. And they will carry him on Mount Zion, and my Anointed One will convict him of all his wicked deeds and will assemble and set before him all the works of his hosts. And after these things he will kill him and protect the rest of my people... (2 Bar 40:1-2).

John has a vision of 'the dead, great and small, standing before the throne' for the Last Judgement; they are the ones whom the sea, Death and Hades have given up from their store (Ap 20:12-13). 2 Baruch also refers to this general resurrection (30:2; 42:8; chs 49-52).

And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the Anointed One has been fulfilled and he returns with glory, that then all who sleep in hope of him will rise. And it will happen at that time that those treasures will be opened in which the number of the souls of the righteous were kept, and they will go out and the multitudes of the souls will appear together, in one assemblage, of one mind... For they know that the time has come of which it is said that it is the end of times.

(2 Bar ch 30)

And dust will be called, and told, "Give back that which does not belong to you and raise up all that you have kept until its own time" (2 Bar 42:8).

The same idea is continued in chs 49-52 of 2 Baruch.. The judgement is based on 'what was written in the books, by what they had done' (Ap 20:12). 2 Baruch, too, refers to the books:

For behold, the days are coming, and the books will be opened in which are written the sins of all those who have sinned, and moreover, also the treasures in which are brought together the righteousness of all those who have proven themselves to be righteous. (2 Bar 24:1)

As in the Apocalypse, the resurrection and the judgement are explicitly linked in 2 Baruch.

For the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form. But as it has received them so it will give them back. And as I have delivered them to it so it will raise them. For then it will be necessary to show those who live that the dead are living again, and that those who went away have come back. And it will be that when they have recognized each other, those who know each other at this moment, then my judgment will be strong, and those things which have been spoken of before will come (2 Bar 50:2-4).

John describes the vision of the new heaven and new earth in Chapter 21. He sees the holy city of Jerusalem descending from heaven in all splendour (21:2). Baruch is told by God about the new Jerusalem,

Or do you think that this is the city of which I said: On the palms of my hands I have carved you? It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already

prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. (2 Bar 4:2-3)

John hears the voice from the throne saying that God 'will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying for pain any more, for the former things have passed away' (21:4). In 7:16-17, too, there is such a promise:

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water;
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (7:16-17)

We find a more elaborate description in 2 Baruch:

And it will happen that after he has brought down everything which is in the world, and has sat down in eternal peace on the throne of the kingdom, then joy will be revealed and rest will appear. And then wealth will descend in dew, and illness will vanish, and fear and tribulation and lamentation will pass away from among men, and joy will encompass the earth. And nobody will again die untimely, nor will any adversity take place suddenly. Judgement, condemnations, contentions, revenges, blood, passions, zeal, hate, and all such things will go into condemnation since they will be uprooted. (2 Bar 73:1-4)

The Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Elijah

The message to the church in Philadelphia in the Apocalypse includes a promise to the conquerors that the names of God, Christ, and the new city of Jerusalem will be inscribed on them (3:12). It also refers to the 'servants of God' being sealed (7:3). Those who persevered in their faith would be clothed in white garments and would 'hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat' (7:16). The 144,000 who stood on Mount Zion with the Lamb 'had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads' (14:1). At the judgement, John sees 'the souls of those who

had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands' coming to life and reigning with Christ for a thousand years. But 'the rest of the dead did not come to life... (20:5). The Apocalypse of Elijah also has a reference to this 'name on the forehead' and 'sealing' of the faithful while the sinners being condemned to death:

"Everyone who will obey me will receive thrones and crowns among those who are mine." The Lord said, "I will write my name upon their forehead and I will seal their right hand, and they will not hunger or thirst. Neither will the son of lawlessness prevail over them, nor will the thrones hinder them, but they will walk with the angels up to my city." Now, as for the sinners, they will be ashamed and they will not pass by the thrones, but the thrones of death will seize them and rule over them because the angels will not agree with them. They have alienated themselves from his dwellings.

(Ap Elijah 1:8-12).

Now those upon whose forehead the name of Christ is written and upon whose hand is the seal, both the small and the great, will be taken up upon their wings and lifted up before his wrath. (Ap Elijah 5:4)

In the open heaven John beholds a throne on which one covered with dazzling light was seated. 'Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads' (4:4). According to the Apocalypse of Elijah, Elijah and Enoch will come down and fight with 'the shameless one who has revealed himself in the holy place' saying, '... You have been hostile to the thrones...' (Ap Elijah 4:10). The four living creatures surrounding the throne sang day and night,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,

who was and is and is to come !" (4:8)

The Apocalypse of Elijah speaks of Christ sending from heaven six-winged sixty four thousand angels to take the righteous to heaven, whose 'sound will move heaven and earth when they give praise and

glorify' (Ap Elijah 5:2-3).

The opening of the sixth seal heralds cosmic upheavals and John hears people from different strata of society calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb..." (6:16). Such an imagery is also found in the Apocalypse of Elijah

In those days they will run up to the rocks and leap off, saying, "Fall upon us." And still they will not die (Ap Elijah 2:33).

Those 'who have come out of the great tribulation' without succumbing to the temptations and crumbling before the persecutions, according to the Apocalypse, will be clothed in white garments and serve God continually and 'shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more' (7:16). They will 'eat of the tree of life' (2:7). We are also told in 21:23-24 that in the new city of Jerusalem there will be 'no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light shall the nations walk...' The Apocalypse of Elijah has a condensed description of the bliss of the righteous.

Then Gabriel and Uriel will become a pillar of light leading them into the holy land. It will be granted to them to eat from the tree of life. They will wear white garments... and angels will watch over them.

They will not thirst, nor will the son of lawlessness be able to prevail over them (Ap Elijah 5:5-6).

According to the Apocalypse, the blowing of the third trumpet (8:10) and the fifth trumpet (9:1) makes the stars to fall from heaven and cause havoc on earth. Elijah and Enoch refer to the 'shameless one' as having 'fallen from heaven like the morning stars' (Ap Elijah 4:11).

The opening of the 'shaft of the bottomless pit' will unleash so much suffering and pain that 'in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them' (9:6).

The Apocalypse of Elijah uses very similar vocabulary in describing the reaction of people under great tribulation

Many will desire death in those days, but death will flee from them (Ap Elijah 2:4, 32).

The Apocalypse describes the beast making war against the two witnesses and killing them, 'and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. For three days and a half men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb...' (11:8-9). We have a parallel in the Apocalypse of Elijah. Hearing Elijah and Enoch accusing him, 'the shameless one' will be angry, and he will fight with them in the market place of the great city. And he will spend seven days fighting with them. And they will spend three and one half days in the market place dead, while all the people see them (Ap Elijah 4:13-14).

Seeing the doomed city of Babylon (Rome), as John sees it in his vision, 'the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more (18:11). In his apocalypse Elijah hears:

In those days the cities of Egypt will groan for the voice of the one who sells and the one who buys will not be heard. The markets of the cities of Egypt will become dusty (Ap Elijah 2:31).

John has a vision of those 'who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God' coming to life and reigning 'with Christ a thousand years' (20:4). In the final vision he sees 'a new heaven and a new earth' (21:1). The Apocalypse of Elijah also speaks of the new heaven and new earth and the millennial age.

On that day, the Christ, the king, and all his saints will come forth from heaven. He will burn the earth. He will spend a thousand years upon it. Because the sinners prevailed over it, he will create a new heaven and a new earth. No deadly devil will exist in them. He will rule with his saints, ascending

and descending, while they are always with the angels and they are with the Christ for a thousand years (Ap Elijah 5:36-39).

The Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Daniel

The cataclysmic events associated with the sixth seal make people of every walk of life, 'the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free', leave the city and hide 'in the caves among the rocks of the mountains' (6:15). The Apocalypse of Daniel also speaks of fleeing to the mountains:

But the rulers of the Romans and the magnates of the Seven-hilled city will flee to the glens of the mountains. And there will be fear and affliction (Ap Dan 2:15).

So great will be the affliction caused by the plagues following the blowing of the trumpets that 'men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them' (9:6). The Apocalypse of Daniel, too, presents such a scenario:

And then the people will be calling upon death and digging up the tombs and saying, "Blessed and thrice blessed are you who have already died, because you did not reach these days. And those who go down to the sea also will be saying, "May the fury of your waves swallow us also, O holy sea" (Ap Dan 12:4-6).

Describing the end of the world in terms of great bloodshed in the imagery borrowed from harvest operations, the Apocalypse says that the angel 'gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the wine press of the wrath of God; and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, so high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia' (14:19-20). The Apocalypse of Daniel draws an equally, if not more, terrifying picture of bloodshed in the slaughter by a Roman king.

And he will massacre them like the grass of a reed being burnt by fire. And from their blood a three-

year-old bull will drown. And the king alone will pursue a thousand and the two small boys myriads. And Ishmael and the sons of Hagar will be butchered to the end. And there will be war and great Bloodshed such as has not been since the foundation of the world. The blood will be mixed in the sea one and a half miles. And in the street of the Seven-hilled city horses will be submerged drowning in the blood (Ap Dan 4:2-8).

In the last vision of the bowl series, 'the seventh angel poured his bowl into the air and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne... And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peels of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake...' (16:17-21). The Apocalypse of Daniel also refers to 'a great sound from heaven and a fearful earthquake and a voice from the angel from heaven' preceding the great bloodshed (Ap Dan 3:7).

John hears a heavenly voice announcing the doom of Babylon (Rome) saying,

"... As she glorified herself and played the wanton,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning.

Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit,
I am no widow, mourning I shall never see.'
so shall her plagues come in a single day,
pestilence and mourning and famine,
and she shall be burned with fire..." (18:7-8)

and reproducing the merchants' words of mourning,

"Alas, alas, for the great city
that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet,
bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!
In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste." (18:17-18)

We find a striking parallel to this description in the Apocalypse of Daniel:

"And therefore woe to you, Seven-hilled Babylon, because your wealth and your glory will be proclaimed. For, boasting, you said, 'I am clothed in gold and in hyacinth and pearl and in scarlet raiment and in purple and in silver and amber and there is nothing inferior in me because kings will reign in me and potentates will come in and go out and great rulers will reside in me.'" (Ap Dan 7:1-10)

The Apocalypse and The Testaments of The Twelve Patriarchs

In the vision of the heavenly court, John sees God seated on a throne in dazzling light, surrounded by twenty four thrones, seven spirits of God, and four living creatures, singing and worshipping God day and night (4:1-11). The Testament of Levi records the heavenly scene thus:

In the uppermost heaven of all dwells the Great Glory in the Holy of Holies, superior to all holiness. There with him are the archangels, who serve and offer propitiatory sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of all the sins of ignorance of the righteous ones. They present to the Lord a pleasing odour, a rational and bloodless oblation. In the heaven below them are the messengers who carry the responses to the angels of the Lord's presence. There with him are thrones and authorities; there praises to God are offered eternally. So when the Lord looks upon us we all tremble. Even the heavens and earth and the abysses tremble before the presence of his majesty. (T Levi 3:4-9)

Of the four six-winged living creatures, one was 'like an ox' (4:7). The Testament of Naphtali also mentions such a creature:

And behold there was a bull on the earth with two great horns and an eagle's wings on its back.
(T Naph 5:6)

John sees a great portent in heaven, 'a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (12:1).

Naphtali, in his fortieth year, had a vision. Describing this vision, he says:

I saw on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem that the sun and moon stood still. And behold Isaac, my father's father, was saying to us, 'Run forth, seize them, each according to his capacity; to the one who grasps them will the sun and moon belong.' All of them ran, but Levi seized the sun and Judah, outstripping the others, grasped the moon. Thus they were exalted above the others. (T Naph 5:1-3)

In the vision of the war in heaven in which the dragon and his angels were defeated, John hears a voice referring to those who have conquered the devil 'by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony' (12:11). In the vision of the last judgement, John has a vision of the 'souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God... These came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years' (20:4). In the Testament of Judah we read:

And those who died in sorrow shall be raised in joy;
and those who died in poverty for the Lord's sake shall be made rich;
those who died on account of the Lord shall be wakened to life. (T Judah 25:4)

The Devil and Satan is seized, bound and sealed in the bottomless pit (20:2) and Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire (20:14). The Testament of Judah declares, 'There shall no more be Beliar's spirit of error, because he will be thrown into eternal fire' (T Judah 5:3). We have a similar reference in the Testament of Levi, too:

And Beliar will be bound by him
And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits. (T Levi 18:12)

In the vision of the new heaven and new earth John hears a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them...' (21:3-4). God tells Levi, 'Levi, to you I have given the blessing of the priesthood until I shall come and dwell in the midst of Israel' (T Levi 5:2). John says that all nations will flock to the

heavenly Jerusalem (21:24-27). We find such expectations in the Testaments of Levi (T Levi 18:9), Naphtali (T Naph 8:3-4), and Asher (T Ash 7:3).

The Spirit has promised the conquerors the right 'to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God' (2:7). This promise is fulfilled in the new Jerusalem where 'on either side of the river the tree of life' (22:2) flourished. Those who have the right to this tree are blessed (22:4, 19). In the new Jerusalem there will be unmitigated eternal joy (21:4; 22:2, 4-5). The Testament of Levi also speaks of the saints as having access to the tree of life and the bliss in heaven:

And he shall open the gates of paradise;

he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam,

and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life.

The spirit of holiness shall be upon them. (T Levi 18:10-11)

REFERENCE

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1949, vol 2, p 105

The Apocalypse, in keeping with the apocalyptic tradition, has a penchant for symbolic representation of persons and events. It also abounds in allusions.

The Apocalypse is the 'revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants... and he made it known by sending an angel to his servant John (1:1). The term, 'servant', as we have seen, is used for great OT personages, to Abraham, Moses, Jacob, Caleb and Joshua, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Job, and the prophets; in the NT, it is applied to the apostles, and all those who believe in Christ. Thus its use here alludes to the continuity of Judaism in Christianity, and at the same time the authority and position of the seer as well as the believers being equal in dignity to these great persons. It also means that all great people are servants of God. It is from this text that the Papal official address formula, 'servant of the servants of God', originates.

John writes to the 'seven churches that are in Asia' (1:4). The number 7, in the Bible signifies considerable measure, fullness or perfection (Gn 4:15; Prv 24:16; Mt 18:21; Mk 16:9; Lev 4:4,17; 8:11; 14:7; Num 19:4; 2 Kgs 5:10; Num 28:11; Ez 45:23; Jb 42:8; 2 Chr 29:21; Tob 12:15; Zech 3:9; Dan 9:2,24). Hence, 'seven churches' would mean the universal Christian community. The number 7 appears 54 times in The Apocalypse. There are seven churches (1:4); seven spirits (1:4, 3:1); seven candlesticks (1:12); seven stars (1:16); seven lamps (4:5); seven seals (5:1); a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes (5:6); seven angels standing before God, who were given seven trumpets (8:2); seven thunders (10:3); seven angels with seven plagues (15:1,6,8); seven golden bowls (15:7); the beast with seven heads (17:3,7,); seven mountains corresponding to seven heads (17:9), and so on. John sends greetings to the churches from 'him who is and who was and who is to come (1:4); the Lord God identifies himself as the Alpha and Omega (1:8 also in 21:6). Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. So

the phrase, 'alpha to omega' indicates the beginning and the end, completeness. The Jews expressed it as 'aleph to tau', the first and the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. We, too, use the expression 'A to Z', to indicate entirety. 'Alpha and Omega' suggests, therefore, that God is eternal and perfect; He is the source of all that is and the last resort of all the living. God revealed Himself to Moses as 'I AM WHO I AM' (Ex 3:14). The Greeks spoke of Zeus who was Zeus who is, and Zeus who will be. The Orphic worshippers said: 'Zeus is the first, and Zeus is the last; Zeus is the head and Zeus is the middle; and from Zeus all things come.' The title is given to the risen Christ elsewhere (22:13). Thus, through the imagery of Alpha and Omega, John wants to show the divine nature of risen Christ. By projecting himself as 'brother and partner' of his fellowmen 'in tribulation, in the kingdom, and in that steadfast endurance' (1:9), John alludes to the passion and death of Christ himself before his glorification, thus driving home the point that all those who suffer for their faith in Christ will also be glorified. 'A loud voice like a trumpet' (1:10) alludes to a theophany (Ex 19:16-19). It also alludes to the eschatological time (Mt 24:31; 1 Thes 4:16). The expression 'son of man' is an allusion to Jesus Christ (Mk 8:31; Mt 8:20; Lk 6:5). The imagery of the 'seven golden lampstands' (1:12) drawn from the OT sources (Ex 25:31-37; 1 Kgs 7:49; Zech 4:2) is an allusion to God's presence among his people and the essential unity of the Jewish and Christian faith. The picture of 'a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast' (1:13) is composed from the attire of the High Priest (Ex 28:4; 29:5; Lev 16:4), of the royalty (1 Sam 18:24; 24:5,12; Ez 26:16), of the divine messenger (Dan 10:5) alludes to the status of Jesus: he is the supreme mediator, majestic king, and God's messenger par excellence. The description of the head and hair of the risen Christ as 'white, as white wool, white as snow' (1:14), taken from the description of 'the ancient of days' in Daniel (Dan 7:9), is a symbol of Jesus' eternal existence and unmatched purity. From his 'mouth issued a sharp 'two-edged sword' (1:16). We come across this expression in the message to Pergamum, too (2:12,16). It symbolises the power of his word and the finality of his judgement (Is 49:2; Prov 5:4; Wis 18:60). Under the Roman government, there were two categories of Roman governors: those who had the right of the sword and those that had not. The

former had the power of life and death, i.e., on their order a man could have been executed on the spot. But the sword that Christ has is double-edged, that is, more powerful than that of the governor who persecuted the Christians, and therefore, they had nothing to fear from him. He had the 'keys of Death and Hades' (1:18). This is an allegory of the ultimate defeat of the evil powers and the establishment of the sovereign rule of Christ. In his 'right hand he held seven stars.' The stars here symbolise the seven churches to which the message is addressed. Holding the churches in the hand is an allegory for full control over as well as complete protection to the churches. God had used such an imagery to express His care for Israel (Is 50:15-16).

Ephesus comes first in the list of seven churches addressed in the Apocalypse. It was because it had a preeminent position in the time of John. It was the greatest harbour in Asia. All the roads of the Cayster Valley converged upon it. Ephesus was the meeting point of the roads from Euphrates and Mesopotamia via Colossae and Laodicea, the road from Galatia through Sardis, and the road from the southern rich Maeander Valley, and was the gateway to the Mediterranean. It was the highway to Rome for all the travellers and merchants from the above places. It made it the wealthiest and the greatest city in Asia. The Church of Ephesus is given a warning: I will move your lampstand from its place (2:5). The allegory of the lampstand suggests that Ephesus had a prominent position among the Churches, too, and in the event of their failure to remain faithful to Christ they would lose their place of importance in the hierarchy. 'Nicolaitans' (2:6,15) are the followers of Nicolaus. Nicolaus is made up of two Greek words, 'nikan' meaning 'to conquer' and 'laos' meaning people. They are closely connected with those who hold the teaching of Balaam mentioned in the letter to Pergamum. Balaam is derived from two Hebrew words, 'bela' meaning 'to conquer' and 'ha'am' meaning 'people'. 'Nicholaitans', therefore, serves as an allegory for 'conquerors of people' viz., those misleading them with their false teaching. Those who will not go astray will be granted 'to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God' (2:7). It is an allusion to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden the access to which was prohibited (Gen 2:8-9; 3:22-24). The Jews

believed that in the new age the Messiah would restore the tree of life and those who had been faithful would freely eat its fruit. Thus, the tree of life allegorically describes eternal life.

The church of Smyrna comes second on John's list. The message to the church in Smyrna is termed as the words of him 'who died and came to life' (2:8). It is an allusion to the history of Smyrna, which was said to be the loveliest of all Asian cities, a Greek colony founded about 1000 BC. It was situated at the end of the road to the Far East via Lydia and Phrygia, and commanded the trade of the rich Hermus valley. Built at the end of the long arm of the sea, it was the most convenient and the safest of all harbours. Its setting was equally beautiful. Beginning at the harbour, it extended across the narrow foothill and behind the city there rose the Pagos, a hill covered with magnificent temples and splendid buildings. This flourishing city was destroyed by the Lydians c 600 BC. For almost four centuries it was in ruins until about 200 BC when Lysimachus had rebuilt it as a planned city with great, broad, straight streets. The Christians in Smyrna, therefore, would clearly understand that the opening statement of Christ alluded to their own history. By 'your poverty' (2:9) the author may be alluding to the refugee status of the Christians in Smyrna. They were probably the immigrants from Galilee or Judea uprooted by the Jewish war (66-74 AD). A T Kraabel mentions a 2nd century inscription from Smyrna which refers to a group called 'the former Judeans'.¹ The Roman authorities who persecute Christians are referred to as 'devil'; the persecution is going to last 'for ten days,' i.e., a brief period, and the faithful would be given 'the crown of life' (2:10). A crown was presented in recognition of some meritorious work. It was presented to a victorious athlete, and to a magistrate, at the end of his term, for diligent and faithful performance of his duties; it was worn at banquets as a sign of festal joy; at times, the Greeks wore crowns when they approached the temple of their gods. Thus, through the imagery of the crown, John wants to allude to the victory of the faithful, their joy, and their proximity to God. The victorious 'shall not be hurt by the second death' (2:11). The 'second death' is a phrase which occurs nowhere in the NT except the Apocalypse. It comes again, thrice (20:6,14; 21:8). The Sadducees held that after death there was absolutely nothing

(Eccles 9:4-5); the wise and the fool would meet the same end (Eccles 2:15-16; 9:2). The Epicureans, too, shared this belief. But many of the Jews and the early Christians could not accept this. Yet they knew that death befell all. So, they believed that there were two deaths - physical and the spiritual. The first, every one invariably undergoes, the second one, those found unfaithful at the judgement of God. Hence, the 'second death' is clearly an allusion to the eternal damnation, the death of the soul (Mt 10:28; 1 Enoch 108:3-4) as contradistinguished from bodily death at the hands of the persecutors.

The third letter is to the church of Pergamum. The 'sharp two-edged sword' (2:12) and the 'sword of my mouth' (2:16) allude, as we have seen, to the efficacy and authority of the word of God. Pergamum is the throne of Satan (2:13). Scholars give different interpretations of this allegory: the temple of Zeus, the temple of Roma and Augustus, the shrine of Asclepius, and the seat of the Roman governor. Pergamum was not on par with Ephesus and Smyrna as a great commercial centre but it was one of the greatest religious centres of the ancient world. About 240 BC, in memory of the victory against the invading savage Gauls, a forty feet high magnificent altar was erected to Zeus in front of the temple of Athene which stood eight hundred feet up on the conical hill of Pergamum. Standing on the projecting ledge of the rock it look exactly like a great throne. Whole day smoke went up from it from the sacrifices offered to Zeus. Pergamum was also famous for the worship of Asclepius, the god of healing. From all over the world people flocked to his temples for healing. Charles calls it the 'Lourdes of the ancient world.' Pergamum was the administrative centre of the province of Asia. Therefore, it was the centre of Caesar worship for the entire province. It was the first to erect a temple to the godhead of Caesar, as early as 29 BC. That meant that the Christians in Pergamum lived under constant danger of death. This was the place where a Christian had to choose between Caesar and Christ; call Caesar the Lord instead of Christ under penalty of death. Antipas was executed for refusing to participate in Caesar worship (2:13). For a Christian there could not be anything more satanical than giving the title and worship due to Jesus to Caesar, or any one else for that matter. Hence, we can conclude that 'Satan's throne' is an allusion to the

seat of the Roman governor. The stumbling block of Balaam and Balak (2:14) is an allusion to the Israelites' sin of intermarrying with the Moabites and worshipping their gods under the influence of the persons of the same name (Num 25:1-2; 31:16). Sexual immorality is a metaphor for idolatry (14:8; 17:2,4; 18:3,9; 19:2). The conqueror is promised 'some of the hidden manna' (2:17). 'Manna' is the miraculous food provided by Yahweh to the Israelites during their sojourn in the desert (Ex 16:11:15; Num 7:7-9). In memory of this, a pot of the manna was kept in the ark and was placed in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple. The rabbis had a legend that when Jerusalem fell in 587 BC and the Temple was destroyed, Jeremiah had hidden the pot of manna away on mount Sinai, and that, when the Messiah came, Jeremiah would return and the pot would be recovered. According to the Jewish apocalyptic tradition the heavenly manna would descend upon the earth in the Messianic age (2 Apo Bar 29:8). Thus, eating of the hidden manna, is an allegory to the receiving of the blessings of the Messianic age. Further, the manna was called 'the heavenly food, 'the bread of angels' (Ex 16:15; Ps 78:24,25). In this sense, giving manna would be an allegory of sharing in the heavenly banquet. Also, Jesus had declared that he was the bread of life and that whoever would come to him would never hunger and whoever believed in him would never thirst (Jn 6:32:35). Hence, a share in the hidden manna would mean fellowship with Jesus himself. The 'white stone' with a 'new name' which 'no one knows except the one who receives it' may be an allusion to the current magical practices, especially the custom of wearing an amulet or charm with the belief that the god whose name was inscribed upon it would aid the bearer in times of difficulty.²

Christ has a complaint against the church of Thyatira, they 'tolerate the woman Jezebel... (2:18-20). Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon, was the wife of Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kgs 16:31). She brought her own gods with her and induced Ahab and his people to worship Baal. She killed the prophets of the God of Israel (1 Kgs 18:13) and supported four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:19). She was the cause of 'the harlotries and the sorceries' in Israel (2 Kgs 9:22). Jezebel, therefore, in the Apocalypse is an allegory for seduction. Her teaching (2:20) is an allusion to leading people astray by

advocating practices untenable with Christian principles, seriously compromising their faith. In the Bible, 'immorality' and 'adultery' are often allegories for infidelity to God (Ex 34:15,16; Deut 31:16; Ps 73:27; Hos 9:1; Mt 13:39; 16:4; Mk 8:38). By 'deep things of Satan' (2:24), the author may be alluding to 1 Enoch ch 8 where the author describes the knowledge imparted to people by the fallen angels. It may also be an allusion to the teaching that a Christian need not insist on strict ethical and moral standards but accommodate himself to the world, and that there was nothing wrong in taking part in social or business practices. The promise to conquerors of 'power over the nations' to 'rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces' recalls the imagery of one of the psalms:

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron,
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. (Ps 2:8-9)

The granting of the authority to the Christians who remain faithful till the end over others is to impress upon them that they should keep aloof. The 'morning star' is promised to those who persevere till the end (2:28). The imagery may be an allegory for resurrection; just as the morning star rises after the night, a Christian will rise after the death. The morning star is also called Lucifer, lightbearer. In this connection, giving of the morning star would suggest complete power over evil and devil. It is also possible that the author of the Apocalypse had Dan 12:3 at the back of his mind while using this imagery:

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever

in which case 'morning star' would serve as an allegory for the glory of the faithful.

The Message to the church of Sardis records, 'you have the name of being alive, and you are dead' (3:1). 'Death' is an allegory for sin. When the Prodigal Son returned, his father says, '... for this my son was dead, and is alive again...' (Lk 15:24). According to Paul faith in Christ frees one from his sins and makes him

righteous which is a passage from death to life (Rom 6:13; Eph 2:1,5), and one who is 'self-indulgent is dead even when she lives' (1 Tim 5:6). The statement is an allusion to the very history of Sardis, as we shall see. The key word is 'awake' (3:2). About seven hundred years before John wrote the letter to Sardis, Sardis, the capital of king Lydia's empire, was one of the greatest cities in the world. Its wealth was legendary. Its geographical location made it literally impregnable. The Hermus Valley is bounded on the north by the long Tmolus ridge from which a series of hills go out like spurs, each of them forming a narrow plateau. On one such plateau, about fifteen hundred feet high, stood the city of Sardis. The sides of the ridge were smooth and precipitous. Croesus was the greatest of the Sardian kings. He embarked upon a war with Cyrus of Persia, which turned out to be disastrous. His army was routed. Croesus beat a hasty retreat and took shelter in the safe citadel of Sardis. Cyrus besieged Sardis but could not enter the city. So, he announced a reward to anyone who would find an entry into Sardis. One of his soldiers named Hyeroeades discovered a fault in the rock and led an attack party. They found that all the battlements were completely unguarded. Sardians had thought themselves too safe to warrant any guard. So, Sardis fell. Cyrus made sure that there would be no attempts at rebellion. He forbade Sardians to possess any weapon and ordered them to teach their sons music, dance, and the art of playing lyre. Sardis lost its importance for almost two centuries under the Persian rule. In time it became a part of the Greek empire. After the death of Alexander, there were many claimants for power. Antiochus became the ruler of Sardis but he had to contend with Achaeus who had sought refuge in the impregnable city. Antiochus laid a siege for a year but in vein. Then one of his soldiers, Lagoras, repeated the feat of Hyeroeades. Sardis had not learnt its lesson. It fell because it was not awake, not watchful. In due course Sardis recovered. Then came the Romans. It became a Roman assize town. In 17 AD, it was devastated by an earthquake. When John wrote the letter to Sardis, the city was wealthy, but degenerate. The once great citadel was in ruins, the once great Sardians were slack and listless. They had lost their city twice because they were too lazy to be awake and on guard. Thus, by alluding to the history of the city, John wants the Christians there to realise what laziness, want of watchfulness can cost, and, therefore, be on

their guard. If they are not watchful, they will not be prepared for the attack of the devil. To 'come like a thief' (3:3) is an allegory for sudden unexpected arrival, happening. The few who had been watchful, had not soiled their garments and they would walk with Christ in white (3:4). 'Soiled garments' is an allegory for sinfulness. It should be understood with reference to white garments symbolising the victory and the glory of the faithful. The privilege to walk with Christ may be an allusion to Enoch walking with God and being taken into heaven (Gen 5:22,24); the imagery may also have a Persian background. In Persian court the king's most trusted ones were given the privilege to walk with the king in the royal garden, in which case the expression would mean fellowship with Christ. The names of the faithful would not be wiped out from the book of life (3:5). The 'book of life' motif occurs often in the Bible (Gen 32:32,33; Ps 69:28; Phil 4:3; Ap 20:15; 21:27). In the ancient world, kings kept registers of their subjects. The names of those who committed crimes against the state, or died would be struck off the register, which meant that they lost their citizenship and the corresponding rights. Hence, the names not being wiped out from the book of life is an allegory for citizenship of heavenly kingdom and eternal life.

The next letter is addressed to the church of Philadelphia. The message to the church of Philadelphia is the words of him 'who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens' (3:7). The allusion here is clearly to the prophecy of Isaiah where the prophet foretells the rejection of Shebna in favour of Eliakim as the king's steward (Is 22:22). John uses this prophecy to refer to the risen Christ as the sole mediator between God and man. The message says, 'I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut' (3:8). In the NT, the 'open door', is an allegory for missionary activity, spreading of the good news of Christ. Referring to an opportunity to preach Christ, Paul says, 'But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me (1Cor 16:9); in his second letter to the Corinthians he writes, 'When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, a door was opened to me in the Lord' (2 Cor 2:12); he asks the Colossians, 'and pray for us also, that God may open to us a door for the word' (Col 4:3); in Antioch he tells the gathering how God 'had opened a

door of faith to the Gentiles' (Acts 14:27). As in the previous cases, the allegory is based on the history of the city itself. Philadelphia was founded by colonists from Pergamum during the reign of Attalus II (BC 159-138). Attalus loved his brother, Eumenes, so much that he was called Philadelphos, i.e., one who loves his brother. The city bordered on Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia. It was so founded with the express purpose of spreading Greek language and culture to Lydia and Phrygia, and it succeeded remarkably well. The Jews who hate and slander the Christians would be made to 'come and bow down' before the Christians (3:9). We have seen how the Jews expected God to vindicate them in the Messianic age by making all nations to pay homage to them (Is 45:14; 49:23; 60:14; Zech 8:22-23). Now Christ promises his faithful that all nations including the Jews, who are instrumental in causing suffering to them would be subjected to them. The Christians in Philadelphia are exhorted, 'hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown' (3:11). The allusion here is to losing one's position due to unworthiness: Esau lost his place to Jacob (Gen 25:34; 27:36); Reuben, to Judah (Gen 49:4,8); Saul, to David (1 Sam 16:1,13); Shebna, to Eliakim (Is 22:15-25); Joab and Abiathar, to Benaiah and Zadok (1 Kgs 2:25); Judas, to Matthias (Acts 1:25-26); the Jews, to Gentiles (Rom 11:11). Christ also promises to make those who conquer the pillars of the temple, the New Jerusalem (3:12). The High Priest played a mediatory role in the earthly temple. But the heavenly temple will be built of the faithful. Thus the 'pillar in the temple' suggests not only the prime place (Gal 2:9) but also the direct personal relationship with God. The words, 'never shall he go out of it,' suggests eternal bliss. It is also an allegory for total security by allusion to the city of Philadelphia itself. Subsequent to the earthquake of AD 17, which destroyed Sardis and many other cities, there were constant tremors felt in Philadelphia and people had to flee into the open country to escape from the collapsing buildings; they lived under constant threat of being buried alive under the debris. So, the Philadelphians knew very well what is meant by not having to go out of the city every now and then: total security.

The last letter is addressed to the church of Laodicea. There were at least six cities known by that name in

the ancient world. The Laodicea of the Apocalypse was called Laodicea on the Lycus to distinguish it from the rest. It was founded c 250 BC by Antiochus of Syria and named after his wife. Laodicea was one of the greatest commercial and strategic cities of the ancient world. Three major routes passed through it: the road from Ephesus to Syria; from Pergamum and the Hermus valley to Pisidia and Pamphylia to the coast of Perga; from eastern Caria to central and west Phrygia. It gloried as a great centre for banking and finance, manufacture of cloth, and medical care. The message to the church of Laodicea is 'the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation' (3:14). The word, 'Amen' coming at the end of a solemn statement emphasised the truth and reliability of that statement. Therefore, the title, 'Amen' is an affirmation of the truthfulness and certainty of Jesus' words. The one who is an eyewitness to an incident and is honest and truthful in describing it is a faithful and true witness (Jn 21:24). Hence, this title implies that Jesus can reveal the divine secrets because he came from God (Jn 1:18,34). The last title alludes to the preexistence of Jesus: according to the Nicene Creed Jesus is 'the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all the ages... through him all things were made.'¹³

The message to Laodicea is the severest: Christ finds nothing praiseworthy among the Christians there. They are 'neither cold nor hot' (3:15). This is an allegory to their attitude of indifference for Jesus wants his followers to be the light of the world (Mt 5:14, Mk 4:21; Lk 8:16; 11:33; Eph 5:8; Phil 2:15; Jn 8:12) and the salt of the earth (Mt 5:12; Mk 9:50; Lk 14:34-35). It is also an allegory for neutrality (Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13). Laodicea thinks, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing,' not knowing that it was 'wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked' (2:17). This description alludes to the general situation of Laodicea. It was a wealthy city, so wealthy that when it was devastated by an earthquake in 61 AD, it refused outside help to rebuild it. The people thought that they were so rich that they were not in need of anything. But they were spiritually bankrupt. They dressed in good clothes, their woollen clothes were famous all over the world. But their life was shameful in the sense that their riches made them slack in

their faith. 'Nakedness' is a metaphor for humiliation or shame (2 Sam 10:4; Is 20:4; Ez 16:37-39; 23:26-29; Nah 3:5). Therefore, the Christians of Laodicea are counselled to buy 'gold refined by fire' and 'white garments' (3:18) implying that they should bear testimony to their faith amidst tribulations and persecutions and as a reward for this testimony earn their victory. Genuine faith likened to gold tested by fire is also a picture used by Peter (1 Pet 1:7). Laodicea was also famous for its eye-salve, which was exported all over the world as a sure remedy for many eye diseases. But this salve did not help them to open their eyes to their own spiritual poverty and nakedness. So, Jesus exhorts them to buy the salve from him which will cure them of their blindness. Christ reproves and chastens all those whom he loves (3:19). The statement is an adaptation of Proverbs 3:12. Reproving and chastening is a recurring theme in the Bible (Prov 13:24; 23:13-14; 27:6; 29:15,17; Sir 30:1; Ps 94:12; Job 5:17; 1 Cor 11:32; Heb 11:7-8). It is an allegory for corrective action leading to mending of ways and being saved. The imagery of standing at the door and knocking (3:20) suggests that Christ is nearby and implies the need of being ready on the part of the persons to receive him without delay. We find similar allegorical descriptions in other books of the NT, too (Lk 12:36; Mk 13:29; Mt 24:33). It may also be an allegory to the yearning of a lover: Christ yearning for the love of his faithful. It is quite possible that John drew this picture of a lover knocking at the door from the Song of Songs (5:2-6). Dining with those who open the door is symbolic of a close fellowship between the Lord and his followers. Those who remain faithful till the end will sit with Christ on his throne (3:21). Christ conquered sin and death and God made him sit on his right giving him all authority. So, sitting on his throne is a symbol of sharing in the power of God and Christ over the new creation as referred to in 2:26-27; 5:10 and 22:5.

The vision of the heavenly court (4:1-11) has close links with the visions in Isaiah (6:1-4) and Ezekiel (ch 1). It is also analogous to the visions in 1 Enoch (14:8-25; 71:5-14), 2 Enoch (chs 20-21) and the Apocalypse of Abraham (ch 18). John sees 'in heaven an open door' (4:1). An open door signifies unrestricted access. Here it is an allegory of revelation of the heavenly secrets. The seers often use the

expression in describing a vision of the heavenly beings or surroundings: Jacob has a vision of heaven and exclaims, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen 28:17); During his tour of the heavens, Baruch passes through 'very large doors' of the first heaven (3 Bar 2:2), 'a door similar to the first' in the second heaven (3 Bar 3:1) and sees a closed gate in the fifth heaven (3 Bar 11:1); God opens 'heaven's gates' and sends two angels to save the Jews from being trampled by the elephants of Ptolemy (3 Mac 6:18). The seer beholds a throne and one seated on it (4:2). God seated on his throne is a common OT picture (1 Kgs 19:22; Ps 47:8; Is 6:1). It is a symbol of the majesty and power of God. The one seated on the throne 'appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald' (4:3). The three precious stones mentioned here were part of the rich dress of the king (Ez 28:13); they were among the precious stones that adorned the breast plate of the High Priest (Ex 28:17). Thus, they symbolise the elevated rank of the person wearing them. According to Charles, the rainbow surrounding the throne (4:3) is an allusion to the divine nature of the one who is seated on the throne.⁴ But the allusion to the rainbow of Genesis signifying God's everlasting covenant with his creatures (9:8-17) cannot be overlooked. John says, 'Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders...' (4:4). In the Apocalypse, the twenty-four elders are mentioned frequently. They perform various actions: (4:4; 14:3; 4:10; 5:11,14; 7:11; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4; 5:5; 7:13). D.E. Aune opines that the vision of the twenty-four elders seated on the thrones may have been influenced by the practice in the Roman court. When the emperor heard the legal cases orally, he was seated and was surrounded by senators, men of consular rank, friends and advisors.⁵ While this may be so, we must bear in mind that John may have derived this picture from many other sources. In the OT we come across the picture of God's council (1 Kgs 19:22; Job 1:6; 2:1; Is 24:23); and so also in the Jewish apocalypses, but there, God is depicted as seated but all heavenly beings remain standing (3 Enoch ch 16). In Babylonian astrology, 24 stars, 12 to the north and 12 to the south of the zodiac, were called "judges of the All". Accordingly, the imagery may point out to cosmic order and governance. But it is also possible that John made use of the OT organisation of the priests into twenty-four divisions for offering

offering sacrifice in the Temple (1 Chr 24:7-18).

The Levites, too, were divided into twenty-four groups. Their work was to play the musical instruments (lyre, harp and cymbals) and sing psalms during the worship. In Ap 5:8 the elders are presented as performing both these duties: the priestly work of presenting the prayers of the faithful to God, and playing the harp and singing a song. Lastly, the twenty four elders may be the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, as seen in the vision of the new city of Jerusalem. The 'flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder' (4:5) are associated with a theophany, they are the manifestations of divine presence. And before the throne, there was something resembling 'a sea of glass, like crystal' (4:6). This picture may be drawn from the Biblical conception of the universe. The Jews thought that beneath the firmament lies the earth and above it, the heaven. In the creation story the waters above and below the firmament are mentioned (Gen 1:6-10). Psalms also echo this belief (Ps 104:3; 148:4). Even the sight of the Aegean Sea reflecting the sun rays on a hot summer day could have influenced this imagery. John may have also used the popular conception of the palace of Solomon. There is in the Koran a mention of a floor of glass in the palace of Solomon, which was exactly like a sea so that when the queen of Sheba came to visit him she picked up her skirts thinking that she had to wade through water. The imagery of the 'four living creatures' (4:6) is influenced by Ezekiel (ch 1) and Isaiah (ch 6). The Apocalypse of Abraham also speaks of 'four fiery living creatures' (Ap Ab 18:3-5). The creatures depicted by John symbolise the best in nature, the lion symbolising the noblest, the ox, the strongest, the man, the wisest, and the eagle, the swiftest. There is another interesting allegorical interpretation of the four creatures. Irenaeus (c AD 140-202) identified them with the four aspects of Jesus' ministry enunciated in the four Gospels. The Gospel of John is symbolised by the lion because he presents the effective and powerful working of the Son of God, his leadership and his royal power; the Gospel of Luke, by the calf because he stresses the priestly side of Jesus' work; the Gospel of Matthew, by the man because he begins with the genealogy of Jesus and depicts his humanity; the Gospel of Mark, by the eagle because he begins with the Spirit of

prophecy and emphasizes the prophetic work of Jesus. The creatures and the twenty four elders praising God symbolise the universal praise rendered to him. The triple 'holy' is derived from the vision of Isaiah (6:3). John's description of 'the twenty-four elders' who 'fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him' (4:10) is an allusion to the Persian court ritual which became a part of the ceremony of ruler cult in Hellenistic kingdoms and eventually of the Roman imperial cult.⁶ This gesture is a symbol of total submission.

John sees 'a scroll, written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals' (5:1). Scrolls or books are often the means of knowing divine mysteries. In this context the scroll is akin to the book of destiny containing the eschatological secrets. Daniel is shown 'the book of truth' (Dan 10:21) while Enoch, 'the tablet of heaven' (1 Enoch 81:1). The seven seals symbolise the highly obscure and profoundly mysterious nature of the details to be revealed. Also, under the Roman law seven witnesses were required for a will to be valid. They sealed it with their seals and the will could be opened only in the presence of all the seven witnesses or their legal representatives. John was aware of this legal procedure and it is quite possible that he wanted to present the scroll as the will of God depicting the ultimate destiny of man and the universe. One of the elders tells John that 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' can open the scroll. Both are messianic titles, the first occurs in Genesis (Gen 49:9-10) and the second, in Isaiah (Is 11:1,10). They allude to Christ. He 'has conquered'. Here the expression points out to Jesus' death and resurrection by which he has won a final victory over sin and death. Jesus is referred to as the Lamb of God. The symbol is derived from Isaiah (ch 53) and Exodus (ch 12). The Lamb was 'standing, as though it had been slain' (5:6), which is an allusion to the sacrificial death of Jesus. It had 'seven horns' symbolising fulness of power. The symbol of horned sheep or ram is found in other apocalyptic writings, too. Daniel speaks of a horned he-goat (8:8,20-21); Enoch describes the Maccabees who took up arms to liberate the Jews from the Hellenistic domination as horned lambs (1 Enoch 90:9-12). The symbol of ram is also used for Judges in Enoch (1 Enoch 89:42ff). We find the symbol of horns in the OT used to describe might

(Deut 33:17; 1 Kgs 22:11; Ps 75:4; Zech 1:18). Horns stand for honour, too (1 Sam 2:1; Ps 89:17; 112:9; 148:14). The Lamb also has seven eyes, i.e., omniscient. Thus the picture is complete: Christ is the fulfilment of the hopes of Israel; through his death and resurrection he has saved all men from the power of the Satan; he is mighty, and none can conquer him; he is all-knowing, and no one can escape his scrutiny. The acclamations and the act of worship by every creature (5:11-14) is, according to Aune, derived from the Roman imperial cult.⁷ We should note here that in the OT there was a belief that there was no scope for the dead to praise God (Ps 6:5; 30:9; 88:10-12; Is 38; 18) but John has not excluded any one, even the dead, from the reign of Christ. This universal worship brings to our mind Psalm 148 and The Song of the Three Children in the apocryphal section of the book of Daniel.

Chapter six concerns the visions of the seals. The Jews believed, as we have seen, in the dual age: the present is totally evil, and beyond repair; the coming, the golden age, an age filled with justice, righteousness, peace, and prosperity. In between, there would come a time of terror and judgment and it is this, the terrible signs and catastrophic events preceding the end, that John sees in his vision. The first four seals depict war and famine symbolically. The 'white horse' is associated with victory in war. The general on a victory march often rode a white horse. The horseman held 'a bow'. In the OT, bow was a symbol of military power (Jer 51:56; Hos 1:5; Ps 46:9). The bow was the characteristic weapon of the Parthian army. Parthia was the successor of Persia and the greatest rival of Rome in the East. In fact, a Roman army had surrendered to Vologeses, the Parthian king in AD 62. The Jews looked to Parthia as their potential liberator from the Roman dominion. In the light of ch 17, this vision may be considered as an allegorical depiction of Parthian invasion of Rome. The white horse was followed by a bright red one, and 'its rider was permitted to take peace away from the earth, so that men should slay one another' (6:4). The Jewish apocalyptic literature, as we have seen, had envisaged a total disintegration of human relationships, characterised by strife and discord. Added to this John must have had the historical facts before him, too. In the last century before Christ in Palestine alone more than 1,00,000 men had died in

abortive rebellions. The Romans had crushed the British revolt under queen Boadicea in 61 AD. Boadicea is said to have committed suicide and about 1,50,000 men had perished in that campaign. The red horse of bloody rebellion and revolutions was let loose, indeed. The black colour represents darkness, and is associated with 'sheol' the place of the dead according to the Jewish belief. The 'black horse' (6:5), therefore, is a symbol of death. Its rider 'had a balance in his hand.' The balance in the hand is an allegory for severe scarcity (Lev 26:26; Ez 4:16). John hears one of the four creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine' (6:6). Corn, wine, and the oil were the three main crops of Palestine (Duet 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; Ho 2:8,22). The words indicate that there was an acute scarcity of corn while the other two were not affected. Such a situation was not unheard of in Palestine (En 43:11). Denarius, a day's wage of a man, could buy eight to sixteen measures of corn and three to four times as much barley, because the latter was cheaper. So, John is describing a time when there would be an acute scarcity of food grains. This may be reflecting a real historical situation. During the reign of Dalmatian, we are told, there was a serious shortage of grain but a superabundance of wine such that Dalmatian had to promulgate an edict prohibiting planting of fresh vineyards and ordering the cutting down of half the vineyards in the provinces. Paleness signifies malnutrition, sickness, fear or death. In the context (6:6), the 'pale horse' (6:8) signifies sickness and death due to famine and starvation. John's description of these disasters is similar to the 'four sore acts of judgement' with which God threatens to punish the disobedient people: sword, famine, evil beasts, and pestilence (Ex 14:21). The book of Leviticus also has a description of the disasters that would befall the people if they did not obey God (Levi 26:21-26). John uses 'Hades', the nether world in Greek mythology, instead of the Hebrew 'shell' (Ps 49:15-16; Hos 13:14). The 'souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and the witness they had borne' were 'under the altar' (6:9). The Jews regarded blood as life and life as belonging to God, and God alone (Lev 17:11-14). Therefore, during a sacrifice, the blood of the bull was poured at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering (Lev 4:7). The souls under the altar, therefore, symbolise the death of the martyrs as a sacrifice to God. 'How long...?' (6:10) is a cry of

anguish. It has been the eternal cry of the innocent, helpless sufferer. The martyrs were each 'given a white robe.' (6:11). White garments refer to glorified bodies of the righteous dead as indicated already in 3:4-5,18. And they were asked to wait until the number of those who are to be martyred is complete. This thought has roots in the Jewish belief that the persecutions would stop only when the appointed time came, and the appointed number of martyrs is completed (4 Ezra4:36; Enoch 47:4). The sixth seal announces the signs of the end-time (6:12-17). The passage is full of images borrowed from prophetic and apocalyptic traditions of the end of the world: earthquake (Amos 8:8; Is 2:19; Joel 2:10; Hag 2:6; Mk 13:8), sun and moon (Amos 8:9; Is 13:10; Ez 32:7; Joel 3:4; Mk 13:24; Acts 2:20), stars (Nah 3:12; Mk 13:25), vanishing of the sky (2 Pet 3:12).

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken (Mk 13:24-25).

The list of people of seven walks of life: kings, great men, generals, the rich, the strong, slaves, and free men (6:15) signifies the entire society. Everyone, irrespective of their caste and creed, status and position is bound to be subject to the judgment of God. The imagery of hiding in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, and calling on the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them (6:15f) is derived from Isaiah and Hosea respectively.

Enter into the rock,
and hide in the dust
from before the terror of the Lord,
and from the glory of his majesty. (Is 2:10)

The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel
shall be destroyed.

Thorns and thistle shall grow up
on their altars;

and they shall say to the mountains, cover us,

and to the hills, Fall upon us. (Hos 10:8)

John has a vision of 'four angels standing at the Four Corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth' (7:1). The picture of the Four Corners of the earth is based on the conception of the earth as flat.

The vision alludes to the Jewish belief that God regulated the natural elements through his angels. Enoch is shown by the angel accompanying him in his tour of heaven the working of the winds, thunders and lightning, frost and hail, rain, etc. (1 Enoch 60:11-23); Moses is told by 'the angel of the presence' that God created

the angels of the presence,

and the angels of sanctification,

and the angels of the spirit of fire,

and the angels of the spirit of the winds,

and the angels of the spirit of the clouds and darkness and snow and hail and frost,

and the angels of resoundings and thunder and lightening,

and the angels of the spirits of cold and heat and winter and springtime and harvest and summer,

and all of the spirits of his creatures which are in heaven and on earth. (Jubilees 2:2)

The 'four winds' represent divine punishment. Jeremiah foretells the destruction of Elam in the imagery of being scattered by 'the four winds from the four quarters of heaven' (Jer 49:36). Then John sees 'another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God' (7:2). This scene must be understood in comparison with the previous, four angels ready to unleash the winds of destruction.

The sun is the source of all life on earth; he rises in the east. Therefore, east in itself is an allegory for life-giving force. The episode of the Magi reporting, 'We have seen his star in the East' (Mt 2:2) may also have been at the back of John's mind while composing this picture. The expression, 'living God' needs to be understood from the Jewish viewpoint of the gods others worshipped: they were not gods at all.

they were the work of human hands; they were only things; they were dead (Is 44:9-17; Ps 115). The living God, therefore, is, unlike the idols, powerful; He will punish the wicked and reward the just (Josh 3:10). The angels holding back the four winds are restrained till the faithful are sealed. The kings used to wear a signet ring. The seal of this ring was the authenticating mark of royal authority, power, and possession (Gen 41:42; Esther 3:10; 8:2; Dan 6:7; Mt 27:66). It was also customary for merchants to seal the goods with their seals, and the owners of vineyards, the jars of wine from their vineyards. The significance of the seal has remained much the same even today. Thus, sealing with the seal of the living God is an allegory for belonging to and being under the protection of the living God. Next, he hears 'the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand' (7:4), 12,000 each from all tribes. The number 12, as mentioned already, is a complete number; 1000 signifies a great number. Hence, 12,000 may denote quite many and its square would indicate a perfect number. But it is also possible that John wants to show that not all Jews will be saved, but only those who accept Christ as the Lord. The latter meaning becomes clear in the next vision of the multitude from all nations in 7:9. The tribe of Dan is conspicuous by its absence. The reason may be the belief that the tribe of Dan was considered idolatrous (Gen 49:17; Jgs ch 18; 1 Kgs 12:28-30; Jer 8:16-17). The rabbis believed that the Antichrist was to come from the tribe of Dan. The 'great multitude which no man could number' were 'clothed in white robes' and held 'palm branches in their hands' (7:9). We have seen that white robes symbolise victory, and so do the palm fronds (2 Mac 10:7). The imagery of washing the robes in the blood of the Lamb (7:14) is an allusion to the salvific death of Jesus through which, according to the Christian belief, he redeemed mankind (Rom 3:25; 5:9; Eph 1:7; Col 1:20; Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 1:19; 1 Jn 1:7). The imagery of washing one's clothes in the blood may be repulsive for us today. But during the time of John, it was not so. The Mystery Religions had various dramatic and moving ceremonies through which they promised the devotees rebirth and eternal life. Mithraism was one such. It had followers all over the world. It was the favourite cult of the Roman army. The most sacred ceremony of this cult was called 'taurobolium' the bath in the blood of the bull. It is said that a trench was dug over which was erected a platform with perforated planks; a sacrificial bull

was slaughtered on the platform whose blood dripped on the worshipper who knelt below; he even moistened his tongue with the blood as a sacramental act; fully 'wet' with blood he came out of the trench with the full conviction that he was 'renatus in aeternum', reborn for all eternity. John applies this practice to the death of Jesus on the cross and the its salvific effect on the believer. The allusion may also be to Baptism. It is from this imagery that the custom of presenting a white cloth to the newly baptised sprang up in the Church. Then follows a poetic description of the unending joy and blessedness of those who have washed their clothes in the blood of the Lamb (7:15-17), the imagery being drawn from various sources, particularly that of the 'Good Shepherd' (7:16 = Is 49:10; Ps 12:1-6; 7:17 = Ez 34:23; Ps 23:2; Is 25:8). They shall serve God 'day and night within his temple' (7:15). This is an allusion to the worship in the Temple of Jerusalem. It was the duty of the priests and the Levites to serve day and night before the throne of God (1 Chr 9:33). In the Jerusalem Temple, no Gentile could enter beyond the Court of the Gentiles. Anyone who disregarded this prohibition was liable to death penalty. An Israelite could enter only as far as the Court of the Israelites beyond which was the Court of the priests, and no layman had access to it. The innermost section of the Court of Priests was the Holy of Holies which could be approached by the High Priest only once a year. Now we can understand the significance of what John says: in heaven there would be no barriers, no distinction of caste, nationality, or status; all the faithful will see God face to face and serve Him without ceasing.

Immediately after the seventh seal was opened, 'there was silence in heaven for about half an hour' (8:1). This silence suggests a sense of anticipation and creates an eerie feeling, coming as it is after the terrible events of the seal's series. It is also possible that it was a silence when the prayers of the saints were about to go up. The content of the vision of the seven trumpets (8:2-11:19) is the future salvation of the persecuted Christians through the allegory of the liberation of Israelites from the slavery of Egypt. Alluding to the various plagues with which God affected the Egyptians the seer drives home to the Christians the fact that they will be definitely saved by God. The first trumpet producing 'hail and fire,

mixed with blood, which fell on the earth' (8:7) is an allusion to the seventh plague against the Egyptians (Ex 9:22-26); the second trumpet turning a third of the sea into blood (8:9), to the first (Ex 7:14-24); the third trumpet causing a third of the waters to become wormwood (8:10-11), to the prophecy of Jeremiah (9:15-16; 23:15); the fourth trumpet affecting the heavenly bodies (8:12), to the ninth (Ex 10:21-23) and to some prophetic passages (Am 8:9; Joel 3:15; Is 30:26). Wormwood is a common name for the artemisia family of plants, which are bitter. Israelites had a great dislike for them. The wormwood is an allegory for punishment for disobedience to God (Deut 29:17-18; Jer 9:14-15; 23:15).

The fifth trumpet causes a star to fall from heaven (9:1). The Jews identified the stars with angels. Hence, 'star fallen from heaven to earth' alludes to the story of the fallen angels (Gen 6:1-4; Is 14:12-15; 2 Enoch ch 18). The Apocalypse depicts the 'bottomless pit' as the intermediate place of punishment of the fallen angels, the demons, the beast, the false prophet, and Satan (Ap 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 20:1,3) and their final place of punishment is the lake of fire and sulphur (Ap 20:10,14,15). The plague of locusts unleashed by the fifth trumpet is an allusion to the eighth plague against the Egyptians (Ex 10: 3-15); the locusts appeared like 'horses arrayed for battle' (9:7). This imagery is inspired by Joel 2:4-9. The plague of the locusts serves as an allegory for terrible destruction. When they leave an area not a blade of grass would be seen, the trees would be stripped off their bark; the ground where they had settled looks as if it had been scorched with a ravaging fire. It is said that the locusts plague in Algiers in 1866 resulted in a severe famine in which about 2,00,000 people perished. The suffering caused by the locusts is such that people will long for death but will not die. The head of the locusts is called in Hebrew, 'Abaddon' which means 'destruction'; and in Greek, 'Apollyon' which means 'destroyer'. The 'demons' (9:20) are the pagan idols (Deut 32:17; 1 Cor 10:19-20). John hears the voice ordering the sixth angel to release the 'four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates' (9:14). The reference to Euphrates points out to the Parthian empire. The description of idols, 'of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk' (9:20) very closely resembles that in Daniel: ... and you have praised the gods of silver

and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know... (Dan 5:23).

The little open scroll in the hand of the angel (10:2) suggests clarity and directness in contradistinction to the sealed scroll of 5:1. The scroll is little symbolising nearness of the end, clearly indicated in 10:7. The command to eat the scroll producing bitterness in the stomach and sweetness in the mouth (10:9-10) is similar to Ez 2:8-3:3. It is an allegory to the great feeling one gets when chosen as a messenger by God and the difficulty of delivering the unpleasant message of terrible suffering.

John is given a measuring rod. He is commanded to measure the temple and the altar but prohibited from measuring the courtyard (11:1-2). The allusion here is to the holiness of things measured and the courtyard being unclean due to its occupation by the Romans. They had entered the courtyard of the temple during the Jewish war (70 A D) to put down the rebellion.⁸ John writing his book after the destruction of Jerusalem, may be also hinting that though the earthly city and the temple is no more, its heavenly counterpart is intact where the faithful worship God endlessly. The time limit of 'forty-two months' and 'one thousand two hundred and sixty days' (11:3) recalls 'a time, two times, and half a time' of Daniel (Dan 12:7), all meaning three and a half years. The expression originated in the most terrible time in the Jewish history. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in his attempt to Hellenise his empire, forced the Greek language, culture, and religion on the Jews. Naturally, the Jews opposed his attempts. About 168 BC, he invaded Jerusalem. It is said that about 80,000 Jews were either killed or sold into slavery. He decreed that the possession of the Torah by any Jew was punishable by death. His army conducted house to house search to find if anyone possessed a copy of it. Circumcising a child was declared to be a capital crime. The Jerusalem Temple was desecrated: a great altar to Zeus was erected in the Temple; swine's flesh was offered as sacrifice on the altar of the Burnt Offerings; the Temple chambers became the official quarters of the sacred prostitutes. The Jews rose against Antiochus as one man. They chose to die to safeguard their religion, and they did. Under the command of Judas Maccabaeus they resorted to guerilla warfare against

Antiochus. Finally, they succeeded in driving out Antiochus' forces, and the Temple was cleansed and restored. The period of the desecration lasted from June 168 BC to December 165 BC, exactly three years and a half. To this day the Jews commemorate the liberation of the Temple by the celebration of the 'Hanuka' in December. By using this expression John is trying to warn the Christians that the persecution against them was bound to be as severe and diabolic, and only a resolute resistance could withstand it. The identity of the two witnesses is difficult to establish. Their being likened to the 'two olive trees and the two lampstands' (11:4) makes us conclude that John has drawn his imagery from Zechariah (4:12-14). The witnesses have power to bring down fire, shut the skies, and cause plagues (11:5-6). Elijah brought down fire to destroy the captain and his fifty soldiers who had come to take him to king Ahab (2 Kgs 1:9-12) and shut the skies to cause drought as a punishment for Ahab's sin of idolatry (1 Kgs chs 17-18); and Moses brought plagues in Egypt (Ex chs 7-10). Elijah and Moses are representatives of the Prophets and the Law (Mk 9:4). Hence, the two witnesses can be identified as Elijah and Moses. The earthly temple consisted of three parts: the ulam (vestibule), the hekal (sanctuary) and the debir (holy of holies), the last containing the ark of the covenant, where nobody but the High Priest could enter, that too, only once a year to offer sacrifice. Therefore, the vision of the temple in heaven being opened and the exposure of the ark of the covenant (11:19) alludes to the future direct relationship between God and his people. The ark of the covenant was a proof and reminder to the Israelites of God's covenant with them. John uses this imagery to stress the fact that God has made a new covenant with His people in Jesus and that, in spite of the terrors and frightening events all around, He would keep that covenant and be true to His promises. The accompanying signs of 'flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail' (11:19) are characteristic features of Biblical theophanies (Ex 15:8, 10; 19:16-19; Jgs 5:4-5; Pss 18:6-19; 29; 77:16-20).

The second cycle of visions (12:1-22:5) is based on the symbol of the open scroll of 10:2. The vision of the woman and the dragon (12:1-17) has two units: the conflict between a woman in pangs of birth and

the dragon (12:1-6, 13-17) and the depiction of a battle in heaven between archangel Michael and his angels versus the dragon (12:7-9). John sees the woman 'clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars' (12:1). According to Collins, the high goddesses, such as Isis, are depicted with these attributes.⁹ The traditional Roman Catholic interpretation identified the woman with Mary, the mother of Jesus. Other suggestions are that she represents the heavenly Jerusalem, the personified wisdom, or the Church. John uses the allegory to symbolise the heavenly Israel (Hos 1:2; 2:2-3; 2:14-15; Is 50:1; 54:5-8) as he does not distinguish between the Jew and the Christian. The birth pangs allegorically point to the imminent salvation preceded by tribulations. The second portent concerning the 'dragon with seven heads and ten horns' (12:3) has mythic connotation. The Babylonian mythology has a dragon with seven heads. The Canaanite texts too mention a similar monster. Such a beast appears as an adversary of God in Jewish tradition. Isaiah prophesies about the punishment of 'Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea' (Is 27:1); he also speaks of God having 'cut Rahab in pieces' and pierced 'the dragon' (Is 51:9). The psalmist also sings of God who broke 'the heads of the dragons on the waters' and crushed 'the head of Leviathan' (79:13-14). Job, too, acknowledges God's superiority over Rahab (Job 9:13; 26:12). John himself identifies this dragon as the ancient serpent (referring probably to Genesis chapter 3) and Satan (12:9). Daniel's vision of a 'terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong' beast with ten horns (Dan 7:7) may have inspired John's depiction of the seven horned dragon. This dragon had 'seven diadems upon his head.' Seven diadems signify his tremendous power and authority. He had a long tail with which he 'swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth' (12:4). In Daniel we read that one of the horns of the ram cast down 'some of the host of the stars' (Dan 7:10). As already pointed out, Jews considered stars as angels. Hence, the casting down of the stars serves as an allegory for the revolt of Satan and his being the cause of the fall of many angels. The dragon 'stood before the woman... that he might devour her child...' (12:4). The description of the child as 'one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron' (12:5) identifies him with the Messiah (Ps 2:9). The picture here is one of enmity between Christ and the devil. As Collins

points out the imagery of the narrative is derived from the story of Apollo's birth. According to the Greco-Roman version of this story, Leto, a goddess, became pregnant by Zeus. Python, a dragon, foresaw that he would be displaced as ruler of the oracle at Delphi by Leto's son. So, he pursued her to kill her son as soon as he was born. Under Zeus' orders, the North Wind and Poseidon, god of the Sea protected Leto. She gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. Apollo killed Python. John makes use of this myth in order to counter the claim of Roman emperors, notably Nero, to be the incarnation of Apollo by adapting the narrative to indicate the birth of the Messiah who will establish the golden age.¹⁰ John could also have been influenced by the Egyptian myth of the birth of the sun-god, Horus. 'Here the goddess mother is represented with a sun upon her head. Typhon slays Horus. Hathor, his mother, is persecuted by Typhon and escapes to a floating island with the bones of Horus, who revives and slays the dragon.'¹¹ Back home, the narrative has similarities with the birth of Krishna. The woman 'fled into the wilderness... in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days' (12:6). The time of nourishment mentioned here and in verse 14 is symbolic. It recalls Daniel 12:7. It is an allegory for a standard period of distress. Then a war arose in heaven, and the dragon and his angels were defeated by the heavenly forces led by the archangel Michael, and thrown down to the earth (12:7-9). Satan is the 'accuser' of Christians before the throne of God. The defeat of this 'accuser' alludes to the reversal of the condemnation of the Christians in Roman courts, thereby implying that the accusation and condemnation by the Romans is wrong. The dragon is called 'that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world' and the accuser of the brethren. This sentence is a summary of the development of the concept of Satan. We have already seen why he is called the ancient serpent'. Originally, 'Satan' meant only an adversary' (Num 22:22; 1 Sam 29:4; 1 Kgs 5:4; 11:14,23). Later on it took the meaning of an 'accuser' (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-6; Zech 3:1). In the NT 'Satan' becomes 'Devil', from the Greek 'diabolos' meaning 'slanderer'. He is the personified power of evil: a tempter, a seducer, leading people astray. He tempts Jesus in the desert (Mt 4:1,3,5,8; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:2,3,5,6,9); he leads Judas to betray Jesus (Jn 13:2,27; Lk 22:3); he causes Peter's fall (Lk 22:31); he makes Ananias greedy

(Acts 5:3); he leads us astray (2 Cor 2:11; Eph 6:11); he is the Prince of the World (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The defeated dragon pursued the woman but 'the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness (12:14). The 'eagles wings' is an allegory for God's protection and care (Ex 19:4; Deut 32:11-12; Is 40:31). The dragon did not give up. it 'poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood' (12:15). The imagery of the flood is often used in the OT as an allegory for trials and tribulations (Ps 18:4; 32:6; 42:7; 124:4; Is 43:2). The swallowing up of the river by the earth (12:16) symbolises Nature joining Providence. The dragon going off 'to make war on the rest of her offspring' (12:17) is symbolic of the spread of persecution in Asia Minor and in other parts of the Roman empire.

John describes two visions in chapter 13: one, of a beast from the sea (13:1-10) and the other, of a beast from the earth (13:11-18). The sea, in Canaanite mythology is a deity in conflict with Baal, the god of storm and fertility. In Jewish tradition it is equivalent to abyss (11:7) and has mythic connotations (Ps 77:17). It is an opponent of God (Ps 74:13). This beast is closely linked with the four beasts in Daniel ch 7: the ten horns associates it with the fourth beast of Daniel (Dan 7:7-8); its leopardlikeness to the third (Dan 7:6); the mouth like a lion to the first (Dan 7:5). Daniel refers to the four successive kingdoms, the Babylonian, the Median, the Persian, and the Greek whereas the Apocalypse concentrates on one kingdom, the Roman. John combines the characteristics of the four beasts into one to portray the Roman empire as having imbibed all the wickedness of the preceding empires. The Roman empire and its emperors seem utterly satanic to him because of demanding universal compulsory Caesar worship. Caesar worship was more a political thing than religious; it represented loyalty to the Roman empire. But no Christian could ever say, 'Caesar is Lord' because for him 'Jesus Christ is Lord.' This was construed to be disloyalty to the empire. These 'dangerous revolutionaries' who refused to take the oath of loyalty were traitors who had to be nipped in the bud. Thus hung over the head of a Christian the proverbial Damocles' sword. The 'seven heads' of the beast point to the seven emperors: Tiberius (AD 14-37), Caligula (AD 37-41),

Claudius (AD 41-54), Nero (AD 55-68), Vespasian (AD 69-79), Titus (AD 79-81), and Domitian (AD 81-96). Nero's death was followed by a brief period of almost complete chaos. In the course of eighteen months three different men occupied the throne: Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Since their reign is insignificant, John has not included them in his list of seven heads. But he has described the beast as having ten horns to refer to the ten emperors who ruled the Roman empire from the death of Augustus to the time of writing the Apocalypse. The beast had a 'blasphemous name upon its heads.' The word 'blasphemous' means showing contempt or irreverence for God. The Roman emperors had assumed the title 'divus' or 'sebastos', which means 'divine' or 'dominus' which means 'lord', which for Christians belonged only to God and to Jesus Christ, and their attribution to any human being, therefore, was blasphemous. The healing of the mortal wound of one of its heads (13:3) is an allusion to the legend that Nero would return to regain power over Rome.¹² The Sibylline Oracles, too, points out to such a legend (4:119-124, 137-148; 5:93-110, 361-384). The 'blasphemy' (13:6) alludes to the claim to divine worship. The beast from the earth had 'two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon' (13:11). With this imagery, John wants to present the beast as a counter image of Jesus, the Lamb. The same beast is portrayed as a false prophet in 16:13; 19:20; 20:10. The description in 13:11 is analogous to the false prophets 'in sheep's clothing' in Matthew 7:15. The beast has a delegated power (13:12). It receives power from the beast from the sea (Roman empire). This allusion to the imperial cult (13:12-17) leads us to identify the beast with Asiarchs whose main responsibility was to protect and promote the imperial cult. The beast 'works signs' (13:13) in order to lead people astray. In the other books of the New Testament, too, we find such themes. False Christs and false prophets will show signs to mislead the faithful (Mt 24:24; Mk 13:22; 2 Thes 2:9). Those who refused to worship the image of the beast were to be slain (13:15). During the reign of Trajan (AD 98-117) those who were accused of being Christians were asked to invoke the gods, curse Christ and worship the image of Trajan in order to ascertain whether they were true Christians or not, and those who were, were put to death as traitors. The number of the beast is 666 (13:18). However some manuscripts read it as 616. Many hypotheses are put forward to solve this puzzle. All agree that the solution is to be

found in 'gematria', since it refers to the number of a man, viz., sum of letters that make up the man's name. The Hebrew and Greek letters have a numerical value. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica the number 616 was, probably, associated with Caius Caligula who wanted to install his statue in the Jerusalem Temple. It was later applied to Nero who was thought to be the antichrist. During the siege of Jerusalem in 70, Titus must have seemed the antichrist. Probably, he was associated with the ancient 'titans' (the demonic personalities) and made to fit this number, for 'teitan' totals 666. Beatus explains that the sign and number of the beast itself signifies antichrist: the monogram of Christ is $\chi\rho$; 'anti' means opposite; X , therefore, represents antichrist; X=600, I=10 and ζ =6, the last being an early form of Epistemon.¹³ However, at present, the common opinion of the Biblical scholars is that the beast stands for Nero Caesar whose name in Hebrew may be written as NRWN QSR: 50+200+6+50+100+60+200 = 666.¹⁴ As already pointed out in this study, the digit '6' stands for imperfection and a triple repetition of it shows the ultimate imperfection and evil. The Latin form of the name, if written without the final 'N' of NRWN, would add up to 616. Here again a question comes to our mind: Why was it that Nero was considered the devil incarnate? We have to find the answer in the life and character of Nero himself. His father, Cnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, was notorious for his wickedness. He had murdered a man just for refusing to drink more wine; deliberately run over a child in his chariot on the Appian Way; in a brawl in the Forum, gouged out the eye of a Roman knight; and finally died of dropsy caused by his debauchery. His mother, Agrippina, is said to be the most terrible woman in history. When Ahenobarbus had come to know that she was pregnant, he had cynically remarked that nothing but a monster could come out of their union. When Nero was three she was banished by Caligula; Nero was entrusted to the care of two slaves, one a barber and other a dancer. Claudius revoked her banishment. She came back with a single agenda, making Nero the emperor. She worked to achieve her ambition with all the passion and intrigue which only she was capable of. Claudius had two children, Octavia and Britannicus, but she persuaded him to adopt Nero. Nero was eleven then. She pestered Claudius to marry her, though he was her uncle, and succeeded.

Then she appointed Seneca, the renowned philosopher, and Afranius Burrus, the great soldier, as Nero's tutors. By and By, Britannicus, the heir -apparent, was sidelined and Nero was given the limelight. Now Claudius had no use for Agrippina and she planned to get rid of him. She arranged to poison him by a dish of mushroom, and when the poison was slow to act and Claudius lay in coma she inserted poison down his throat with a feather. As soon as Claudius died, Nero was lead forth as the emperor, the army having been bribed to support him. Nero was not worried about governance. He was busy with fine arts. Rome was ruled for five years by the wise Seneca and the able Afranius. Then things changed. Nero stopped being a cultured dilettante and indulged in vicious crimes. At night he would roam the streets with other gilded young men and attack whom he fancied. He killed his step brother, Britannicus, as a possible rival. He had insatiable lust; it is said that no young man or young woman was safe from his advances. He publicly married a youth named Sporus in a state wedding; he took Popaea Sabina, the wife of Otho his close friend, as his mistress and kicked her to death when she was with child. He had a great passion for building. It is alleged that Nero set Rome on fire in order to have the glory of rebuilding it. The fire burnt for a week. He not only did nothing to extinguish it but also hindered any attempt to control it. When the people suspected him to be the culprit, he made the Christians the scapegoat and began the persecution. His sadistic nature invented horrible forms of torture: he had the Christians sown up in animal skins and set his savage hunting dogs upon them; he had them put in sacks with stones and thrown into the Tiber; he had them coated with pitch and set them alight and used them as torches to light up his gardens. His insanity grew unchecked. Seneca was forced to end his life; Afranius was poisoned; anyone who incurred his displeasure was sure to be terminated. Even Agrippina could not tolerate this insanity. She attempted to reign him in. Nero was furious. He repeatedly tried to murder her by poisoning, by causing the roof of her house to collapse, by sending her on a voyage in a boat designed to wreck. When all these attempts did not succeed, he sent his attendant, Anicetus, to kill her with a dagger. When Agrippina saw him, she is reported to have said, 'Strike my womb because it bore a Nero.' Even God must have been fed up with this man. People could no longer put up with his madness. Julius

Vindex rebelled in Gaul, followed by Galba in Spain. Finally, the Senate plucked up courage and declared Nero a public enemy. In the end he committed suicide. No doubt there could be no person more satanic than Nero to serve as a paradigm for evil incarnate, the antichrist.

The 144,000 have the name of the Lamb and his Father on their forehead (14:1). This image alludes to those who had the mark of the beast on them in 13:6, who are not saved. They have 'not defiled themselves with women' 14:4). Here the allusion seems to be to the Watchers who are said to have had sexual relations with women (1 Enoch 7:1; 9:8; 15:1-7). Collins opines that it points to the practice of sexual continence considered superior to the married state.¹⁵ Their being 'the first fruits' evokes the imagery of sacrifice. The Israelites were to offer the first fruits of their grounds (Ex 23:19) and the firstlings of their herd and their flock (Deut 12:6) to the Lord. The expression may also suggest the first resurrection as in Paul (1 Cor 15:20-23). The announcement of the fall of Rome (14:8) echoes the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah (Is 21:9; Jer 51:8). It is said to have caused 'all nations drink the wine of her impure passion.' This imagery is drawn from Jeremiah,

Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand,

making all the earth drunken;

the nations drank of her wine,

therefore the nations went mad. (Jer 51:7)

The picture here is one of a prostitute soliciting a man and leading him into immoral activities. Rome is forcing the Christians to render the worship, which rightfully belongs to God to Caesar. The apostate, i.e., one who worships the beast, will incur the wrath of God; he will be severely punished. He will 'drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night' (14:9-11). Their torment with fire and Sulphur alludes to the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:28). The description of the torment is

of the torment is analogous to a passage in Isaiah depicting God's vengeance on the wicked (Is 34:8-10). The severity of the punishment of those who give up their faith and render Caesar-worship serves as a warning to desist from apostasy and an incentive to keep their faith. It alludes to the blessedness of the faithful by contrast. John's vision of 'a cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man' (14:14) is analogous to the vision in Daniel (Dan 7:13-14). It alludes to the power of Christ to judge the nations and his final victory. The imagery of the harvest and vintage (14:14-20) is derived from Joel 3:13 where the images of harvest and winepress are used to describe a holy war between the divine warrior and the oppressors of Judah (Joel 3:19). But John universalises this imagery to indicate God's judgement on the entire earth (14:15-16,18-19). In Joel the battle is associated with Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 3:16-17) while for John it is "Babylon", i.e., Rome. The allusion becomes clear if we compare 14:20 with 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21. Further, Rome is thus described in the Jewish apocalyptic literature, too (2 Bar 11:1; Sib Or 5:143). The angel having 'power over fire' (14:18) recalls Jubilees 2:2 and 1 Enoch 60:11-21). Treading of the winepress (14:20) owes its imagery to Isaiah (63:1-3). In Isaiah the divine warrior slays Edom and Bozrah (63:1) whose 'lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments' (63:3). John uses the imagery as an allegory for God's judgement in terms of a battle. 'The winepress was trodden outside the city.' This alludes to the Jewish belief that Jerusalem was the holy city of the chosen people of God and the final judgment of the nations would take place there (Joel 3:2,12; Zech 14:1-4). The blood flowing from the winepress 'for one thousand six hundred stadia' is symbolic of the entire Jewish nation coming under the judgment for the length of Palestine from north to south was approximately sixteen hundred stadia (furlongs).

Now, John is given a new series of visions: the seven bowls. Like in the other series, this one also is interwoven with the themes of persecution, judgement and salvation. This series recapitulates the vision of the seven seals and the vision of the seven trumpets in that it deals with the same subject matter: eschatological events. But the perspective in which it describes these events is different. It has the

themes of justice and vindication in common with the seven seals and the involvement of natural elements and the interplay of Exodus themes as in the seven trumpets. The bowls differ from the trumpets in so far as they specify the adversaries of God and the reason for divine judgement. The seer beholds a 'sea of glass mingled with fire' (15:2). This expression is already commented upon earlier (4:6). The conquerors 'sing the song of Moses' (15:3). The allusion here is to the victory song of Moses after the deliverance of the Israelites from the slavery of the Egyptians (Ex ch 15). The 'song of the Lamb' is, once again, an allusion to the victory of Christ. Then John saw 'the temple of the tent of witness in heaven opened, and out of the temple came seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen, and their breasts girded with golden girdles' (15:5-6). 'Tent of witness' also called 'tent of testimony' was the tabernacle during the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness (Num 9:15; 17:7; 18:2). It contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The angels coming out from this place with plagues indicates that the plagues are the consequence of disobedience to God's law. The temple was filled with 'smoke' (15:8). The imagery of smoke or cloud is employed in the OT as a symbol of God's glory (Is 6:4; Ex 40:34-35; 1 Kgs 8:10-11). There is an interesting detail here: no one could enter the temple till the people were affected with the seven plagues, which if read with the prayers of the saints followed by an interlude in the catastrophic events described in 7:15-8:1 makes it clear that there was no scope of halting the wrath of God by intercessory prayers.

The chapter 16 concerns the pouring out of the seven bowls of the wrath of God on the earth. They contain the last terrible plagues which have a lot of similarities with the ten plagues in Egypt described in the book of Exodus, and the terrible events that followed the sounding of the seven trumpets in the Apocalypse chs 8-11. The following chart will help us to compare them.

Egyptian Plagues

Trumpet Terrors

Bowl Terrors

Water turned into blood
(Ex 7:20-25)

Frogs (Ex 8:5-14)

Lice (Ex 8:16-18)

Flies (Ex 8:20-24)

Cattle Plague (Ex 9:3-6)

Boils and sores
(Ex 9:8-11)

Thunder and Hail
(Ex 9:22-26)

Locusts (Ex 10:12-19)

Darkness (Ex 10:21-23)

Slaying of the first-born
(Ex 12:29-30)

Hail, fire and blood destroying a third
of vegetation (8:7)

Flaming mountain cast into sea turns a
third of sea into blood (8.8)

The star Wormwood falls into water
making them bitter and poisonous
(8:10-11)

One third of the sun, moon and
stars darkened (8:12)

Falling star unlocks the abyss
releasing smoke and demonic
locusts (9:1-12)

loosing four angels of destruction,
coming of demonic cavalry from
the east (9:13-21)

Announcement of the final victory
of God and raging of nations
of nations (11:5)

Ulcerous sores (16.2)

Sea becoming like a
dead man's blood (16.3)

Rivers, fountains become
become blood (16.4)

Scorching and burning
hot sun (16.8)

Darkness over the
animal kingdom (16:10)

Euphrates dried to enable
invasion by hordes of
from east (16:12)

Pollution of air,
terrors in nature, thunder,
earthquake, lightning,
hail (16:17-19)

The first four bowls (16:2-4,8) allude to the entire universe. According to Collins, the earth, the sea, the fresh waters, and the sun (heavenly body) represent the traditional Jewish cosmology.¹⁶ The first plague, associated with the first bowl, is an adaptation of the sixth plague against the Egyptians (Ex 9:8-12); the second (16:3) recalls the first against the Egyptians (Ex 7:14-24) and is similar to 8:8-9 while the third (16:4) is an allusion to it. The first plague against the Egyptians turned the water of the Nile and all the fresh waters in Egypt into blood. The fifth bowl was poured on 'the throne of the beast' (16:10). Throne is a symbol of power. Hence 'throne of the beast' alludes to the city of Rome. As a consequence, 'its kingdom was in darkness.' This is an allusion to the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex 10:21-29). Consequent to the pouring of the sixth bowl on the river Euphrates, the river 'dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east' (16:12). The imagery is drawn from the Israelites crossing the Red (Reed) Sea (Ex 14:21-25). The allegory of the dried up river points to the salvation of the persecuted Christians, as was the case with the Israelites. According to Peters, 'the kings of the east' in the context refers to the Parthians.¹⁶ The vision of the Parthian cavalry coming sweeping across the Euphrates would have struck terror into even the bravest hearts. Further, we have seen already that it was from Parthia that the Nero redivivus (resurrected Nero) was expected to come to attack Rome. John could also have drawn this imagery from an unusual historical event. According to Herodotus, the ancient historian, Cyrus could not overcome the defences of Babylon. So, he hit upon a brilliant plan: entering the city by crossing the river where the city had no defences. He kept the attack on Babylon going, and at the same time, with a section of his army, 'attacked' the river. By a magnificent engineering feat the course of the river was deflected into a lake. As the water level in the river began to go down making a temporary passage, his army crossed over and captured the city. This incident makes the drying up of the river an allegory for defeat of the persecutors of the Christians. Also, the OT imagery of drying up of waters used as a symbol of God's redeeming act in His peoples' favour (Ex 14:21; Jos 3:17; Jer 51:36; Is 11:16; Zech 10:11) would have suited John very well. From the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet issue forth-demonic spirits like frogs (16:13). The likening of these spirits to 'frogs' may be an allusion to the second Egyptian plague (Ex 7:25-8:15). In

Zoroastrianism, frogs are agents of Ahriman, the power of darkness; they are said to cause plagues. The OT includes them in the list of unclean animals (Lev 11:10). Their croaking is generally considered to be monotonous meaningless exercise. John seems to have put all these things about the frogs together to depict the evil genius of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet by presenting their utterances as fully wicked: unclean, futile, aiding the powers of darkness, and causing plagues. The 'false prophet' is described in 19:20 as one 'who had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.' In 13:13-14 we read that the beast which rose out of the earth 'works great signs...it deceives those who dwell on earth.' This helps us to identify the false prophet as the entire administrative mechanism which enforced Caesar worship. The function of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet was to entice the kings to assemble for battle on the great day of God (16:13-14). The description alludes to the prophecy of Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:21-23). Through this allegory, John wants to show that God's judgement will surely fall on those aligned against God just as it fell on Ahab. The prophetic saying, 'Lo, I am coming like a thief' refers to the parousia (second coming) of Christ (Mt 24:43-44; Lk 12:39-40; 1 Thes 5:2,4; 2 Pet 3:10). Its insertion here would mean that 'the great day of God the Almighty' is the second coming of Christ when he will judge all, the living and the dead. The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet assembled the kings of the whole world for a battle against God at the place called 'Armageddon' (16:16). The word means 'mount of Megiddo'. The main route between Egypt and Syria ran through the plain of Esdraelon (Jezreel). In the southern side of the plain is situated the Carmel mountain range. It had four passes. The army or the caravan from Egypt had to pass through one of these to reach the plain. There were four fortresses, Jokneam, Megiddo, Taanach, and Ibleam, guarding these passes. Of these Megiddo was the strategically most important. This was the scene of many a great battle in history. It was here that the greatest of the Egyptian Pharaohs, Thutmosis III won the final victory over the remnants of the Hyksos who ruled Egypt c 1667-1559 BC, forging the Egyptian empire. This was the plain where Barak and Deborah defeated Sisera and his chariots (Jgs 5:19-21). It was here that Jehu killed Ahaziah (2 Kgs 9:27). Solomon and the later kings had fortified this city (1 Kgs

9:15). Josiah, the most pious of Judah's kings died here trying to block the march of the Egyptian army against Nineveh (2 Kgs 22:19). John has chosen this place for the scene of the greatest battle of all, the cosmic battle in which God's adversaries will be finally vanquished. The catastrophic upheavals following the pouring of the seventh bowl of the wrath of God (16:17-21) are such that the world has never known. They symbolise the severity of the punishment of the unrighteous and the role Nature plays in it.

Chapter 17 and 18 delineate the fall of Babylon, i.e., Rome. The angel shows John 'the great harlot' (17:1). The prophets use the allegory of harlot to denounce a city. Sometimes Jerusalem is called a harlot (Is 1:21; Ez 16:15-45) while at others, it is other nations: Nineveh (Nah 3:4) and Tyre (Is 23:16-17). The harlot is 'seated upon many waters' (17:1). This description points to Babylon (Jer 51:13). Further, the author himself identifies her as Babylon in 17:5. Thus Babylon is allegorically used by John to describe the wrongdoings of Rome: claim to divinity (17:2), luxurious and extravagant life (17:4; 18:3), and persecution of Christians (17:6). It is also possible that John is denouncing the worship of the goddess Roma by calling the deity, 'harlot' (17:7). The name written on her forehead is an allusion to the practice in Rome of writing the names of the prostitutes in public brothels on their foreheads. The description of the harlot, 'arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls,' comes from the temple prostitutes of Asia Minor. There is also another possibility. It is said that the Roman empress, Messalina (wife of the weak Claudius) used to go out at night to public brothels and offer herself as a common prostitute. For John she may have perfectly fitted as the type for depicting the immorality of Rome. The beast that John sees, 'was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition' (17:8). Here John uses 'beast' to refer to the Roman emperor. The description points to Nero and the legends about him. Nero was, i.e., ruled Rome. He is not, i.e., dead. He will ascend from the bottomless pit, i.e., rise from Hades. He will go to perdition, i.e., will be condemned during the Last Judgement and thrown into hell as indicated in 19:20. The seven heads of the beast are 'seven mountains' (17:9), an allusion to Rome, a city built on seven hills. The seven heads are 'also seven kings, five of whom

have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while' (17:10). The five fallen emperors are: Augustus (27 BC- 14 AD), Tiberius (14-37), Gaius Caligula (37-41), Claudius (41-54), and Nero (54-68), ignoring the three weak persons (Galba, Otho and Vitellius); one is: this refers to the sixth emperor Vespasian (69-79); the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while: this refers to Titus, who due to ill health, had a very short reign (79-81). John goes on to say that 'the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition' (17:11). 'The beast that was and is not' refers to Nero who as resurrected is the eighth but belongs to the seventh. This should mean that Nero redivivus is identified with Titus. But Titus' reign was not as terrible as that of Domitian. Further, the Apocalypse, in general, points to the persecution during the reign of Domitian (81-96). Hence, John, though actually writing during the reign of Domitian and identifying the resurrected Nero with Domitian, may be deliberately antedating here, in tune with the apocalyptic writings. To John Domitian was Nero reincarnated; the incarnate evil, epitome of the evil of the Roman empire. The ten horns of the beast represent 'ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast' (17:12). When Nero realised that he could no longer remain in power, he considered fleeing to Parthia. After his death a legend arose that he was not dead and that he would return with his Parthian allies to regain power over Rome and defeat his enemies.¹⁸ The legend is reflected in 17:12-14, 16-17. John has adapted this legend to suit his purpose. The battle between Nero and his Parthian allies against Rome would take place first, and Nero would assume power. This is the divine judgement against "Babylon" referred to in 14:8 and 16:19. We find an allusion to this battle early on in the book (6:2, the first seal and 9:13-21, the sixth trumpet). The sixth bowl (16:12-16) is a subtle introduction to both this battle whose outcome is depicted in 17:16-18 and the immediately following final battle between the Lamb and the beast (the demonic Nero). The allusion to this final battle can be found in 6:12-17 (sixth seal), 11:15-19 (seventh trumpet) and 14:14-20 (vision of the harvest and the vintage). Its description begins in 17:14 but resumes only in 19:11.

Chapter 18 depicts judgement over "Babylon" in the form of a dirge. It is an allegory depicting the utter destruction and desolation of Rome.

It has become a dwelling place of demons,
a haunt of every foul spirit,
a haunt of every foul and hateful bird (18:2).

The description is analogous to that in Isaiah (Is 13:19-22; 34:11-15), Jeremiah (Jer 50:39-40) and Baruch (Bar 4:35). The 'impure passion' is the claim and the desire to divinity and 'fornication' stands for idolatry. The reference to the merchants growing 'rich with the wealth of her wantonness' (18:3) alludes to Isaiah (Is 23:18) by contrast where the 'merchandise' and the 'hire' of Tyre 'will be dedicated to the Lord; it will not be stored or hoarded...' The call to the people to move out of Babylon in order to escape the plagues (18:4-5) allude to the prophecies of Jeremiah (Jer 51:45; 51:9). It is an allegory for the essential dichotomy between the Christian way of life and the world (Jn 17:9,14,16; Rom 12:2). Babylon is to be rendered 'double for her deeds' and 'a double drought' is to be mixed 'for her in the cup she mixed' (18:6). 'Double' is a symbol of abundance. Thus vengeance against Babylon for her misdeeds is to be without limit. The reason for her punishment is her haughtiness (18:7). The rest of the chapter contains a threefold lamentation: of the kings (18:9-10), of the merchants (18:11:16), and of the shipmasters and sailors (18:17-19), the kings because they have lost their promoter and protector in their ungodly ways, the merchants because they have lost a valuable customer, the shipmasters and sailors because they will be out of job. The final picture is grim indeed, Rome is desolated, devastated, and obliterated (18:21:24). The symbolic action of throwing a stone into the sea and comparing the disappearance of Babylon to the disappearance of the stone (18:21) is analogous to the prophetic action in Jeremiah (Jer 51:59-64).

John presents God's victory over "Babylon" (19:1-5) as divine judge and warrior. The victory song bursts forth with the word 'Hallelujah'. It is one of the two Hebrew words that have been retained in common

religious use in Christian worship - the other being, 'Hosanna'. But, interestingly, the Apocalypse is the only book of the Scriptures where it is used. It occurs four times in this chapter. It means 'Praise the Lord'. God is praised for several² reasons. His judgements are true and just; He has judged the harlot and punished her; He has avenged on her the blood of His martyrs; the smoke from her goes up for ever and ever, all recapitulating earlier images, the last symbolising the destruction being final and complete so that Rome will never again rise from her ruins. His kingship and the marriage of the Lamb form the subject matter of 19:6-8. God is called Almighty. Interestingly, out of the ten times in the NT, this title for God occurs nine times in the Apocalypse (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 17:7,17; 19:6,15; 21:22). There was never a time in history when such force was drawn up against the Church and, therefore, John uses it repeatedly to impress upon his persecuted brethren the fact that God is mightier than the might of their persecutors. The sequence of victory in battle, accession as king, and the sacred marriage is a Canaanite mythic pattern.¹⁹ The 'marriage of the Lamb' (19:7) is an allegory of the close relationship of Christ with his faithful. The depiction of the marriage of the Lamb here alludes to the fulfilment of the Jewish Messianic expectation (Is 25:6) and the words of Jesus himself (Mt 8:11; 26:29). The 'Bride' is those who persevere till the end. The angel forbidding John to worship him and commanding him, 'Worship God' (19:9-10) is a reminder that worship is to be rendered to God and God alone and to none other. After this, John describes the Second Coming of Christ (19:11-16). He sees 'the Faithful and True'. The title is given to Christ in 1:5 and 3:7,14. He is seated on a 'white horse' symbolising victory march. There are 'many diadems' on his head. His eyes are like flames of fire. We have met this description in 1:14 and 2:18. There were many diadems on his head. Many diadems, i.e., unnumbered, signify unlimited, immeasurable and supreme power in contradistinction to that of Satan in 12:3 and of the beast in 13:1. His robe 'dipped in blood' (19:13) together with treading 'the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God' (14:17-20) recalls the vision of the harvest and vintage (14:14-20), which is an allusion to Isaiah (Is 63:1-6. The imagery of the Messiah as a warrior whose clothes are soaked with the blood of his slaughtered enemies is common in the Jewish apocalyptic literature. He is called the Word of God. This

expression referring to Jesus is found in the first chapter of the Gospel according to John. For the Jews 'word' was not a mere sound or symbol; it was powerful and as good as an action performed which cannot be revoked (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 26; 27:1-37; Wis Sol 18:15-16; Heb 4:12). Therefore, the expression symbolises the power and might of the victorious Christ. The following description (19:14-16) reinforces the image. Then follows a horrifying description of the doom of the enemies of Christ (19:17-21). The call to the banquet (19:17-18) is the dramatic prelude to the battle described in the verses immediately following. The description is analogous to Ezekiel (Ez 39:17-20) and Isaiah (Is 34:1-7) where the corpses of enemy warriors and horses are described as a sacrificial slaughter. The bloody picture is a common feature of the Jewish apocalyptic literature. The capture of the beast and the false prophet (19:20) symbolises the final defeat of Satan's agents; their being thrown into the lake of fire is the punishment meted out to them for their sins.

Now it is the turn of the Satan; he is bound 'for a thousand years' (20:2). The number 1000 symbolises a considerable quantity, a long period: God is kind to 1000 generations (Ex 20:6; Jer 32:18); 1000 years are like a day for God (Ps 90:4); a day in his service is worth more than 1000 others (Ps 84:11). Binding of Satan is analogous to the binding of evil angels during the deluge to be confined and punished until the last judgement in Enoch literature (1 Enoch 10:4-8; 18:11-19:3; 21:1-10). Those who died for their faith 'shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years' (20:10). This belief does not occur in any other book of the NT. Nevertheless, in the early Church it gave rise to the doctrine of Milleniarism or Chiliasm: that for a thousand years before the final end Christ will rule this earth with his saints; after that will come the final struggle, the general resurrection, the last judgment, and the final consummation. The belief originated in the Jewish milieu. In the earlier times the Jews thought that the Messianic kingdom of righteousness would last for ever (Dan 2:44; 7:14,27). But slowly their thinking changed. Towards the last century BC, they began to think that the Messiah will rule the earth for a limited time, and then the final consummation would come (1 Enoch 93:3-10; 2 Bar 40:3). Then came the

speculation on the limited reign of the Messiah. It was differently defined. One view was that it would last for 400 years (4 Ezra 7:28-29). This view was based on Genesis (Gen 15:13) and Psalm 90:15. Some thought that it would last for 6000 years, the time taken for creation. This figure was arrived at by taking a day as 1000 years (Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8). Christians referred to as priests is also found elsewhere (1 Pet 1:9). The reference to Gog and Magog (20:8) is an allusion to Ezekiel chs 38-39. This imagery helps the seer to give the battle a cosmic dimension. Now comes the final judgment (20:11-15). John says that 'books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done' (20:12). We have seen earlier that the judgment based on ones' deeds recorded in the 'books' existed in Judaism (Dan 7:10; 1 Enoch 90:20; 2 Bar 24:1, 4 Ezra 6:20). We have also seen the symbolism of 'the book of life' (Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28; Is 4:3; Phil 4:3; Ap 3:5; 13:8).

The seventh vision in the last series concerns new creation: new heaven, new earth and new Jerusalem (21:1-8). Its main focus is on salvation. The creation of a new heaven and a new earth is seen as the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah (65:17ff). The disappearance of sea is analogous to the confinement of the dragon in 19:20 and the beast in 20:10 as well as the elimination of Death and Hades in 20:14, and symbolises the definitive victory of God over Satan and his agents. The vision is accompanied by the declaration that 'the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them' (21:3). This announcement alludes to God's promises to his people in the past (Lev 26:11-12; Ez 37:27). God also promises to 'wipe away every tear from every eye...' (21:4) symbolising an end to all pain and suffering and the establishment of real everlasting peace and happiness. The promise recalls 7:17 and Isaiah 25:8. Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls showed John the holy city of Jerusalem coming down from heaven 'like a most rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal' (21:11-13). The description is analogous to Isaiah 54:11-12. The description of the twelve city gates is similar to Ezekiel 48:30-35. The twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of

Israel symbolise the unification and gathering of Israel, a Jewish apocalyptic expectation of the Messianic times. The twelve foundations of the wall had the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (21:14). By integrating the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles into the New Jerusalem, John shows the universal character of Christianity as well as the essential unity of the Jews and the Christians. Then John saw the angel measuring the city (21:15-17). The city was foursquare. In the ancient world, it was common for cities to be built in square shape; Nineveh and Babylon were in the form of a square. But what is interesting is that the holy city was not only square but also a perfect cube (21:16). The cube stands for perfection: the altar of the burnt-offering, the altar of the incense, and the High Priest's breastplate were all in cubic shape (Ex 27:1; 30:2; 28:16); the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple was a perfect cube (1 Kgs 6:20); this shape comes repeatedly in Ezekiel's vision of the new Jerusalem and the new temple (Ez 41:21; 43:16; 45:2; 48:20). Hence the holy city in the shape of a cube is an allegory for the dwelling place of God. Its measurement was 12000 stadia, i.e., a perfect area. Its wall measured a hundred and forty four cubits. Once again we have a perfect number here. The foundations of the wall was adorned with twelve precious stones and the twelve gates had twelve pearls (21:19-21). The twelve stones were worn by the High Priest on his breastplate (Ex 28:17), and nine of them tally with John's list. It looks John has used the High Priest's breastplate as his model. In this case the symbolism is clear: the wall and the gates are like the High Priest, i.e., inside the wall is the dwelling place of God and all who enter its gates will be in His presence. According to Charles, these pearls, in John's time, represented the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, but, here, are listed in reverse order.²⁰ The purpose may be to show that the constellations are no more the governors of the universe in the new creation. The absence of the temple in the new city (21:22) is a clear indication that there will be full fellowship between God and man in the new Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem shall be a beacon to the nations (21:24-26). This imagery alludes to chapter 60 in Isaiah. The city will not have anything unclean (21:27). Formerly nothing unclean could enter the temple but now the whole city is clean and holy as foreseen by Zechariah (Zech 14:20-21).

The vision of the 'river of life' issuing forth from the throne of God and the Lamb (22:1) alludes to the water flowing from the threshold of the temple in Ezekiel 47:1-10. Water is the symbol of life. Hence the river of life may be standing for fulness of life. It is also possible that John has the Spirit in mind, the giver of life as described in the Gospel according to John (Jn 7:37-39). The tree of life on either side of the river (22:2) is an allusion to the original bliss of the Eden (Gen 2:9); its leaves meant for healing of the nations alludes to the restoration in Ezekiel 47:12. John's description of the tree of life is parallel to the Rabbinical picture of the tree of life in paradise. They conceived it spread over the entire paradise, with five hundred thousand fragrant perfumes, and with abundant fruits, each one with different pleasant taste. The description, therefore, may be taken as an allegory for abundant spiritual gifts: eternal life, joy and happiness. That is the promise on which the vision ends (22:3-5). The rest of the chapter is the summing up of the major themes of the books by way of recapitulation by various characters.

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CONCLUSION

The book of the Apocalypse is a great work of literature. It manifests many contemporary literary features: it exhibits a lot of similarities to the prophetic literature; it has some characteristics in common with the epistolary literature; it also has some affinity to the Greek Tragedy; but it is the apocalyptic literary framework to which it predominantly adheres.

The Apocalypse as Prophetic Literature

The apocalyptic had its beginnings in passages in the works of the prophets. It has been said that the apocalyptic was really an attempt to rationalise and systematise the predictive aspect of prophecy. Like the prophets, the apocalyptists see in the unfolding of history a purpose. The evil in the world may confound and confuse man but the divine will cannot be frustrated; the present ungodly phase and the consequent trials and tribulations will be replaced by the just and righteous rule of God established after vanquishing the evil forces and their agents. There are, however, significant variations. The prophet, to a large extent, announced his message orally, the written form is later codification. The apocalyptist, on the contrary, conveys his message in writing. The prophet generally spoke in his own name but the apocalyptist, for the most part, has recourse to pseudonymity: attributing his work to a person of antiquity, like Daniel, Enoch, Ezra, Baruch, etc.

The Apocalypse refers to itself as prophecy on six occasions: of these one each is found in the opening and the penultimate chapters (1:3; 19:10) and the others occur in the last chapter of the book (22:7,10,18,19), whereas 'revelation' is used only once (1:1).

The expression 'the prophets' is rare in the Jewish apocalypses but is found seven times in the Apocalypse (10:7; 11:10; 16:6; 18:20,24; 22:6,9).

John is given a mission to prophesy: And I was told, "You must again prophecy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" (10:11). This is similar in nature to the prophetic commissions of the Old Testament.

And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel... and you shall say to them...

(Ez 2:3ff)

The word of the Lord came to me saying, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem ... (Jer 2:1ff)

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said,

"Here am I! Send me." And he said, "Go and say to this people..." (Is 6:8ff)

The command is fulfilled in chs 12-22.

Prophecy was an important phenomenon in the nascent Christian communities. Corinth had prophets and prophetesses playing an active role in the community (1Cor 11:2-16; 14:1-40). Paul exhorts the Corinthian community as,

Make love your aim and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation... (I Cor 14:1ff)

His letter to Timothy, too, points out the existence of prophecy among the early Christians (1 Tim 1:18; 4:14). In his letter to the Ephesians he speaks of the various ministries in the community:

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers... (Eph 4:11ff)

Matthew also refers to prophets in the early church (7:22; 10:41). He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward ... (Mt 10:41)

And so does Luke:

On the morrow we departed and came to Caesarea; and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist,

who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. And he had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. While we were staying for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us he took Paul's girdle and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this girdle and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:8-11)

Hence, we can reasonably contextualise the Apocalypse in the prophetic ministry of the early Christian communities. Further, though the book taken as a whole fits into the apocalyptic genre, it does exhibit certain features of prophetic literature. The oracle is the most prominent prophetic literary form. An oracle is a divine revelation directly given by the deity, in this case, Yahweh. It may be of woe or weal, i.e., prophecy about future evil or future welfare. Feuillet argues that the Apocalypse is composed in the form of prophetic books, viz., woes against Israel and woes against nations - we find a striking example of this feature in Ezekiel chs 1-24 and 25-32. He points out that the chs 4-11 in the Apocalypse match the first category while chs 12-20, the second. The first reveals God's wrath against the Jews for rejecting Jesus and the consequent judgement resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem in A D 70. The second concerns with the destruction of Rome, the persecutor of God's people. The final chapters deal with the vindication and salvation of the faithful.¹ M Hopkins, too, expresses a similar view of the Apocalypse.² D E Aune holds that the message to the seven churches are prophetic oracles.³ Nevertheless, the oracle is not always predictive; its use for denunciation of sin (e.g., Is 1:2-3; Jer 5:23-24; Am 5:21-22) or call for repentance (e.g., Is 1:16-17, 19-20; Jer 15:19-21; Amos 4:4-5; Zep 2:3) is not uncommon. The following is an example of its use in denouncing sin:

Sons have I reared and brought up,
but they have rebelled against me.
The ox knows its owner,
and the ass its master's crib;

but Israel does not know,

my people do not understand. (Is 1:2-3)

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;

remove the evil of your doings

from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,

learn to do good;

seek justice,

correct oppression;

defend the fatherless,

plead for the widow. (Is 1:16-17)

If you are willing and obedient,

you shall eat the good of the land;

But if you refuse and rebel,

you shall be devoured by the sword;

for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (Is 1:19-20).

The Apocalypse employs oracles for all the three purposes. The fall of Rome is announced in cryptic terms

Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the

wine of her impure passion (14:8).

Denunciation of sin and call for repentance is found in the letters to the seven churches (2:5, 14-16, 20-23;

3:1-3,15-16),

Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to

You and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent (2:5).

The word of God is revealed to the prophets in auditions and visions (Amos 7:1-9; 8:1-3; 9:1ff; Jer 13:1-

11). The descriptions of these visions are quite lengthy in Ezekiel (ch 8; 37:1-14) which are imitated by apocalyptic writers, the difference being, in the latter, the vision itself is the substance rather than merely the occasion or setting for the revelation. The Apocalypse abounds with such auditions and visions.

The prophetic word is often expressed in poetic form. The Apocalypse too makes use of this style (7:15-17; 13:10)

Therefore are they before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night within his temple;
and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water;
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (7:15-17)

Another prophetic literary form is the dirge. The book of Lamentations is a good example of this literary form. We find them elsewhere, too (Is 15:1-9; Jer 4:19-31; Ez 19:2-14). The Apocalypse has also imitated this genre. In ch 15, John mourns the doom of Babylon.

Obscurity is another characteristic feature of prophecy. Even today the precise significance of Isaiah 7:13ff is not understood. The oracles of Amos (3:3ff), Micah (5:2), Jeremiah (31:22) and the like present no less difficulty. The Apocalypse, too, shares this feature. Symbolic numbers, bizarre images and obscure allusions are used to highlight the ineffable mystery of revelation.

The prophetic word is also modelled on temple liturgy. The following example from Micah illustrates

this factor.

Hear what the Lord says:

Arise, plead your case before the mountains,

and let the hills hear our voice.

Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord,

and you enduring foundations of the earth,

for the Lord has a controversy with his people,

and he will contend with Israel.

"O my people, what have I done to you?

In what have I wearied you?

Answer me!

For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,

and redeemed you from the house of bondage;

and I sent before you Moses,

Aaron, and Miriam.

O my people, remember what Balaak king of Moab devised,

and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him,

and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,

that you may know the saving acts of the Lord."

"With what shall I come before the Lord,

and bow myself before God on high?

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,

with calves a year old?" (Mic 6:1-6)

We have other examples in liturgical psalms (Pss 107, 114, 118, 119, 121, 134, 136). The Apocalypse uses this feature generously (4:11; 5:9-10; 11:17-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; and 19:1-8). Note the liturgical

setting of the following hymn:

And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying,

" We give thanks to thee Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign.

The nations raged, but thy wrath came,

and the time for the dead to be judged,

for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints,

and those who fear thy name, both small and great,

and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." (11:16-18)

Most symbols of the Apocalypse are borrowed from the prophetic tradition thereby forging a close link with it: a woman represents a people (12:1ff) or a city (17:1ff); horns refer to power (5:6; 12:3); eyes speak of knowledge (1:14; 2:18; 4:6; 5:6); wings denote mobility (4:8; 12:14); trumpets herald a superhuman, divine voice (1:10; 8:2ff); sharp sword indicates the Word of God, an instrument of God's judgement and punishment (1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15,21); white points to joy of victory (1:14; 2:17; 3:4-5,18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9,13f; 19:11,14); white robes signify the glorious state (16:11; 7:9, 13-14; 22:14); black indicates death (6:5,12); purple shows luxury and kingship (17:4; 18:12,16); palms signal triumph (7:9); crown symbolises kingship and sovereignty (2:10; 3:11; 4:10; 6:2; 12:1; 14:14); and the sea stands for evil (13:1; 21:1).

The Apocalypse uses numbers symbolically as did the prophets: 2 (also referred to as 'double' or repeated twice) indicates abundance, full measure (Is 40:2; 61:7; Jer 16:18; Zech 9:12; Ap 14:8; 18:2,6); 3 in its repetition (triple repetition) of a gesture or a word expresses emphasis or the superlative

(1Kgs 17:21; Jer 7:4; Is 6:3; Ap 4:8; 13:18); 4 represents cosmic totality (the four directions: front, back, right and left - the four creatures Ez 1:5 and Ap 4:6; the four winds Ez 37:9; Is 11:12 and Ap 7:1); 7 stands for a complete course or series (Lev 4:6,17; 8:11; 14:7; Num 19:4; 2 Kgs 5:10) thereby indicating perfection (Is 30:26; Zech 4:2; Ap 1:12,16; 3:1; 4:4; 5:1,6; 8:2; 10:3; 15:1; 17:9); 6 typifies imperfection, its triple repetition highlighting the greatest imperfection (Ap 13:8); 12 is the number of lunar phases of the year and, hence, stands for entirety or perfection (the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles, the vision of the new Jerusalem with twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes on them and built on the foundation of the twelve apostles in Ap 21:12-14; the people saved are 144,000, i.e, 12 times 12 thousand in Ap 7:4-8; 12 stars on the crown of the woman (Ap 12:1) meaning the 12 zodiacal constellations).

The Apocalypse as Epistolary Literature

Before we comment on the epistolary features of the Book of the Apocalypse it is necessary to briefly examine the epistolary form of literature. Deissmann distinguishes between a 'letter' and an 'epistle'. According to him, 'A letter is something nonliterary, a means of communication between persons who are separated from each other. Confidential and personal in its nature, it is intended only for the person or persons to whom it is addressed, and not at all for the public or any kind of publicity.⁴ In style, tone, and form it can be free, intimate, familiar, frank as conversation. As A.G.Gardiner says, 'It cannot be too simple, too commonplace, too colloquial. Its familiarity is not its weakness, but its supreme virtue. If it attempts to be orderly and elaborate, it may be a good essay, but it will certainly be a bad letter.'⁵

In the Old Testament we find summaries of official correspondence during the pre-exilic kings (2 Sam 11:14-15; 1 Kgs 21:8-10; 2 Kgs 5:5-6; 10:1-6 etc.) There are also summaries of letters in the exilic and post-exilic periods but they preserve the form of the ancient letters (Ez 4:11-16, 17-12). In Esther 9:20;

12:4 we find a mention of a memorandum of Mordecai and a letter of the king about Purim (a feast celebrated on 14th and 15th of Adar (February-March) in memory of the victory of the Jews of Persia over their would-be exterminators). In Baruch chapter 6 we find the Letter of Jeremiah (Jer 29:1). Many letters written by Jews, Romans, Seleucid rulers, and Spartans are found in the Book of Maccabees (1 Mac 5:10-13; 8:23-32; 10:18-20,25-45; 2 Mac 1:1-2:18). Most of these letters fall into this category.

An epistle, on the other hand, is an artistic literary form, just like the dialogue, the oration, or the drama. It has nothing in common with the letters except its form: apart from that one might venture the paradox that the epistle is the opposite of a real letter. The contents of an epistle are intended for publicity - they aim at interesting 'the public'.⁶

The Greco-Roman letters of the New Testament times had three clear parts: opening formula, message and final greeting. The opening formula consisted of the senders name as well as that of the addressee together with a short greeting as, for instance, in 1 Maccabees 10:18,25; 11:30; Acts 15:23; 23:26; and James 1:1

King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greeting (1 Mac 10:18);

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion:

Greeting (Jas 1:1).

The message was determined by the concrete situation and was an elaboration of certain themes or clarification of certain issues or instructions and exhortations. The final greeting was merely a leave-taking word (Acts 15:29); in official letters the date was also added (2 Mac 16:21,33,38)

Farewell (Acts 15:29)

Farewell. The one hundred and forty-eighth year, Xanthicus fifteenth (2 Mac 11:33).

The form of contemporary Jewish letters written either in Aramaic or Hebrew and modelled on older Assyrian, Babylonian or Canaanite forms, was similar to that of the Greco-Roman. The opening formula was either like the Greco-Roman form, or more frequently with a double sentence; the first part named the sender and the addressee and the second part expressed a blessing as:

King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! (Dan 4:1);

or

Thus speaks Baruch, the son of Neriah, to the brothers who were carried away in captivity: Grace and peace be with you (2 Apo Bar 78:2).

While referring the book as apocalypse (1:1) and as prophecy (1:3) John is spoken of in the third person while in most of the rest of the Apocalypse, he speaks in the first person. At the point of this transition from the third person to the first person we find the epistolary elements being introduced. Notice the typical New Testament epistolary formula: the sender, the addressee and the greeting

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth (1:4-5).

The greeting is elaborate as in the letter to the Galatians.

Paul an apostle - not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead - and all the brethren who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be glory

for ever and ever. Amen (Gal 1:1-5).

In many New Testament letters, Pauline and others, the greeting is followed by a thanksgiving or a benediction (Rom 1:1-8; 1 Cor 1:1-4; 2 Cor 1:1-4; Eph 1:1-3; Phil 1:1-5; Col 1:1-3; 1 Thes 1:1-2; 2 Thes 1:1-3; 2 Tim 1:1-3; Philem 1:1-4; 1 Pet 1:1-3). In the Apocalypse, the greeting is followed by a doxology as in the letter to the Galatians:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (Ap 1:5-6).

The book also ends with a benediction:

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen (22:21), which is the typical ending formula of the ancient letter genre (Rom 16:27; 1 Cor 16:23; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 6:18; Eph 6:23-24; Phil 4:23; Col 4:18; 1 Thes 5:28; 2 Thes 3:18; 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim 4:22; Tit 3:15; Philem 25; Hebr 13:25; 1 Pet 5:14).

Yet in a major aspect the Apocalypse does not conform to the epistolary form: in the New Testament letters, the body of the letter follows the thanksgiving or the benediction, as the case may be. The body of the letter in the Apocalypse does not follow the doxology but is followed by two prophetic sayings (1:7-8) which do not seem to have a direct bearing on the letter as such, and then by a report of the epiphany of Christ (1:9-3:22) and other visions and auditions (4:1-22:5). Then we find the juxtaposition of various sayings (22:6-20). Thus, John has used the epistolary form as a framework, an envelope to enclose his apocalypse.

The exigencies of the situation may have compelled John to resort to this method. His banishment to the island of Patmos definitely hampered his direct personal communication with the churches of Asia Minor. It is also possible that by the time epistolary form had become the accepted authoritative form of

communication expected of the leaders in the Christian communities. It would be pertinent to note here that of the 27 books of the New Testament 21 are called 'Epistles' which in itself points to the popularity of the form in the contemporary Christian milieu. Of course, it was Paul who popularised this form, and was imitated by the later Christian writers. From the study of the Fathers of the Church we know that Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna also wrote to the Christian communities in Asia Minor. Further, a combination of the apocalyptic and the epistolary forms is not the unique feature of the Apocalypse. It is also found in 2 Apocalypse of Baruch:

The letter of Baruch, the son of Neriah which he wrote to the nine and half tribes.

These are the words of the letter which Baruch, the son of Neriah, sent to the nine and a half tribes which were across the river in which were written the following things:

Thus speaks Baruch, the son of Neriah, to the brothers who were carried away in captivity: Grace and peace be with you.... When you, therefore, receive the letter, read it carefully in your assemblies. And think about it, in particular, however, on the days of your fasts. And remember me by means of this letter in the same way as I remember you by means of this, and always.

And it happened when I had finished all the words of this letter and had written it carefully until the end, I folded it, sealed it cautiously, and bound it to the neck of the eagle. And I let it go and sent it away.

The end of the letter of Baruch, the son of Neriah (chs 78-87).

The Apocalypse as Drama

The Apocalypse is a narrative rather than direct action in which various characters present themselves as living and moving before the audience. As such it does not qualify to be called a drama. But as some Biblical scholars have pointed out, it does have some affinity with tragedy.⁷ Firstly, the subject matter. According to Aristotle, the subject matter of tragedy should be serious rather than ordinary or trivial, as in a comedy. The subject matter of the Apocalypse is serious. Secondly, the function of tragedy. Aristotle holds that catharsis, viz., the purgation of pent up emotions through fear and pity, is the function of a real

tragedy. The plot should depict the change of fortune from good to bad of the hero who has a flaw. Audience should pity him and fear that the misfortune such as his might befall them. The Apocalypse, like other apocalypses, excites fear by portraying the terrors of the world to come for the unfaithful. It also depicts the glorious victory for endurance. Thirdly the performance. Norwood explains that Greek tragedies were usually performed by three actors, and a chorus (15 in number after 5th cent. BC). The drama alternated between episodes or acts performed by the actors and songs performed by the chorus. In addition to the songs performed by the chorus, there used to be short, lively songs expressing sudden joy and other types of involvement of the chorus in action. Occasionally, a few words were sung by a member of the chorus.⁸

In describing his visions, John often presents individuals and groups speaking. Three of such performances are songs (4:8,11; 5:9-10; 15:3-4): those who had conquered the beast sang with the harps in their hands,

"Great and wonderful are thy deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are thy ways,
O King of the ages!
Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord?
For thou alone art holy.
All nations shall come and worship thee,
for thy judgments have been revealed." (15:3-4)

The sayings, in many cases, serve as a commentary on the actions reported in the visions preceding them (12:10-12; 16:5-7; 18:10, 16-17, 18-19).

And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down,

who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! (12:10-12)

There are calls for rejoicing and expressions of joy (18:20; 19:6-8)

Rejoice over her, O heaven,

O saints and apostles and prophets,

for God has given judgment for you against her! (18:20)

This interplay of reported action and songlike commentary by either groups or individuals may have been due to the influence of the Greek Tragedy.

The Book of the Apocalypse as Apocalyptic

Let us begin with what is 'unapocalyptic' of the Apocalypse. We have seen that the apocalyptic literature evinced a keen interest in the secrets of cosmos, the nature and working of seasons, historical reviews, angelic orders, and so on. But the Apocalypse does not attempt to reveal the mysteries of cosmogony, of astronomy, the unfolding of the ancient history, or the details of the angelic orders. Its focus, on the other hand, is on the contemporary events and their eschatological significance. Secondly, the apocalyptic works are pseudonymous. Here, too, the Apocalypse deviates from the apocalyptic tradition. It is not attributed to a man of the antiquity. On the contrary, the author identifies himself as John (1:1,4,9; 22:8). The author's address to the seven churches clearly points to his being well-known and occupying a position of authority among the contemporary Christian communities. Thirdly, many of the apocalyptic works were written in ancient or archaic script, their message being meant only for a select group. But the Apocalypse is written in the language of the people in vogue, the Greek; its message is not concealed from the public; it is not meant only for a small group; but is addressed to the seven churches, symbolising

the entire Christian community (1:4). Fourthly, the apocalyptic attempted to review history in order to present the past as future. But, the book of the Apocalypse does not attempt to present a review of world history from John's point of view, as was traditionally held, in tune with the symbolic reviews of history which characterise Jewish apocalyptic literature (Daniel, 1 Enoch chs 83-90, 2 Apocalypse of Baruch). Most authors agree that the similarities between the seals (6:1-8) and the messianic woes in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt ch 23; Mk 12:38-40; Lk 11:37-52; 20:45-47) clearly indicate that the seals depict the imminent eschatological future, not the past or the present, though the past and the contemporary events may be used to portray the future.⁹ Finally, the book of the Apocalypse, being a Christian apocalypse, has a Christological conception of history: Christ is closely associated with God who is the supreme Ruler of the universe (3:21); he is the Lamb who has redeemed his people (5:9f), will lead them to the final victory (19:1ff), establish his kingdom in which the Jews and the Christians will be integrated (21:12,14), thus bringing history to consummation (22:3-5,12).

The book of the Apocalypse claims to be an apocalypse. It is the 'revelation of Jesus Christ.' The message contains information about 'what must soon take place,' i.e., unravelling of history as determined by God. The revelation of such a mysterious nature can be made by God alone. God is too transcendent to make direct contact with man. He does it through his angel (1:1-2). Therefore, to state that the book of the Apocalypse is an apocalypse is to be, strictly, tautologous for, as we have seen, the word 'apocalypse' itself means an unveiling or unfolding of things previously not known and which could not be known apart from the unveiling.

The book as a whole fully confirms the claim made in the opening lines. The mystery is revealed in a series of visions (54 times). The first cycle of visions (1:10-11:19) contains an epiphany of Christ (1:13-16); the scroll with seven seals (4:1-8:5) with the two inserted visions of 144,000 sealed (7:1-8) and the salvation of a multitude (7:9-17); seven trumpets (8:2-11:19) with the two inserted visions of a mighty

angel and a little open scroll (10:1-11) and the temple and two witnesses (11:1-13). The second cycle consists of the woman and the dragon (12:1-17); the beast from the sea (13:1-10); the beast from the earth (13:11-18); the lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5); the three angels (14:6-13); harvest and vintage (14:4-20); salvation of the conquerors (15:2-4); the seven bowls (15:1-16:21); the visions of the last things (19:11-22:5) with the second coming of Christ (19:11-16), call to the banquet (19:17-18), the final battle (19:19-21), the binding of Satan (20:1-3); the thousand year reign (20:4-10), the last judgement (20:11-15), and, finally, the new heaven, new earth and new Jerusalem (21:9-22:5).

Symbols, an integral part of the narrative, are everywhere. The reader is prepared for the bombardment of unearthly visions and symbols in the first chapter itself:

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (1:12-16)

A woman represents a people (12:1ff) or a city (17:1ff); horns indicate power (5:6; 12:3), especially dynastic power (13:1; 17:3ff); eyes, knowledge (1:14; 2:18; 4:6; 5:6); wings, mobility (4:8; 12:14); trumpet, divine voice (1:10; 8:2ff); a sharp sword, God's word which judges and punishes (1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15,21); white robes, the world of glory (6:11; 7:9,13f; 22:14); palms, triumph (7:9); crown, authority and kingship (2:10; 3:11; 4:10; 6:2; 12:1; 14:14); sea, evil (13:1; 21:1); white, joy (1:14; 2:17; 3:4f,18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9,13; 19:11,14); purple, luxury and kingship (17:4; 18:12,16) and black, death ((6:5,12).

Symbolic numbers, too, abound in the book. 7 (used 54 times: 1:12,16; 3:1; 4:5; 5:1,6; 8:2; 10:3; 15:1;

17:9 etc) symbolises fullness, perfection; its half is also mentioned (11:2-3, 9-11; 12:6; 13:5); Inversely 6 (7 minus 1) is the type of lack of perfection (13:8), the triple repetition of 6 (666) indicating the highest imperfection and evil possible; 12 (used 23 times) recalls the 12 tribes of Israel and indicates that the people of God has reached its eschatological perfection; 4 (16 times) points to the universality of the visible world; 3 (11 times); 1000 (6 times in ch 20, often in multiples) implying multitudes. There are three intriguing cases: the duration of the persecution is given as 1260 days (11:3; 12:6) or 42 months (11:2; 13:5) or three years and a half (12:14); 144,000 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes' (7:4-8; 14:1-5); and the Beast referred to by the number 666 (13:8).

This elaborate use of symbols suggests the mysterious nature of the revelatory matter. The supernatural character of the truths unveiled is highlighted by other means also. The seer is able to receive the revelation only through the assistance and enlightenment of the Spirit (1:10; 4:2). Every detail comes to him through the visions (54 times) and explained by an angel (67 times). The seer also is taken to the desert (17:3) and to the top of a high mountain (21:10), associating it with mysticism and theophanies.

The author presents himself as one persecuted for his faith (1:9), a feature among all apocalyptists. He attempts to encourage and strengthen his fellow Christians in the face of the persecution by unraveling the meaning of their suffering and the glorious reward for faithful adherence to their faith. The historical setting is the persecution of the Church by the Roman Empire. But John sees in this confrontation the battle between God and Satan. The outcome is evident. Christ will vanquish his foe, the Satan and the never-ending divine rule will be established with the creation of a new heaven and new earth. All those who persevered in their faith will become the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. This vision of a cosmic struggle with the definite and sudden breakthrough of God's kingdom is common to all apocalyptic writings.

Further, it shares all the characteristic features of the Jewish apocalyptic literature. Its *raison d'être* is to help the Christians of the first century AD to make sense out of a situation that seemed terribly hard to comprehend. The early Christians believed that Jesus of history was indeed the Christ. He died on the cross, no doubt, but God raised him from the dead and made him the Lord of heaven and earth. This firm belief reflected in the early Christian hymn (Phil 2:5-11) and reverberating throughout the NT is represented in the Apocalypse. They who confessed Jesus as the Lord are cleansed by his blood and have received the fulness of life; become the heirs of God's Kingdom. They are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (I Pet 2:9). Note the striking similarity with the faith of the Jews. But the antagonism of the Jews and the total misunderstanding of the people around culminating in the unprecedented barbaric persecution unleashed against them definitely seemed to be at odds with their faith. God had called them to be His own in Christ Jesus and they had responded in faith. And what did they get in return? Many of them were arrested, dragged in chains thrown into prisons, tortured and brutally killed, or thrown into the arena to be ravaged by savage beasts. This was surely not what an early Christian bargained for. The misunderstanding and, to certain extent, the opposition from the Jews was explainable. But the might of the Roman Empire directed against and threatening the very existence of a harmless and defenceless religious community having no political or material ambitions but engaged in prayer, living a common life, eagerly awaiting the parousia was beyond rational explanation. Something was really wrong. Something did not add up. The whole situation was indeed inexplicable. Where was their loving God? Where was His almighty power? Could He not match the Roman might? What should they make of Jesus' promise of fulness of life? No doubt they needed extraordinary courage and unwavering faith to tide over this crisis which threatened to wipe out their new faith in its infancy. No human being could have sustained them in the trial of such a magnitude. And so, John is given a revelation in which Jesus himself in striking imagery and unequivocal terms urges his followers to remain faithful and endure the persecution as their enemies would be completely

destroyed and they would be rewarded with the fulness of life in the heavenly Jerusalem. John writes it down as the Apocalypse.

It is written almost exactly on the Jewish pattern. It follows the basic concept of the dualism of time: there is this present age, totally bad, under the power of satanic forces, and, therefore, doomed to destruction; there is the golden age to come in which the satanic powers will be overthrown, and a new heaven and a new earth will be created where God will wipe every tear from every eye, where all the faithful shall live in perfect peace and bliss. The only difference is that the author of the Apocalypse has substituted the 'coming in power of Jesus Christ' to the Jewish 'Day of the Lord' motif.

Not only do we find the conformity in the pattern but also in the details. The Jewish apocalyptic had envisaged a divine Messianic figure of power and glory who would descend from heaven into the world to conquer the evil powers; he existed in heaven before the creation of the world, before the sun and the stars were made; he was preserved in the presence of the Almighty (1 Enoch 48:3,6; 62:7; 4 Ezra 13:25f). In the book of the Apocalypse, though the idea is not very explicit, it is, nevertheless, evident (Ap 1:17-18 read with Jn 1:1-2, 14).

The apocalyptic imagination does not portray a Messiah with gentle or meek character full of compassion. On the contrary, he is a mighty avenging warrior descending from heaven with power and glory before whom the whole earth trembles. He would come to put down the mighty from their seats, to dethrone the kings of the earth, and to destroy the sinners and to restore the righteous (1 Enoch 45:2-6; 48:2-9; 62:3-13; 69:26-291). We find a similar portrayal of Jesus Christ as Messiah in the Apocalypse (14:14-20; 19:13-26).

The coming of the Messiah was to be preceded by Elijah who was to stand on the hills of Israel and

announce the coming of the Messiah with a voice so loud that it would be heard from one end of the earth to the other. The Apocalypse does not mention Elijah by name but the attributes of the two witnesses makes it clear that one of them is Elijah (11:3)

The last terrible times preceding the Messianic age were known as 'the travails of the Messiah', they were described as 'birth-pangs' (Mt 24:8; Mk 13:8). The Apocalypse depicts terrible sufferings, death and destruction as a prelude to the coming of the Messiah (Ap 6:7-8, 12-17; 8:6-12; 9:1-20; 14:18-20; 18:8).

The last days will be a time of terror. During those days even the mighty will weep bitterly (Zeph 1:1-16; Joel 2:1; 1 Enoch 1:4-7; 102:1-3). The Apocalypse, too, describes 'the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong...' wailing and trying to run away to the mountains to escape the terrors of the day (Ap 6:15-17). It will be a time of cosmic upheavals when the universe will be disintegrated: the stars will be extinguished; the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood (Is 13:10; Joel 2:30-31; 3:15); the firmament will crash in ruins; there will be a cataract of raging fire, and creation will become a molten mass (Sib Or 3:80-87); the seasons will lose their order, and there will be neither night nor dawn (Sib Or 3:88-90). The book of the Apocalypse, too, enumerates these cataclysmic events in graphic detail (6:12, 14; 8:12; 11:13, 19; 16:17-21; 20:11).

It will be a time when the structure of human relationships will be destroyed, the very fabric of familial affinity will be disrupted: hatred, enmity, and dissension will rule the earth (Zech 14:13); brothers will kill each other; parents will murder their own children; from dawn to dusk they shall slay one another (1 Enoch 100:1-2). There will be scant regard for human values: wise men will be rare to find; honour will be turned into shame, strength into humiliation, beauty into ugliness; men will become violent and give in to every kind of passion (2 Bar 48:33-37). Though the reference to familial dissensions is conspicuous by its absence in the Apocalypse, there is a detailed description of various passions

indulged in by sinners and evil ways followed by the unrighteous, and the consequent judgement on them in the prophecy of doom of Babylon (ch 18). It also speaks of the rider of the red horse being permitted 'to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another' (6:4). It will be a time of judgment. God will come like a refiner's fire and none can face that day (Mal 3:2-3); by fire and sword God will deal with men (Is 66:15-16). The Apocalypse describes the risen Christ as the universal Judge who will judge the nations with sword and fire (1:16; 8:7; 14:14-20; 15:8; 16:5-6; 19:15; 20:12-13)

The Son of Man will destroy sinners from the face of the earth (1 Enoch 69:28); they will be burned up as Sodom and Gomorrah (Jubilees 36:10); and the smell of brimstone will fill the earth (Sib Or 3:60). The Apocalypse, too, delineates the fate of the sinners and the oppressors of the faithful in striking imagery (9:18; 11:17-18; 14:9-11; 18:1-24; 19:2, 17-21; 20:3,10; 21:8).

In those days, the Jews who had been scattered and exiled throughout the four corners of the world will be gathered in the Holy city again: they will come back from Assyria and from Egypt and worship the Lord on His holy mountain (Is 27:12-13; Bar 5:5-6; Pss Sol 11:2-3). The apocalypse does not mention gathering of the Jews, obviously because its perspective is Christological. However, it does speak of Christ as the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David' or as 'the root and offspring of David' (Ap 5:5; 22:16) implying the 'restoration' of the Davidic dynasty. It also describes the new heaven and new earth, the former things having passed away and all things being made new (Ap ch 21); John also is given a vision of a great multitude in heaven (Ap 7:9), of 144,000 standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb (Ap 14:1), and the inscription of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the gates, and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb on the walls and twelve foundations of the new city of Jerusalem (Ap 21:12). The song praising God in heaven which John sees in a vision (Ap 19:6-7) is strikingly similar in tone and setting to that of Ps 122, a Zion psalm pouring out the joy of the pilgrims when they, finally, reached the Temple of Jerusalem for worship. The other hymns he hears (4:11; 11:17-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-6) also echo the Jewish

liturgical celebration in the Jerusalem Temple. Thus, the Apocalypse clearly envisages the fulfilment of this dream in the worship in the new city of Jerusalem, but with a Christological emphasis (Ap 4:11; 5:9-10; 7:15-17)

Nature will rejoice at this turn of events: the hills will be removed, the valleys will be filled in, and the trees will gather to provide shade for them as they come back (Bar 5:7-8; Pss Sol 11:4-5). The Apocalypse depicts the tree of life 'on either side of the river' that flows in the middle of the new city of Jerusalem; it would yield an abundance of fruit round the year and its leaves were 'for healing the nations' (Ap 22:2).

The Gentiles are not mute spectators to these events, they are very much a part of the whole scheme of things. But their participation is variously mentioned as being completely destroyed: Babylon will become a desolation (Is 13:19-22); God will tread down the Gentiles in His anger (Is 63:3,6); or as gathered in a last battle against Jerusalem and being totally routed (Ez 38:14-39:16; Zech 14:1-5; Sib Or 3:660-697). In the Apocalypse, John hears an angel announcing the eternal torment of the 'worshippers of the beast and its image' (14:11); he is granted a vision of 'the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army,' that is, Christ and his faithful, the beast and the false prophet being captured and 'thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur' and the rest being 'slain by the sword' issuing from the mouth of Christ (Ap 19:19:21); he, then, hears an angel announcing the doom of Babylon in imagery similar to that in the prophet Isaiah (Ap ch 18); he is further granted a vision of Satan deceiving 'the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle' against the people of God and being completely consumed by fire from heaven and the devil being 'thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were' (Ap 20:7:10), or as getting converted through the light of Israel (Is 45:20-22; 49:6; 1 Enoch 48:4-5; Pss Sol 17:34; Is 49:6). In the Apocalypse, too, we read that the glory of God is the light of the new city of Jerusalem and the Lamb is its lamp and by its light 'shall the nations

walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations' (21:23:-26).

The city of Jerusalem preserved in heaven in all her glory, beauty and splendour will descend from heaven in the last days (4 Ezra 10:44-59; 2 Bar 4:2-6). The Apocalypse presents a vision of the 'holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God...' (Ap 21:2, 10). The new Jerusalem will be unparalleled in her dazzling beauty with foundation of sapphires, windows of agate, gates of carbuncles, borders of pleasant stones, the latter house, i.e., the new Jerusalem, will be more glorious than the former (Is 54:12; Tob 13:16-17; Hag 2:6-9). We find a similar description of the new city in the Apocalypse. John is shown by an angel 'the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal' (21:10-11); the twelve 'foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gate made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass' (21:19-21).

In the last days the dead will be raised (Dan 12:2; 1 Enoch 51:1-2). In the vision of the judgement, John sees Death and Hades giving up the dead in them and the 'dead, great and small, standing before the throne,' and the righteous being rewarded with eternal life while the sinners being condemned to eternal torment (Ap 20:12-15).

The Messiah will rule the earth with his saints. The most usual view of the duration of the Messianic kingdom was that it would last for ever (Dan 7:27) but some believed it to last 400 years; it was computed by comparing Genesis 15:13 and Psalm 90:15. According to the Apocalypse, 'The kingdom of the world

has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever' (Ap 11:15); it also mentions a Messianic reign of a thousand years at the end of which a final battle will take place in which Satan will be vanquished and the new age will be inaugurated (Ap 20:3,4).

The apocalyptic literature also describes various blessings of the new age. The Jews earnestly believed that the unification of the divided kingdom will take place in the last time. The prophets declared that the house of Judah would walk again with the house of Israel (Jer 3:18; Is 11:13; Hos 1:11). In the Apocalypse, it is a fait accompli: the new city of Jerusalem 'had a great, high wall, with twelve gates... and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed' (21:12); John also says that 'the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb' (21:14) showing the universal character of Christianity and the essential unity of the Jews and the Christians in Christ Jesus.

The land would be extremely fertile (Is 51:3; 35:1; 2 Bar 29:5-8; Sib Or 3:744750); it would bring forth in abundance. It would become like the garden of Eden (Is 51:3); the desert would rejoice and blossom like a rose (Is 35:1); Baruch stretches the expectation to its very limit (2 Bar 29:5-8). The Apocalypse indicates the fertility of the earth by referring to the abundance of the yield of the tree of life round the year (Ap 22:2).

The coming age will bring an end to weariness, sorrow, pain, and moaning. The people will have plenty and languish no more (Jer 31:12); they will enjoy everlasting joy (Is 35:10; 49:10). According to the Apocalypse, the righteous 'shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat' (7:16).

People will be blessed with long life, no one will die an untimely death (Is 65:20-22); death will be

swallowed up in victory and God will wipe all tears from their faces (Is 25:8); disease will withdraw; anxiety, anguish and lamentation will pass away; childbirth will have no pain; the reaper will not grow weary and the builder will not be toilworn (2 Bar 73:2-74:4). An angel in the apocalypse tells John that the righteous will neither hunger nor thirst any more because 'the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes' (Ap 7:17); in the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, John hears a loud voice telling that God 'will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away' (Ap 21:4).

Unrighteousness will be unheard of in the age to come. It will be an age of perfect holiness and righteousness. The mankind will be good, living in fear of the Lord in the days of mercy (Pss Sol 17:28-43; 18:9-10). The Apocalypse, in the vision narrative of the new heaven and new earth portrays the new city of Jerusalem as being inhabited by righteous people alone, the evil men being completely excluded from it (Ap 21:8, 27; 22:3,14).

There would be total peace and harmony in the new age. There would be no wars. The swords would be beaten into ploughshares and the spears into pruning hooks (Is 2:4; 54:13-14); the children of God would enjoy great peace; there would be no sword or battle-din, there would be a common law for all men and a great peace throughout the earth, and kings would be friendly with each other (Sib Or 3:751, 756-759). The vision of the new city of Jerusalem in which there would be perfect happiness and joy depicted in the Apocalypse clearly implies that peace and tranquility will reign throughout the new creation.

The apocalyptic literature portrays the restoration of the original harmony in Nature: the leopard and the kid, the cow and the bear, the lion and the fatling will play and lie down together (Is 11:6-7; 62:25; Sib Or 3:789- 793); there will be a new covenant between man and the beasts of the field (Hos 2:18); even a child

will be able to play where the poisonous reptiles have their holes and their dens (Is 11:8-9; 2 Bar 73:6; Sib Or 3:794f). Thus, in all nature, between man and man, between people and people, between beast and beast, and between man and beast there will be universal cordial relationship, a reign of uninterrupted peace and harmony. The Apocalypse makes use of all these details in the e portrayal of the new earth and new Jerusalem.

The Apocalypse, therefore, is apocalyptic literature, which borrows heavily from the prophetic tradition, and is enveloped in epistolary casting, and exhibits some affinity with the Greek Tragedy. It is composed in the pattern of the Jewish apocalyptic and portrays the Jewish apocalyptic aspirations as being fulfilled and the history as being consummated in Christ Jesus. It is the expression of the fundamental and agonised cry of the Christian soul in distress, in the same way as the Jewish apocalypses had expressed the anguish of the imprisoned and humiliated soul of Jewry. John followed the same literary methods of his predecessors: the mysterious combinations of numbers and the esoteric descriptions alluding to the existing situation. Like his predecessors, he takes the contemporary tragedy as his starting point and constantly refers to it. This enabled his mind to travel far beyond the model set before him and to attain far wider horizons of the essential drama of man and his destiny, and the fundamental opposition between the world and Christ; he embarked upon his terrifying descriptions of the end of the world in order to find therein the fulfilment of the promise of Christ, the realisation of the hope of salvation to the righteous in the ultimate victory of good over evil. In the process he reached the height and sublimity of literary achievement no earlier author of the genre had scaled. It is the greatest classic, the climax of the apocalyptic literature.

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