APOCALYPTIC TIME

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

NUMEN BOOK SERIES

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

EDITED BY

W.J. HANEGRAAFF

VOLUME LXXXVI

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

APOCALYPTIC TIME

EDITED BY

ALBERT I. BAUMGARTEN

BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON · KÖLN
2000

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Apocalyptic time / edited by Albert I. Baumgarten.
p. cm. — (Numen book series. Studies in the history of religions, ISSN 0169-8834 ; vol. 86)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 9004118799 (alk. paper)
1. Eschatology—Congresses. I. Baumgarten, Albert I. II. Studies in the history of religions ; 86.
BL500.A66 2000
291.2'3—dc21 00-029731
CIP

Die Deutsche Bibliothek - CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Apocalyptic time / ed. by Albert I. Baumgarten. – Leiden; Boston ; Köln : Brill, 2000
(Studies in the history of religions ; Vol. 86)
ISBN 90–04–11879–9

ISSN 0169-8834
ISBN 90 04 11879 9

© Copyright 2000 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Brill provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910 Danvers MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

CONTENTS

Introduction vii
A.I. Baumgarten

End of Time and New Time in Medieval Chinese Buddhism 1
H. Seiwert

Apocalypticism, Symbolic Breakdown and Paranoia: An Application of Lifton's Model to the Death-Rebirth Fantasy 15
M. Hazani

The Apocalyptic Year 200/815–816 and the Events Surrounding It 41
D. Cook

I am not the Mahdi, But 69
P. Heine

The Development of Essenic Eschatology 79
A. Steudel

Innere Zeit und apokalyptische Zeit 87
A. Agus

Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Calculations in Late Antiquity 113
O. Irshai

'The Time of the End:' Apocalypticism and its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology 155
M. Idel

Breaking the Boundaries of Time and Space in Kabbalistic Apocalypticism 187
R. Elior

Abnormal and Normal Time: After the Apocalypse 199
G. Motzkin

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Why Lubavitch Wants the Messiah Now:
Religious Immigration as a Cause of Millenarianism 215
A. Szubin

The Moral Apocalypse in Byzantium 241
J. Baun

Cognitive Dissonance and Proselytism: An Application
of Festinger's Model to Thirteenth-Century Joachites 269
E. Wardi

Awaiting the Last Days. . . . Myth and Disenchantment 283
J. Fried

Apocalyptic Space 305
M. Barasch

The Restoration of Israel as Messianic Birth Pangs 327
H. Kippenberg

When Prophecy Fails and When it Succeeds: Apocalyptic
Prediction and the Re-Entry into Ordinary Time 341
S. O'Leary

Memory and the Metamorphosis of Apocalyptic Time
in an Italian Millenarian Movement: The Case of
David Lazzaretti and his Followers 363
G. Filoramo

Index of Subjects and Names 373

Contributors 387

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

INTRODUCTION

I

The essays in this volume are revised versions of papers delivered at the second international colloquium, held February 19–22, 1996, under the auspices of the Taubes Minerva Center for Religious Anthropology at Bar Ilan University.[1] The ideas in this Introduction formed the basis for a presentation I made at the 1999 meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, in Boston, MA. The essays here represent contributions on the topic of *Apocalyptic Time* written by scholars from Germany, Israel and other parts of the world. While there is an inevitable focus on the Abrahamic religions and on the part millenarian movements have played in their history, there is also a deliberate attempt to go outside those limits in at least a few contributions. Several papers concentrate on abstract aspects of the question and utilize concrete examples from Abrahamic religions only as the basis for more general reflection.

The choice of the theme for the colloquium, and its extended discussion in these papers, is another indication of the commitment of the Taubes Minerva Center to Religious Anthropology, which the Center was created to study. The investigation of millennial movements is a prime example of the benefit to be gained by focusing on the human side of matters, on what people do and why they behave in the ways they do, stressing the dynamics of the formation of collective identity, as a window of insight into religious experience. Moreover, in exploring this topic we are elaborating the intellectual legacy of Jacob Taubes, who devoted attention to the subject, from his earliest publications to his last.

The expression of these concerns, when approaching the topic of millenarianism in this volume, was the decision to concentrate on the role of time in millennial movements. On the personal and

---

[1] Two papers delivered at that colloquium have since appeared elsewhere. They are: A. Kosman and N. Rubin, "The Clothing of Primordial Adam as a Symbol of Apocalyptic Time in Midrashic Sources," *HTR* 90 (1997) 155–174; R. Landes, "On Owls, Roosters and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method for Reading a Refractory Documentation," *USQR* 49 (1996) 41–65.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

collective levels, time is an essential aspect of human cosmogony, and studies of the experience of time have provided valuable insights into larger aspects of culture. It is this achievement which we hope we have succeeded in adapting to the study of millennial movements, ultimately understanding them better as a result of the effort devoted to Apocalyptic Time.

To attain this goal, a broad degree of freedom was granted authors. Accordingly, as the attentive reader of the essays collected here will note, no unified theoretical perspective was imposed on the contributors. Indeed, several papers adopt methods or reach conclusions against which others argue. All authors do not employ the terms "messianic," "millenarian" or "apocalyptic" in exactly the same sense,[2] nor would the authors of the papers in this volume necessarily agree with the synthesis to follow, for which I alone am responsible.

II

The papers gathered here serve as a stimulus for generalization about the nature of millennial movements, about their entry into and exit from Apocalyptic Time.[3] This general outline is not intended as a means of overcoming the diversity of millenarian experience, as reflected in the papers in this volume and elsewhere. Rather, to the contrary, it is explicitly intended to embrace the diversity of that experience. I take the acknowledgement that there is no single standard millenarian vision in Judaism, Christianity or any other major

---

[2] Compare A.I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden: E.J. Brill & Co., 1997) 153–156, and R. Landes, "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography," *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (eds.: W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988) 205–208.

[3] In this synthesis I focus less on how members of these groups behave in apocalyptic time, as the general conclusion has been well put by others. See, e.g. K. Burridge, *New Heaven, New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1969) 167:

> Knox's remarks concerning the alterations of scandal and rigorism characteristic of enthusiastic movements are not simply good history. The two go together, are integral parts of a transition process in which the new rules are still experimental and uncertain . . . It could be argued that orgies of sexual promiscuity . . . and the high idealism often connoted by the release from all desire are polar opposites. But the fact remains that both meet in precisely the same condition: that of no obligation.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

religious tradition as one of the hallmarks of contemporary research on the topic.[4]

I suggest that we focus on four stages or phases in the life of a typical millennial group. The first phase is one of arousal, in which the message of the imminent end gets an audience. There are always people claiming that the end is near, but they are often regarded with disdain.[5] When the message is dismissed its bearer usually retreats back into his or her "normal" world, anxious to forget the whole episode.[6] What is special about the formation of a millennial movement is that for a variety of reasons circumstances are such that the millennial message attracts a responsive audience. Mutual validation—which is essential for the continuation of the process—then takes place between the bearer of the message and a community which accepts it as authoritative.[7]

While there may be many reasons for this heightened receptivity to the millennial message, one in particular deserves special mention. As Wayne Meeks has noted,[8] people whose place in life has undergone a drastic change, *either* a sudden rise *or* an acute fall, are especially aware of a sense of a world out of joint, and hence unusually interested in a message that preaches that their situation is not anomalous, but part of a larger pattern of imminent cosmic change, soon to transform heaven and earth.

The second stage is the search for the "Signs of the Times." As it were, a spiritual radar goes on to seek confirmation of the millennial message in a variety of contexts, including events of the age, both good and bad (sometimes even good and bad at the very same time), chronological reckonings of different sorts and Biblical interpretation. This search proceeds by triangulation: as many different independent lines of argument as possible are developed to confirm the conclusion that the end is in fact near.

---

[4] See the essay which turned scholarship on ancient Judaism and Christianity, at the very least, in that direction, M. Smith, "What is Implied by the Variety of Messianic Figures?" *JBL* 78 (1959) 66–72.

[5] They are told to "take a Physic," and are usually regarded as medical cases. See e.g. C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994) 243.

[6] Compare what happens to contemporary sufferers of the "Jerusalem Syndrome."

[7] R. Stark, "How Sane People Talk to the Gods: A Rational Theory of Revelation," *Innovation in Religious Traditions—Essays in the Interpretation of Religious Change* (eds. M. Williams, C. Cox and M. Jaffee; Religion and Society 31; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1992) 19–34, esp. 28–29.

[8] W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 172–174.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Here too the role of a community in accepting these conclusions is vital,[9] as the search for signs of the times fills an important cognitive need, which requires collective confirmation. The members of virtually every millenarian group are well aware that there have been similar movements in the past, which have disappointed. They are subject to the comment and criticism of friends and relatives, who fear that they have gone mad (compare the remarks concerning Jesus in Mk. 3:21). They need to meet that criticism both to others and for themselves, and argue that "this time it is for real." An argument based on triangulation meets this need. Any one argument by itself, in its own terms might not suffice, but the agreement of a number of independent lines of analysis confirms the inevitability of the imminent end. In this way, almost anything can become a sign of the times if a community agrees to grant it that meaning and incorporates it within its proofs of imminent redemption.

It is at times like these that millenarian enthusiasm has an ability to jump the boundaries of faith communities, arousal in one tradition "infecting" another, with each community working out the significance of the signs of the times within the context of its beliefs. Thus each group might produce its own set of calculations proving that the end is near, and while these calculations might have a different basis in the separate traditions they would concur that the end is imminent.

For the third stage, I would like to borrow a term from the world of gambling, and designate it as "upping the ante." When one player increases the amount bet all the others who wish to remain in the game must increase their wagers as well. "Upping the ante" thus has important consequences for the other players, and for that reason I prefer the term to other possibilities, such as "going out on a limb," which can be done in isolation and has no equivalent social implications.

I suggest that there are moments when millennial movements need to "up the ante," by forcing their members to accept risks which

---

[9] The community always plays an essential validatory role. Britain of the seventeenth century was a time when many radical religious groups were present, and in which confidence in the priesthood of all believers replaced the specialized educated priest as the authorized interpreter of the Bible. Nevertheless, it was the congregation which guaranteed the validity of interpretation, and served as a check on individualist absurdity. See C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down—Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) 95. See also W. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) 121.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

will increase solidarity and loyalty. At the simplest level movements "up the ante" in order to take advantage of the bonds established between those who share dangers. At a next is the common commitment of those willing to take the risk, as opposed to those apostates who refuse: the risk binds those who will share in the imminent blessings, unlike the apostates doomed to perdition. Designating and expelling these apostates also contributes to the sense of solidarity among those who endure. On an analogous plane, movements often attract "floaters" who want to try out membership on their own terms for a period of time. These "floaters" need to be encouraged to make a definite choice.[10] Alternately, those movements who take care of the needs of their members, feeding, clothing and housing them, may feel abused by "free-loaders," who must be compelled to make a commitment that will justify the movement's investment.[11] Finally, if the risk involves anti-social or even illegal behavior it unites those who share in the "crime," as their return to ordinary society is difficult if not impossible. When "upping the ante" takes this form it may reinforce the anti-nomian tendencies apparent in many millennial movements.

There are a number of reasons why movements may go through a phase of "upping the ante." For Festinger and his followers, this may be a response to the minor disconfirmations along the way (which precede the more massive and supposedly decisive disconfirmations later in their the experience, such as the death of the founder or the arrival of the "final" date for redemption with no results)[12] which are a regular feature of the life of many millenarian groups. These minor disconfirmations create a need to demonstrate loyalty to the message in spite of the disappointment.[13] Stark and Bainbridge, by contrast, might point to the elusive promises made by leaders of such groups.[14] "Upping the ante" is necessary in order to hold out

---

[10] Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 51–55.

[11] R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 174–176; Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 64–66.

[12] An example of such minor disconfirmations in the recent case of Lubavitch would be the series of illnesses suffered by the Rebbe in his final years.

[13] L. Festinger, H. Riecken and S. Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956).

[14] See the discussion of the example of Scientology (not quite a millennial movement, but one modeled on psychotherapy in promising personal salvation, but nevertheless a good example of "upping the ante") in R. Stark and W.S. Bainbridge,

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

a goal which recedes into the distance so as to serve as an on-going focus of commitment. A structuralist analysis, such as that favored by Douglas, would stress the weak nature of leadership in groups of this sort, leading to inevitable competition within the group and tension between members. In order to control this danger and prevent defection, the greatest threat of all, measures must always be taken to assure the faithfulness of members.[15]

"Upping the ante" can take many different forms, from the most benign to the most extreme examples of anti-rational behavior. Propagandizing, revealing the messianic secret, setting a date for the end can all be examples of this phase. The accepted sanctity of a widely revered holy place (such as Jerusalem) can also play such a role. Thus when a group moves the focus of its activities to such a center it raises the stakes. At other times, a movement may provoke the authorities, encourage its members to sell their property, or even to jump into the sea, expecting it to part as for Israelites at the Exodus.

As part of "upping the ante" some sacrifice of individual identity for the sake of commitment to the movement may also be demanded. The extent of this sacrifice may vary, from a change of lifestyle within the original social context, to transfer of private property to the group, to transferring one's commitment from the biological family to sectarian brothers (in matters of commercial life, family arrangements such as marriage, education of children, and divorce, or in plans for burial). In more extreme instances, believers may be asked to abandon their original social context to live in the new communal setting, to sacrifice their sexual identity (celibacy), or even to commit suicide.

The consequences of a successful "bet on the millennium" can be far-reaching. The reinforcement it provides that the end is truly at hand can change the way one lives (see the preceding paragraphs), and yield a certainty that is resistant to almost any sort of disconfirmation. Assured that millennial time is in effect, all possibilities seem realistic. Individuals and movements feel empowered to seek and achieve at a higher level than ever (in a sense, "upping the ante"

"Of Churches, Sects and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements," *JSSR* 18 (1979) 127–128. In more abstract terms, see also R. Stark and W.S. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996) 273–275.

[15] M. Douglas and S. Ney, *Missing Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 145–153.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

one more time, so that the cycle spirals upward, feeding on itself), and attain success more regularly.

The last phase, disconfirmation and its aftermath, is the focus of many of the contributions in this volume. As these papers teach us, we need to be careful lest we overstate the absolute decisive nature of disconfirmation as it appears to an outsider, by comparison with the perception of an insider who may avoid the conclusion by reinterpretation,[16] mythologization, spiritualization, invoking the idea that the failure is a delay intended to test the faithful, or scapegoating, to mention only a few among a variety of other means. Paradoxically, from the perspective of the outsider, for the insider, "disconfirmation" can even become the most important mark of truth.[17] Hope once raised is not so easily quashed; the pleasures of living in millennial time are not easily relinquished. It is remarkable just how powerful faith can be, and how resistant to disconfirmation. Sometimes, a prophecy of the end, which has long since been disconfirmed by our standards can live on or even re-emerge anew. Nevertheless, in most recorded examples, the disillusion ultimately proves decisive, and groups must make the transformations necessary to re-enter normal time. Experience must now be re-interpreted in light of what has happened,[18] but these difficult moments may also be ones of great social creativity, as the vision of a new world to come held in times of expectation of imminent upheaval does result in change in the bad old world which has remained. Dreams of a new heaven and a new earth experienced in millennial time may come to shape normal time in new ways, and many unanticipated consequences may ensue.[19]

---

[16] From among many studies of this topic see the insightful treatment of the topic by I. Gruenwald, "From Sunrise to Sunset—On the Nature of Eschatology and Messianism in Judaism," *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought—A Study Conference in Honour of the Eightieth Birthday of Gershom Scholem Held 4–5 December 1977* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982) 18–36 [in Hebrew].

[17] This is a point where the pioneering work of Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter is most vulnerable and most in need of modification. The authors of *When Prophecy Fails* viewed disconfirmation virtually entirely as perceived by outsiders—as decisive, totally erasing any remnant of hope, and as a death blow to a millennial movement. These conclusions, as argued in this introduction and the essays of this volume, simply do not stand the test of examination in the light of experience. I would note, as merely one example in addition to the many cited in this volume, that there are supposedly 30,000 believers in the messianic status of Shabbetai Zvi still living in Turkey, over three hundred years after this figure converted to Islam and died.

[18] Richard Landes compares the written record which may result to an account of the "Emperor's New Clothes," as written by the courtiers.

[19] See the classic study of R.K. Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action," *American Sociological Review* 1 (1936) 894–904.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

As in all previous phases, the consent of the community to the interpretation is crucial, and may lead to experimentation with several notions until one agreed understanding is fixed. Accordingly, this is a time when factionalism may be rife (perhaps as much as in the period when hopes of imminent redemption are high, although for other reasons).[20]

Furthermore, as the message is passed from one leader to another, in the wake of disconfirmation, it may change. One interesting example is provided by John the Baptist and Jesus. The latter's public career began with the arrest of John, Mk. 1:14 and parallels. In spreading what became his own vision of the imminent kingdom of heaven, Jesus began to stress other aspects (Jesus worked miracles, while we are never told of miracles worked by John) and reduce the importance of others (the principal ritual taught by Jesus was the Eucharist; baptism enters late—as it were through the back door; see Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15–16). Unlike John, Jesus ate with the sinners, for which he was rebuked (Mt. 11:18–19/Lk. 7:33–35).

Viewed from a long-term perspective, then, most disconfirmed millennial movements do not survive as distinct entities. Nevertheless, for the few examples of such groups which successfully negotiate disconfirmation, remain attractive and continue to recruit and grow,[21] disconfirmation can prove to be a source of flourishing on a scale otherwise unimagined.[22] One example of such an outcome may be early Christianity.

One final conclusion is that in analyzing the phases of millenarian groups, one must be sensitive to the various forms faith can take, appropriate to the different social and economic positions of mem-

---

[20] To quote Richard Landes, once again, when hopes are high, as well as in the wake of disappointment there is no baseless hatred: all resentment against dissidents is justified as they may be about to cause a failure of hope or are already accused of being responsible for it.

[21] The process of recruitment—in particular as analyzed by R. Stark and W.S. Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects," *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (1980) 1376–1395—is such that under proper circumstances it may not be harmed by disconfirmation.

[22] Note the concluding musings of Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails*, 233, who speculate on what might have happened if the movement in "Lake City" had been skillful proselytizers:

> Their ideas were not without popular appeal, and they received hundreds of visitors, telephone calls and letters from seriously interested citizens, as well as offers of money (which they invariably refused). Events conspired to offer them a magnificent opportunity to grow in numbers. Had they been more effective, disconfirmation might have portended the beginning, not the end.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

bers of these movements.[23] Millennial hopes are not the exclusive province of the dispossessed. We must learn to recognize the triumphalist and elitist varieties as well.[24] Millenarian hopes sometimes trickle from the top down, as well as rise from the bottom up among Jews, Christians and Moslems.

III

It would be foolish not to mention the obvious: this introduction is being completed in Jerusalem in December 1999, one month before the possible inception of a wave of millennial enthusiasm connected with the year 2000 whose proportions are unknown, but which could have dramatic effects on life in Jerusalem, the Middle East and the world at large. The papers collected here were not written in the shadow of these possible events, and only refer occasionally to the enthusiasm which may ensue in 2000. Nevertheless, they may have a significant contemporary ring. The light they shed on past millennial moments may help illuminate the one to come, and vice versa, as may be self-evident by the time this book appears in print.

IV

My thanks are due to Rachel Budd Kaplan who edited the submissions so well, and thus helped achieve a greater degree of clarity of expression and consistency. As for the previous volume of Taubes Minerva Center papers, Judy Fattal typed (and retyped) essays in order to produce the final copies appearing here.

Albert I. Baumgarten

Jerusalem
December 1999

---

[23] W. Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion 1603–60* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

[24] See further A.I. Baumgarten, "The Pursuit of the Millennium in Early Judaism", *Tolerance and its Limits in Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (eds.: G. Stanton and G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 38–60.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

END OF TIME AND NEW TIME IN MEDIEVAL CHINESE BUDDHISM

Hubert Seiwert

Chinese Buddhism may appear to be an exotic theme given the fact that other articles in this volume concentrate on monotheistic religions of the Western part of the Old World. As an outsider I would like to take this opportunity to offer a few thoughts about the systematic context of apocalyptic thinking from a comparative point of view. These more or less theoretical considerations about time and history will be followed by an example of Buddhist apocalypticism in China. I would like to point out from the beginning that this is a highly specialized field of research, and I do not expect general readers to be familiar with it. I have tried my best to present this topic in a way that is useful to scholars from other fields and to raise some questions of general interest.

Like so many terms used by historians of religion, "apocalypse" originates in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Even if the term is removed from its original context (where it refers to a particular genre of literature in early Christianity and post-biblical Judaism), it seems doubtful that it can be applied to the religious traditions of India and the Far East. Apocalyptic views seem to be connected with a particular understanding of history as a limited span of time, starting with the first day of creation and ending with the fulfilment of time at the last day of history. Only within such a frame of limited time, one might suspect, may ideas about the events occurring at the end of time attain religious and intellectual significance.

This understanding of time is far from being universal. Indian, and to a certain degree also Chinese concepts of time have often and justifiably been characterized as "cyclical" as opposed to "linear". Cyclical concepts of time have the advantage of corresponding to the experience of natural processes, like the cycles of the seasons and vegetation, or to the cyclical motions of heavenly bodies. Linear concepts correspond more closely to human life cycles—from birth to death. It appears that different concepts of time are in some way related to the different ways human beings and cosmic

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

processes are conceived. It is probably no mere coincidence that in Indian thought even human existence is interpreted as a cyclical process covering an endless sequence of individual lives. Death and any form of termination is not an unique and final occurrence, but rather a junction in the continuous process of existence. Death does not function as a key concept in anthropological thinking because reflections and imaginations about the last day are of minor interest. This applies, needless to say, not only to individuals but also to the world. Eschatological and apocalyptic thinking, therefore, does not occupy a prominent place in Indian intellectual history nor in Indian Buddhism. There are scholastic speculations about the junction of cosmic cycles, the succession of different *kalpas* and the destruction of the present world before a new cycle begins, but they did not evoke apocalyptic expectations in Indian Buddhism.

In traditional China the concepts of time and history were in many respects different from Indian ones.[1] Although cosmological speculations focus on cyclical processes, and the course of history was interpreted as a sequence of dynastic cycles, the concept of history as a linear process beginning with the sage rulers of high antiquity to the present time was also formed. Chinese historians were highly conscious of the changes that had occurred in the course of history. As far as these changes concerned technical or even institutional issues, they were accepted; but there was a strong conviction that in the field of morality the ancient sages had set fixed paradigms. In traditional China the awareness of historical change was combined with the conviction of an unchanging world order. In a metaphysical sense, this order remained always the same. Empirically, however, potential violations of this order—resulting in various kinds of disturbances, from natural disasters to social turmoil and political chaos—could happen. However, as far as the official Confucianist interpretation of history is concerned, these disturbances were seen as only temporal deviations from the preordained cosmic and social order. According to the cyclical concept of time, order will be restored once chaos has reached its climax. In the political arena, old corrupt governments are replaced by new dynasties who begin new cycles. Clearly, this view of history does not incorporate a final destruction

[1] For Chinese concepts of time, see Joseph Needham, "Time and Eastern Man," in his *The Grand Titration. Science and Society in East and West*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969) 218–298.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

of the cosmic order or conception of a future end of the world.

Thus, it may be concluded that both the Buddhist and the traditional Chinese understanding of time and history lack one of the basic presuppositions of apocalyptic expectations, i.e. the idea that time is limited and human history, therefore, will come to an end. When I once talked about the subject with a sinological colleague, he did not hesitate to assert that eschatological thinking is completely lacking in Chinese intellectual history. He is certainly right in his view if we confine our perception to the mainstream of Chinese, particularly Confucian thinking. In mainstream Chinese religious life there is hardly a place for apocalypses. However, there are some traditions that did not find the approval of the political and intellectual elites, in which eschatological, and even apocalyptical, thinking did play a role.

The earliest literary evidence of apocalyptic ideas can be found in Daoist tradition. The *Taiping Jing (Great Peace Scripture)*, an influential text traditionally dated to the second century, notes the threat of a final catastrophe ushering in the end of the world. This calamity will occur if humankind does not cease to violate the heavenly order.[2] During the following centuries such eschatological ideas were transmitted mainly within popular sects that rarely gained the attention of the elites and historiographers, except in cases of rebellion. However, during the fourth and particularly the fifth centuries messianistic hopes, combined with apocalyptic warnings, pervaded large portions of Chinese society. The historical reflection of this messianistic movement were numerous rebellions, and a number of Daoist texts that show the deep influence of apocalyptical ideas on religious life at the time.[3] Although messianistic expectations were occasionally utilized as means of political propaganda, they always remained suspicious to the political elites who were more interested in social stability than in revolutionary changes. Thus, from the beginning apocalyptic thinking in China was linked with sectarian movements that were not only condemned but often persecuted by the political and clerical

---

[2] See my article "Health and Salvation in Early Daoism. On the Anthropology and Cosmology of the *Taiping Jing*", in Albert Baumgarten, ed., *Self, Soul and Body In Religious Experience.* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 256–275.

[3] These texts have only recently attracted the attention of scholars. See Christine Mollier, *Une apocalypse taoïste du Ve siècle. Le Livre des Incantations des Grottes Abyssales.* Paris: Collège des France, Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1990 (Mémoires de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises; 31).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

establishments. This affinity to heterodoxy is one of the reasons why apocalyptic traditions remained outside the mainstream of Chinese religious history.

The second stage in the history of Chinese apocalypticism developed as Buddhism penetrated all layers of the society including the popular sects during the middle of the first millennium. Popular apocalypticism, which had previously employed Daoist religious symbolism, had now been integrated into the Buddhist tradition where again it was closely connected with heterodox movements. In China apocalyptic thinking never gained a central position in religious tradition. In comparison to Jewish and Christian apocalyptic beliefs, this difference appears to be significant. However, one should not overlook the fact that even in Christianity, where the *Apocalypse of John* is part of the canonical scriptures, religious movements stressing this aspect tended to be marginalized. Although the expectation of the second advent of Christ and the last day belong to the core of the Christian message, mainstream churches seem to be reluctant to stress this aspect of their tradition. Hence, the reluctance of the orthodox traditions in China to embrace apocalypticism may reflect a structural tension that also exists in other cultures.

Before providing some historical details of Chinese Buddhism, it is appropriate to address some terminological questions. As outlined above, the term "apocalypse" has been coined to denote a rather specific literary genre and by extension religious beliefs in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Examining the titles of the papers in this volume confirms the impression that the phenomenon is largely confined to the monotheistic religions originating in west Asia. In comparative usage this term is quite uncommon, whereas other concepts such as *eschatology, millenarianism* and *messianism* appear more frequently. Incidently, the historical origin of these terms is not less rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition than in the case of *apocalypse.* In addition, the semantic field of these different terms is not coextensive with *apocalypse.*

By moving away from the Jewish and Christian world we gain a broader perspective that will allow us to examine the intellectual contexts in which apocalyptic thought may appear. The common denominator of the above terms is the end of the present and the dawn of a new era. This break in the continuous flow of time is expected to happen sometime in the future. This approach not only

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

places an emphasis on the world and the cosmos *in general*—as in the case of Indian teachings about cosmic ages—but also on the future of *human* history. Belief systems that incorporate eschatological, millenarian or apocalyptic ideas conceive human history as a closed process. Unlike our modern understanding of history, which deals only with the past and not with the future, this approach attempts to provide a complete understanding of history, from beginning to end.

Why are people interested in history? Apart from amateurs and modern scholars they do not conduct research out of mere curiosity. Writing or narrating history is a means to understand and interpret the present. One of the crucial functions of historiography is to define personal and collective identity. The identity of individuals and nations is defined by their continuity in time or by their place in history. If history is to be understood in relation to the past and future, then one's place in history also depends on future events. Therefore, the meaning of the present is contingent upon future events. Any uncovering of the future has a direct bearing on the interpretation of the present. This point will be illustrated in the Chinese examples that will be presented below.

Within this frame of reference the term *apocalypse* can be used as a general concept. Apocalypticism shares with millenarianism, messianism and eschatological speculations its point of reference, i.e. future events. I shall employ this term in the context of Chinese, and particularly Chinese Buddhist, ideas to denote interpretations of history that predict and describe a catastrophic end of time. This preliminary definition is wide enough not to restrict its use within Jewish and Christian contexts. We shall see, however, that there are a number of similarities between Chinese and Near Eastern apocalypticism.

Since Chinese Buddhism does not belong to the standard curriculum of historians of religion, and some readers may not be familiar with its history, it may be useful to provide some background information. Monks from Central Asia introduced Buddhism in China during the first century C.E. The following centuries were marked by its gradual penetration into Chinese society on all levels, from the ruling elites to the common people. During this period an increasing number of Buddhist scriptures were translated from Sanskrit and Central Asian languages into Chinese. This undertaking was one of the biggest translation enterprises in the history of humankind. The

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

transplantation of Buddhism to China also transformed the Indian religion. As one can easily imagine, Buddhism not only brought many new religious ideas and practices to China, but also it adopted elements of the Chinese cultural heritage and developed distinctive features. The growth of Chinese Buddhist literature, produced also scriptures of purely local origin. These included works that adopted the literary form of *sūtras*, i.e. sayings of the Buddha, that had the highest possible form of scriptural authority. Modern Western scholars usually call this kind of Chinese Buddhist scriptures *apocrypha*, which incidently is another term derived from biblical religions.[4] "Apocalyptic" ideas developed within apocryphical literature, which has been rather popular since the fourth and fifth centuries. Unfortunately, many of the Chinese Buddhist apocrypha are lost, as they were perceived as heterodox by the political and clerical elites. Since these texts were excluded from the Buddhist canon, in most cases we do not know more than their titles which appeared in bibliographical catalogues. Although they were regarded as heterodox, apocrypha were circulated widely in the country at least until the eighth and ninth centuries. A number of apocryphical writings, unearthed in the caves of the Dunhuang oasis at the beginning of the twentieth century, have allowed us to gain some insight into the suppressed tradition of Buddhist apocalypticism in Medieval China.

Describing the contents of this apocalyptic literature is rather difficult as the relevant texts are often enigmatic, and the exact meaning of many passages remains obscure. It is also important to note the fact that various scriptures have different stories and details of apocalyptic events. I shall, therefore, first give a general outline of the basic structure of Buddhist apocalypticism, avoiding the details that are of interest only to the specialists in the field. I would like to raise the following questions:

1. When do the apocalyptic events occur?
2. What happens during that time?
3. What happens after that time?

The historical context in which this kind of apocalyptic thinking occurred, its genesis and social impact, will be discussed at the end of this article.

---

[4] See Robert E. Buswell, ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha.* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The advent of apocalyptic time in orthodox Chinese Buddhism is not related to the end of the world. This final event has no importance in Buddhism nor in Chinese thought. Apocalyptic time, therefore, does not mark a final time in an absolute sense, but rather in a relative sense. Apocalyptic events, occur at the end of the present age. The present age is a time when the *dharma*, the truth revealed by the Buddha, prevails. During the present age men know the true teaching and follow it, whereas at the end of time the knowledge of Buddhist truth gradually diminishes and finally disappears.

In China the expectation of the end of the *dharma* has long occupied the imagination of Buddhist thinkers. The historical origin and development of this idea is a rather complicated matter that cannot be discussed here.[5] Since the fifth century there have been Buddhist scriptures circulating in which Buddha made prophecies about the events occurring in the last phase of the *dharma*, before its stage of complete oblivion. Some circles expected the immediate advent of the last phase of the *dharma* (*mofa*) or were even convinced that it had already been entered. A general decline of morality and a lack of adherence to true Buddhist teachings characterizes this last phase of the *dharma*. In the *Sūtra of the Annihilation of the Dharma* (*Fo shuo fa miejin jing*, T 396), the Buddha predicts that at that time evil teachings will appear and devils will become monks to destroy the true doctrine. The monks will engage in all kinds of sinful activities, monasteries will fall into disrepair and the Buddhist precepts will not be followed any more. When this decline of Buddhism has reached its climax the apocalypse occurs as a huge deluge that will destroy the sinners. Only a few virtuous people, who withdraw into the mountains, survive. Then the bodhisattva Yueguang ("Moonlight") appears and renews Buddhist teaching once again for a period of fifty-two years, after which the *dharma* is completely annihilated and Buddhist scriptures disappear from the world. However, this annihilation of the *dharma* is just a temporary disappearance from the world. The *sūtra* concludes with the prophecy that after ten million years the future Buddha Maitreya will appear to inaugurate a new age of the True Teaching. It will be a time of peace and prosperity when people will live for eighty-four thousand years and achieve salvation.

---

[5] The topic has been exhaustively treated by Jan Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time. Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline.* (Berkeley, CA: Asia Humanities Press, 1991) (Nanzan Studies in Asian Religions; 1).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Although this text deals with apocalyptical motifs—the catastrophes occurring when the *dharma* vanishes from the world—it has no millenarian or messianistic message. The apocalypse is not the prelude to the coming of a new perfect time but to a degenerating world oblivious to the saving knowledge of the *dharma*. However, after a time of unimaginable length the *dharma* will be renewed and humankind will enjoy complete happiness and salvation. Obviously, this scenario could not inspire hopes for an imminent coming of a saviour. The new perfect time is nothing that people of the present can expect to enjoy, except after countless reincarnations. The apocalyptic events are placed in a cosmological context of cyclical decline and renewal rather than in an eschatological context of imminent complete transformation.

In the *Sūtra of the Annihilation of the Dharma* apocalyptic events are described in a rather moderate way. This *sūtra*, considered to be an authentic scripture, was not regarded as an apocryphical text. However, it contains the basic structure of Chinese Buddhist apocalypticism, and above all it explains that the apocalypse happens when Buddhist teachings disappear from the world.

What happens during the apocalyptic time? To answer this question I shall use two other texts that have not been included into the Buddhist canon, *Zhengming Ming* or *Sūtra of the Realization of Understanding preached by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra* (*Puxian pusa shuo zhengming jing*, T 2879) and *Shouluo Jing* or *Scripture of the Monk Shouluo* (*Shouluo biqiu jing*, T 2873). Both of these works, found in the caves of Dunhuang, probably originated in the sixth century.[6] In both scriptures the plot is somewhat different from the *Sūtra of the Annihilation of the Dharma*. Buddha Śākyamuni himself does not teach, but rather other buddhas and bodhisattvas reveal prophecies.[7] Without going into details it should be noted that the literary form of the two apocalyptic scrip-

---

[6] For bibliographical details see Erik Zürcher, "'Prince Moonlight', Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism", *T'oung Pao*, 68 (1982) 1–751 especially 34 f. This is the most substantial study of Buddhist apocalypticism in China. See also Erik Zürcher, "Eschatology and Messianism in early Chinese Buddhism", in W.L. Idema, ed., *Leyden Studies in Sinology*. (Leyden, 1981) 34–56.

[7] The *Zhengming jing* consists of two parts. The first is a pronouncement of the Buddha in the usual form while the second part consists of pronouncements of several other transcendent beings. A summary of the *Zhengming jing* can be found in Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century: Inquiry into the Nature, Authors and Functions of the Tunhuang Document S 6502 followed by an annotated translation*. (Napoli: Instituto Universitario Orientale, 1976) 271–280.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

tures suggests that they are revelations which go beyond the teachings present in ordinary *sūtras*. Authentic *sūtras* are composed as sayings of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, whereas these texts are clearly revelations, and are thus similar to with *apocalypsis* as a literary genre.

The circumstances in which the apocalyptic prophecies are revealed differ considerably in the two texts, but the description of the events shares many common elements. For example, in *Scripture of the Monk Shouluo*, the apocalyptic time will be marked by three scourges: deluge, epidemics and demonic powers. First, floods will rise and destroy most of the sinners. Second, the majority of the survivors will suffer greatly and eventually die from epidemics.[8] Then, finally, thirty-six Great Devils (*damo*, mārakings), riding on dragon-horses and brandishing diamond clubs, will invade the world with their hordes. During their destructive rampage they shout "sha!" ("kill") and nobody is able to withstand them. After the violence, there will be darkness for seven days. During that time all the demonic hosts, the *Yakṣas* and *Rākṣasas*, the *Piśācās* and *Kumbhāndas*, ravage the world and the *Rākṣasas* kill countless people. After these three great disasters the moats and rivers will be filled with blood, and mountains of white bones will cover the earth (*Shouluo Jing*, T 2873, 1356 b/c).

This apocalyptic scenario is only part of the message. The same texts also describe the ways in which this huge catastrophe can be avoided. People can be rescued if they change their hearts and follow the true teachings. The texts give different accounts about this rescue, but they both state that the demonic powers will battle the supernatural forces of truth.[9] Following the apocalypse the virtuous people, who have been saved from eradication, will live in a new world which can best be characterized as a paradise, though Chinese and Western perceptions of paradise do not completely converge. In both texts the saved will live in a transformed city (*huacheng*), i.e. a new supernatural landscape which is described as a world of great splendour.[10] The landscape is made of precious metals and jewels,

[8] Zürcher, "Prince Moonlight," 38. This opening part of the scripture does not appear in the text of the Taishô Tripitaka but in the manuscript reprinted by Zürcher.

[9] According to the *Shouluo jing* only a *kumāra* (prince) called He Tian from the heaven of the thirty-three gods will be able to resist the thirty-six Great Devils (T 2873, 1356 b).

[10] It is difficult not to compare the motif of the transformed city to the New Jerusalem in the New Testament.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

and the inhabitants wholeheartedly practice good deeds and follow the true teachings.

Although the two apocalyptic texts differ significantly in their description of many details of the events, they share the same dichotomical structure of the apocalypse. The horror of the apocalyptic time is paired with the promise of a paradise-like life after the catastrophe. This paradise is of course open only to those who follow Buddhist teachings or more particularly the teachings revealed in these apocalyptic scriptures. Thus, the dichotomy of destruction and paradise is complemented by the dichotomy of the annihilation of the sinners and the salvation of the true followers of the teachings. Furthermore, there is a dichotomy of the supernatural agents in this cosmic battle: On the one hand, devils and demons are ravaging the world and its sinful inhabitants. On the other hand, divine powers, buddhas and bodhisattvas fight to rescue the few that have practiced the true teaching.

Several issues regarding the question, "What happens after the apocalyptic time?" should be addressed. The first point concerns the time perspective. It has been noted that in the canonical literature of Chinese Buddhism the idea of the end of the *dharma* was quite popular, and the description of social decline and moral decadence in the final age of the *dharma* foreshadows the very detailed apocalypses of the apocryphical texts. According to Orthodox Buddhism, the true teaching will vanish and reappear when Buddha Maitreya descends from the Tuṣita heaven. However, the advent of Maitreya was expected after some ten million years, and therefore it was totally irrelevant for the present time. In the above apocryphical texts, this cosmic time perspective has been replaced by a *Naherwartung*, the belief that apocalyptic events and the formation of a new world will occur in the near future, if they have not happened already.[11] Thus,

[11] As far as I understand these texts, there is no concrete date given for the apocalyptic events. The *Zhengming jing* has a somewhat obscure passage saying that seven hundred years after the *parinirvāna* of the Buddha Śakyamuni heaven and earth will experience a great quake, and ninety years later the apocalypse will happen (T 2879, 1366 a). According to the usual chronology this would imply that the apocalypse should have happened already. I cannot explain this calculation. In the *Shouluo jing* it is explicitly stated, "I tell you that the world is about to reach its end" (T 2873, 2357 c). Another passage not included in the Taishō text, but appearing in the manuscript reprinted by Zürcher states that, "Yueguang will soon appear; there will be terrible disasters". (Zürcher, *Prince Moonlight*, 48) It is also noted that those who eagerly engage in good deeds will be able to see the future paradise, and if they rely on this scripture they will see "me", i.e. the saviour. (T 2874, 1358 b, l. 15/16)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the battle between the forces of evil and of truth involves people living in the present time. Depending on their choice, they will either be destroyed or saved. If they are among the chosen people who escape apocalyptic catastrophe, they will enjoy a pure life in the new world. Thus, the cosmic time perspective of traditional Buddhism has been transformed into a very concrete hope for an imminent advent of a new time.

This brings me to the second point about the time after the apocalypse. The advent of the new time is inaugurated by the appearance of a figure who might be called *saviour*, and some scholars would refer to him as *messiah*. The two texts do not fully agree about the identity of this saviour. A further study of the various names, titles and transcendent agents should be done though it is beyond the scope of this paper. However, there is one point I would like to mention. One of the titles given to the saviour is *Ming Wang*, which can be translated as *King of Light*. The title is used repeatedly in both texts. In *Scripture of the Monk Shouluo* a reference is made to *An Jun*, or *Lord of Darkness*, who controls the evil powers that destroy the world.[12] There is a remarkable symbolism of light throughout the scriptures. The King of Light who will appear after the apocalypse is identified with a bodhisattva called Moonlight (Yueguang). Yueguang does not hold any prominent position in canonical writings.[13] But here he appears as the central figure, the King of Light who will save the world. He will manifest himself "after the end of the Old Moon".[14] This is a very cryptic phrase that cannot be explained on the basis of traditional Buddhist literature. It appears that the Old Moon refers to the forces of darkness, reminiscent of the seven-day complete darkness in which apocalyptic events reach their climax.

Approximately a century after these texts were written, the symbolism of light and a battle between a "King of Light" and a "Lord of Darkness" became recurring motifs in Chinese Manichaean communities. The exact date of the introduction of Manichaeism into China is still a matter of dispute. Although Manichaean teachings were presented to the throne in the late seventh century, their ideas appear to have influenced certain circles of lay Buddhists in China

[12] T 2874, 1358 b.

[13] It should be remembered, however, that in the above *Sūtra on the Annihilation of the Dharma* a bodhisattva, called Moonlight, restores the *dharma* for forty-two years before it will fall into oblivion.

[14] T 2873, 1356 c, l. 3/4. A similar phrase occurs earlier in the manuscript studied by Zürcher ("Prince Moonlight," 48).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

and in Central Asia beforehand.[15] In addition, there seems to be a relationship between Manichaeism and the coming of Buddha Maitreya that can be traced back to Parthian sources.[16] Maitreya figures prominently in Buddhist apocalyptical writings, and in the *Shouluo Jing* he is associated with the bodhisattva Moonlight who is called "King of Light." The title of an apocryphical scripture, listed in a Buddhist catalogue of the early eighth century, indicates that Maitreya was identified with Mani, the founder of Manichaeism.[17] Taken together the available evidence suggests a possible influence of Manichaeism on popular sects and their eschatological beliefs. It should be stressed, however, that this evidence is far from being conclusive.

To avoid any misunderstandings I would like to remind the reader that the texts discussed in this article are definitely Buddhist texts, though they did not belong to what may be called "orthodox" Buddhism. It is very clear that these texts were written with the intent of criticizing the existing forms of Buddhism. There was a strong feeling that the final age of the *dharma* had been reached: Buddhist monks were perceived as engaging in worldly activities and caring more about the accumulation of riches and political influence than about following the precepts of Buddha.

Not only monks represent the religious ideal described in these scriptures but also pious lay people, especially pious women who will

---

[15] Most scholars would accept 694 as the date of the introduction of Manichaeism into China. However, others disagree with this opinion and argue that Manichaeism influenced popular religion much earlier. This position has been taken by Japanese scholars and has been argued above all by Liu Ts'un-yan, "Traces of Zoroastrian and Manichaean activities in pre-T'ang China", in his *Selected Papers from the Hall of Harmonious Wind.* (Leyden: Brill, 1976) 3–58. According to Lin Wushu (*Monijiao ji qi dong jian*, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1987) 60, the influence of Manichaeism (not the earliest Manichaean communities!) may be as early as the fourth century.

[16] See Lin Wushu, *loc. cit.*, 56–58 and Liu Ts'un-yan, *loc. cit.*, 37.

[17] *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (T 2154), 673a. The title of the scripture in question is *Mile Moni fo shuo kaiwu foxing jing* (*Sūtra on the Buddha Maitreya-Mani who explains the awakening of the Buddha-nature*). Since the text itself is lost, the translation is not unquestionable. The Chinese expression *moni* is the usual phonetic transliteration of Mani, the founder of Manichaeism. However, it is also used as a transliteration of the Sanskrit word *mani*, meaning "pearl" or "treasure". Thus, the title could also be translated as *Sūtra on Maitreya, the Pearl-Buddha* . . . However, this does not make much sense. In other Buddhist writings the expression *mingyue moni* can be found, which could be translated as "brilliant moon Mani" (cf. *Foxue da cidian*, Beijing 1984, 748), reminiscent of the bodhisattva Moonlight who is also called King of Light and occasionally identified with Maitreya. In any case, even if these expressions are due to Manichaean influence, it is obvious that it was not more than a very dim reflection of the original Manichaen teachings.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

be the first to be saved from the impending catastrophe. The special attention given to women and lay people is one of the few clues to the social milieus in which such apocalyptic beliefs originated. Obviously these traditions did not originate with orthodox Buddhist monks, but rather within circles of lay Buddhists, with a significant number of female believers, and possibly with the participation of some monks who were dissatisfied with the Buddhist clergy. The criticism of the established Buddhist institutions was certainly not without foundation given the fact that Buddhist monasteries were among the biggest estate owners at the time and a great number of people entered the order for reasons other than religious devotion. The social milieu in which this apocalypticism grew was sectarian in the sense that there was a clear demarcation between the true believers who will be saved, and the "world" dominated by demonic forces that will finally be annihilated.[18] Buddhist apocalypticism was the most extreme form of theological—if I may say so in a Buddhist context—protest against the legitimacy of the then present social order. It was a historical interpretation of the present time, but with a concept of history that included the future. The real meaning of the present is revealed with reference to the future. As in any historical thinking, one's own identity is clarified. History, in this case future history, separates the just from the unjust. The former will stand "east of the bridge," and the latter "west of the bridge".[19] Hence, history settles any questions that may be about the present. Although sinners may seem to be on the winning side, future history shows that they are wrong. People should make their choice in view of the events to come.

We have no further information about the social composition of these sects, but we may assume that they recruited their members mainly from the middle classes. The critical remarks of the orthodox compilers of the bibliographies make it clear that apocryphical texts were widely distributed; for example, in her political propaganda Empress Wu Zetian referred to the *Zhengming Jing*.[20] It appears that apocalyptical texts were in no way confined to small and

---

[18] This *selective* salvation contradicts a basic doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism, i.e. *universal* salvation of all beings.

[19] *Zhengming jing*, T 2879, 85.1365 c; 1366 b. This first passage says east resp. west of the "river" instead of "bridge".

[20] See Forte, *loc. cit.*, 159–163.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

clandestine groups of sectarians but had considerable influence on the common people. Although in the early sixth and seventh centuries there were some cases of rebellion connected with the expectation of the future Buddha Maitreya,[21] the majority of believers did not transform their religious protest into a political one. The criticism of the present time seems to be based on religious and moral convictions rather than on political and economical antagonisms. If we place this Buddhist apocalypticism of the Medieval ages in a wider historical perspective, however, then its political dimension becomes more obvious. Any questioning of the legitimacy of the present order had political implications. The political authorities viewed these religious teachings as heterodox, and the sects connected with the above two apocalyptic scriptures were part of a broad tradition of Chinese millenarianism, which in the case of Buddhism anticipated the future Buddha Maitreya. In fact, the King of Light was obviously identified with Maitreya. The hope for the advent of Maitreya, in conjunction with a reversal of the present condition, became a core element of popular sectarianism. In one of the most famous rebellions in Chinese history in the fourteenth century, which led to the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the expectation of Maitreya as the King of Light was used as a means of ideological propaganda. During the following Ming ("Light") and Qing dynasties, popular sects with apocalyptic teachings on the coming of Maitreya became the most dynamic religious forces in China. They were severely persecuted by the government. Thus, the heterodox Buddhist eschatology and apocalypticism that developed in the middle of the first millennium had lasting historical influence. To my knowledge, the last case of this politically motivated Maitreya belief took place on January 30, 1985, in the Hunan province, when a self-styled Buddha Maitreya was publicly executed.[22]

---

[21] The sources say nothing about the scriptures used by these rebels, but they probably derived their ideology from sources belonging to the same genre of apocryphical *sūtras*. We may assume that the broad stream of popular messianism had some extremist branches where it was turned into political action.

[22] *Chinese Journal of Public Law (Zhongguo fazhi bao)*, 11 February 1985, quoted in *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, Summer 1989/vol. 21, no. 4, p. 35. Translation by Robin Munro.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

APOCALYPTICISM, SYMBOLIC BREAKDOWN AND PARANOIA: AN APPLICATION OF LIFTON'S MODEL TO THE DEATH-REBIRTH FANTASY

Moshe Hazani

The present study is concerned with two questions that have long attracted the attention of students of apocalypticism. First, what are the historical conditions that are conducive to the spread of apocalyptic attitudes? Second, what is the message of the apocalyptic to people who embrace its prophecies? It is frequently claimed that apocalyticism thrives in crisis situations, and that its major message is the consolation of suffering individuals.

These answers, however, are inadequate. For example, crises, such as the Black Death, were not followed by a spread of apocalyptic attitudes. At the same time, there are instances of apocalyptic outbursts that were not related to crises, such as the tense anticipation in 1184 England for an eclipse signaling total destruction followed by great well-being.[1] The reign of Henry II (1154–1189), however, was marked by restoration of order and stability to the monarchy.[2]

Overall, a number of scholars hold that in addition to some of the central themes of this phenomenon, consolation[3] is just one factor out of many which give meaning to human anxieties, relating a person's life to a beginning and an end. It is seen as "one way of overcoming what Mircea Eliade called 'the terror of history'."[4] We accept this view, but only as a partial explanation because it overlooks a tormenting terror people may experience in certain periods, namely, the terror of death. This fear has little to do with terror of history.

---

[1] For a description of the event and its context, see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957) pp. 75–76.

[2] It was, however, problematic on the symbolic level; for example, thousands of pilgrims flocked to the murdered Becket's relics. See the discussion below.

[3] For discussion of the central themes, see below. On the apocalyptic as more than consolation, see Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement: Introduction and Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975); Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Bernard McGinn, ed. and trans., *Apocalyptic Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979) p. 9.

[4] McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, p. 13.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

We argue that apocalypticism *is* related to crisis situations as long as we consider the *critical aspects* of the situations. Historical situations are comprised of different and sometimes contrasting aspects. We should not define them *in their entirety* as "crises" or "non-crises." For instance, periods of rampant prosperity are often characterized by high suicide rates, a fact recognized since Durkheim's *Le Suicide.* Do we classify such examples as "crisis situations" or does the answer depend on which aspect is studied? Likewise, in periods of general stability, subterranean crumbling of cultural symbol systems may take place, resulting in much human misery.

It appears that if we focus on the symbolic domain, we find a relationship between crises *in that domain* and apocalypticism. In this paper we will argue that the message of the apocalyptic lies in its capacity to alleviate acute anxieties engendered by the breaking of symbolic continuity. Moreover, the relationship between symbolic breakdown, human suffering, and the relief provided by the apocalyptic, in terms of Lifton's paradigm of symbolic immortality will be elucidated. In addition, the capacity of the apocalyptic to produce catharsis will be discussed, along with other qualities that are not directly related to Lifton's model.

The crux of this article may be summed up in the following points:

(1) Humans need a sense of immortality. When this sense is impaired, they plunge into a miserable "death in life" existence, characterized by painful symptoms of the "survivor syndrome" and "survivor paranoia."
(2) Breakdowns of collective symbol systems often result in an impairment of individuals' sense of immortality.
(3) The apocalyptic extricates people from their wretched existence and relieves attendant anxieties by virtue of its themes, along with its cathartic quality. In addition, the apocalyptic answers some of the psychic needs of the paranoid personality.
(4) Due to its experiential nature, the apocalyptic can never be disconfirmed.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Lifton's Paradigm of Symbolic Immortality

Lifton claims that humans require a sense of immortality in the face of inevitable death.[5] This is not merely a denial of death, but rather a compelling, universal urge to maintain a sense of self-continuity and a quest for symbolic relationship to what has been before and what will continue after our finite personal existence. The striving is neither compensatory nor irrational, but "an appropriate symbolization of our biological and historical connectedness."[6] He enumerates five modes of symbolic immortality, the most relevant of which are the *biological mode*, i.e., the sense of living on through, or in, one's offsprings, tribe, people, etc. and the *theological mode*, which highlights religious ideas concerning life after death and the more general principle of the conquest of death.[7]

Modes are not merely problems pondered as one approaches death (man's "ultimate concerns," in Lifton's terminology). Rather they are constantly perceived (albeit often unconsciously) inner standards by which we evaluate the meaning of our *everyday* existence ("proximate concerns"), regardless of age, health, or state of mind. I Corinthians 15:32 states, "what advantageth it to me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." That is, *here and now* functioning depends upon a sense of being symbolically immortal (the theological mode, in this instance). A Jewish *Aggadah* conveys the same message: a man planting a carob tree (which gives fruits only after 70 years, so the *Aggadah* has it) was asked why he was planting the tree—surely he would never enjoy the fruits! Said he: "I found carobs in the world; just as my fathers planted [carob trees] for me, I am planting for my sons." The sense of immortality (via the biological mode, in this instance) makes tree planting possible. Devoid of a sense of continuity, however, we recall Ecclesiastes (2:8–25),

---

[5] The paradigm is presented in detail in R.J. Lifton, *The Broken Connection* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[7] The other three modes are: that achieved through man's works (art, thought, institutions, etc.); that represented by the continuity of nature itself, the sense of living on in the natural elements, which are limitless in time and space; and experiential transcendence, similar to what Freud referred to as "oceanic feeling".

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> Yea, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun: because I shall leave it unto the man that shall be after me [with whom I have no connections] . . . There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink . . . But this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

When individuals face the prospect of losing their sense of immortality, they experience threatened vitality and anxiety associated with death and death equivalents: separation, stasis, and disintegration.[8] People often perceive themselves as victims. In Lifton's terminology, they assume the *victim identity*. Their everyday functioning is greatly impaired, and they exist in a death-in-life state. As the Hebrew poet U.Z. Greenberg poignantly put it, "Man is digging a grave for his own corpse."[9] Tormented by death anxiety, the self-perceived victims see death lurking everywhere and often entertain suicidal thoughts. They also exhibit symptoms similar to those exhibited by survivors, e.g., apathy, hopelessness, constant fear of persecution, psychic numbness, and more. Suppressed aggression, self-directed hostility, self-reproach and self-punishment have also been observed. Quite a few exhibit also *survivor paranoia*, with features similar to those of the paranoid personality. We shall expand these points further on.[10]

What impairs people's sense of immortality? Individuals may have their personal circumstances (e.g., children who were incestuously abused may plunge into death-in-life existence),[11] but how can we account for collective phenomena in which groups seem to lose their sense of immortality, and subsequently display the above symptoms?

Since humankind is comprised of "cultural animals," their modes of symbolic immortality are embraced by collective symbolizations. Historical dislocations—times in which people have difficulties in

---

[8] Lifton, *Broken Connection*, p. 128.

[9] U.Z. Greenberg, in his "Great Dread and a Moon."

[10] For a detailed description of the survivor syndrome, see M.S. Bergmann and M.E. Jucovy, eds., *Generations of the Holocaust* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). The features of paranoia are described in all psychiatry textbooks, e.g., Theo C. Manschreck, "Delusional Disorders and Shared Psychotic Disorders," in Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock, eds., *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry* Vol. I (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1995) pp. 1031–49. We also draw greatly upon W.W. Meissner, *The Paranoid Process* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1978); *idem, Psychotherapy and the Paranoid Process* (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1986). For manifestations of survivor paranoia among people who have lost their sense of immortality, see Moshe Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality: Toward a Theory of Suicidal Terrorism and Related Phenomena," in L. Bryce Boyer *et al.*, eds., *The Psychoanalytic Study of Society* (Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 1993).

[11] See Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

finding symbolic forms within which to locate themselves—undermine individual modes of immortality. For instance, the theological mode is hardly available to people in periods of secularization. Likewise, the decline of the family undermines the biological mode of immortality, as known to students of tribal societies undergoing modernization.[12] Whether or not one's corporeal existence is threatened, and regardless of material prosperity, it is *desymbolization*—the crumbling of society's symbol system—that impairs people's sense of immortality and self-continuity, and breaks their connections to life.

Desymbolization as a Subterranean Process

Objective crises, including serious threats of physical extinction, do not automatically lead to desymbolization. This author, a post-Auschwitz Jew, is far from belittling the horrors of mass extermination (which did lead Holocaust survivors to death-in-life existence). Nonetheless, quite a few remained firm and steadfast in their faith. Conversely, periods of freedom, progress and openness may be marked by much human misery.

The Jewish Haskala Movement

The *Haskala* (enlightenment) movement, which spread among East European Jewry in the nineteenth-century attracted Jewish youth from the stifling ambience of the religious *shtetl*. However, they also experienced symbolic uprootedness. Jay Gonen writes, "the inner world of the enlightened was 'merely a vacuum'." Hanna Arendt does pay attention to external factors (e.g., antisemitism), but she also stresses "dissolution from within," i.e., the erosion of traditional Jewish symbols. Jacob Katz writes in a similar vein.[13] Chaim N. Bialik, the titan of Hebrew poetry who witnessed this process, wrote: "The people are plucked grass . . . look at their hearts—behold a dreary waste." Another well-known Hebrew poet, U.Z. Greenberg,

---

[12] Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality."

[13] Jay T. Gonen, *A Psychohistory of Zionism* (New York: Mason and Charter, 1975); Hannah Arendt, "The Jew as a Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1944) pp. 99–122; Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

cried: "There is no way out because there is no God."[14] These aspects occurred in a time of "positive" change such as the birth of Zionism, which eventually led to the establishment of a Jewish State. Yet a telling testimony to the anguish of the period is provided by a graveyard near the peaceful Sea of Galilee, where more than a few Zionist suicide victims found their last repose.

"The Elizabethan Malady"

Elizabethan England was a period of restored political continuity and freedom from external powers. It was also marked by glorious naval victories, growing trade, economic prosperity, establishment of internal quiet religious toleration, reduction of anomie, tremendous creativity, and more. This period was also marked by inflation, but those who suffered most were barely affected. Melancholy was widespread among English privileged youth, so much so that it was called "the Elizabethan malady."[15] Autobiographies denote despair, visions of the devil, and suicidal thoughts.[16] The words of Shakespeare's melancholy Jacques, "And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe . . . And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot," reflected the mood of many.[17] The religiously perplexed and suicidal John Donne, the great metaphysical poet, epitomizes the period. Contemporaries said the world was turned upside down. Ironically, a world of remarkable power, stability and coherency, yet symbolically inconsistent, was to turn upside down a generation later.[18]

Savonarola's Florence

The above instances, drawn from different times, places and existential universes, should make our argument clear. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to focus on an additional example—late Quattrocento

---

[14] Chaim Nachman Bialik, in his "In the City of Slaughter"; U.Z. Greenberg, in his "Great Dread and a Moon."

[15] Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951); Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (London: J.M. Dent, 1948)—a semi-medical contemporary book.

[16] See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975) pp. 170–3.

[17] Shakespeare, "As You Like it," Act II Scene VII. See W.R. Elton, "Shakespeare and the Thought of his Age," in K. Muir and S. Schoenbaum, eds., *A New Companion to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) pp. 180–98.

[18] See Hill, *The World Turned.*

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Italy, the age of Savonarola. Bernard McGinn places an emphasis on this period, claiming that there is little relation between apocalypticism and broken continuities.[19] Indeed, Late Quttrocento Florence was politically stable,[20] economically prosperous, intellectually and artistically creative. But breakdown of a long cherished symbol system had been under way for decades, manifesting itself in heresy, secularization, fascination with non-Christian systems—trends frowned upon by contemporaries. McGinn considers the period "a highly *volatile* era,"[21] but he does not pay attention to the human misery that characterized the age. Period sources report of corruption, decline of morals, despair, self-hate, suicide as well as a yearning for spiritual regeneration.[22] The era is epitomized by Pico della Mirandola, a free thinker who avowed to suffering from an "internal struggle worse than civil war."[23] Popular poems, such as those by Lorenzo de Medici, call to enjoy life for night was coming, followed by no morning of which one could be sure.[24] It was through this Florence, the artistic capital of Europe, that extremes of hope and terror swept in anticipation of the last age.

In addition, other instances show that people may feel surrounded by "darkness, death, emptiness, vanity",[25] and entertain suicidal thoughts, while there is no apparent crisis or discontinuity. It is an impaired sense of immortality, ensuing from symbolic breakdown, that is at the root of the *vanitas vanitatum* state of mind.[26]

---

[19] See McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, p. 8.

[20] By Renaissance standards (particularly under Lorenzo the Magnificent's rule).

[21] McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, p. 8. In fact, McGinn's argument is more complex and insightful, but for lack of space, we do not discuss it here. Many of his insights concur with the views advanced here. In fact, he does elsewhere dwell on the corruption of the Church, see *ibid.*, pp. 184–186.

[22] A synoptic view of the period is to be found in Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958). See esp. Part III Ch. xi, Part VI Chs. i, iii, v. See Machiavelli's view of his city, p. 427. On suicide, see p. 275. For the yearnings, see Lorenzo Polizzotto, *The Elect Nation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) p. 2.

[23] Vincent Cronin, *The Florentine Renaissance* (London: Collins Fontana, 1972) p. 134.

[24] Ferdinand Schevill, *History of Florence* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961) p. 415. Schevill also quotes some instances of hedonistic/pessimistic quatrains.

[25] Hill, *The World Turned*, p. 171.

[26] Robert Bellah is very close to this view, even though he does not employ Lifton's key concept of symbolic immortality. As he writes, "the deepest cause [of religious awakening in the US] was the inability of utilitarian individualism to provide a meaningful pattern of personal and social existence." See Robert Bellah, "New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis in Modernity," in Robert Bellah and Charles Clock, eds., *The New Religious Awakening* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) pp. 297–330. Some take exception to Bellah's view, attributing the

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Responses to Desymbolization

People respond to the misery accompanying this state in a variety of ways. First, there is a group of passive, apathetic responses in which behavior and sentiment are simply dead,[27] sometimes resulting in low birth rates and depopulation.[28] Along with apathy, emptiness, psychic numbing, etc., paranoid-like attitudes have been observed.[29] Second, there is the "eat and drink" response: hedonistic pursuit of immediate pleasures and escalating stimuli.[30] Third, people may engage in self destructive behavior, court death or commit suicide; self-directed aggression is often coupled with other-directed aggression.[31] Fourth, mystic cults may proliferate, along with fascination with esoteric religions.[32] People flock around charismatic messiahs in quest of immediate relief. *Immediacy* is a major concern: people wish to "leap" over time and immediately enter a promised land free of death terror. Sergei Kapitza, who witnessed the collapse of Marxism in the USSR, describes people's "regression into mythology," promising a "rapid change, a miracle offering of deliverance from all ills through the magic of a new creed."[33] The "mythic response" can take on numerous forms, mostly eclectic and inchoate; yet sometimes rather elaborate belief systems emerge, vividly depicting a myth of future salvation. Though disconnected from reality, these systems help people cope with their feelings and facilitate group support.

Totalism and Victimization: In the midst of anxiety, uncertainty and loss of purpose people may turn to ideological totalism. Totalistic systems assert an all-or-nothing claim to absolute truth, a belief that there is only one valid mode of being, and only one authentic avenue

---

phenomenon to material factors. But it is not the materially deprived who seek solace in religion. Quite the contrary: it is among the privileged that "Asian spirituality" has spread since the late 1960s, see below.

[27] R.M. Keesing and F.M. Keesing, *New Perspectives in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971) pp. 356–358; see also J.B. Berry, "Social and Cultural Change," in H.C. Triandis and R.W. Brislin, eds., *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychiatry* (Boston: Brislin & Bacon, 1980).

[28] See T. Russel, *We Shall Live Again* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[29] See Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality."

[30] *Idem*, "On the Consciousness of the Holocaust," *The Psychohistory Review* 9 (1980) pp. 3–22.

[31] See Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality."

[32] This, too, did not escaped the attention of Robert Bellah, who attributes the spread of "Asian spirituality" in the US to the insufficiencies of utilitarianism. See Bellah, "New Religious Consciousness."

[33] Sergei Kapitza, "Antiscience Trends in the U.S.S.R." *Scientific American* 265, 2 (1991) pp. 18–24.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to salvation. The claim to ultimate truth requires a contrasting image of absolute evil, which must be destroyed to redeem the faithful. According to Lifton, the faithful regain their sense of immortality by displacing their death anxiety onto a scapegoat; they experience rebirth by turning from self-perceived victims to victimizers.[34] A number of examples buttress Lifton's view, for example, the revitalization of Germany in the 1930s by Nazi totalism was inseparable from Nazi depiction of an image of absolute evil. The sequence *desymbolization—impairment of man's sense of immortality—totalism—victimization* is Lifton's great contribution to our historical understanding.

The Mythical-Totalistic Response: Victimization need not always be physical. Sometimes people embrace a combination of totalistic and mythological responses. In many respects (e.g., claim to ultimate truth, quest for an evil scapegoat), this combination is totalistic. However, at the same time it is mythological, because cosmic events occur, but only in the imagination of the faithful. In their minds, the embodiment of evil is destroyed, and redemption occurs. But this, oddly enough, may sometimes engender actual redemption. When people define situations as real, they may be real in their consequences.[35] By the same token, if the faithful fancy themselves as redeemed, this may be real in its consequences—all the more so as it is the state of mind of the faithful that causes their suffering. Unlike a dream, then, the faithful do not wake up from mythological imaginings to realize that nothing has changed; rather, the mythological experience may well affect their lives. We shall expand this point further on. In any event, the faithful do "leap" over time and enjoy immediate rebirth.

Other responses to symbolic breakdown can be cited, such as outbursts of creativity or silent assimilation into another culture.[36] The sequence *desymbolization—impairment of man's sense of immortality—responses to the attendant suffering—(totalism—victimization*, in some instances) is the cornerstone of our argument. Therefore, we contend that apocalypticism is a link in the sequence, one of the human responses to desymbolization.

---

[34] Lifton, *Broken Connection*, pp. 302–303.

[35] This is W.I. Thomas' formulation of the actual outcome of men's definition of the situation. See W.I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (New York: Dover, 1958) pp. 1847–1849.

[36] See Hazani, "Netzah Yisrael, Symbolic Immortality, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in Knud Larsen, ed., *Conflict and Social Psychology* (London: Sage, 1993); A.F.C. Wallace, *Culture and Personality* (New York: Random House, 1961).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The Inner World of the Survivors

Until now we have dwelt mainly on survivor symptoms, however, an understanding of how the apocalyptic helps assuage their suffering requires that we probe their inner world as well.

Victims, Aggressors, and the Aggressor-Victim Double

As noted, survivors are often self-perceived victims. Victimization requires both a victim and a victimizer and in our instance, the victimizer dwells within the survivor. In technical terms, survivors harbor in their psyches both a victim and an aggressor introjects, antagonistic to each other. William James depicts the subject as a "divided self . . . [whose psyche is] a battle ground for what [the subject] feels to be two hostile selves." This results in "self-loathing; self-despair; an unintelligible and intolerable burden . . . Suicide [is] naturally the consistent course dictated by logical intellect."[37]

In relation to paranoia Meissner writes: "the victim is the recipient of destructive aggression. The aggression, however, is the subject's own . . . He is the victim of an internal persecutor, an alien and destructive inner presence, the hidden executioner."[38] Maltsberger and Buie describe suicidal individuals in the following way: "The hating introject . . . calls out for the execution of an evil self. From life, a desert of intolerable loneliness and helplessness . . . [man] turns to death in flight from inner persecutors, in quest of rebirth."[39] This deadly combination has been called "the aggressor-victim double."[40]

The agonizing "double," characteristic of paranoids and suicides, may haunt "ordinary" people as well as human collectivities in special historical situations, ranging from primitive peoples undergoing modernization to enlightened Western university students in the 1990s.[41] In most cases, no material deprivation was involved, but

---

[37] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: The Fontana Library, 1902) pp. 176, 162.

[38] W.W. Meissner, *Psychotherapy*, pp. 321–2.

[39] J.T. Maltsberger and D.H. Buie, "The Devices of Suicide: Revenge, Riddance, and Rebirth," *International Review of Pycho-Analysis* 7 (1980) p. 68.

[40] Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality," pp. 419–26. For a discussion of the double motif in literature and mythology and its relationship to eternal survival, see Otto Rank, *Beyond Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1941).

[41] The university students' instance was studied by this author in 1995, as part of a study on Israeli upper middle class youth self-destructive behavior.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

rather erosion of symbol systems. The occurrence of the aggressor-victim double among "ordinary" individuals can be explained in several ways.[42] For the sake of our present study, however, it is sufficient to remember that the internal strife results in "an unintelligible and intolerable burden" verging on suicide.

The Paranoid Solution

The paranoid patient overcomes his self-destructiveness by carving out his double and projecting the inner executioner onto a delusional external entity, thereby ridding himself of the internal strife. He becomes a self-perceived victim, constantly persecuted by an external enemy, but this is preferable to harboring death within. In Meissner's words, the paranoid system is a *defense against underlying suicidal impulses.* The role of an external devil is crucial, for its "existence" terminates the deadly internal war. Paradoxically, the devil becomes the savior, occupying a central position in the patient's mind. The more the latter is obsessed and threatened by the devil, the more successful is the substitution of external fears for internal suicidal impulses. In sum, a subjective reality, polarized between "me" and "my devil(s)," is created, in which both poles are joined in a *permanent persecutory bond.* This merger may result in partial relief from suicidal impulses.

However, non-psychotic paranoids cannot delude themselves into believing in an "objective" devil. Devoid of an external enemy, they are doomed to remain in a state of "preliminary hypotheses",[43] perceiving themselves as intermittently threatened by an endless series of demons who lurk everywhere, shifting representations of their inner persecutor. The fluid, undetermined nature of the situation is tremendously nerve-racking, as known to many war veterans. This is further aggravated by a diminished sociability resulting from paranoid suspiciousness—a roadblock to group support. Ironically, it is their basic sanity that prevents non-psychotic paranoids from coming to terms with themselves and their fellow-people, and decrees them to wretched existence. Their misery, however, can be greatly reduced by the adoption of totalistic or mythico-totalistic belief systems.

---

[42] See Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality," p. 427.

[43] A highly troubling stage in the paranoid process, before a "pseudo-community" (of enemies) is defined by the patient. See Norman Cameron, "The Paranoid Pseudo-Community Revisited," *American Journal of Sociology* 65 (1959) pp. 52–58.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Binary Maps of the World

The above systems profess a Manichaean-like view of the world. As Lebra put it, "every thing seen, heard or otherwise experienced can be placed on the binary map."[44]

In the dichotomizing mind there is no light without darkness, no good without evil, no God without Satan, no Christ without the Antichrist. While the doubles are not always believed to exist ontologically, the world is perceived not as a world of things, but of tension between opposites, which are meaningful only insofar as they are countered by their *anti*-entities.

Equipped with the binary map, the new convert, *in communion with his fellow believers*, splits out the internal aggressor-victim double and projects one of the hostile introjects onto the external devil. This is now possible, because the devil is no longer delusional. Theologically defined and *socially constructed*, he attains objective status.[45] Projection is now possible, and the convert rids himself of his internal strife. His suicidal impulses subside—which amounts to rebirth. However, he enters into a continuous bond with a devil, whose menace is theologically intensified to keep the internal persecutor at bay. We have called these "binary map" systems "functional equivalents of the paranoid system."[46]

The Aggressive Solution

Unlike the paranoid system, the above systems enable the "converts" to split out their internal aggressor-victim double and project the victim, not only the aggressor, onto the ideologically-defined demon.

---

[44] T.S. Lebra, "Millenarian Movements and Radicalization," *American Behavioral Scientist* 16 (1972) pp. 195–218. The tendency to dichotomize the world has been noted by many, from students of ancient groups, e.g., Jacob Licht, "The Plant Eternal and the People of the Divine Deliverance," in C. Rabin and Y. Yadin, eds., *Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Jerusalem: Hekhal HaSefer, 1961) pp. 49–75, to investigators of modern terrorism, e.g., Jerrold Post, "Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces," in W. Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 25–40. Of special interest is Jung's discussion of the Antichrist as the mirror image of Christ, and his view that in archetypal imagery Christ and the Antichrist together make up the unity of the self. See C.G. Jung, Aion, in H. Read *et al.*, eds., *The Collected Papers of C.G. Jung*, Vol. 9, Part II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul). See also Rank, *Beyond Psychology*.

[45] For the "objectivity" of social constructions, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Pelican Books, 1967).

[46] Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality," p. 429.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Here, *it is the victim who is the savior*, because it is his "objective" existence that makes projection possible. A constant persecutory bond is created, in which the faithful must ceaselessly victimize the demon. Moral issues aside, this is preferable to harboring death within. It can be said in the wake of Meissner, that *victimization is a defense against underlying suicidal impulses*, the mirror image of the paranoid defense. Totalistic victimization is the most conspicuous instance of the aggressive solution. As Lifton put it, by turning from self-imagined victims to victimizers, the faithful experience rebirth. This solution, however, often requires a justificatory ideology. The ideology offers the believers a binary map of the world, which legitimizes victimization of the sons of darkness. At the same time, of course, it makes projection possible. The mechanism of splitting out and projection underlies both defenses, which alleviate deathly terror and endow the faithful with a sense of rebirth. All the solutions are illustrated by historical and anthropological examples.[47]

Clearly, the mechanism presented above is a highly simplified view of complex psychic processes. In reality, people rarely externalize the aggressive (or the victimized) introject altogether; more often than not, they retain a "residual" inner aggressor (or victim), as observed among paranoid patients.[48] This explains some seemingly odd phenomena, such as victimizers who exhibit paranoid traits, like those Nazis who sincerely feared their Jewish victims; or self-perceived victims who exhibit aggressive traits, as seen in some Qumran texts.[49] It also explains the "interchangeability" (or affinity) between aggression and victimhood.[50] Finally, *externalization is an unstable state, and*

---

[47] See, e.g., Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Vatro Murvar, "Nontheistic Systems of Beliefs: An Urgently Needed Conceptual Tool," *American Behavioral Scientist* 16 (1972) pp. 169–194; Joseph F. Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail: A Theoretical Perspective on the Comparative Evidence," *American Behavioral Scientist* 16 (1972) pp. 245–268. See also Wallace's discussion of primitive revitalization movements, in A.F.C. Wallace, *Religion* (New York: Random House, 1955); James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Rebellion* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965); this rebellion had apocalyptic overtones. Binary maps smacking of paranoid attitudes, mark also some of the "electronic churches" or "TV cults" in the United States.

[48] For instance, Ovesey found "power motivation" among paranoid patients, see L. Ovesey, "Pseudo-Homosexuality, the Paranoid Mechanism and Paranoia," *Psychiatry* 18 (1955) pp. 163–173.

[49] See David Flusser, The Judean Desert Sect and its Views," *Zion* 19 (1954) pp. 89–103 (Hebrew).

[50] See Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality," p. 433.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

death anxiety is never fully abated. This is why the life-endowing systems arouse combinations of hope and despair, anticipation for salvation and fear of extinction.

Two Major Themes of the Apocalyptic

The apocalyptic belongs to the "binary" family of ideologies. While scholars make different lists of the essential components of the apocalyptic, two common themes emerge. First, a *dualistic worldview* (not necessarily ontological), and second, *the wish to triumph over death.*[51] Those who hold dualistic beliefs, whatever their content, view the world as a battle-ground between absolutely positive and unconditionally negative opposites: God and Belial; Christ and the Antichrist; sons of light and sons of darkness; proletariat and capitalists; *Herrenvolk* and *Untermenschentum*, etc. By and large, the emphasis is on a conflict that is to occur at the end of time, leading to a creation of a new, paradisal world. History is viewed as two ages or aeons; the present one, ruled by the unconditionally negative; and the one to come, ruled by the absolutely positive.

Sometimes the dualism exhibits itself in "spatial" terms: there is a world above, wherein the good resides, in contradistinction to this world, which is ruled by evil.[52] This dichotomy, too, is considered an essential component of the apocalyptic, with the possible exception of modern, secular apocalyptic systems that do not allow transcendentalism. Finally, good and evil may engage in a deadly battle here and now, evil threatening good. Although they differ in emphases, the above perspectives are not mutually exclusive, as described in the Book of Revelation. The book relates to both "the things which are" and "the things which shall be hereafter" (1:19), as well as heaven and earth.

The triumph over death can take on a variety of forms. Isaiah promises that when new heavens and earth are created, "the child shall die a hundred years old" (65:17–21). Death is not conquered, but life lengthened. The promise, however, betrays concern with

---

[51] The above is based on Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) pp. 7–11, and *idem, Apocalyptic Spirituality* pp. 6–7, 278, n. 12.

[52] John J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death," *CBQ* 36 (1974) pp. 21–43.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

regard to death. Another form is the promise of afterlife, whether or not accompanied by bodily resurrection. Revelation describes how "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" (20:13) and promises that in the new age "there shall be no more death" (21:4). Interestingly, the conquest of death is inseparable from dualism: while *the faithful* shall be vindicated, "*the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable* . . . shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (21:8).

A most interesting form of the triumph over death is discussed by John Collins. He interprets the Qumran writings as, a "depth experience" as an elevation to a "higher form of life" that takes place *in the present.* Death is transcended by "an intensity of *this* life."[53] Collins' view is most important because it helps elucidate how systems that have no conception of afterlife, help people transcend death by the intensity of *this* life.[54] He argues that the believers can perceive themselves as redeemed in the present. This opinion concurs with the above-mentioned observation that "mythological response" may engender a sense of present redemption.

We have only put forward two themes and left out others, regarded by some as essential components of the apocalyptic as well, e.g., the "urgent expectation of the impending overthrow of all earthly conditions in the immediate future," the "vast cosmic catastrophe of the end" which is also a beginning, and "the sense of unity and structure of history."[55] We will focus on these latter themes below.

The Apocalyptic as a Functional Equivalent of the Paranoid Defense

In some apocalyptic experiences, the internal persecutor is projected onto a theologically-defined external devil, and the faithful perceive themselves as the latter's victims. This paranoid-like quality has not escaped the attention of scholars. Norman Cohn writes that "one cannot afford to ignore the psychic content of the phantasies . . .

---

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 41; emphasis added.

[54] The non-theist way is included in Lifton's "theological mode" of symbolic immortality, see above. Some people, however, do not grasp how death can be conquered without a belief in afterlife.

[55] Some of the motifs generally accepted as essential components of the apocalyptic, see Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of the Apocalyptic.* Studies in Biblical Theology, 2nd. ser., vol. 22 (Napirville, IL.: Allenson, 1970).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

[which] are precisely such as are found in individual cases of paranoia."[56] Richard Hofstadter writes, albeit in another context, that the "enemy seems to be on many counts a projection of the self."[57] However, the paranoid individual views the enemy as "the very incarnation of cosmic evil," believing that history is "a conspiracy set in motion by demonic forces."[58] This assessment fully concurs with the apocalyptic outlook.

Apocalyptic Objectivations: There is a difference between an individual paranoid's demons and those of the apocalyptic. Even though paranoid constructions are clear, logical and systematic, they are private.[59] Apocalyptic devils, however, are creations of private affect that are projected onto the *public* sphere and *objectivated.* In essence, they become "products of human [expressive] activity available to both to their producer [the author of the apocalypse] and to other men [the faithful] as *elements of a common world.*"[60] Tremendously magnified, they are elevated to a cosmic level and viewed as active forces in history, omnipotent creatures of mythological proportions. Thus, the apocalyptic mythologizes life and demonizes history.

In this respect, too, the apocalyptic is analogous to paranoid ideation. Individual paranoid construction has certain affinities with mythical thinking,[61] but only in the apocalyptic, the mythical out-

---

[56] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 309. Cohn discusses eschatological movements in general, but his instances include apocalyptic ones as well, e.g., the Taborites, whose eschatology derived from the Johanine and Joachite prophecies. Capitulating to scholarly criticism of his application of modern psychiatric labels to medieval men and women. however, Cohn omitted this paragraph from the revised edition. The criticism premises that medieval people differed from us—and yet we "moderns" are stirred by ancient texts no less than by modern ones. It also ignores the persistence of apocalypticism in a secular vein among moderns, see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994). Some major scholars do share Cohn's attitude, e.g., John Gager, *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* (Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975); Robert C. Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). As regards modern phenomena, see H. Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1965); he also found apocalyptic attitudes to be associated with extreme forms of individual and group paranoia.

[57] Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, p. 32.

[58] *Ibid.*, 29; see also Robert Robbins, "Paranoid Ideation and Charismatic Leadership," *The Psychohistory Review* 15 (1986) pp. 28, 29.

[59] Manschreck, "Delusional Disorders," p. 1042

[60] Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 49.

[61] Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, p. 119.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

look condenses into lasting mythological configurations.[62] However, the image of the devil occupies a prominent position in both systems. The stronger this external enemy becomes, and the more he grips our imagination, the more torpid our internal enemy becomes. Thus, this "savior" allows us to substitute a death scare for a death wish, to our great relief.

Content, Experience, and Shared Experience: The public and objective quality of apocalyptic mythical thinking has a twofold beneficial effect on the believer. First, since objectivations are *shared*, social integration is fostered and paranoid isolation is reduced.[63] Second, as a mythology, the apocalyptic facilitates psychic movements through "the intensity and conviction it is experienced and believed."[64] It is not the dichotomization of the world *per se*, but rather its *experience*, that affects us. It is not our *knowledge* that Satan exists, but the fright we experience, that helps us project our evil self onto him. Moreover, as mythology, the apocalyptic is "lived reality in the present life of the community." When things are experienced in communion, their effect upon the individual is greatly enhanced. This argument buttresses Lifton's assertion that a sense of immortality is not achieved unless "a quality of *experience*" connects with "significant *content.*"[65] It is the mythopoetic power of the apocalyptic, which connects with and vivifies its binary theology, that makes it functionally equivalent to the paranoid system.

Victims Turned Aggressors: It should be noted that even though the reborn faithful assume a passive victim identity, aggressiveness and vengefulness are often discernible. These, too, are known features of the paranoid personality, beneath whose victimhood a strong power motivation is apparent.[66] As noted, interchangeability phenomena are explicable in terms of our model. The "residual" aggressor may take over and manifest himself in atrocious behavior, or fantasies thereof, against the sons of darkness. The conviction that a catastrophical end is imminent removes restraints and facilitates aggressive expressions, as many historical instances suggest.[67]

---

[62] On the apocalyptic as a form of mythology, see Paul D. Hanson, "Jewish Apocalyptic Against its Near Eastern Environment," *RB* 68 (1971) pp. 31–58.

[63] Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, pp. 94, 814.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[65] Lifton, *Broken Connection*, p. 34 (emphases in original).

[66] Manschrenck, "Delusional Disorders." See also Ovesey, "Pseudo-Homosexuality."

[67] Many instances can be found in e.g., Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (New York:

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Whether victim or aggressor, the true believer is partly rid of his internal persecutor by virtue of the apocalyptic dualistic worldview. However, the binary map delivers him from his misery in yet another way. It substitutes a highly ordered world for the fluid, shaky and insecure one, wherein the terrorized survivors die many times before their deaths. It replaces the endless series of demons who lurk everywhere by a well-defined adversary, whose hostility is rationalized in terms of the apocalyptic system. Moreover, in this orderly and secure world, the faithful view themselves as the sons of light, because their evil self has been expelled. Purified, they perceive themselves as being reborn into a new world.

This rebirth is impressive, however it does not conquer death. Externalization is an unstable state, and the internal dormant demon can quicken and demand an execution. (This is why we take care to add the word "partly" when describing the beneficial outcome of the externalization.) The above psychic mechanism helps believers experience rebirth "negatively" i.e., by ridding them, even if partly, of their suicidal impulses. In order to transcend death, their sense of immortality must be "positively" restored—they must re-experience their self-continuity uninterrupted by physical death. A radical transformation, produced by the mythological quality of the apocalyptic, must take place in their hearts.

The Apocalyptic as Mythology

The affinities of the apocalyptic to ancient myths have been noted by scholars, demonstrating that it shares the worldview of the ancient cosmic mythology.[68] Yet perhaps more significantly, considering modern apocalypses, it shares the power to manipulate emotions by transferring the audience temporarily to a province where fantasy reigns. Temporary regressions into mythical thinking may have beneficial

---

Harper and Row, 1951); Zygmunt, "When Prophecies Fail"; B.S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972); H. Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); J. Hall, "The Apocalypse in Jonestown," in T. Robbins and D. Anthony, eds., *In Gods We Trust* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1982) 171–90. Flusser, "The Judean Desert Sect"; G.H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (London: Widenfeld and Nicolson, 1962).

[68] E.g., Hansom, "Jewish Apocalyptic". See also Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology."

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

results. For instance, children's frightening tales carry them to another world, wherein they experience mortal anxiety, resolving existential dilemmas and tensions. Bruno Bettelheim put it almost in Liftonian terms, "If there is a central theme to the wide variety of fairy tales, it is that of rebirth to a higher plane." Fairy tales "take the sting out of the narrow limits of our time on this earth by relating how we connect ourselves *experientially* to our loved ones . . . This alone can dissipate the fear of death," he concludes.[69] Escape from life may reconnect one to life—but death must first be experienced. An ascent to eternal height is preceded by a descent into a purgatorial hell, whence the faithful emerge, cleansed, in triumph over death. In Aristotle's terms, they experience catharsis.

Apocalyptic Catharsis: The beneficial effects of catharsis have attracted the attention of clinicians, who utilize it for therapeutic purposes. Thomas Scheff describes the therapeutic process as resolving painful experiences by reawakening distressful emotions, to be followed by an emotional discharge, i.e., purifying catharsis.[70] Since emotional discharge cannot occur unless distress is dramatically reawakened, death cannot be conquered unless the subject experiences what Scheff calls "vicarious death." The more dramatically death is presented, the reawakened death terror intensifies, and great relief follows. It follows that the form—dramatic images and visions—plays an important role in the process. Eliezer Witztum and Ilana Roman, who utilized cathartic therapy, encouraged their clients to express themselves in metaphors and fantasies.[71] They employed a metaphor of a chrysalis metamorphosing into a butterfly. This recalls Bettelheim's observation that many fairy-tale heroes "fall into deep sleep" to awake to "a higher stage."[72] Vicarious death, or metaphoric death (Bettelheim's term), or sleep (temporary death, in children's

---

[69] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1976) pp. 179, 11. This fully concurs with Collins presentation of present "depth experience" as engendering the transcendence of death, see Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology."

[70] Thomas J. Scheff, *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual and Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[71] Eliezer Witztum and Ilana Roman, "Psychotherapeutic Intervention with Unresolved and Pathological Grief Following Loss of an Adult Parent," in Ruth Malkinson *et al.*, eds., *Loss and Bereavement in Jewish Society in Israel* (Jerusalem: Cana Publishing House and Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1993) pp. 117–138.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 125; Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, p. 214.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

imagination), then, precedes rebirth into a new existence. Significantly, in this new existence people become more sociable, their loneliness reduced by cathartic experience.[73]

Form and Content: Catharsis is produced by form as well as content.[74] Apocalyptic scenes are gripping pictures, images carved from words and rendered in Bosch- or Breugel-like spine-chilling style. Verging on the surrealistic, their emotive power is great, all the more so as they revolve around doom, death, and annihilation—the most acute concerns of the survivors. It can be safely said that in the apocalyptic, form and content meet.[75]

The emotive power of the apocalyptic is all at once a drama, horror tale, and ritual. For example, the paradigmatic apocalypse, Revelation, was meant to be read aloud and all at once in liturgical settings, conducive to emotional discharge.[76] Like Revelation, other apocalypses play upon the audience's most acute anxieties and arouse dread, eventually bringing about catharsis.[77] Even the ending seems to be awesome. Who, righteous as he or she may be, could stand "the great and *terrible* day of the Lord" without trembling?[78] In tense anticipation of God's fateful sentence the awed audience experience metaphoric death—bringing about catharsis. The last judgment, then, culminates in a powerful work of art capable of generating profound psychic changes in people making them receptive to the promise that "there shall be no more death." This is the ultimate triumph over death.

---

[73] Scheff, *Catharsis*, p. 53.

[74] The musical experience is a prime instance of catharsis produced with no "content" at all. Concerning myth, Meissner writes: "The significance of the myth lies not in its content, but in the intensity and conviction it is experienced," see Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, p. 119.

[75] As Collins observes, the apocalyptic as mythology provides "a good illustration of the intrinsic relation of the form to the message," see Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," p. 30.

[76] Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1993) p. 31. Concerning emotional discharge, see Scheff, *Catharsis*, p. 53: "Collective discharge in a social setting, such as theater or ritual, has powerful social as well as psychological effects."

[77] The fact that religious apocalypses are no longer live rituals only means that they were replaced by modern secular apocalypses.

[78] True, the faithful are promised vindication, but a sense of reinforced invulnerability very often betrays a heightened sense of vulnerability, see Hazani "Netzah Yisrael," n. 12; see also Lifton, *Death in Life*, p. 481. It should also be remembered that the strength of symbols, rituals and myths lies precisely in their multivocality, i.e., hope and fear are not, and perhaps should not be, mutually exclusive.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Future or Present Triumph?

Triumph over death, however, is not merely a belief in *objective future revivification.* Deriving from a *subjective present experience* of transcending death, this situation may be explicable in terms of Lifton's paradigm: When one loses one's sense of immortality, one's *everyday* functioning is impaired. Conversely, when one regains one's sense of immortality, one's *here-and-now* existence changes. Apathy, meaninglessness, and hopelessness give way to vitality, activity, and hopefulness. In contrast to Ecclesiastes, "and I hated all my labor," one embarks upon planting carob trees. One experiences *immediate* revitalization, manifesting itself in *the most concrete ways.* Nonetheless, future expectations are indispensable. Present relief facilitates future belief, and future belief in turn sustains present relief. It follows that the future and present are dialectically related to each other. As Collins put it, "while the present experience . . . gives rise to the hope of final vindication, it is also true that the hope of final vindication makes possible the present experience [of transcending death]."[79] The above observations are most relevant to modern, secular systems. While rejecting personal afterlife, they profess future ends that transcend personal death, making the *present* experience of transcendent life possible.

Apocalyptic and Paranoia—Additional Analogies

We have focused on two themes of the apocalyptic and left out others; we shall briefly address ourselves to some of the latter, which pertain to the subjectivity of the survivors.

First, throughout the present work we have referred to "salvation" or "redemption", and paid little attention to "vindication". The faithful wish to be vindicated, seeking *justice*, not *grace.* I am indebted to Richard Landes for turning my attention to this important point. Although not embraced by Lifton's paradigm, it mirrors a common feature of paranoia.[80]

Quest for Justice: The paranoid personality is characterized by self-righteousness, accusatory behavior, vengefulness, and litigiousness.

---

[79] Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," p. 41.
[80] Richard Landes, personal communication, February 1996.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Litigious behavior is common, and patients who suffer from litigious paranoia are seen more frequently by judges than by psychiatrists. In his rigid and uncompromising way, the paranoid seeks justice, administered by authority figures according to authoritative rules.[81] The scene of the last judgment is a fantasy produced by, and/or appealing to, litigious personalities.[82] It is also a confirmation of righteousness and satisfaction of vengeance, as well as the triumph of justice, administered by the highest authority figure according to the most authoritative rules. This description does not contrast with our view of the scene as having cathartic effect. The strength of symbols and myths lies in their being multivocal, i.e., capable of speaking many voices. The last judgment is at once a horrifying event, triumph over death, victory of justice, vengeance, and more. It caters to various and sometimes, conflicting psychic needs that must be met before peace of mind is achieved. In the case of the paranoid personality, the external devil/internal evil must be *justly* annihilated in order for the believer's righteousness to be proclaimed.

Leap over Time: A number of other characteristics of the apocalyptic seem to be related to the state of mind of the survivors. The urgent expectation for impending salvation concurs with the wish of people in historical dislocations to "leap over time" and immediately, and preferably miraculously and passively, become saved.

Quest for Structure: The sense of unity and structure in history, including an orderly division of ages, appeals to those who seek order. Filling the present with meaning, order helps the survivor's life become "related to a beginning and an end, not only in individual terms but also from the viewpoint of the whole."[83] This view of McGinn fully concurs with Lifton's position concerning man's need for "historical connectedness."

However, for the suffering survivor, order is sought as a defense against insecurity. The threat of change and unpredictability, as well as the unbearable fluidity, are greatly diminished when history is structured and ordered. Paranoids strive to eliminate ambiguity and

---

[81] David Shapiro, *Autonomy and Rigid Character* (New York: Basic Books, 1981) pp. 76, 134–173.

[82] Throughout the present essay we have barely distinguished between the author(s) and the audience of the apocalyptic This distinction is very important, yet for lack of space, we attempt to do without it even though it bears heavily upon the topic of objectivation.

[83] McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, p. 13.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to establish order and consistency. In addition, they also exhibit a tendency toward classification coupled with a tendency to view things as unified wholes.[84] Underlying all this, intense anxiety and insecurity are related to death. Leo Kovar notes that the paranoid is seeking "a release from facing life as it is, in its full indeterminacy and finitude." Paraphrasing Freud, he adds: "Where indeterminacy is, there shall certainty be."[85] It is a basic human need to relate one's place to the structure of the world. For the paranoid, however, it is also a desperate attempt to cope with indeterminacy. Grand historical schemes, then, cater to both his ultimate concerns, his proximate ones, his need to be related to a whole to overcome his death anxiety.

Determinism: At this point, the deterministic worldview of the apocalyptic surfaces. This worldview reflects the passivity and helplessness of the survivor, but it also characterizes militant, highly active apocalyptic movements.[86] It seems that this view ensures that external, authoritative and most potent allies (God, science, or the march of history) are on the side of the faithful. Determinism, a source of strength, accords with the paranoid's false premise that people are devoid of will power and are *unconditionally* subject to external influences. This supposition is viewed by Kovar as the "most discernible and significant feature common to all clinical manifestations of the paranoid condition."[87] It is precisely because of the paranoid's impaired sense of autonomy that determinism helps him rouse and resist. For it is not out of his own will that he dares challenge fate, but as a sheer instrument at the service of external forces that determined things long ago.

Paranoid Grandiosity: Other features of the apocalyptic are explicable in terms of survivor paranoia. For instance, the paranoid personality views history as a conspiracy set in motion by demonic forces and the enemy as the very incarnation of cosmic evil. The apocalyptic obsession with cosmic enemies may also reflect paranoid grandiosity. The definition of my foes as demons clearly aggrandizes

---

[84] Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, pp. 49–51, 82, 84, 93.

[85] Leo Kovar, "A Reconsideration of Paranoia," *Psychiatry* 29 (1966) pp. 290–291.

[86] For instances see Kaminsky, *The Hussite Movement*, and Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men.*

[87] Kovar, "A Reconsideration," p. 289; unconditionally is emphasized by Kovar. Meissner, too, emphasizes the paranoid's "replacement of responsibility" (p. 36) to external forces and his "loss of will," see Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, pp. 36, 144. Shapiro devotes large space to the impaired sense of autonomy of the paranoid personality as well as to his reduced capacity of volitional action, see Shapiro, *Autonomy.*

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

me: titans do not bother to battle with ordinary people.[88] Moreover, the more significant action takes place on the cosmic level, and the more I am involved in this action, the more I am elevated to that level as well.[89]

In another instance of paranoid grandiosity, the suicidal person perceives death not as an ending, but rather as "a rebirth into a sublime, transcendental existence, a once-and-for-all attainment of immortality."[90] Humans tend to anthropomorphize history and perceive its course in terms of individual biography.[91] This propensity also characterizes paranoid individuals, who tend to structure the world in subjective terms.[92] In our instance, the death/birth wish is objectivated and transferred to the cosmic sphere, with the possible benefit of ridding the potential suicide of his suicidal thoughts as well as satisfying his self-aggrandizement. This concurs with the observation that the analogy microcosm/macrocosm may be carried to the extreme of blurring the distinction between the two, so much so as to produce a megalomaniac identification of the paranoid with the world.[93]

We would like to suggest that the fantasy of total destruction followed by rebirth is multivocal, and contains other elements as well. The totalistic mind may see the demonized world as the evil scapegoat that must be victimized to redeem the sons of light. It seems that this scene, and the multiplicity of messages it conveys, deserves additional investigation.

Is Disconfirmation Possible?

Let us now turn to the problem of disconfirmation. Many wonder how people cling to apocalyptic prophecies after they fail. This phenomenon is indeed puzzling, yet only insofar as redemption is viewed

---

[88] See also Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, p. 309.

[89] Collins develops a similar view, albeit in another context, see Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology," p. 36.

[90] See Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality," p. 436; see also Maltsberger and Buie, "The Devices of Suicide," p. 68.

[91] See Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[92] Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, p. 103.

[93] See Moshe Hazani, "'Behold that Victim!' Robert Owen and the Sinner-Victim-Redeemer Syndrome," *Biography* 15 (1992) pp. 331–347.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

as *objective future revivification*, distinct from its *present* annunciation by the apocalyptic.

Let us suppose a sequence comprised of three stages: (1) people are promised a new age in which death is about to be overcome; (2) eagerly anticipating the fulfillment of the promise, (3) they realize that nothing actually happens. When stage 1 (prophecy) and stage 3 (reality) clash, people are expected to discard stage 1, i.e., relinquish the apocalyptic. Paradoxically, quite a few retain their belief in spite of the objective evidence. A number of scholars attempt to account for this paradox, arguing that belief systems are adhered to "on the basis of prior emotional commitment," and that human anxieties are "too pressing to allow temporary disconfirmation ruinous power."[94] However, this explanation is too general because it does not adequately define what makes people committed to a certain system or the nature of pressing human anxieties.

This paper focuses on survivor anxieties as well as offers an explanation about human belief systems vis-à-vis the apocalyptic.

As has been shown, stage 1 (prophecy) arouses a subjective *present* experience of symbolic resurrection, extricating people from their miserable death-in-life existence and revitalizing their *concrete* everyday functioning. This stage, then, includes both a prophecy and its *objectively evident* fulfillment. To paraphrase McLuhan, *faith is its own confirmation.* Stage 3 (future facts) is the anchor to which our theological mode of symbolic immortality is moored. The belief in our own transcending time is what revives our present existence. There is a dialectic relationship between present and future which maintains our present revivification. Thus, the apocalyptic promise is self-confirmed, and the question of disconfirmation no longer becomes relevant.

Some points need further consideration. For instance, if stage 1 is its own confirmation, how can we account for the tense and anxious atmosphere that at times characterize stage 2 (anticipation)? This seems to occur not *because*, but *despite*, apocalyptic messages. It reflects survivors' death terror that has not yet been fully assuaged by the apocalyptic, only channeled to a specific direction. This possibility, is hinted by the fact that partial success of belief systems may result in calamities.[95] In any event, it is not at all obvious that collectively

[94] Meissner, *The Paranoid Process*, p. 94; McGinn, Apocalyptic Spirituality.
[95] See Hazani, "Sacrificial Immortality."

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

experienced terror of a definite object is worse than lonely individuals' diffuse and paralyzing anxieties. Although this subject requires additional research, it seems that the spread of apocalyptic attitudes is a multi-stage process in which the stages are different states of mind.

Conclusion

We have attempted to apply Lifton's paradigm of symbolic immortality to the apocalyptic phenomenon. The link between the macro (historical level) and the micro (individual level) is provided by Lifton's concept of symbolic immortality. By utilizing this concept, it is possible to relate the spread of apocalypticism to specific characteristics of historical periods. The appeal of the apocalyptic to certain individuals is explained in terms of Meissner's model of paranoia. It appears that the apocalyptic, far from generating panic and despair, helps extricate people from an agonizing death-in-life existence. Therefore, the apocalyptic may be viewed as possessing therapeutical qualities in the broad sense of the term.

Throughout this article we have perceived the apocalyptic not as theological literature, but as a work of art, conveying its messages experientially, and affecting *present* human existence. The persistence of apocalypticism in the modern world, and the structural similarity between ancient and modern apocalypses, attests to the fact that this phenomenon answers basic human needs.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

THE APOCALYPTIC YEAR 200/815–16 AND THE EVENTS SURROUNDING IT

David Cook

Introduction

The situation of the ʿAbbasid dynasty (132–656/749–1258), in the years immediately following the death of Harun al-Rashid in 194/809 in the Persian city of Tus, gave rise to a large number of apocalyptic expectations and prophecies concerning the imminent collapse of the dynasty and the establishment of a messianic kingdom. This paper will examine these messianic traditions, highlighting the previously ignored apocalyptic atmosphere.

In an effort to ensure the orderly succession of his two elder sons, al-Amin (194–98/809–13), and al-Maʾmun (198–218/813–33), Harun al-Rashid effectively divided the Muslim empire between them, giving al-Amin the western half and al-Maʾmun the eastern. Al-Maʾmun had a considerable advantage because the ʿAbbasid army was supplied with soldiers from the east. al-Rashid further stipulated that the throne was to pass from al-Amin to al-Maʾmun upon the former's demise, and not to al-Amin's descendants. Soon after his father's death, al-Amin broke this part of the agreement and a civil war broke out. In addition, the war was aggravated by the fact that al-Amin was the son of an Arab woman, whereas al-Maʾmun was the son of a Persian. Thus, the conflict assumed the dimension of a struggle between two peoples, which was then just starting to manifest itself in a number of ways. Apocalyptic hopes and predictions had been in the air from a number of different sources, including Shiʾite groups, supporters of the Umayyad dynasty in Syria, whom the ʿAbbasids had overthrown and massacred, and other parties. These apocalyptic hopes received their strongest reinforcement when al-Maʾmun, who managed to defeat and kill his brother in 198/813, appointed a descendant of the Imami Shiʾi line of the Prophet Muhammad's family, ʿAli al-Rida' (who according to Shiʾi belief is the eighth Imam), as his successor and heir. This act enraged the entire ʿAbbasid family and divided the empire, which had already been in upheaval due

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to a number of revolts connected to the apocalyptic year 200/815–16. 'Ali al-Rida' is presented in the sources as a messianic figure, and it is very likely that his appointment was the result of this messianic fervor. This situation continued until 'Ali al-Rida' either died or was murdered in 203/818, at which time al-Ma'mun abruptly changed his mind, appointed an 'Abbasid as his heir, and returned to live in the capital city of Baghdad.[1] We will examine these apocalyptic predictions in their historical contexts, as recorded in both Sunni and Shi'i religious and historical texts, and how they especially influenced the development of Shi'i messianic beliefs.

The strong surge in apocalyptic feeling during the early 'Abbasid age (132–247/749–861) has been recorded in numerous sources. A number of scholars have argued that the 'Abbasid revolution (129–132/746–49) was in itself an apocalyptic manifestation.[2] Throughout the first two centuries of Islam, a pattern of apocalyptic-messianic outbreaks can be identified. For example, approximately every sixty years, starting from the Prophet's emigration from Mecca to Medina in 622, there was a major apocalyptic revolt against the government, irrespective of whether that regime was led by the Umayyads (41–129/661–749), or the 'Abbasids who followed them. The first uprising was in 61/680, and began with the revolt of al-Husayn, the Prophet's grandson, and his death at Karbala' near the Euphrates River. This event sparked a series of revolts lasting until 73/692. The 'Abbasid revolution (746–49), which successfully defeated the Umayyad dynasty, was part of a series of apocalyptically motivated revolts that occurred during those years. The apocalyptic and mes-

---

[1] The historical facts can be found in the following sources: F. Gabrieli, "La successione di Harun al-Rashid e la guerra fra al-Amin a al-Ma'mun," *Rivista delgi Studia Orientali* 11 (1926–28), pp. 347–397; M. Shaaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 41–46; E. Daniel, *The Political and Social History of Khurasan under 'Abbasid Rule* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979), pp. 175–181; H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1981), pp. 135–150; A. Arazi and A. Elad, "'L'Epitre a armee' al-Ma'mun et la seconde *da'wa*," *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987), pp. 27–70, and 67 (1988), pp. 29–74. On a specific aspect of this history, G. Hoffmann, "al-Amin, al-Ma'mun und der 'pobel' von Baghdad in den jahren 812/13," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 143 (1993), pp. 27–44.

[2] See, e.g. F. Umar, *The 'Abbasid Caliphate* (Baghdad, 1969), pp. 57ff.; M. Sharon, *Black Banners from the East* (Leiden and Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 75ff.; *idem*, *Revolt: The Social and Military Implications of the 'Abbasid Revolution* (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 29ff., 79–83, 232–234; and note S. Bashear, "Muslim Apocalypses and the Hour," *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), pp. 89, 94 on the specific apocalyptic dates.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

sianic manifestations we will examine here occurred during the third series of revolts, which began circa 194/809.

In order to understand the significance of these events, we must examine what happened during the years immediately preceding the apocalyptic year 200, and the traditions which can be dated, or inferred to date from this time.[3] Throughout this period, from the beginning of the ʿAbbasid dynasty, apocalyptic groups carefully observed their surroundings. A few of their traditional texts reveal something of their anticipation:

> Walid [b. Muslim][4] said: We saw the earthquake which hit the people of Damascus during the last days of Ramadan; many people perished in the month of Ramadan in the year 137 [= 754]; we have never seen destruction the like of which is mentioned. This is the "swallowing up [by the earth]" (*khasf*) which is mentioned about the village which is called Harasta'.[5] I saw a comet [literally: a star with a tail] in Muharram in the year 145 [= 762][6] at dawn, from the east,

[3] It would go beyond the boundaries of this paper to detail the numerous revolutionary apocalyptic and Shi'i messianic groups which were active during this time. See F. Umar, *The ʿAbbasid Caliphate*, pp. 211ff.; *idem*, "Some Aspects of the ʿAbbasid-Husaynid Relations during the Early ʿAbbasid Period," *Arabica* 22 (1975), pp. 170–179; W. Tucker, "Bayan b. Sam'an and the Bayaniyya," *Muslim World* 65 (1975), pp. 241–253; *idem*, "Rebels and Gnostics: al-Mughira ibn Sa'id and the Mughiriyya," *Arabica* 22 (1975), pp. 33–47; *idem*, "Abu Mansur al-'Ijli and the Mansuriyya: A Study in Medieval Terrorism," *Der Islam* 54 (1977), pp. 66–76; *idem*, "'Abdallah b. Mu'awiya and the Janahiyya," *Studia Islamica* 52 (1980), pp. 39–57; M. Rekaya, "Le *Hurram-din* et les mouvments *Hurramites* sous les ʿAbbasides," *Studia Islamica* 60 (1984), pp. 5–57; K. Athamina, "The Early Murji'a: Some Notes," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 35 (1990), pp. 122ff.; and D. Gimaret and G. Monnot (trans. and ed.), *Livre des religions et des sectes* I, pp. 507ff. The apocalyptist's description of the revolutionary atmosphere at the end of the Umayyad dynasty is apt. He notes that they will build a wall around themselves, which will be attacked from all sides; every time they repair a section, another one collapses. See Nu'aym, *Fitan* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1993), p. 423.

[4] On him see: al-Mizzi, *Tahdhib al-kamal* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risala, 1992), XXXI, pp. 86ff. (no. 6737), esp. 95–96 where his connections with Nu'aym b. Hammad are revealed.

[5] The disaster at Harasta, a village located on the road to Hims, is a recurring theme in Muslim apocalyptic, and clearly made a deep impression at the time, though it is not mentioned in historical works. This could be the earthquake mentioned as one of the apocalyptic signs in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafa', 1983), LII, pp. 216, 253. 100,000 people were killed.

[6] This was the same year of the messianic revolt of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in Medina, though his uprising took place in Rajab (six months later); see T. Nagel, "Ein früher Bericht über den Aufstand des Muhammad b. 'Abdallah," *Der Islam* 46 (1970), pp. 227–262. For other traditions concerning events that occurred during this year see, al-Hindi, *Kanz* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risala, 1987), XIV, p. 572 (no. 39637).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> and we would see it before the dawn during the rest of Muharram, whereupon it disappeared.[7] Then we saw it after sunset, in the twilight, and afterwards between the north (*jawf*) and the west [for] two or three months, then it disappeared for two years or three. Afterwards we saw a mysterious (*khafiyy*) star with blazing fire the length of a cubit (*dhira'*), [according to what] the eye saw, near Capricorn orbiting around it [like] the orbit of a planet during the two [months of] Jumada and [some] days of Rajab, and then it disappeared. Then we saw a star that did not glow rising from the right, the opposite side of Syria; its blazing fire spreading from the south to the north, to Armenia. I noted this to an elderly learned man (*shaykh*) from the people of the Sakasik [a tribe], and he said: This is not the expected star.[8]

This is one of the most detailed Muslim astrological-astronomical apocalyptic traditions of the era. Unfortunately, the apocalyptist does not provide us with more dates, especially because such signs were clearly significant to the apocalyptic groups which flourished at this time.

Starting almost with the first decades of Islam, Muslim tradition literature (*hadith*) preserved a number of dire forecasts scheduled for specific years. Although these dates continually appear until the fourth century (*hijri*), the relative numbers intensify during our time period. In 180/796, the following tradition was recorded: "When 180 years come upon my [Muhammad's] community, [then] celibacy and monastic life[9] will be permitted for them on the tops of the moun-

---

[7] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 220: "[listing the signs of the end] . . . the rising of a comet (lit.: a star with a tail) from the east, giving light like the light of the moon, then it will incline until almost its two edges will meet, and red appearing in the heavens, spreading out through its [the heavens'] horizons . . .", and see p. 240; and Ibn Ta'us, *al-Malahim wa-l-fitan* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'la, 1988), p. 123 (quoting al-Sulayli). al-Mu'afa b. Zakariyya, *al-Jalis al-Salih* (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1987), III, p. 70, also mentions a comet as one of the principal signs of the end.

[8] Nu'aym, *Fitan* pp. 132–133. It is possible that the second comet is alluded to in Nu'aym p. 422, when the apocalyptist speaks of a comet appearing in the 160s/776–86. Ibn al-Athir, *Kamil* (Leiden: Brill, 1965/66 reprint), V, p. 583, mentions that the stars were scattered by degrees (*tanathurat al-kawakib*) in 145/762. al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Ithbat al-hudat* (Qumm: Matba'a al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.), VII, p. 72, states that one of the signs will be that fire will shine from Azerbayjan. Ironically enough in al-Hindi, *Kanz* XIV, 557 (no. 39590), belief in astrology (*tasdiq bi-l-nujum*) is in itself said to be one of the signs of the end; as in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 188 (*iman bi-l-nujum*).

[9] Both of these are most strictly forbidden by Muslim law. See Qur'an 57:27; A.J. Wensinck (ed.), *Concordance et indices de la tradition Musulmane* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1936–64), s.v. *'uzzab*; Ibn 'Adi, *Kamil* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1988), III, p. 43, VII, p. 163; and I. Goldziher, *Islamic Theology and Law* (trans. Hamori, Princeton, 1981), pp. 122–123.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

tains."[10] Since nothing notable happened (at least according to historians) at this date, we are left with several options as to the interpretation of traditions of this nature. One possibility is that they represent the apocalyptist's genuine attempt at predicting future events using a time-oriented deadline.[11] This approach is associated more with Sunni Muslim apocalyptists, and judging from the number of traditions of this nature which have come down to us, they seem to have been popular. Since after the event all traditions of this nature were deemed to be "forged," these sayings are strewn throughout the books containing this material.

In contrast, Shi'i apocalyptists are defined by their reluctance to state the dates of the messianic age and other apocalyptic events.[12] The other possibility is that we have a tradition which indicates the general apocalyptic air of expectancy (or fear, in this case). This is especially likely when the warning is of an indirect nature. Some traditions are so specific that they would not seem to leave the apocalyptist much leeway. For example, the rule of the community of Muhammad was predicted to last for 167 years and thirty-one days after his death (= 178/794).[13] This is paralleled by the Christian

---

[10] al-Daylami, *Firdaws al-akhbar* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1987), I, p. 405 (no. 1333); and al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-shari'a* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1981), II, p. 349. For additional traditions of this nature, see S. Bashear, "Muslim Apocalypses," pp. 87ff. It should be noted that variants of this tradition are attested for the years 160/776. See al-Daylami, *Firdaws* II, p. 472 (no. 3326); al-Kinani, II, p. 211; Nu'aym, *Fitan* pp. 422–423; and for 380/990; see al-Kinani, II, p. 346.

[11] Though most scholars see apocalypses as literary compositions written after the fact, in Nu'aym b. Hammad (d. 227/844) we have a number of apocalypses (pp. 320, 420, 423, 427) detailing events from the following two centuries, which would seem to indicate that there were genuine attempts at prediction. The fact that these are quite general, and do not detail any of the political events of these centuries, indicates that they were part of the original collection, and not added in later, as some skeptics would assume.

[12] The most significant traditions of the Imams in this connection are: "[Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth Imam replies to the question: does the end (*amr*) have a specific time] Those who specify dates (*al-waqqatun*) lie (repeated three times)": al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Ithbat al-hudat* VII, p. 86 (no. 528); al-Musawi, *al-Anwar al-nu'maniyya* (Tabriz: Maktabat Shirkat Chabiyat, n.d.), II, p. 75; and al-Golpaygani, *Muntakhab al-athar* (Tehran: Nashr al-Kitab, 1385h), p. 463; and "Those specifying times (*al-muwaqqitun*) lie; we did not specify times in the past and we will not specify times in the future". See al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Ithbat* VII, p. 47 (no. 408); and al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, pp. 185, 247, 270, LIII, pp. 1–3; and Goldziher, *Islamic Theology and Law* p. 196, note 90.

[13] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 418. In Ibn Abi Shayba, *Musannaf* (n.p. n.d.), XV, p. 51 (no. 19088) there is a tradition about the years 145, 150, and 160 predicting a swallowing up by the earth and an earthquake.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

tradition of the eighth century, "Apocalypse of Peter," which states that there will be no justice during the time of "this people" (which we assume are the Muslims) for 169 years.[14] Again, since nothing extraordinary is known to have happened during this year, the historian is left with unresolved questions. General traditions are also available, which for the most part do not differ substantially from the traditions quoted above: "The best of you [the Muslim community] about the year 200 is anyone with little property, who has no wife or child [so that he can be mobile]."[15]

Though not much historical inference can be drawn from the earlier traditions, once we reach the time of Harun al-Rashid (169–194/785–809) they become both more specific in their predictions and more accurate in their history.

> A man of the descendants of 'Abbas will settle in Raqqa,[16] and stay there two years. Then he will attack the Byzantines, [though] his affliction of the Muslims will be worse than his affliction of the Byzantines. Then he will return from the raid to Raqqa, and [news] which he dislikes will come to him from the east,[17] and he will return back to the east, and not return from it. His son will rule after him, and during his time will be the appearance of the Sufyani and the end of their rule.[18]

There is no doubt that the death of Harun al-Rashid in 194/809 was the sign for the down-spiral, which was supposed to lead immediately to the appearance of the Mahdi. "When the fifth of my family [e.g., the Prophet's family, meaning Harun] dies, then there will be killing [and] killing,[19] and the seventh will die, then it will con-

---

[14] "Apocalypse of Peter" (ed. A. Mingana), *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 14 (1930), p. 452. The editor of Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 418 notes that there is a variant text that says "nine" in place of "seven." The two words are very close in the Arabic script. Compare Ibn Ta'us, *al-Malahim wa-l-fitan* p. 142 (quoting Abu Yahya al-Bazzaz), where it is said that the best of women will be barren in the year 169.

[15] al-Daylami, *Firdaws* II, p. 271 (no. 2673), and the sources quoted by the editor. A variant is quoted in al-Hindi, *Kanz* XI, p. 222 (no. 31302). These traditions should be compared to Matthew 24:19–20; and "Apocalypse of Peter," p. 438.

[16] Though the formal capital of the 'Abbasids was Baghdad, many of them chose to dwell in other locations as well. Harun was the only one of the dynasty who dwelt in Raqqa, north-west of Baghdad.

[17] The revolt of Rafi' b. Layth. Harun traveled to Persia in order to fight him and died in the city of Tus.

[18] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 181. See below on the Sufyani.

[19] The word used is *haraj*, which is the Hebrew *hereg*. This word is deemed to be Ethiopian according to al-Hindi, *Kanz* XIV, p. 238 (no. 38544), and further differentiated from that signifying Muslims killing infidels: it is only Muslims killing Muslims, *ibid.*, (no. 38546).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

tinue until the Mahdi [the Muslim messiah] will arise."[20] Ordinarily we would expect the "Prophet's family," the ʿAlids, to be his immediate descendants. However, here the apocalyptist thoughtfully identifies this person as Harun al-Rashid (in the commentary on the tradition), so there can be no doubt that the family in apocalyptic usage is expanded to include the ʿAbbasids.

The Count-Down to the Apocalyptic Year

Especially significant for our purposes are those traditions which allow us to see the countdown to the apocalyptic year:

> The first of the signs of the release (*faraj*)[21] is in the year 195 [810], and in the year 196 [811] the Arabs will throw off their bridles,[22] and in the year 197 [812] there will be annihilation (*fana'*)[23] in the year 198 [813] there will be exile, and he said [Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth Shi'i Imam]: Do you not see the Banu Hashem[24] uprooted with their families and their children? and I [unidentified] said: Is the exile for them? He said: And others, and in the year 199 [814] God will reveal the tribulation, if He wills, and in the year 200 [815] God will do as He pleases. We said to him [the Imam]: We will be your redemption—tell us what will happen in the year 200? He said: If I told anyone, I would tell you, for I have been informed of your position [religiously speaking, in the Shi'i hierarchy], but it was not my opinion to reveal this to you, but when God most high desires to reveal truth to His servants, the servants are unable to conceal it.[25]

The Imam describes how the Shi'ites press him to reveal whether this is a prophecy of the end of the rule of the ʿAbbasids (concealed behind the expression: *bani fulan*). The Imam reaffirms the prophecy, but refuses to say whether the Mahdi will be revealed at that same time. A shorter version of the tradition reads: "In 196 [811] there will be an Arab revolt, in 197 [812] there will be destruction, in

---

[20] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 125; and al-Suyuti, *al-Hawi li-l-fatawi* (Beirut, 1982), II, p. 83.

[21] This word indicates the Shi'i messianic age, during which they will be 'released' from the Sunni oppressors, and ruled by the Prophet's family.

[22] Meaning that they will revolt. Though frequently the word *ʿarab* means Bedouin, here since it is in opposition to *ʿajam* (non-Arab Muslims) it must mean Arabs as a whole. See al-Majlisi, *Bihar* LII, p. 220.

[23] Oftentimes used to describe the end-time tribulations of the Prophet's family. See al-Hindi, *Kanz* XIV, p. 211 (no. 38430).

[24] The Banu Hashem in apocalyptic texts almost always means the ʿAbbasids.

[25] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 183. Compare the last sentence with Amos 3:8.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

198 [813] the Banu Hashem will be exiled, in 199 [814] the tribulation will be revealed, and in 200 [815] God's will will be accomplished."[26] This tradition, which either originated in Shi'i circles or survived only in their texts, denotes what the apocalyptists expected to happen during the five final years before the end of the century.

These feelings were not confined to the Shi'ites, however. According to the material in the early apocalyptic collection of Nu'aym b. Hammad (d. 229/844), "the rule of the 'Abbasids will disintegrate in the year [1]97 or [1]99 and the Mahdi will appear in the year 200 [815]."[27] A "progression of tribulations" tradition like the Shi'i ones above is recorded in Nu'aym as well, though much of it does not concern us here. Thus:

> I [the Prophet Muhammad] will tell you that dissension for a few years follows your prophet. As to the [year] 133 [750] the perceptive (*halim*) will not rejoice over his children; in 150 [767],[28] heretics (*zanadiqa*) will appear; in 160 [776] store up food for two years; in 166 [782]: release! release!; in 190 [805] the kings' theft of their [probably the peoples'] property; from the [1]80s to the [1]90s, the tribulation [will come] upon the disobedient; 192[29] [807] throwing of stones, swallowing up [by the earth] and metamorphosis, and the appearance of fornication; in 200 [815] the end/judgment (*qada'*): torment will take the people by surprise in their market-places.[30]

We need to examine the antecedents of this family of traditions, and what relation they have to history, specifically the apocalyptic and messianic history of the early 'Abbasid period.

Comparing these traditions with the events pertaining to al-Amin and al-Ma'mun, we find that in the year 196/810 al-Ma'mun no longer pledged his allegiance to al-Amin, but there is no mention of an Arab revolt (since al-Ma'mun is frequently seen as the representative of the Persians). However, in 195/809 there is another apoc-

---

[26] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 213. In accordance with the sentiments mentioned above, these two traditions are unique among Shi'i apocalyptic traditions.

[27] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 419.

[28] In the year 153/770, it is said that the demons which Solomon imprisoned will be let loose on the land. See, Ibn Hajar, *Lisan al-mizan* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1987), III, pp. 218–219. This is also the year in which 'Ali al-Rida' was born. See al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, p. 131.

[29] The text has 172, which makes no sense, so I read 192. The two words are virtually identical.

[30] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 422. Of course, for the apocalyptist, the market-place was the den of iniquity.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

alyptically significant revolt of the Sufyani in Syria, who is frequently seen as the champion of the Arabs. This figure has been examined by a number of scholars during the past century, who by and large have come to the conclusion that he was either the messiah of the supporters of the overthrown Umayyad dynasty in Syria, or an anti-Christ like figure originating in Shi'i apocalyptic circles.[31] Most of these scholars have noted the fact that not only are there a tremendous number of traditions in the *hadith* collections concerning the Sufyani (though none except W. Madelung used the early collection of Nu'aym b. Hammad), but that this figure also appeared in historical reality.

Of course, a number of apocalyptic figures are known from history, and many people have appeared, for example, claiming to be the Mahdi. But the title of the Mahdi is not one that demands a certain genealogical relationship. Orthodox Sunni tradition requires that the Mahdi be of the family of the Prophet. This fact, however, has not stopped a number of Arab and non-Arab candidates from claiming the title, and did little to weaken their claim.

The Sufyani is, however, most specifically said to be the descendant of the family of Abu Sufyan, the most persistent of all of the Prophet's opponents. In addition, he is also known as the father of the caliph Mu'awiya I (41–61/661–80), who fought 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and who was himself the father of Yazid I (61–64/680–83), who had the Prophet's grandson al-Husayn put to death at Karbala' in 61/680.[32] For this reason, most scholars have accepted the line of reasoning according to which the Sufyani is the Shi'i anti-Christ, who must rise at the end of time and fight the Mahdi, just as the Dajjal must be fought and defeated by Jesus in orthodox Sunni apocalyptic. However, as usual, this interpretation, while satisfying some elements of the traditions, does not answer a number of questions. It must be noted that the material about the Sufyani is actually considerably older than R. Hartmann or Madelung (the two principal researchers on this subject) were able to prove, since we

---

[31] W. Madelung, "The Sufyani: Between Legend and History," *Studia Islamica* 63 (1986), pp. 5–48 (giving bibliographical notes for the earlier research on the subject).

[32] This relationship is recognized by the Shi'i tradition: "Abu Sufyan fought the Messenger of God [Muhammad], Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan fought 'Ali b. Abi Talib, Yazid b. Mu'awiya fought al-Husayn, and the Sufyani will fight the Qa'im [the Mahdi]", See, al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 190; and al-Qummi, *Tafsir* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-'Ata', 1993), I, p. 406.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

have a developed Sufyani tradition in the Qur'anic commentary of Muqatil b. Sulayman (d. 150/764),[33] and in the recently published *Papyrus* of 'Abdallah b. al-Lahi'a (d.173–74/789–90).[34] These dates indicate that the Sufyani story was not created by the claimant who rose in 195/810; rather he was fulfilling (as it were) prophecies which already existed.[35]

The second conclusion which must be drawn is that the Sufyani traditions serve a dual purpose. Both Shi'ites and Sunnis use these traditions for their own diametrically opposed purposes. The Shi'i reasons have already been noted, whereas the Sunni reasoning lies in the expression of the immense hatred which accumulated in certain circles against the Shi'a. This led, even outside of Syria-Palestine (where such feelings had been long known), to a cult of Mu'awiya and his family precisely because he had fought and defeated the Shi'a.[36] The expectations center around the appearance of a messianic figure, who would be from the descendants of Mu'awiya, and would fight the Shi'ites and the 'Abbasids together, eventually restoring the rule of the Umayyads.

Though the Sufyani rose in 195/810, caliphal control had clearly slipped in Syria before this time.[37] All the Muslim historical accounts are in agreement that the Sufyani is 'Ali b. 'Abdallah b. Khalid b. Yazid b. Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan,[38] though this is not the name under which this figure appears in apocalyptic traditions.[39] Interestingly

---

[33] Muqatil b. Sulayman, *Tafsir* (Cairo: al-Ha'iya al-Misriyya, 1983), III, p. 539.

[34] R.G. Khoury (ed.), *Papyrus d'Abdallah b. al-Lahi'a* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1986), p. 255. It should be noted, of course, that there was an earlier rising of a Sufyani during the rule of al-Saffah, the first 'Abbasid caliph (ruled 132–37/749–54. See, al-Baladhuri, *Ansab al-ashraf* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1978), III, pp. 169–170, but very little is known about it.

[35] al-Dhahabi, *Siyar a'lam al-nubala'* (Mu'assasat al-Risala: Beirut, 1981–82), IX, p. 286.

[36] C. Pellat, "Le cult de Mu'awiya à siècle III" *Studia Islamica* 6 (1956), pp. 53–66. The fact that this was an issue at the time is indicated by the statement of al-Ma'mun when 'Ali al-Rida' was sworn allegiance to "*buri'at al-dhimma miman dhakara Mu'awiya aw faddalahu 'ala ahad min ashab rasul Allah* . . .". See Ibn al-A'tham al-Kufi, *Futuh* (Beirut: Dar al-Nadwa al-Jadida, n.d.), VIII, p. 321.

[37] Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum al-zahira* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 1929), II, p. 141, and note the events of the following year on p. 145. These feelings are expressed by the apocalypse in Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'rikh madinat Dimashq* (Amman: Dar al-Bashir, 1984), XII, p. 446–47.

[38] al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk* tertia series (Leiden: Brill, 1964) (reprint) II, p. 830; and Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'rikh* XII, pp. 444–450.

[39] Compare Nu'aym, *Fitan* pp. 165, 167, 169. Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum* II, p. 147 states that this Sufyani claimant's grandfather forged the traditions concerning him.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

enough, in accordance with the interpretation given above concerning this figure, the historical account presents him as a man who sought to unite Sunni Umayyad supporters with Shi'i 'Alid groups. He proclaims that his genealogical descent is from both Mu'awiya and 'Ali (though from a son of his who was not born of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter).[40] This cannot have gained him much support in Syria-Palestine, which was a stronghold of pro-Umayyad and anti-Shi'i feeling. However, this combined Sunni-Shi'i descent may have enhanced the ultimate use of these traditions, since they could be used equally by extremist Sunnis as well as Shi'ites.

The surviving traditions which can be ascribed to him indicate a messianic character. For example, a version of the well-known Muslim messianic tradition appears related to him: "If only a day were left in the year 195, the Sufyani would appear."[41] Traditions are available in which the Sufyani is clearly mentioned as the expected messianic figure who will continue the fight against the supporters of 'Ali, the Shi'a. One reads: "O Kuthayra [addressing an unidentified person]: These swords with which our fathers fought during [the Battle of] Siffin,[42] are stored away with us until the Qa'im[43] from the family of Abu Sufyan appears, when we will fight with them [again]."[44] The career of this historical Sufyani, however, is not very

---

Undoubtedly this would fit well with the time in which the traditions first appeared, but it seems unlikely that a man who belonged to such a politically prominent family would involve himself in forgery of this nature, an act which would have been suicidal during the Umayyad and early 'Abbasid times. The names in the traditions are so blatant that one cannot see the claimants themselves involved. See Madelung, "The Sufyani," p. 8.

[40] Mus'ab al-Zubayri, *Nasab Quraysh* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1953), p. 131.

[41] Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'rikh* XII, p. 446 (adding the phrase *la-yakhrujunna al-Sufyani sanna khams wa-tis'in wa-mi'a*). Compare with the standard Mahdist formula in al-Hindi, *Kanz* XIV, p. 267 (no. 38676): "If only a day remained left for this world, God would lengthen that day in order to send a man from my [the Prophet's] family in it . . ." The Sufyani's slogan was: "Come! swear allegiance to the chosen Mahdi (*al-mahdi al-mukhtar*), whom God has chosen over the evil Banu Hashem". See al-Safadi, *al-Wafi bi-l-wafiyat* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1988), XXI, p. 198.

[42] This is the important battle fought in 37/657 between 'Ali (representing the Arabs of Iraq) and Mu'awiya (representing the Arabs of Syria), ending in a draw.

[43] It is quite unusual to see the messianic title "Qa'im" attached to the Sufyani; normally one only sees it in Shi'i traditions attached to the Mahdi. Even in messianic Sunni traditions the use of it is very uncommon. See W. Madelung's entry on Ka'im Al Muhammad in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1960). However, the phrase *ahl bayt Abi Sufyan* is attested in al-Sulami, *'Iqd al-durar* (Zarqa': Maktabat al-Manar, 1989), p. 116 (no. 82).

[44] Ibn 'Asakir, *Ta'rikh* XII, p. 448. Note that in Ibn Manzur, *Mukhtasar ta'rikh madinat Dimashq* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1984), XVIII, p. 114, he is referred to as *al-rida' min Al Muhammad.*

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

interesting. As the above tradition implies, he did indeed revolt during the last month of 195 (Dhu al-Hijja).[45] Despite his claims, it is clear that he never gained more than a fraction of the support of the people of Syria, and despite his initial successes, he could not defeat the regular armies of the empire.[46] His rule lasted only for a few months, and even this short reign was possible only because of the civil war then being fought in the eastern part of the empire between the two royal brothers. He himself never achieved much in the way of messianic success, because the Shi'a perceived his appearance to be one of the signs preceding the appearance of the Mahdi.[47] Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the expectation of the messianic year is redoubled after the failure of his revolt. Numerous traditions are recorded about apocalyptic figures coming at the same time from Syria and Khurasan to the center of the empire,[48] and it appears that the apocalyptists felt that the combination of Sufyani's revolt and that of al-Ma'mun in Khurasan would succeed in destroying the 'Abbasid caliphate. As it happened, the Sufyani's revolt came to nothing, and al-Ma'mun reestablished 'Abbasid authority.

This issue of the inter-dynastic dissension (*ikhtilaf*) is the key word in the apocalyptist's vocabulary. It is repeated many times in all of the apocalyptic works surveyed.[49] Without a doubt, the conflict between the two brothers al-Amin and al-Ma'mun is the event which caught the attention of the apocalyptists, both Sunnis and Shi'ites. The traditions describing the expected events are too numerous to translate here, so we will confine ourselves to the principal examples. From a unique early tradition: "The 'Abbasids will reign, then their rule will come apart in the year 195; if you find nothing but

---

[45] In Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 165 it is said that one of the signs of his appearance will be a star. In accordance with the comments about the Mahdi below, he is said to have a withered hand (p. 178).

[46] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 421 says that he conquered the area around Sidon in addition to Damascus.

[47] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LI, p. 46, 121; LII, p. 182.

[48] al-Majlisi, *Bihar* LII, pp. 234–235: "It is necessary that Banu 'Abbas rule, and when they rule and there is dissension between them, and their authority breaks apart, the Khurasani and the Sufyani will revolt against them: this one from the east and this one from the west, racing to Kufa like two racing horses."

[49] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, pp. 234–35, 237, and note the Christian prediction in "A Christian Bahira Legend," (ed. R. Gottheil) *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 14 (1899), p. 226: "When these [the seven kings, see below] will have ruled, and will be dead, know that the kingdom of the sons of Hashem is at an end . . . They will fight among themselves . . ."

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the stone of a scorpion [to hide under], get beneath it, because this will be a lengthy [time of] evil."[50] The actual conflict is not something out of the ordinary, and the primary facts have already been discussed. In many accounts the conflict between the two brothers is portrayed as an affair manipulated by their respective chief ministers, who basically controlled their policy-making decisions.[51] This is undoubtedly correct. Al-Amin had the advantage of being the legitimate ruler and of having the support of the Iraqi people and the western part of the empire, whereas al-Ma'mun had the advantage of being the legitimate heir and controlling the chief source of soldiers for the dynasty, Khurasan. Therefore the outcome was not surprising, especially, since the Iraqis had long since lost their primacy on the battlefield. Indeed, al-Amin did not win even a single battle against al-Ma'mun.[52]

al-Amin's overthrow in 198/813 was only one more violent event in the turbulent annals of Muslim history.[53] However, this conflict, though meaningless in itself, shows what the apocalyptists expected to achieve in the eschatological future. The predictions about the overthrow of the dynasty stemming from the dissension between the two brothers are quite detailed, and highly accurate (with the exception of the endings): "The corruption (*fasad*) of the rule of the ʿAbbasids (*banu fulan*) will continue until the swords of the ʿAbbasids cross, and when they disagree, that will be the breakdown (*fasad*) of their rule."[54] A Shi'i tradition gives more specific predictions:

> [Muhammad al-Baqir said] Four events will take place before the Qa'im arises, which will indicate his appearance: among them events

---

[50] al-Azdi, *Ta'rikh al-Mawsil* (Cairo, 1967), p. 324; and al-Suyuti, *Hawi* II, pp. 83–84, who adds: "until their rule will disappear in the year [1]97 or [1]99 and the Mahdi will appear in the year 200."

[51] In light of the astrological apocalyptic signs mentioned above, one should note that al-Fadl b. Sahl, al-Ma'mun's chief minister, was a noted astrologer. See, al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* p. 817; and al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, pp. 133, 168 (where he checks the signs of the stars to give advice to al-Ma'mun).

[52] Some scholars see the revolt's propaganda as a replay of the original ʿAbbasid *da'wa* (in 746–49), see A. Arazi and A. Elad, "al-Ma'mun et la seconde *da'wa*," *Studia Islamica* 67 (1988), pp. 39ff.; and note the tradition in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, p. 160, which does indeed mention *al-da'wa al-thaniyya* and see al-Majlisi's explanation of the phrase on p. 163. For further historical information, see T. el-Hibri, "The regicide of the caliph al-Amin," *Arabica* 42 (1995), pp. 334–364.

[53] al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* p. 934 records a tradition in which the crowds of Baghdad, after the murder of al-Amin, called his son Musa by the messianic title *mansur*.

[54] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 210.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> which have already taken place: three of them, and one remains. We said: We are your redemption, what has already happened of them? He said: A [month of] Rajab in which the ruler of Khurasan [al-Ma'mun] throws off his allegiance, a Rajab in which [they] attack Ibn Zubayda [al-Amin], and a Rajab in which Muhammad b. Ibrahim appears [in revolt] in Kufa.[55] We said to him [the man who relates the tradition from al-Baqir]: And the fourth Rajab is connected to him? He said: Thus Muhammad al-Baqir spoke.[56]

The apocalyptist ends this tradition on a note which leads us to expect the messiah to appear during the month of Rajab. This whole situation, as the apocalyptist notes, is one likely to be used by internal rebels and external foes. A number of opposition groups were waiting on the sidelines, including the supporters of the Umayyads (above), and the Shi'ites. Of course, outside the empire, the Byzantine Christians were the Muslims' most important political enemy, and the Byzantines were not attacked between 191–215/806–30, so they had an opportunity to recover from the constant invasions of the previous century.[57] Though they did not take advantage of this internal strife in the Muslim world by attacking the latter, the apocalyptists repeatedly predicted that they would. The Berbers, Turks and the Khazars, too, waited at the sidelines, and the Muslim apocalyptists featured them in their predictions.[58]

The destruction of Baghdad as a result of the siege by al-Ma'mun's general, Tahir b. al-Husayn, during which a large part of the city was laid waste, passed into apocalyptic lore as the punishment for the rich, arrogant, godless city. "[When the Prophet is asked about the meaning of the mysterious letters[59] at the beginning of Qur'an 42:1, which are *hm ʿsq*] the *ʿayn* is torment (*ʿadhab*), the *sin* is a year of hunger, and famine, and the *qaf* is bombardment at the end of time. ʿUmar [b. al-Khattab, the second caliph] said: From whom

---

[55] About this event, see below.

[56] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 182. al-Majlisi notes on p. 183 that the final ambiguous remark could mean that the final Rajab is the one during which ʿAli al-Rida' entered Khurasan. On pp. 204, 249 he records a tradition in which the Sufyani is said to appear in Rajab as well, but he apparently appeared in Dhu al-Hijja. See, Ibn al-Athir, *Kamil* VI, p. 249. Other traditions record important events in Rajab. See, al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* pp. 841, 846, 851, 857–58, 861.

[57] Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1992), IX, p. 194.

[58] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 236, 237; and al-Sulami, *ʿIqd al-durar* pp. 116–117 (no. 84—a very unusual tradition).

[59] On the "mysterious letters" of the Qur'an, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new ed.), s.v. "Kur'an" (A. Welches), section 4, part d.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

are they? He said: From the descendants of al-'Abbas in a city called al-Zawra' [Baghdad]; a great slaughter will occur there, and the Hour [of Judgment] will come upon them . . ."[60] Another tradition describes the destruction of Baghdad in the following way:

> A man of his [al-'Abbas'] immediate family called 'Abd al-Ilah or 'Abdallah[61] will settle one of the rivers of the east, building two cities on it; the river dividing between them. When God gives permission to remove their rule, and the end of their [allotted] time, then God will send fire one night upon one of them [the cities], and in the morning it will be black, darkened, [and] burned as if there had never been anything in its place. Its companion [city] will wake up astonished—how did it disappear so suddenly?; there will only remain one day until God collects in it [the city] every stubborn tyrant.[62] God will then cause it and them together to be swallowed up [by the earth]. This is the word [of God in the Qur'an] *hm 'sq*: a disaster (*'azima*) from God and judgment, and the *'ayn* is torment, and the *sin* he says: a bombardment which will occur in the both of them, meaning the two cities.[63]

This aspect is further elaborated in a tradition about the Sufyani and his projected successes. It states that "then 'Abdallah [i.e., the common man] will perish, and allegiance to *al-makhlu'* will be thrown

---

[60] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 185; al-Baghdadi, *Ta'rikh Baghdad* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, n.d.), I, pp. 40–41; and al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-shari'a* II, p. 350. One can easily see that this tradition originates from this time because the commentators previous to the siege of Baghdad do not mention it. Muqatil b. Sulayman, *Tafsir* III, p. 763, for example, only mentions the *'adhab*. Later commentators, though, mention these traditions. See, al-Tabari, *Jami' al-bayan* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), XXV, p. 6; al-Nahhas, *Ma'ani al-Qur'an* (Mecca: 'Ulum al-Qur'an, 1989), VI, p. 291 (who mentions that *fitan* are attached to it); al-Samarqandi, *Bahr al-'ulum* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993), III, pp. 189–190; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Zad al-masir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1987), VII, p. 71; al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-manthur* (Cairo: Anwar al-Muhammadiyya, n.d.), VI, p. 3. Of course, it goes without saying that these letters are interpreted differently, even in Nu'aym, p. 119. For example, "Cambridge anonymous tafsir" [Persian] (Tehran: Farhang-i Iran, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 127 states that the *ha'* is the [Prophet's] war with Quraysh, the *mim* is the rule of the Umayyads, the *'ayn* is the revolution of the 'Abbasids, the *sin* is the Sufyani and the *qaf* is the Qa'im, the Mahdi, and al-Sulami, *'Iqd* pp. 214–215 (no. 226). All of these interpretations are eschatological in nature, though.

[61] This is al-Mansur, the founder of Baghdad, who reigned 137–59/754–75.

[62] The expression *jabbar 'anid* is Qur'anic: 11:59, 14:15, and the meaning is that the Day of Judgment will happen immediately. Note the poem in Ibn Kathir, *al-Bidaya wa-l-nihaya* (Cairo, 1932–39), X, p. 243: [addressing Tahir b. al-Husayn] ". . . you killed the great tyrants (*al-jababira*) . . ."

[63] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 185; al-Hindi, *Kanz* XI, p. 219 (no. 31296); al-Baghdadi, *Ta'rikh* I, p. 40; and al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-shari'a* II, pp. 350–351.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

off,[64] . . . and the sunken-eyed one (*al-akhwas*)[65] will conquer the city by force, and perform a great slaughter in it, and kill six "sheep" of the family of al-'Abbas, and butcher in it [the city] in cold blood. Then he will go to Kufa."[66]

In addition to this fraternal strife, there were revolts all over the Muslim world during these years. Strangely enough, scholars have not associated these revolts, which all had a religious apocalyptic or messianic character, with the fact that the following year was the apocalyptic year 200. Many of these revolts were characterized by the cry for *al-rida' min Al Muhammad* (the agreed-upon one from the family of the Prophet Muhammad), a messianic call.[67] As noted above, the Sufyani was also called by this title. Most scholars, however, have preferred to speak of "discontent" following the victory of al-Ma'mun and his unwillingness to move from Merv to Baghdad, ignoring the apocalyptic significance of the year. During the year 199/814 a Shi'i rebel called Ibn Taba'taba' revolted, and called for *al-rida' min Al Muhammad* in Kufa.[68] Apocalyptic prophecies, which describe the beginnings of his revolt quite accurately,[69] came into

---

[64] *al-Makhlu'* means "the one [whose] allegiance has been cast off" and became the apocalyptic nick-name for al-Amin. See, Arazi and Elad, "Le *Da'wa*" (second part), p. 57; al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, n.d.), p. 563; and Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, *Futuh* VIII, pp. 309, 312.

[65] This is probably Tahir b. al-Husayn, al-Ma'mun's general, who is described as being one-eyed in Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, *Futuh* VIII, pp. 310–311. There is reference to *al-akhwas* in al-Suyuti, *Hawi* II, pp. 69–70, who goes to Iraq after winning battles in Persia, and is attacked by a group from south Iraq.

[66] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 184; and compare al-Majlisi, *Bihar* LII, p. 220. Tahir did not actually go to Kufa, but sent his deputy Harthama b. al-A'yan to defeat the revolt of Abu al-Saraya (see below). In all likelihood the six 'Abbasids mentioned are the caliph and some of his immediate family.

[67] al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* p. 975. On the significance of this slogan see P. Crone, "On the meaning of the 'Abbasid call to *al-rida*'," *The Islamic World: Studies Presented to Bernard Lewis* (Princeton and New York, 1989), pp. 95–111.

[68] al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* p. 976; al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin* pp. 518f., 542f.; and al-Azdi, *Ta'rikh al-Mawsil* pp. 334–335. A number of 'Alids were killed in this revolt, see al-Isfahani, pp. 513–517. According to p. 530, the slogan of the rebels was *Ya Fatimi, ya mansur* which proves its messianic nature. Note that the traditionalist Ibn Abi Shayba joined this revolt, p. 551 (which could have influenced the messianic traditions in his *Musannaf*).

[69] For example, Zayd b. 'Ali (who founded the breakaway Zaydiyya sect of the Shi'a, which is considered to be the most 'activist' branch of the movement) is quoted saying: "The people will swear allegiance to a man from among us [the family of the Prophet] at Qasr al-Durratayn, in the year 199 on the 10th of I Jumada; God will bring him to vie [for superiority] with the angels:" al-Isfahani, *Maqatil* p. 524 (several versions). On p. 526, note that Muhammad b. Ibrahim also had astrological signs in his favor.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

being. A soldier-of-fortune type called Abu al-Saraya was his general and, on the basis of the man's conduct after his death, perhaps his string-puller. Ibn Taba'taba' died almost immediately, possibly poisoned by the latter. Abu al-Saraya, however, had no difficulty in producing another 'Alid figure, Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Zayd,[70] who was more tractable, and did his best to carry out his master's wishes. Although he spread his writ over Basra, Wasit and al-Mada'in (all of central and south Iraq) and won some initial victories, Abu al-Saraya was finally defeated and killed by the government's army.

At this same time several 'Alids revolted in the Hijaz. Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq (i.e. a son of the sixth Imam) revolted in Medina at the head of 200 men dressed in wool (*suf*) during this year. It is said that he hoped that he would be the Mahdi because he had a defect in one of his eyes, which was deemed to be a sign of the messiah.[71] This extremely interesting remark indicating the eschatological nature of the revolt is reported almost as an aside. The exact qualifications of the candidates for the position of Mahdi are very unclear. Clearly one of them was the right lineage, since Abu al-Saraya, though he held all of the real power in the above messianic revolt, did not himself assume the title. However, another one would seem to be some sort of facial or bodily defect, which would set the contender apart from his fellow men. This is similar to the mark on the Prophet's body which is referred to in the sources as *khatam al-nubuwwa*. Other messianic candidates were marked with moles on their faces, or various other signs,[72] but this is the first mention of an eye defect.

One of Abu al-Saraya's agents, Husayn b. Hasan al-Aftas, during this same period took advantage of the apocalyptic year to enact major changes at the Ka'ba. On the first day of Muharram (the first

---

[70] He also took the title of al-rida' according to al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin* pp. 532–533.

[71] al-Isfahani, *Maqatil* pp. 538–539: *kana Muhammad b. Ja'far qad asaba ahad 'ayayhi shay'un fa-athara fiha, fa-surra bi-dhalika wa-qala: la-arju an akuna al-Mahdi al-Qa'im qad balaghani anna fi ihda 'aynayhi shay'an wa-annahu yadkhul fi hadha al-amr wa-huwa karihun lahu.*

[72] Nu'aym, *Fitan* pp. 189–190, 197; and note the figures of Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin* pp. 238, 243–245. Regarding the mole on his face, compare al-Suyuti, *Hawi* II, p. 66). Bilal b. 'Abdallah b. 'Umar, who had the right lineage and a sign (*athar*) on his face according to al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-nubuwwa* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1985), VI, p. 492. On al-Mahdi, the 'Abbasid ruler. See Ibn Hajar, *Lisan al-mizan* VI, p. 61.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

day of the new year), he removed the covering (the *kiswa*) of the holy building donated by the 'Abbasids, and replaced it with one of his own. A few months later, he managed to persuade his fellow rebel, Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq, to assume the caliphate. All real authority, of course, remained in Husayn's hands since Muhammad was elderly and very pious, and his followers quickly managed to alienate the populace through their unseeming conduct.[73] In all likelihood it was these events which led to the apocalyptic traditions about 'Abbasids being killed in the holy city: ". . . X son of Y will kill 15 'sheep' of the Abbasids (*bani fulan*) [in Mecca]."[74] Without a doubt, Husayn led a reign of terror in Mecca during the months of his rule, and the principal targets of his actions were indeed the 'Abbasids and their supporters. In Yemen there were also apocalyptic revolts,[75] which can probably be connected to messianic traditions.[76] It is possible that the disturbances in Muslim Spain about this time were also brought about by the impending apocalyptic year.[77]

The Year 200 and its Aftermath

As we have already noted, a strong feeling that 'Abbasid rule was about to come to an end existed during this period. Undoubtedly this mood contributed to the fact that we have a number of collections of apocalyptic and messianic traditions[78] dating from the period immediately following the rule of the children of Harun al-Rashid, who collectively ruled the empire between 194–229/809–43. Both Nu'aym b. Hammad (d. 229/844) and Hanbal b. Ishaq (d.

---

[73] al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* pp. 988ff.; and Khalifa b. al-Khayyat, *Ta'rikh* (Baghdad: 1967), p. 507.

[74] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, p. 211; and compare al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *Irshad* (Najaf: al-Matba'a al-Haydariyya, 1962), p. 360.

[75] al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* pp. 987–988; and see C. Geddes, "al-Ma'mun's Shi'ite policy in Yemen," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 59–60 (1963–64), pp. 99–107.

[76] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, pp. 210, 220.

[77] S. Imaduddin, "Cordovan Muslim rule in Crete," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 8 (1960), pp. 300–302; and see Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum al-zahira* II, p. 158 (the landing of the refugees in Alexandria).

[78] Even the historian al-Tabari felt this way, which one can see by the way in which he starts his section on the beginning of al-Ma'mun's reign. See, *Ta'rikh* p. 975 *wad'at al-harb bayna Muhammad wa-'Abdallah ibnay Harun al-Rashid awzaruha . . .* paraphrasing Qur'an 47:4 and many apocalyptic prophecies.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

273/886)[79] worked during this period or immediately after.[80] Several other facts indicate that this was a period in which the 'Abbasids were expected to give way to an apocalyptic dynasty. For example, the 'Abbasid revolution took place about seventy years before this time,[81] and al-Ma'mun was the seventh ruler of the dynasty. All of the previous rulers, including al-Ma'mun, took apocalyptic names for their regnal titles, a fact that has been noted by several scholars.[82] This change in direction after the reign of al-Ma'mun is intriguing, because he was the last ruler to follow this custom. Fundamentally, his reign was a break in the apocalyptic direction of the dynasty. There were poems circulated that denote the popular expectation that there would not be an eighth ruler: "The kings of Banu 'Abbas in the 'books'[83] [are] seven, and the 'books' do not speak to us [literally: bring to us] about an eighth from them—Likewise the 'People of the Cave' (*ahl al-kahf*) in their cave are seven . . ."[84] The books mentioned here are those apocalyptic Sibylline-like books which are mentioned so often in Muslim tradition as authorities in the matters of deciding the future. However, it is the reference to the "People

---

[79] About Hanbal b. Ishaq, see F. Sezgin, *Geschichte des Arabische Schriftums* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), I, p. 510. His book, *Kitab al-fitan*, is preserved in the Zahriyya Library in Damascus.

[80] A certain Yahya b. 'Abd al-Hamid al-Hamani (d. 228/842) is also listed as the compilator of a volume of apocalyptic traditions, though it is doubtful whether his book survived.

[81] This feeling is expressed by the tradition in Nu'aym, *Fitan* pp. 124, 419: "A man and his descendants from Banu Hashem will rule for 72 years." In the apocalyptic traditions, Banu Hashem is the 'Abbasids. In other traditions their rule is said to last for 900 months (= 75 years). See Nu'aym, *Fitan*, p. 419.

[82] B. Lewis, "The Regnal Titles of the Abbasid Caliphs," in *Dr. Mahmud Zakir Husayn Memorial Volume* pp. 13–22; and M. Qasim Zaman, "Early 'Abbasid response to Apocalyptic Propaganda," *Islamic Quarterly* 32 (1988), pp. 236–244.

[83] Either the books of Jews and Christians which foretell future events, or the book of the dynasty (*Kitab al-dawla*) mentioned in al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, p. 212, which spoke about the end of the dynasty (note that here also the issue of the seventh ruler is highlighted). One should note the fact that the "Apocalypse of Bahira" *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 14 (1899), p. 224, speaks of eight kings, while p. 226 mentions seven ruling before the end. On p. 256 the last king is described wearing green, which was the color of the 'Alids (as opposed to the black of the 'Abbasids).

[84] al-'Isami, *Simt al-nujum al-awali* (Cairo: al-Matba'a al-Salafiyya, 1380h), III, p. 329; Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Aghani* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1986), XX, p. 158. The poem is ascribed to Di'bil al-Khuza'i, who was a noted opponent of the regime, though in *Aghani* p. 159 he denies that he wrote these lines and ascribes them to Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi (an 'Abbasid prince). His violently anti-'Abbasid poems have been translated in Leon Zolondek, *Di'bil b. 'Ali* (University of Kentucky, 1961: this particular one is no. 14 [trans. somewhat differently], and see esp. 65, 95, 201); and see al-Majlisi, *Bihar* XLIX, p. 147.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

of the Cave" which is the most significant. Especially in Shi'i apocalyptic lore, this Qur'anic story, which is a version of the Christian tale of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus,[85] is closely connected to apocalyptic expectations. The seven sleepers are prototypes of the messianic family of the Prophet's descendants.[86] Shi'ites are told to be quiescent until the seventh ruler of the 'Abbasids:

> He said [Ja'far al-Sadiq]: The 'Abbasids (*fulan bani fulan*) [will continue] until they reach the seventh of them (*wuld fulan*). I said [Fadl al-Katib]: What is the sign of what is between us and you {him?}, may I be your redemption? He said: The earth will continue [on as usual], O Fadl, until the Sufyani appears, and when the Sufyani appears, then answer us [when we call for the messianic revolt]; saying it three times: it is among the predestined [events] (*mahtumat*).[87]

In other related traditions the opposition to al-Ma'mun is expected to lead to his assassination:

> The seventh of Banu 'Abbas will call the people to infidelity,[88] and they will not follow him. Those of his immediate family will say to him: Do you wish to expel us from our way of life? And he will say: I am only acting towards you in the manner of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, may God be satisfied with them. They [the family] will deny him, and an enemy from his immediate family, from the Banu Hashem, will kill him. When he [the assassin] falls upon him [al-Ma'mun], there will be dissension between them, and he [the apocalyptist] described a long [period] of dissension until the Sufyani appears.[89]

The editor of the text understood this character to be al-Ma'mun (see the footnote on the same page), but pointed to the theological doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an, which al-Ma'mun proclaimed as the official doctrine of the dynasty during the last year of his life (833), as the source of the controversy. Although al-Ma'mun pri-

---

[85] See Qur'an 18: 9–25; and N. Roberts, "The Companions of the Cave," *Muslim World* 83 (1993), pp. 295–317. On the Christian story see, A. Allgier, "Die alteste gesalt der sebenschlaferlegende," *Oriens Christianus* ser. 2 no. 6 (1916), pp. 1–43. In 182/798 the 'Abbasid commander 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Abd al-Malik reached the city of Ephesus during the summer raid of that year and mentions that he saw their cave. See Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam* IX, p. 67.

[86] E.g. al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Ithbat al-hudat* VII, p. 36 (no. 372); and al-Sulami, *'Iqd* pp. 214 (no. 224).

[87] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLVII, p. 297.

[88] "Infidelity" would seem to be a bit strong; in other locations he is merely referred to as a "sinner."

[89] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 124. A considerably different version appears on p. 182.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

vately believed in the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an throughout his reign, this interpretation is incorrect on the basis of the tradition itself. The doctrine of the Qur'an's creation provoked a great deal of theological controversy and led to a period known as the *mihna* (the inquisition) during which important religious figures like Ahmad b. Hanbal were tortured for their beliefs. However, it did not provoke outrage inside the ruling family, and hardly could have led to an assassination of a caliph, which was not a very common event during the early ʿAbbasid period. Upon examining the reasons given here for the family's dissatisfaction, it seems as though they were afraid of losing their hold on power ("their livelihood"), something which was not an issue during the controversy over the Qur'an. In reply, al-Ma'mun says that he is following in the footsteps of Abu Bakr and ʿUmar, both of whom, uniquely in the history of all the caliphs, did not favor their relatives, nor leave the caliphal throne to their own descendants.[90] This is the crux of the dispute: the desire of al-Ma'mun to leave the throne to someone else, in this case a member of the Prophet's family, ʿAli al-Rida'. The apocalyptist believes that the response of the ʿAbbasid family will be to assassinate al-Ma'mun, after which the dynasty will fall into disarray. There are several other traditions which could indicate that the apocalyptic groups felt that al-Ma'mun's pro-Shi'i policy would cost him his life: "A man from the *mawali* will appear from Merv, inviting the Banu Hashem [to revolt], called ʿAbdallah. He will rule four years and then perish."[91] However, this prediction may not be associated with al-Ma'mun. The editor of Nu'aym identifies this figure with Abu Muslim al-Khurasani, the famous general of the ʿAbbasids, undoubtedly on the strength of the ambiguity of the word *mawali*. This is, of course, the crux, since the word *mawla* means either the client of a tribe, or the master, lord of a group. al-Ma'mun's given name was ʿAbdallah and he proclaimed his revolt in Merv. But more importantly for our purposes, he remained in Khurasan after the death of his brother, and his pro-'Alid policy lasted for a little under four years. This would seem to indicate that this tradition was broadcast by those apocalyptic groups in Iraq who

[90] In al-Irbili, *Kashf al-ghumma* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa', n.d.), III, p. 69, al-Ma'mun adduces the precedent of ʿUmar, and this from a Shi'i source! Compare with Ibn Abi Shayba, *Musannaf* XV, p. 97 (no. 10616).

[91] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 420; and compare al-Hindi, *Kanz* XI, p. 256 (no. 31437).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

felt that these actions would ultimately lead to al-Ma'mun's deposition and death, just as in the previous tradition.

More important for our purposes is the existence of traditions indicating that the Mahdi, or that apocalyptic tribulations, will appear in the year 200: "The Mahdi will appear in the year 200."[92] These traditions, fueled by pressures from apocalyptic groups, made the apocalyptic interlude of the appointment of 'Ali al-Rida' possible. Without this lengthy preparatory time of traditions leading up to the messianic appearance, it is doubtful whether al-Ma'mun would have felt the necessity to appoint him.[93]

A Messianic Interlude for the 'Abbasids

'Ali al-Rida' was a messianic figure by virtue of his ancestry (being the descendant of the Prophet in the seventh generation), and possibly his character as well. Just as the other Imams, his personality is buried under a deep layer of hagiographic material. It should be noted that he seems to have held to the policy laid down by his great-grandfather, Muhammad al-Baqir, and his grandfather, Ja'far al-Sadiq, to adhere to a quietist way of life.[94] This involved teaching and spreading the Shi'i Imami tradition among a limited number of adherents, and avoiding messianic extremism which had overtaken his cousins from the Hasanid branch of the family and the Zaydis.[95] al-Ma'mun's appointment of this man to the position of heir apparent is quite a violent change in policy, since just one year previous to this decision he had executed one of his foremost military commanders (Harthama b. A'yan) for supposed pro-'Alid tendencies.[96]

---

[92] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 205; and Bashear, "Muslim Apocalypses," pp. 94–95. Note also Ibn 'Adi, *Kamil* III, p. 177; and al-Hindi, *Kanz* XIV, p. 211 (no. 38432).

[93] In al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, p. 145 he is quoted as saying that he took an oath that if he managed to defeat his brother, then he would bequeath the throne to the best of the 'Alids. One should note that in the letter of appointment to al-Rida' on p. 149, al-Ma'mun mentions the approach of the end.

[94] Like his uncle, the rebel Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq (see above), he is said to have been very reluctant about the acceptance of the position of heir-apparent. See al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, p. 131.

[95] During the time of Harun al-Rashid he is said to have been suspected of harboring messianic hopes for himself. See al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, pp. 113ff.

[96] al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* p. 998.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The earliest manifestation of 'Ali's messianic appearance would appear to be the traditions in which he appears in Nishapur riding a gray mule (*baghla shahba'*).[97] While it has been clear for a long time that riding beasts have a great deal of significance in apocalyptic and messianic traditions, only with recent research has the prevalence of this method of describing these figures become apparent.[98] Such traditions indicate the nature of the authority ascribed to him. He is also quoted as saying that one of the signs of the Mahdi is that he will speak the dialect of Arabic called *khurasaniyya* (which was only spoken in Khurasan).[99] 'Ali al-Rida' assumed his new position during the first part of the holy month of Ramadan, 201/816.[100] In light of the earlier call for *al-rida' min Al Muhammad*, his title shows that his appointment is messianic and not just political.[101] At this particular time al-Ma'mun ordered dynasty supporters to cast off their black clothing—their most distinctive feature during the seventy some years since the 'Abbasid revolution. The people were ordered to show their loyalty by wearing green clothing, which traditionally was the sign of the Shi'a (along with white clothing).[102] There is very little material about the actions of 'Ali al-Rida' during the period in which he was the heir-apparent to the caliphal throne, a period which lasted for a little over two years. The principal historical information that is available concerns the opposition which this move aroused among the people of Baghdad and the 'Abbasid family.[103] According to the Shi'a, 'Ali al-Ma'mun had al-

[97] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, pp. 122, 126. See al-Irbili, *Kashf al-ghumma* III, p. 67 (where the word used is *himar*), and al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Ithbat al-hudat* VI, pp. 51–52.

[98] S. Bashear, "Riding Beasts on Divine Missions," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 36 (1991), pp. 37–75. Unfortunately, he is primarily concerned with the time of the Prophet, though see pp. 73–75.

[99] al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Ithbat al-hudat* VII, p. 386.

[100] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, p. 128; in al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* p. 1013 (the 2nd of Ramadan, which has been generally accepted); al-Irbili, *Kashf al-ghumma* III, p. 123; (the 5th of Ramadan); or al-Biruni, *Athar al-baqiya* (ed. Leipzig: Sachau, 1923), p. 332. See W. Madelung, "New Documents concerning al-Ma'mun, al-Fadl b. Sahl and 'Ali al-Rida'," in W. al-Qadi (ed.), *Studia Arabica et Islamica* (Beirut, 1981), pp. 333–346.

[101] al-Azdi, *Ta'rikh al-Mawsil* p. 341; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam* X, p. 93; and Ibn Kathir, *Bidaya* X, p. 247.

[102] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, p. 132; and see K. 'Athamina, "The Black Banners and the Socio-Political Significance of Banners and Slogans in Medieval Islam," *Arabica* 36 (1989), pp. 307–326.

[103] E.g. Ibn Taghribirdi, *Nujum al-zahira* II, 169ff. There are notes about a prayer

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Rida' poisoned[104] during the month of Safar 203/818.[105] This cause of death has not been accepted by all scholars, though most admit that 'Ali's death was very expedient for al-Ma'mun. It is rather curious that according to some traditions 'Ali was killed on Friday, the twenty-third day of Ramadan.[106] This is the night on which, according to the apocalyptic prophecies, the *sayha*, the divine "shout" of the end of time (see Qur'an 50:42), is to be heard.[107] Unfortunately, the connection between these two events is unclear, since it would not be reasonable that the Shi'a would celebrate this event. However, in Shi'i (as well as in Sunni) apocalyptic and messianic prophecies the figure of "al-Nafs al-Zakiyya", an innocent soul sacrificed previous to the revelation of the Mahdi, is quite well-developed.[108] This figure is a lightning rod about which the anger towards the government will collect, and his murder will touch off and fuel the revolt which will bring the messianic figure into power, and he will be heralded by the *sayha*.[109] It is possible, therefore, that the accounts of al-Rida"s death/murder are influenced by messianic hopes.[110]

---

which he gave in al-Irbili, *Kashf al-ghumma* III, pp. 58–59, 73; and see al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, pp. 140ff., especially the polemical discussion with the Catholicos and the Exilarch of the Jews on pp. 175–177 (trans. in S. Wasserstrom, "The Shi'is are the Jews of our Community," *Israel Oriental Society* 14 (1994), pp. 320–323.

[104] al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin* pp. 566–567; and al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* XLIX, pp. 129ff. Rather amusingly, on p. 129, al-Ma'mun asks about what the cause of al-Rida"s death will be (since all Imams know the future), and the latter has to resort to double-talk, while al-Ma'mun condemns the future murderer (himself) in no uncertain terms.

[105] Note that al-Irbili, *Kashf al-ghumma* III, p. 60 brings traditions about his death in 202, or 201.

[106] al-Irbili, *Kashf al-ghumma* III, pp. 89, 105.

[107] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, pp. 204; and al-Hurr al-'Amili, *Ithbat al-hudat* VII, p. 31 (according to which he will manifest himself on the 10th of Muharram, the day on which al-Husayn was killed). Before his appearance, there will be eclipses on the 5th of Ramadan (al-Majlisi, LII, p. 207), and the 13th and 14th (al-Majlisi, LII, p. 243). The 14th is the day upon which Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya was killed in 145/762. See al-Isfahani, *Maqatil* p. 275. The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad on the 24th of Ramadan; see, Abu Ya'la al-Mawsili, *Musnad* (Damascus: Dar al-Ma'mun li-Turath, 1987), IV, pp. 135–136. It is also said that there will be torrential rains in the year of the Mahdi's appearance (al-Majlisi, LII, pp. 212–213, 214), and earthquakes (Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 174).

[108] He is basically analogous to the Messiah b. Joseph of the Jewish tradition.

[109] al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, pp. 192, 217.

[110] Di'bil b. 'Ali in Zolondek, *Di'bil* p. 42 (no. 95) refers to 'Ali al-Rida' after his death as *al-Zaki*, which could be a shortened form of *al-Nafs al-zakiyya*. Another indicative fact is Ibn Babawayhi's book *'Uyun akhbar al-Rida'* (unfortunately unavailable to me—though it is ultimately the source of most of the traditions about al-Rida' quoted in al-Majlisi), which is designed to highlight his importance, and to encourage people to visit his gravesite.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Conclusions

Though it is true that Shi'i messianic hopes had to wait about seventy more years to develop the doctrine of the "vanished Imam," who was 'Ali's great-great grandson, and who disappeared in 873, the apocalyptic situation preceding this Imam/Mahdi's eschatological revelation remains that of the apocalyptic year 200. At this time for a brief while, the Shi'a had an opportunity to assume power. Unlike during the other many rebellions, whose glorious battles and heroic last-stands are recorded in the pages of Shi'ite martyrologies (like that of Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, *Maqatil al-Talibiyyin*), during this period they had a real chance.

The historical situation previous to the appointment of 'Ali al-Rida as the heir-apparent to al-Ma'mun was one which captured their imagination, because of the fact that their worst enemies, the 'Abbasids, were apparently killing each other. The Shi'a hoped to benefit in the event of a civil war, since they were a tiny minority with no obvious power base or means of raising an army to defeat their foes. Though the civil war between al-Amin and al-Ma'mun passed without their being able to organize a revolt strong enough for them to take advantage of the situation, amazingly enough al-Ma'mun responded to the call of the times, in the same manner as the common people did (assuming as we do that the apocalyptic prophecies were well known).

We will in all likelihood never know all of the considerations that caused al-Ma'mun to make this bold move, which went against all of the ideals of his family. It is difficult to believe that al-Ma'mun, who lived in a state of total seclusion, guarded by a few trusted advisors, who screened out all information from him but their own, could have been acquainted with the apocalyptic and messianic hopes which were common among people of the empire. After all, it took a palace conspiracy to inform him that Iraq was aflame with revolt, five years after the fact![111] Yet he also cannot have been entirely oblivious of the significance of the date: 200 years after the Prophet's *hijra* from Mecca.

---

[111] See al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh* pp. 1026ff. for this story. It is, of course, possible that this story was created by those who were close to al-Ma'mun in order to absolve him of the guilt in the whole question as to why he did not come to Baghdad for five years after his troops conquered it, and to place the blame for all of the disorder on his vizier al-Fadl b. Sahl.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

This, of course, is one of the key issues. Round dates of centuries regularly breed apocalyptic and messianic prophecies in Muslim tradition. Everyone wanted the new century to provide meaning and to represent change.[112] It is possible that from this point of view al-Ma'mun was indeed aware of the significance of the times and thus contributed unwittingly to the atmosphere. Unfortunately, he picked the wrong group to support him. At this particular point the Shi'a were politically too weak to be of much aid to al-Ma'mun. We do not hear of any demonstrations of support for al-Rida', nor of any revolts provoked by his death/murder, despite the fact that there was a good deal of latent sympathy for the Prophet's family in many areas of the empire. This support, however, could not be translated into actual political power, because it normally only manifested itself in the event of a particularly heroic or gruesome death of one of the Prophet's descendants. Although the supporters of the Imams rarely sacrificed their lives for their spiritual leaders, they were usually willing to lambaste and flagellate themselves after the Imam's death.

This particular episode in Muslim apocalyptic history was chosen because of the manner in which time and the attitude towards it are exemplified. History leads directly into the apocalypse, which is located at a definable, datable point in the immediate future. Though a series of apocalyptic events must be accomplished before the end occurs, it is not a distant event, nor are those involved unknown to the general populace. The events lead inexorably to the appointment of the heir-apparent, 'Ali al-Rida', and then they grind him down until he is finally either killed or dies accidentally. Obviously the pressures of the apocalyptic movements demanded a fulfillment of some sort, and when it was not forthcoming, 'Ali became expendable. On this basis it is easy to accept the Shi'i argument that he was murdered.

There was a total solar eclipse on the last day of the Muslim year, 29 Dhu al-Hijja 203,[113] just a few months after 'Ali al-Rida' had

---

[112] On this issue see E. Landau-Tessaron, "The Cyclical Reform," *Studia Islamica* 70 (1989), pp. 79–113.

[113] Ibn A'tham al-Kufi, *Futuh* VIII, p. 324; and Ibn al-Jawzi, *Muntazam* X, p. 116. Note traditions on the significance of solar and lunar eclipses, such as al-Humaydi, *Musnad* I, p. 216 (no. 455); Abu Ya'la al-Mawsili, *Musnad* VIII, pp. 253–254; and al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar* LII, pp. 207, 214, 266. In the tradition on p. 220, there is a good deal of detail: "[among the signs of the end] . . . and an eclipse of the sun in the middle of the month of Ramadan, and an eclipse of the moon at the end, against all previous usual [occurrences] . . ."

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

died and the messianic hopes of those who had pinned their expectations upon him had abated. Muslim apocalyptists continued to predict the apocalypse, and we find in Nu'aym the following tradition: "The gathering of the people about the Mahdi will be in the year 204 [819]."[114] One could speculate about the conjunction of these two events. Perhaps this messianic manifestation was designed to be for 'Ali al-Rida', and therefore al-Ma'mun had to put him to death, or perhaps the people needed to know exactly when the messianic age was going to begin, since they were showing their impatience, through numerous revolts. Although this chapter in messianic history remains unsolved, it is an excellent example of how the apocalyptic expectations of people continue despite disappointment.

[114] Nu'aym, *Fitan* p. 206. This must be one of the latest dateable traditions in Nu'aym, who died in 229/844.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

I AM NOT THE MAHDI, BUT . . . . . .

Peter Heine

In his article "The Regnal Titles of the First Abbasid Chalifs," Bernard Lewis describes the chiliastic implications of the names of Abbasid khalifs from al-Saffah to al-Qa'im and concludes:

> The Abbasids, like other successful revolutionaries before and after them, chose the path of orthodoxy and empire. Some of their disappointed followers turned away, to fresh illusions and disillusionments; others found their place, as best as they could, in the new imperial order. Of the revolutionary and messianic origins of the Abbasid movement, only the outward forms remained. The radical [sic] beliefs gave way to pious conformity; the black emblems of revolution became a dynasty livery; the messianic war-cries became part of the style and titles of the imperial protocol.[1]

Lewis also sheds light on how the Abbasids contended with the unfulfilled prophecies of the coming Mahdi. "Four times the millenium was deferred to the next reign—to a new just ruler, with a messianic title until the process was no longer feasible or even necessary."[2] From the beginning of Muslim history in the central Islamic lands we find examples of a waning of messianistic revolutionary action, a transformation of activism into a set of etiquette. Does this phenomenon also happen on the periphery of the Muslim world and how does it manifest itself if messianistic appeal was in decline?

Sheikh Usman dan Fodio, whose movement shall be my example in this context, was born on December 15, 1754, in Maratta in northern Hausaland, located today in northern Nigeria. He had a younger brother, Abdallahi, born in 1766 and a son, Muhammad Bello, born in 1781. His religious movement took place in the eighteenth century, a period which has some prominence now among western scholars dealing with the Muslim world. Usman dan Fodio belonged to the Torodbe, the professional religious class among the

---

[1] Bernard Lewis, "The Regnal Titles of the First Abbasid Caliphs," in *Dr. Zaki Husain Presentation Volume* (New Delhi, 1968) 13–22, at 19.

[2] Lewis (1968) 18f.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

islamicized Fulbe nation. These cattle-herders were living in a symbiosis with their surounding sedentary Hausa neighbours. This relationship was not without its difficulties and conflicts. This is not surprising, as we have many examples of this kind wherever pastoral and sedentary peoples share the same region. As in other cases, the conflict became exacerbated as the number of Fulbe herders grew and the struggle for land and water became more difficult. We cannot fully document the war between these two nations, which became known as the Djihad of Usman dan Fodio,[3] but in the end the Fulbe gained control.

Although we cannot provide details of this war and the political developments which led to the establishment of the so-called Sokoto-Khalifat,[4] we can examine the ideology, opinions and doctrines of the Sheikh Usman dan Fodio concentrating mainly on the chiliastic aspects of his ideas. It should be also stressed that he was influenced by *sufi* ideas mainly of the Qadiriyya and the Khalwatiyya order. The leaders and some of the soldiers were members of the Qadiriyya order. During the campaigns dhikr-congregations organized "out of conviction and for the sake of organizational morale".[5] This aspect is quite important because some scholars have contended that the movement of Usman dan Fodio was influenced by the Wahhabi-movement of the Arabian peninsula.

The rising mahdist expectations in the Sahel region contributed to the success of the Sheikh's preaching and campaigning. At the time there was a wide belief in the Muslim world that a Mahdi would rise in the year 1200 Hidjra which corresponds to the year 1785/6 C.E. This expectation was not confined to the Hausalands—other Mahdist movements also existed in some areas of the Caucasus, where the Imam Mansur was resisting the Russian advance, as well as in Algeria. Throughout the eighteenth century there were rumors in Hausaland about the coming of the Mahdi, and many people believed that Usman dan Fodio was the messiah. Unfortunately, we do not know enough about the personal views of the Sheikh in this respect. He firmly believed in the idea of the Mahdi, but from the

---

[3] A plethora of works have been written about these events. The most important book is by Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London, 1967).

[4] On this subject see especially, Joseph P. Smaldone, *Warfare in the Sokoto Caliphate. Historical and Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1977).

[5] B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth Century Africa* (Cambridge, 1976) 20.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

beginning he did not dismiss the thought that he was the Mahdi himself. From his actions it is clear that he understood the benefits of this type of propaganda in his aim to win over the political leadership in the region. During the Djihad, Usman sent propagandists who preached in the major Hausa towns that the advent of the Mahdi was to be expected in near future "and that the Djihad would continue until the Mahdi manifested hinself."[6] In western Sudan the idea of the Mahdi was interwoven with the idea of a Mudjaddid (renewer of the century). This phenomenon, which occurred much later, is less well-known than that of the Mahdi. At first the Mudjaddid was an honorary title (*laqab*) by which important personalities of Islam were called and no messianic powers were attached to it. The first person to be given this *laqab* was the Omayyad Khalif Umar II.[7] In addition, the founder of one of the four muslim law schools, al-Shafi'i and the famous theologian al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) were called al-Mudjaddid. The first mention of the Mudjaddid in a messianic framework can be found in a book written by Ziyad al-Din al-'Iraqi (d. 1404) who quotes a tradition according to which the Prophet had said that, "at the beginning of each century, God will send a man, a descendant of his family, who will explain the matters of religion. Because of the lethargy in which Islamic science found itself between the eighth and fourteenth centuries, no such renewer was expected for the 9th."[8] The famous Egyptian polygraph al-Suyuti rejected this opinion, perhaps because he saw himself as the Mudjaddid of his time.[9] Later the Mudjaddid became more closely related to ideas about the Mahdi. Among the signs of the appearence of the Mahdi, like climatic changes or catastrophies, there was also the appearence of a Mudjaddid. The connection of the two ideas and expectations was very prominent in Western Sudan during the sixteenth century. The year 1000 H. was of course a date in which the expectations of the coming Mahdi were widespread all over the Muslim world. Especially the texts of al-Suyuti, the famous Egyptian polygraph, who died in 1504, about the Mahdi and the Mudjaddid

---

[6] *Ibid.*, at 25.

[7] There is an interesting discussion on 'Umar II and his role as a mudjaddid which I will not elaborate on here.

[8] E. van Dinzel, "Mudjaddid," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1960) vol. 7, 291.

[9] For al-Suyuti, see Ignaz Goldziher, "Zur Charakteristik Gelal ud-Din us-Sujuti's und seiner literarischen Tätigkeit," in Ignaz Goldziher, ed., *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 1, 52–73.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

were disseminated and discussed not only in the central Muslim lands, but also in western Sudan. Usman dan Fodio was well aware of a prophecy by Umm Hani bint Muhammad al-'Abdusi, a Fulbe woman who died in 1455. According to the tradition, "There will appear in this sudanic land one of God's saints who will renew religion, revive orthodoxy, and create a religious community. The fortunate will follow him und spread his fame in distant places. . . . One of his signs will be that he will not tend cattle as the Fulbe custom is. Whoever lives until that time should follow him."[10]

The turn of the century and climatic catastrophies, signs of the coming of the Messiah in Muslim tradition, intensified Mahdist expectations. During the eighteenth century, many catastrophic droughts were reported in Hausaland and in Western Sudan, which lasted in some places more that ten years. In 1790 there was a heavy drought in the Kano region that killed many cattle and resulted in serious crop damage. These events were interpretated as signs of the coming Mahdi.

In general, Mahdist expectations were also connected to the corruption of Muslim religion, and the religious situation in Hausaland can be seen in this context. Usman dan Fodio perceived numerous diviners, talismans, spell-mongers and other magicians as unislamic. In accordance with Mahdist motives he also criticized the false ulama'. "Among those syncretists who claim that they are Muslims and carry out the practices of Islam are those who worship trees by sacrifice to them, make offerings and daub them with dough. They are unbelievers . . . There are others who claim that they posses knowledge of the Unseen through written magic or sand-writing, from the position of the stars, or the language of the birds and their movements. . . . There are persons who place cotton and wool on stones, along the roads, under trees, or at crossroads . . . Those who practice black magic try to separate those who love each other, or husband and wife: all of that is unbelief."[11] The corrupt ulama' or "venal mallams," as he calls them, openly sold their "knowledge" to Hausa kings who were his enemies. In his poems he critically summed up the whole situation:

> That is abandonment of the Holy Law
> Nakedness with women, and the mixing which goes on

[10] Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, 26.
[11] *Ibid.*, at 28.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Swindling the orphan, taking more than four wives
Is similar, like taking women in raids—
An imitation of the people of the Age of Ignorance
Likewise making improper changes in the laws
Without guidance from prominent men of religion
That is an imitation of their ignorant ancestors-
Make no mistake.[12]

Usman dan Fodio made use of these themes to propagate his Djihad. During the campaign he wrote at least ten Rasa'il about this subject, and some were entitled: "A Warning to the Community about the Signs of the Hour" or "Duration of the World." Both of these titles appear to be referring to the coming of the Mahdi.

We are aware of another text in which he preached in the Fulfulde language that demonstrates how he employed Mahdist expectations:

I have been given the attributes of the Mahdi . . .
Because our time is the time of the Mahdi . . .
Observe that I am not the. . . . Mahdi.
Yet I have been clothed with his mantle
In keeping with the pattern
For every era has a Mahdi, and it is already a
Thousand years or more . . .
Like the wind heralding the raincloud
So precisely am I, in relation to the Mahdi.[13]

It is interesting to note Usman dan Fodio's use of the word Mahdi. The traditional Muslim idea is that the Mahdi will appear at the end of time. Here, every era has a Mahdi. The combination between Mahdi and Mudjaddid is clear. Mervyn Hiskett claims that Usman dan Fodio

> awaited the Mahdi to unravel the tangle of the times . . . He saw the world almost having run its course. Whatever reforms he might introduce . . . they were but a temporary expedient. Mankind had reached the point where it was no longer salvable by human agency. . . . Hope lay only in the ultimate millenium . . . To prepare for the Mahdi was to play his appointed part in the divine order.[14]

After the Djihad was won, and the Khalifat of Sokoto was established, Usman dan Fodio had to contend with what he had previously written and preached. He had to explain why he was not the Mahdi or why the Mahdi did not arrive as he had promised. In

[12] *Ibid.*, at 29.
[13] *Ibid.*, at 27.
[14] Marvin Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth* (New York, 1973) 125.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

1808 he wrote: "Based on al-Suyuti's assumptions, what we said repeatedly in our preaching at assemblies was, that the time for the advent of the Mahdi had come. Yet, upon investigation, we must admit that we do not know the time with any certainty."[15]

However, he continued to think of himself as a Mudjaddid and as a result he developed new ideas concerning Fulbe Islam. B.G. Martin has shown that Usman dan Fodio participated in a discussion about the question of *taqlid* or *idjtihad*—*taqlid* meaning the strict imitation of earlier scholars in religious and legal practice and *idjtihad* meaning independent legal reasoning. It is interesting to note that this debate in Western Sudan began at the same time as similar discussions took place in other parts of the sunni world, though the *bab al-idjtihad* was never resolved in the shii community. This indicates the close connection between Muslim scholars throughout the Muslim world. Surprisingly, Usman supported *idjtihad* as his opponents, the venal mallams and all those he had labeled as pseudo-Muslims, had backed the *taqlid*-party. A poem of another Fulbe Scholar, whose books were known to Usman dan Fodio, illustrates this heated debate:

> The majority of the practitioners of *taqlid*
> Shall they not be saved on Judgement Day?
> When one dreads the blade and the earthquake
> Amid the rendering catastrophes to come?[16]

Upon examining these lines it appears as though there must have been a tendency to denounce the followers of *taqlid* as non-muslims. Later Usman dan Fodio went even further when he favored the abolition of the differences between four leading Muslim schools of law to have one single madhhab. "Whatever came from Muhammad was not known as a school of law; it was called His Divine Law. . . . Has God in His Book or His Prophet in the Sunna make it necessary to rely on a single law school or one liberal interpreter (mudjtahid) in particular? We have not heard of a single person among the learned men of the past who directed anyone to follow a specific school of law."[17] This indicates that the thinking of Usman dan Fodio, and his role in the religious context of Islam in Western Sudan, centered around the notion of the Mudjaddid. Therefore, in stressing the Mudjaddid-aspect of the Mahdist expectations he was

[15] Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods*, 26.
[16] *Ibid.*, at 34.
[17] *Ibid.*, at 35.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

able to avoid providing an answer for his frustrated followers. He decided to step down as leader once the Khalifate of Sokoto was firmly established. His brother and sons were involved in political matters and ran the new administration while Usman concentrated on studying and preaching until his death in 1817.

The Mudjaddid idea affected the social and political structure of the Khalifat, and in this new state learned men had leading positions. The declaration of Moddibo Adama as head of the Fombina emirate in the Adamawa region in northern Cameroon points to the strengthening of the Ulama position. After Usman dan Fodio had declared Djihad in Hausaland, he sent messengers into the Adamawa region and asked the Ardo'en (leaders) of the Fulbe groups who were living there to meet with him. Many of them personally accepted his invitation, whereas others sent delegations. Usman organized this meeting in Sokoto to decide which leader of the Adamawa Fulbe should be the Emir. It should be added here that "Amir" has no strong religious connotation neither in the Arabic nor in the Fulbe context. In contrast, the title "Lamido," which is also used to designate the head of a Fulbe emirate—a strong religious aspect—can be understood from the Shahada in Fulbe, which states: Waala Laamiido sey Allah ("There is no Laamiido except Allah"). Modibbo Adama, a learned man who had studied for many years in Bornu, was elected. Not all of the Fulbe leaders were content with this decision because Adama was neither wealthy nor a member of an important Fulbe clan, but rather a religious leader who had a strong following. His scholarship was a decisive factor in attaining his new position, and until that time this was not a criterion for leadership among the Fulbe. The combination of "din" and "dawla", of religion and political power, the aim of all those who sought to create a true Muslim state, seemed to be realized. It seems as though this tendency to establish a theocratic state was the way in which the chiliastic aspects of the Djihad-movement were overplayed.

Messianic expectations are always connected with spiritual ideas, strong hopes for a life without hunger and other form of misery. For example, the German folktale of Schlaraffenland, where one has to eat through a mountain of porridge before entering a place where doves and chicken fly into the mouth of the happy few living there, is clearly messianic. In different cultures and times the physical well-being of the followers of chiliastic propaganda was very important—for the Medieval European history starting with Tanchelm and the Etudes d'Etoile until the kingdom of the Anabaptists of Münster

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

and the Drummer of Nicklashausen, or in the non-European world from North-America with the ghost-dance movements of the tribe of the Sioux indians to the cargo-cult movements of New-Guinea and Melanesia or the Maji-Maji uprising in nineteenth century East-Africa. From the very beginning Islamic messianic beliefs were also connected with these ideas. A Hadith (tradition of the prophet Muhammad) says that during the reign of the Mahdi pastures will be green and the cattle fat, that one can approach the Mahdi and ask for anything and he will give it. After the retirement of the Sheikh, the son of Usman dan Fodio, Mohammad Bello, had the task of making sure that the material situation of the Sheikh's followers improved or remained good. "Bello wanted all activities and every idea to show evidence of wholeness, continuity and integration. He required all people to work with the sense of common purpose towards the establishment of a prosperous society rooted in Islam."

In all new conquered territories Usman and Mohammed Bello tried to put Ulama into the leading positions of the new political order. Some authors understand these tendencies to strengthen the position of learned men as an attempt to establish a theocratic state which has messianistic aspects of its own. In one of his books Mohammad Bello argued that the religious elite which sustained the rule of law could only exist where there was prosperity. Interestingly, this concept of social integration included women. The position of the Sokoto-leadership toward the role of women was quite progressive.[18] For example, the sister of Muhammad Bello, Nana Asma'u (1793–1865), established schools for women from urban and rural areas. These schools also operated following the death of Nana Asma'u and claim to be in existence today.

To bolster the revolutionary spirit among the Fulbe, the leadership continued to expand the domination of the Sokoto empire by employing a certain ritual. In a ceremony, military groups who set out for Djihad were bid farewell and were given flags and other signs of their fulfillment of a religious duty. As Usman dan Fodio had preached: The Djihad would only come to an end when the whole world would be dar al-islam. Only then, the day of judgment would come. The messianic connotations of any Djihad-movement in the Muslim world are based on this idea. The expansion of the

[18] The only book on the role of women in the movement of Usman dan Fodio is by Jean Boyd, *The Caliph's Sister. Nana Asma'u 1793–1865. Teacher, Poet and Islamic Leader* (London, 1989).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Fulbe Khalifat was stopped only by the coming of European colonial powers to the Sahel region. However, the hope for the coming of a Mahdi continued in western Sudan.[19] The famous Mahdi of Sudan[20] was only one example that left an impression on the people of western Sudan. The history of this movement is well known and does not require any further commentaries or explanations here.

I would like to conclude with some observations on how Mahdist ideas were carried from one part of the dark continent to the other. At the beginning of the twentieth century we find in the German colonies of east Africa a chiliastic movement which was connected with the so-alled "Mekka-letters". As far as we know, these letters came from Somalia via Zanzibar into the German Colonies of Tanganjika and German East Africa and it was rumored that they had fallen from heaven. They had strong messianic contents and the German colonial authorities perceived them as a threat to their position. Not surprisingly, the reaction of the colonial authorities was very severe.[21] These letters from heaven appeared also in the German Colonies of Togo and Cameroun, i.e., Western Sudan. The British and French authorities also had their problems with this phenomenon. Togo Dietrich Westermann reports:

> In 1906 came Malam Musa from Hausaland via Bassari to Salaga and from there via Guschiegu to Magu and continued further to the south until he reached Jendi. He came with many people in his entourage and preached against paganism and Christianity. He promised to drive the Europeans away and many people followed him. His greatest success he had with the tribes of Tschakossi and Dagomba.[22]

Malam Musa and others like him circulated the "Mekka" letters during their travels from the east African coast to Western Sudan.

At the beginning of the twentieth century in Adamawa, which had been part of the Sokoto Khalifat, the Mahdist tradition was still very much alive. The centres of Mahdist activity were the cities of Garwa and Marwa. In 1907 there were even two men who declared

---

[19] The Mai Tatsine uprising in Northern Nigeria of the 1980 is one recent example, see Paul M. Lubeck, "Islamic Protest Under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: Yan Tatsine Explained," in (1985) *Africa* 55.

[20] See Peter M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in Sudan* (London, 1971).

[21] Heirich Loth, "Auseinandersetzungen im religiösen Gewand," in Kurt Buettner and Heinrich Loth (eds.), *Philosophie der Eroberer. Ostafrika 1884–1918.* (Leipzig, 1981) 404; Spencer Trimingham, *Islam in East Africa* (Oxford, 1964) 64f., 133f.

[22] Dietrich Westermann, "Die Verbreitung des Islams in Togo und Kamerun. Ergebnisse einer Umfrage," in (1914) *Die Welt des Islams* II 213.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

themselves Mahdi, a Malam called al-Hadjdji and another one called Malam Wadai. Malam al-Hadjdji returned from Mekka and stayed several months in Marwa. Later he moved to the neighbouring city Mendif, declared himself Mahdi, and claimed that he was sent by God to break the rule of the white man. He continued to preach in a region near the city of Balda, where there had been a tradition of well-known Mahdi prophecies since the nineteenth century and a concentration of followers of other Mahdist movements. It appears that when messianistic expectations failed in one place, the belief in a Mahdi continued in a different place that had a history of promoting his advent.

After Malam al-Hadjdji attacked a small group of German soldiers, Captain Zimmermann described the event as follows: "I saw a group of 300 people and some on horses shouting and waving their spears running in direction of my camp, over their heads was fluttering a black flag with white coranic inscriptions. One could hear them shout, that they were coming to kill the white men".[23] The Malam was immediately arrested and later executed. Nearly at the same time there appeared another Mahdi in this region and his name, Malam Wadai, indicates that he came from the kingdom of Wadai in Eastern Sudan. While living in Adamawa for some time he managed to gather a group of followers around him. In 1907 he declared himself to be the Mahdi and wrote letters to the Emir of Ray Bouba, calling him to join forces. He said: "Now I kill the white men and the soldiers in Garwa, I burn the place to ashes and take my seat in the house of the resident, then I will attack the city of Yola. Follow me otherwise I will destroy You, too".[24] He consecrated the flags and promised that his followers would neither be killed nor wounded. On July 18, 1907, following a skirmish with a small group of German soldiers, the Mahdi was killed. His followers dispersed, but still the hope of the advent of the Mahdi remained alive. Even during the time of the French mandatory government rumors of a Mahdi could still be heard.[25]

---

[23] *Deutsches Kolonialbaltt. Amtsblatt für die Schutzgebiete in Afrika und in der Südsee, herausgegeben im Reichskolonialamt* XIX (1908) 167–173.

[24] *Loc. cit.*

[25] P.F. Lacroix, "L'Islam Peul de l'Adamawa," in I.M. Lewis, ed., *Islam in Tropical Africa* (London, 1996) 405f.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESSENIC ESCHATOLOGY[1]

A. Steudel

Introduction and Methodological Questions

The Dead Sea Scrolls have been called one of the most important archeological findings of this century. Indeed, the scrolls—discovered between 1947 and 1956 near Qirbet Qumran on the western shore of the Dead Sea—are of substantial value. These texts, some of the oldest biblical manuscripts ever found, including apocryphal works from the Second Temple period, provide us with insights into the life and beliefs of a religious Jewish group that lived in the last two centuries B.C.E. and the first century C.E.

Over the last few years, research on the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Qumran texts,[2] has widened perspectives and raised many questions.[3] An academic consensus does not exist in interpreting the scrolls.[4] In light of this situation, an examination of the development of Essenic eschatlogy based on the Dead Sea Scrolls should take certain methodological problems into account.

First, two important questions vis-à-vis the title of this paper need to be addressed: Do the Dead Sea Scrolls speak about the Essenes, and can we speak about a development within Essenic eschatology?

Do the Dead Sea Scrolls relate to the Essenes? Before the Qumran findings, ancient historigraphers, such as Pliny the Elder, described the Essenes as living near the Dead Sea. Early on, many characteristic

---

[1] I would like to thank Albert I. Baumgarten for coordinating this inspiring conference.

[2] By using the term Dead Sea Scrolls, or Qumran texts in this article, I refer only to those texts which were composed by the Essenes.

[3] See, e.g., the question of who was the author of the Dead Sea Scrolls, raised especially in the context of 4QMMT, published by Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* X, 1994.

[4] It should be noted that only 9 out of about 900 manuscripts found in the caves are in fact still scrolls, more or less well preserved. All the other so-called scrolls are fragmentarily preserved manuscripts, remains of former scrolls often consisting only of small pieces; see Hartmut Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus* (Freiburg: Herder, 5, 1996) pp. 16–17. This makes the exegesis of the Dead Sea Scrolls rather difficult.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

similarities had been detected between the description of these historiographers and the Qumran writings themselves, but differences exist as well. At present there is a debate whether the texts found in the caves near the settlement Qirbet Qumran in fact belonged to the people who had lived there. It is impossible to discuss all these questions here, therefore we will refer to two publications by researchers who uphold the traditional opinion, suggesting that the Dead Sea Scrolls are of Essenic origin.

The first publication is by Roland Bergmeier who did a comparative study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus' reports on the Essenes.[5] Bergmeier convincingly explains the differences between these texts as due to the different perspectives and biases of the sources used by Josephus. Josephus' description of the Essenes is influenced by the literary sources that he used, and not by his own experiences with Essenes. The differences between Josephus' reports and the picture of the Essenes which we gain from the Dead Sea Scrolls is the difference between literary fiction/literary freedom and history.

The link of the settlement with the scrolls in the caves is supported by the geographical neighborhood and the way of life, but also seems to be confirmed by eschatological evidence. Both the Qumran texts and the tombs at Qumran relate to a belief in resurrection, as shown by Emile Puech.[6] The Qumran texts show that the Essenes expected a physical resurection.[7] The design of the tombs at the graveyards of Qirbet Qumran reflect this belief: each person was buried in a single grave and in a specific manner, guaranteeing that the person buried there remained physically uninjured by the earth above. Furthermore, the tombs face north—the place of paradise—according to Henochic traditions which were well known in Qumran at the time. Despite many scholarly attempts to identify the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Sadducees or another unknown Jewish group, the traditional view associating the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Essenes remains valid.[8]

---

[5] Roland Bergmeier, *Die Essener-Berichte des Flavius Josephus. Quellenstudien zu den Essenertexten im Werk des jüdischen Historiographen* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993).

[6] Emile Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d'une croyance dans le Judaisme Ancien*, vol. II, EB 22 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993).

[7] This was correctly described by Hippolytus of Rome—and not by Josephus who depicts the Essenes' belief in the afterlife according to Hellenistic ideals. See E. Puech, *La croyance*, pp. 703–769.

[8] Cf., e.g., also James VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Before we address a development in Essenic eschatology, two aspects should be considered: First, if we refer to a development it is assumed that we are able to date the Dead Sea Scrolls and that we are able to define the sequence of their origins; which text was composed first, which comes next etc. The *terminus ad quem* of each composition is given by the palaeographical data of the manuscript.[9] Nearly all of the Dead Sea Scrolls are copies and not autographs, i.e., a text is usually at least slightly older than the handwriting of the manuscript. Historical allusions also provide clues: the text has to be dated after the most recent historical event which is mentioned in it. Furthermore, literary dependences of one Qumran text on another are significant. Also, differences and developments in quotation- and interpretation-formulas can be used for dating. Tendencies towards rationalization are visible within the corpus of the biblical commentaries, the *pesharim*. Of course, not all of the Dead Sea Scrolls can be dated with certainty, however, it is possible to determine the order of quite a number of them.[10]

Second, a development of eschatology also presumes that a similar kind of eschatology existed among all the Essenes at a certain time. Should we conclude that different essenic groups with different eschatologies did not concurrently exist? According to the Dead Sea Scrolls, a primary source, there may have been only one group of Essenes. Previously, scholars distinguished between two groups of Essenes, those who were married and those who were not. In addition to the information of Flavius Josephus, this interpretation has been based on two community rules from Qumran, one which refers to women and another which does not (CD and 1QS). However, recently fragments have been discovered of a community rule that show a clear mixture of both rules (4QSerekh Dameshek); marriage of the Essenes is attested there, as it is common for every Jew until today according to the biblical orders of creation. Therefore, it might be better to think of the community rules not as referring to different

---

[9] The results of the palaeographical dating correspond well the results of the radiocarbon (C 14) dating, see most recently A.J. Timothy Jull, Douglas J. Donahue, Magen Broshi and Emanuel Tov, "Radiocarbon Dating of Scrolls and Linen Fragments from the Judean Desert" in *'Atiqot* XXVIII (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1996).

[10] As an attempt to define the sequence of origin of a number of Qumran texts cf. Annette Steudel, *Der Midrasch zur Eschatologie aus der Qumrangemeinde (4QMidrEschata.b)*, STDJ 13 (Leiden/: E.J. Brill, 1994), pp. 170–212.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

groups of Essenes but understanding them as community rules belonging to the same order of Essenes which developed over the course of time.[11] But even if one does not accept this opinion, it is certain that the Damascus Document and the Community rule shared *basically* the same eschatology, i.e. the idea of predestination, the idea of living in the last evil period of history, the coming of messiahs,[12] and the era of the final judgement.

The Essenes: A Brief, General Description

The Essenes existed from about 150 B.C.E. until (at Qumran) 68 C.E.[13] Their settlement near the Dead Sea was only one out of many places where they lived in Judea. In the beginning, Jerusalem was their capital.[14] Although his estimates are not completely reliable, Josephus estimates that approximately 6,000 Pharisees and 4,000 Essenes existed. These figures suggest that the Essenes were not a small sect as sometimes assumed, but an important group of the late Second Temple period almost comparable in size with the Pharisees. Although the Essenes refrained from offering sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, they continued to use the site as a place to teach. The Essenes disapproved of the Temple priests, especially the High Priest, the calendar in force at the Temple and sacrifices. In contrast, the Essenes established spiritual offerings, prayer and hymns, instead of material ones. The Essenes perceived themselves as being the real Israel, the true covenant of God. Only those who belonged to the Essenes were the "sons of light", the good ones for whom salvation would come. Everyone outside of the Essenes were seen as "sons of dark-

---

[11] Cf. Hartmut Stegemann, "The Qumran Essenes—Local Members of the Main Jewish Union in Late Second Temple Times" , in J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (eds.), *The Madrid Qumran Congress. Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18–21 March 1991*, Volume One, STDJ XI,1 (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1992) pp. 83–166, esp. pp. 126–134.

[12] On the development of messianism in Qumran cf. Hartmut Stegemann, "Some remarks to 1QSa, to 1QSb and to the Qumran Messianism", in RQ 65–68 (1996) pp. 479–505

[13] We do not know for how long the Essenes existed elsewhere. Hartmut Stegemann, *Die Essener*, pp. 362–363, assumes that most of the Essenes survived the time of the first Jewish revolt and became influential in rabbinic times.

[14] See 4QMMT B 61–62.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ness", the bad ones for whom no salvation exists but eternal destruction would be their fate.[15] The Essenes avoided contact with the outside world because of its evilness and the danger to defile themselves. It was rather difficult to become an Essene; the procedure to become a member of the group took years. A hierarchical order existed, the priests ranked in the first position, which correlates to the idea of the holiness as a group. One of the most characteristic features of the Essenes was their strict obedience to the Law and their specific use and understanding of Scripture. Their strict obedience to the Torah, and their use and understanding of Scripture, are rooted in their eshatology.

Issues of Eschatology: Apocalyticism in Qumran

Using the term eschatology is, of course, a matter of definition, and others might prefer the word apocalypticsm for the same phenomenon. It is striking that no real apocalypse, in the literal sense of the word, was ever composed by the Essenes. We define apocalypse as a literary composition which needs an extra revelation to authorize its content; for example, an angel reveals things which are not written in Scripture.[16] The Essenes knew and referred to different apocalypses, as Henoch and the Book of Daniel, but they themselves never composed one. The Essenes did not base their knowledge about the end of the world and other apocalyptic phenomena on another revelation, but rather based it on Scripture.[17] The Essenes gleaned their knowledge about the final period of time from their exegesis of Scripture, i.e., the Torah, biblical Prophets, and Psalms.[18]

---

[15] A more moderate attitude is found in the late text 4QpNah III which distinguished between the seducers and those who were seduced.

[16] See Hartmut Stegemann, "Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde für die Erforschung der Apokalyptik", in D. Hellholm (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East—Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979* (Tübingen, 1993).

[17] 1QpHab VII, 4 is difficult to interpret with certainty, but it seems that not even the Teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Essenes, had an extra revelation, instead God enabled him to interpret the biblical Prophets in the right way, cf. 1QpHab II, 8–9.

[18] According to 1QS VI, 6–7, the Essenes were obliged to very intensive studies. Cf. also esp. 1QS VIII, 14–16 and 1QpHab II, 6–10.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The Development of Eschatology[19]

The Essenes believed that Scripture specifically referred to their own period.[20] The Essenes perceived their era as a time of evil and temptation for the just, a time when Belial, the personification of bad, reigns. In the eyes of the Essenes, it was the final period of history. The Essenes understood the whole period of their existence as the "end of days" אחרית הימים.[21] From the beginning,[22] until the end,[23] they believed that they were not far from the end of the world. The final judgment of God at the end of this period of אחרית הימים would destroy all evil, whereas the pious would be saved and live in everlasting glory.

Two striking observations can be made concerning the relation between Essenic literature and eschatology: First after 100 B.C.E. obviously *only* eschatological writings were composed by the Essenes. During their first fifty years, the Essenes primarily concentrated on creating communal rules, such as the Serekh ha-Jachad and the Damascus Document, but after 100 B.C.E. laws vis-à-vis communal life were not passed or revised. Therefore, it appears that after 100 B.C.E. the Essenes were mainly interested in eschatology.[24]

Second, the *rise of exegetical genres*, the so-called *thematical midrashim* and the *pesharim*, correlates with the rise of intensive interest in eschatology.[25] No purely exegetical work seems to have existed before the end of the second century B.C.E., and in the first century B.C.E. *only* exegetical compositions can be found. *Thematical midrashim* are written by authors who explain and develop an idea related to the

---

[19] On all the details of the rich Essenic eschatological beliefs compare E. Puech, *La croyance*, written with an uncomparably immense knowledge of the sources.

[20] See 1QpHab VI, 16–VII, p. 14.

[21] See Annette Steudel, אחרית הימים in the Texts from Qumran" in *RQ 62* (1993), pp. 225–246.

[22] See 4QMMT, and 1QSa, both probably written about the middle of the second century B.C.E.

[23] See the *Pesharim*, composed in the first half of the first century B.C.E.

[24] This fact would be explained by Hartmut Stegemann's (*Die Essener*, pp. 164–167) understanding of the concluding passage of the Damascus Document. The Damascus Document is the *final* interpretation of the Torah; no other rule could have been composed by the Essenes afterwards.

[25] The *thematical midrashim*, which are 11QMelch and 4QMidrEschat, were composed towards the end of the second century B.C.E. (11QMelch), respectively about the year 70 B.C.E. (4QMidrEschat); the *pesharim* originate from the first half of the first century B.C.E.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

present situation of the community with the help of different texts from the Bible, such as the Prophets and Psalms. The *pesharim* are based on Scripture, the Prophets or Psalms, and these books are explained verse by verse as relating to the Essenes' past, present and future. *Thematical midrashim* center on the situation and interpret it through Scripture, whereas *pesharim* employ Scripture to explain the situation.

In the beginning the Essenes probably expected that the end would come during the lifetime of the so-called "Teacher of Righteousness",[26] the founder and leader of the group (circa 150–110 B.C.E.). After his death, and perhaps still inaugurated by the "Teacher of Righteousness" himself,[27] the Essenes started to calculate the date of the end with the help of Scripture, especially the Book of Daniel.[28] However, the calculated date, probably around 70 B.C.E.,[29] passed without any event and the end did not come. The Essenes' hope for the end of the world failed a second time: it did not come during the lifetime of the Teacher nor around 70 B.C.E. Different Qumran texts describe how the Essenes coped with this highly disappointing situation with the help of Scripture.[30] The Essenes maintained their belief in the imminence of the end despite its delay in coming, but they finally stopped trying to figure an exact date. We find this in 1QpHab, a verse by verse commentary on the first two chapters of the biblical book Habakkuk.[31] In col. VII, 1–14 (on Hab 2, 3) it is written:

> and God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when the time would come to an end. And as for which He said, *That he who reads may read it speedily*: interpreted this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets. *For there shall be yet another vision concerning the appointed time. It shall tell of the end and shall not lie* (Hab 2, 3a.) Interpreted, this means that the final age shall be prolonged, and shall exceed all that

---

[26] Cases as described in CD XIX, 33–XX, 1 had not been decided during the Teacher's lifetime.

[27] See 11QMelch, cf. Annette Steudel, אחרית הימים, pp. 234–235, 241.

[28] See 11QMelch and CD, cf. Annette Steudel, אחרית הימים, pp. 236–242, 245, 246.

[29] Hartmut Stegemann, "Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde", p. 522 note 98, followed by others.

[30] See especially 4QMidrEschat, cf. Annette Steudel, *Der Midrasch.* On 1QpHab, see below.

[31] The work represented by the manuscript 1QpHab was composed about the year 50 B.C.E.; it may be the youngest Essenic composition which we know.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> the Prophets have said; for the mysteries of God are astounding. *If it tarries, wait for it, for it shall surely come and shall not be late* (Hab 2, 3b). Interpreted, this concerns the men of truth who keep the Law, whose hands shall not slacken in the service of the truth when the final age is prolonged. For all the ages of God reach their appointed end as he determines for them in the mysteries of His wisdom.[32]

Conclusions

The Dead Sea Scrolls give us insight into the religious life and beliefs of the Essenes, an eschatologically-oriented group of the late Second Temple period. From the beginning of their existence, the Essenes thought they were living in the last, final period of history. Trying to live a life of perfection, they attempted to follow God's will as closely as possible, knowing that they would be the ones who would be saved by God in his final judgement. They expected a new creation, including a new Temple which would never again be defiled. Twice their hope for the end was not realized, but they managed to maintain their imminent expectation for a period of at least one hundred years. They never *composed* apocalypses, such as the Book of Henoch or the Book of Daniel, but they *copied* quite a number of apocalyptical texts. Instead, the Essenes developed literary genres, *thematical midrashim* and *pesharim*, which fit their eschatological self-understanding.

Last but not least, this study may shed light on early Christianity and New Testament research. Many scholars have contended that the early Christians could not maintain their imminent expectation of the end of the world for longer than about one generation. After a generation the disappointed hope led to the establishment of the "church." Modern apocalyptical groups have demonstrated that it is psychologically possible to keep imminent expectations of the end for a much longer period than for only one generation. The Qumran texts show that a more or less contemporary group, the Essenes, maintained their hope in the imminent end for at least one hundred years. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to reexamine early Christianity when other groups might have maintained their hopes for longer than one generation.

---

[32] Translation by Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, fourth edition (London: Penguin Books, 1996).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

INNERE ZEIT UND APOKALYPTISCHE ZEIT

Aharon R.E. Agus

Zu der Zeit wird große Klage sein in Jerusalem, wie die war bei Hadad-Rimmon im Felde Megiddo. Und das Land wird klagen, ein jeglich Geschlecht besonders . . .

(*Zechariah* 12:11–12, und siehe Kontext.)

Was ist der Kontext dieser Trauer? R. Dossa (wahrscheinlich der Sohn Harkinas, der schon während des 1. Jh., vor der Zerstörung des Tempels, bis zum zweiten Jahrzehnt des 2. Jh. wirkte—A.A.) und die Rabbiner setzen hinsichtlich der Antwort auf diese Frage auseinander. Einer von ihnen sagte: Es (diese Trauer) ist für den *Messias*, der Sohn von Josef, welcher getötet wurde. Und der andere sagte: Es (diese Trauer) ist für die *böse (innere, menschliche) Natur*, welche getötet wurde.

Die Meinung des einen, welcher sagte, es ist für den Messias, den Sohn von Josef, welcher getötet wurde, ist zutreffend, denn dies steht in Übereinstimmung mit dem Vers: „Denn sie werden mich ansehen, welchen jene zustochen haben, und werden ihn klagen, wie man klagt ein einiges Kind, und werden sich um ihn betrüben, wie man sich betrübt um ein erstes Kind" (ebd. 12:10). Aber laut der Meinung desjenigen, welcher sagte: Es ist für die böse Natur, welche getötet wurde, fordert diese Trauer eigentlich ein Feiern! Warum weinen sie?

Wie Rav Jehuda lehrte: In der Zukunft bringt der Heilige, gesegnet ist er, die böse Natur und schlachtet diese vor den Gerechten und den Frevlern.

Für die Gerechten sieht diese wie ein großer Berg aus, für die Frevler so dünn wie ein Haar. Diese werden weinen und jene weinen auch. Die Gerechten weinen und sagen: Wie hätten wir bloß solch einen großen Berg bewältigen können? Und die Bösen sagen: Wie konnten wir dieses Haar nicht bewältigen? Und der Heilige, gesegnet sei er, er wird sich auch mit ihnen wundern, wie der Vers sagt: „So spricht der Herr Zebaoth: Dünket sie solch unmöglich sein für die Augen dieses übrigen Volks zu dieser Zeit, sollts darum auch unmöglich sein für meine Augen, spricht der Herr Zebaoth?" (ebd. 8:6).

(Babylonischer Talmud, *Sukkah*, 52a.)

Zwei *Amoraim*, einer sagte: Dieses (das Trauern in *Sach.* 12:11–12)-A.A.) ist das Trauern für den Messias. Und der andere sagte: Dies ist das Trauern für die böse Natur.

(Palästinischer Talmud, *Sukkah* 5:2 /55b/)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Diese zwei überraschenden Vorstellungen, der Tod des Messias ben Joseph und der Tod der bösen Natur bedürfen einer theologischen und wie sogleich erkennbar, einer phänomenologischen Erklärung.

Ohne das Thema „der Messias, der Sohn von Joseph" im Ganzen zu klären, ergibt sich das Problem, was mit der Aussage der „Tötung des Messias" beabsichtigt ist?: Warum muß ausgerechnet der Messias getötet werden?

Die Vorstellung des Todes der „bösen Natur" zeigt ein doppeltes Problem. Erstens könnte vermutet werden, daß eine Hypostatisierung der bösen Neigung im Inneren des Menschen angestrebt wird. Die „böse Natur", der *yezer ha- ra*, ist die *innere* Fähigkeit zur „Bosheit", wie die Rabbiner diese (Bosheit) wahrnahmen. Es trifft ausgesprochen selten in der talmudischen Literatur zu, daß diese „Natur" als eine Realität entfaltet wird, welche ein objektives Sein außerhalb des Menschen statuiert. Bedeutet der „Tod" der „bösen Natur", daß diese zu einem Sein objektiviert wird, welcher eine selbstständige, eigene Existenz zukommt?

Zweitens könnte die Vorstellung eines „Todes der bösen Natur" implizieren, daß das „Sein des Bösen" nicht eine konstante Evaluation der Tätigkeit des Menschen sowie der Ereignisse der Welt darstellt, die bewertet werden müssen, solange diese in der Form, die wir kennen, existieren. Was kann mit der „Bosheit" geschehen, welche derart radikal ist, daß es den „Tod" der menschlichen Ursache von Bosheit zu einem vorstellbaren Ereignis werden läßt? Sprechen wir etwa von einer radikalen Änderung in der Welt, also von der Enstehung einer „neuen Welt"? Dies würde jedoch vielmehr von einem „Tod der Welt", einer apokalyptische Katastrophe abhängig sein, und nicht auf den „Tod der bösen Natur" begrenzt bleiben. Mit dieser Fragestellung sind wir bereits tief in die Behandlung des folgenden Themas vorgedrungen. Zuvor sei jedoch eine konkrete Analyse der Vorstellung eines „Todes der bösen Natur" vorangestellt.

Um diesen Begriff wirklich verstehen zu können, möchte ich auf einen andere Quelle aus dem Babylonischen Talmud, Traktat *Sanhedrin*, 43 b, verweisen:

> R. Jehoshua der Sohn Levis sagte: Derjenige, der seine (böse-A.A.) Natur schlachtet, und für diese beichtet, ist es für die Schrift gleichbedeutend, als ob er den Heiligen, gesegnet ist er, in zwei Welten geehrt hat, dieser Welt und der kommenden Welt, wie es geschrieben ist, „Wer Dank opfert, der ehrt . . .
>
> (Psalm 50, Vers 23)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> Und R. Joshua ben Levi sagte: Als der Tempel steht, bringt der Mensch ein Brandopfer, hat er den Lohn eines Brandopfers in der Hand; ein Mehlopfer, hat er den Lohn eines Mehlopfers in der Hand. Aber derjenige, der demütig ist, ist es für die Heilige Schrift als ob er alle Opfer geopfert hätte, wie der Vers sagt „Die Opfer die Gott gefallen, sind ein geängsteter Geist . . ." (Psalm 51, Vers 19a). Und fürderhin wird sein Gebet nicht verachtet, wie es steht, „Ein geäng-tigtes und zerschlagenes Herz wirst du Gott nicht verachten" (ebd., Vers 19b).
>
> (*Sanhedrin* 43b)

Ich werde versuchen, die beiden, von R. Joshua ben Levi gelesenen Psalme zu analysieren, und zwar so, daß der Midrasch transparenter und somit verständlicher wird. Anschließend greife ich den Text in *Sanhedrin* wieder auf. Zunächst jedoch beginne ich mit dem Psalm 50, Vers 1:

> Gott der Herr der mächtig redet und ruft die Welt vom Aufgang der Sonne bis zu ihrem Niedergang.

In diesem ersten Vers erstreckt sich der Rahmen, in welchem der Inhalt dieses Psalms entfaltet wird, auf die ganze Welt (metaphorisch formuliert von Ost bis West).

> Aus Zion bricht an der schöne Glanz Gottes
>
> (Psalm 50, Vers 2.)

Im diesem zweiten Vers beginnt eine zunehmende Verengung und zugleich Fokusierung in bestimmter Richtung. Zunächst schloß die Betrachtung ja die Perspektive der ganzen Welt ein, doch ausgehend von einem bestimmten Standpunkt „sieht" Zion sozusagen.

> Unser Gott kommt und schweiget nicht. Fressend Feuer gehet vor ihm her, Und um ihn her ein groß Wetter
>
> (Psalm 50, Vers 3.)

Sogleich (und die religiöse Sensibilität vernimmt dies sofort) ist nicht das Bild einer tauben und bewußtlosen Welt gemeint, sondern eine Welt, in welcher Gott „spricht". Und damit wird ein besonderer, spezifischer Moment in der allgemeinen, unbegrenzten und absoluten Welt gesetzt. Deutlich wird hierbei eine schrittweise Entfaltung, ein „Heraustreten" einer in sich geschlossenen, kosmischen Welt in eine Konkretheit, Wirklichkeit aufgezeigt. Der folgende Vers verdeutlicht diese Struktur:

> Er rufet Himmel und Erden, Daß er sein Volk richte.
>
> (Psalm 50, Vers 4.)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

In diesem Vers werden Himmel und Erde in einem Akt der Enthebung, Herauslösung aus der kosmischen, universalen Bewußtslosigkeit (dem Nichtwissen) verdinglicht und gegenständlich. Das Universum wird in dieser Weise anthropozentrisch.

> Versammelt mir meine Heiligen, Die den Bund mehr achten, denn opfern.
>
> (Psalm 50, Vers 5.)

Dies entspricht der lutherischen Übersetzung. Ich selbst würde an dieser Stelle eher die folgende Übersetzung gelten lassen: „Sammelt mir meine Ausgewählten, die einen Bund mit mir über den Opfern schließen." Dabei wird betont, daß die Opfer eigentlich *dem Bündnis mit Gott dienen.* In diesem Vers wird ein ähnliches Verhältnis hinsichtlich des Universums entwickelt, welches aus der Anonymität und Bewußtlosigkeit (Sprachlosigkeit) heraustritt. Auch Israel ist plötzlich nicht mehr der Inbegriff des Landes oder der Nation Israel, sondern der *chassidim,* der Frommen, Gerechten und Auserwählten. Diese Personen treten aus ihrer Anonymität und erhalten sozusagen Namen, sie sind diejenigen, die „Opfer bringen". Sie werden zu wirklichen, konkreten Personen, welche handeln. Sie werden ihrer Unmündigkeit enthoben, insoweit sie ihre Existenz nicht lediglich im Rahmen einer bloßen, allgemeinen und damit unbestimmten Gegebenheit definieren. Diese Personen schließen ein *aktives* Bündnis mit Gott.

> Und die Himmel werden seine Gerechtigkeit verkündigen, Denn Gott ist Richter Sela.
>
> (Psalm 50, Vers 6.)

Man erkennt deutlich den Verlust der Anonymität und Abstraktheit einer allgemeinen Universalität, denn Gott wird zum *Richter.* Die Ursache für den Verlust der Abstraktheit ist jedoch Gott selbst. Gott ist Gott, je konkreter die Welt „wird", „spricht" . . . etc. Reflektiert wird dabei schon nicht mehr der schaffende Gott, welcher einzig die Ordnung der Welt garantiert. Im Gegenteil, es handelt sich um ein Verständnis von Gott, welcher dazu befähigt, die Welt aus ihrer bloßen, bewußtlosen Gegebenheit, Abstraktheit „herauszulösen", so daß diese „zur Sprache kommen kann". Dabei wird eine, vom ursprünglichen, urgöttlichen Schaffensprozeß differenzierte Darstellung und Entwicklung thematisiert.

> Höre mein Volk, Lass mich reden, Israel lass mich unter dir zeugen. Ich Gott bin dein Gott.
>
> (ebd., Vers 7.)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Selbst Gott tritt aus seiner Unbestimmtheit, Abstraktheit, „Unmündigkeit" und damit auch Zeitlosigkeit. Obwohl im Begriff Gottes anfangs der Schöpfer des Kosmos begriffen ist (sein Ziel besteht in der Schaffung *von allem*, aber damit nichts Bestimmten, Spezifischen) wird zunehmend das Erreichen von Konkretheit, Zielorientiertheit, in Richtung auf Kontingenz und Wirklichkeit erkennbar. „Gott, *dein* Gott bin ich." Der Gottesbegriff besitzt hier keinen reinen Objektcharakter, und ist selbst subjektiv, ein „du".

Eigentlich ist hier die Erwartung inhärent, daß der Mensch ein Opfer darbringt, da er derjenige ist, welcher ein Bündnis mit diesem „wunderbaren" Gott schließt. Doch dies würde einer Rückkehr zur überlieferten, alten Religion einschließen und es würde sogleich zu der Frage führen: Warum bedarf man einen Gott, der aus seiner Unbestimmtheit, Abstraktheit heraustritt, wenn es ausreichend ist, lediglich Opfer darzubringen? Innerhalb dieser Logik schließt sich der Kreis und man kehrt zum Ausgangspunkt zurück. Aus diesem Grund wird Vers acht wichtig:

> Deines Opfers halben strafe ich dich nicht . . .
>
> (ebd., Vers 8a.)

Oder besser formuliert: „Ich werde mich mit dir nicht um deine Opfer auseinandersetzen." Im Sinne Gottes stehen die Opfer in dieser Lesart nicht im Mittelpunkt.

> Und deine Opfer sind vor meinen Augen ewig.
>
> (ebd., Vers 8b)

Ich möchte jetzt nicht auf die Übersetzung des biblischen Textes selbst eingehen, doch innerhalb des rabbinischen Verständnisses wird dieser Vers als ein Widerspruch reflektiert. Gott selbst sagt: Ich werde deine Opfer keineswegs thematisieren; und sofort wird doch eingeräumt: „Deine Opfer sind vor meinen Augen ewig." Welche Konstellation eröffnet sich mit dieser Textstelle? Im rabbinischen Verständnis handelt es sich um die Formulierung eines *anderen Charakters des Opfers*. Gemeint sind deshalb in der rabbinischen Auslegung nicht die Opfer als Tiere etc. Dies beschreibt den Schlüsselpunkt im rabbinischen Verständnis dieses Psalms.

> Ich will nicht von deinem Haus Farren (Ochsen-A.A.) nehmen . . . noch Böcke aus den Stellen.
>
> (Psalm 50, Vers 9)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Gottes Interesse an dieser Art von Opfern ist nichtig.

> Denn alle Tiere im Wald sind mein, Und Vieh auf den Bergen da sie bei tausend gehen . . .
>
> (ebd., Vers 10.)
>
> Ich kenne alle Gevögel auf den Bergen, Und allerlei Tiere auf den Feldern sind von mir. Wenn ich hungern würde, ich würde es dir nicht sagen. Denn der Erdboden ist mein, und alles was drinnen ist.
>
> (ebd., Vers 11, 12.)
>
> Meinst du, daß ich Ochsenfleisch essen würde Oder Bockblut trinken?
>
> (ebd., Vers 13)

Im Vers 16 schließlich heißt es:

> Aber zu den Gottlosen spricht Gott, Was verkündigst du meine Rechte und nimmst meinen Bund in deinen Mund?

Dies schließt eine Kritik der etablierten Religion ein. Obwohl Luther dies als „Gottlose" übersetzt, drückt der Text im Hebräischen eher den Begriff „Frevler" aus. Luther, der die Kirche zumeist mit den „Gottlosen" vergleicht, nutzt dies ironisch für die Übersetzung dieses Textes, was noch zu einer Verstärkung der Aussage führt.

> So du doch Zucht hassest, Und wirfst meine Worte hinter dich.
>
> (ebd., Vers 17.)
>
> Wenn du einen Dieb siehst, so läufst du mit ihm, Und hast Gemeinschaft mit den Ehebrechern.
>
> (ebd., Vers 18.)
>
> Dein Maul läßt du Böses reden, Und deine Zunge treibet Falschheit.
>
> (ebd., Vers 19)
>
> Du sitzt und redest wider deinen Bruder, Dein Mutter Sohn verleumdest du.
>
> (ebd., Vers 20.)

Der Text versucht zu verdeutlichen, daß die bisherige Befolgung des Opferkultes den Zusammenhang der menschlichen Gemeinschaft gefährdet und in Frage stellt. Ursache dafür ist die Verdinglichung und Fetischisierung der Opfer, die zum einzigen Zweck des Opferkults erwählt werden, während die ethische Dimension entweder gar nicht oder nur sporadisch, formelhaft innerhalb des Prozesses der Handlungen einbegriffen wird. In diesem Geist klingt Vers 14,

> Opfere Gott Dank, Und bezahle dem Höhesten dein Gelübde.

eher wie eine blasse Pflichtwahrnehmung gegenüber dem existierenden Kult, als eine echte Akzeptanz seiner Theologie. Luther ver-

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

sucht, die Problematik dieses Verses zu überwinden, indem er *toda* mit „Dank", anstatt mit „Dankopfer" übersetzt. Aber gerade in einer wortwörtlichen Übersetzung tritt die Reduzierung des etablierten Opferkultes zu einem entleerten Ritual hervor.

Welche Wirklichkeit muß demnach im Sinne der Theologie dieses Psalmes unbedingt bewahrt und geschützt werden?—Die der menschlichen Gemeinschaft. Denn mit der Frage nach der Bewahrung oder Zerstörung dieser entscheidet sich die Existenz des Menschen und damit das Dasein der Welt als solche—in einem Universum, welches, gerichtet von Gott, in dem Psalm beschrieben wird, oder besser formuliert, das an dem Richterprozeß teilnimmt.

> Das tust du, und ich schweige. . . .
>
> (ebd., Vers 21a.)

Reflektiert wird die Möglichkeit des Zusammenbruchs und der Zerstörung der menschlichen Gemeinschaft. Wodurch charakterisiert sich die Reaktion Gottes? Der gleiche Gott, welcher anfangs den Himmel und die Erde als Zeuge anruft, tritt entgegen. Der Mensch erlebt Schweigen anstatt Zeugnis. Hierin liegt die Wende. Dieses Schweigen wird in der Entfaltung des Psalmes zu einem neuen Hören. Wenn die Stimme Gottes in der lärmenden Welt nicht mehr vernehmbar ist, bleibt als einzige Möglichkeit der Erkenntnis sowie des „Hörens" von Gott die *innere Dimension des Menschen.* Und diese Entwicklung kann man in der rabbinischen Auslegung tatsächlich nachverfolgen.

> Da meinst du, ich werde sein gleich wie du, Aber ich will dich strafen und will dich unter Augen stellen.
>
> (ebd., Vers 21b.)

Es wird deutlich, daß die Frevler einen Gott nach dem Bild des Menschen erstreben, gegen welches der *chassid* kritisch reagieren muß und sich von diesem distanziert. Die Aufgabe besteht somit darin, den inadäquaten Begriff Gottes, welcher in den menschlichen Handlungen selbst gesetzt wird, aufzuheben.

> Merket doch, daß die ihr Gottes vergeßet, Daß ich nicht einmal hinreisse, und sei kein Retter mehr da.
>
> (Vers 22.)

Das falsche Verständnis Gottes stellt die Legitimität der Welt als Schöpfung in Frage.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Mit Vers 23 gelangt man zu einer entscheidenden Aussage, welche den oben genannten Midrasch zitiert:

> Wer Dank opfert (also doch Opfer bringt-A.A.) der preiset mich, Und da ist der Weg, da ich ihn zeige das Heil Gottes.

Die bessere Übersetzung ist anstatt „Und das ist der Weg . . ." „Derjenige, welcher einen Weg macht (oder festlegt, das bedeutet *handeln*, und zwar als die Festlegung eines alternativen Weges, im Gegensatz zu dem, welcher bisher vorliegt-A.A.), ihm werde ich das Heil Gottes zeigen."

Es ist in diesem Zusammenhang, in welchem R. Jehoshua ben Levi fragt: Worin besteht das Opfer, welches hiermit gemeint ist? Mit anderen Worten nimmt R. Jehoshua die Umwandlung des Opferbegriffs von diesem Psalm wahr und fragt nach dem Inhalt dieser Umwandlung. Seine Antwort lautet: Die Substanz des Opfers in dem neuen Verstand ist die *„böse Natur"*, und dadurch wird auch das Verb „opfern" im Sinne einer Gabe zu „einer Erfahrung" uminterpretiert.

Doch bevor dieser Psalm in Verbindung mit dem Text R. Jehoshua ben Levis analysiert werden kann, muß auf einen weiteren Aspekt hingewiesen werden. Dies bildet ein anderes, wichtiges Element innerhalb der rabbinischen Argumentation. Was besagt der Begriff „die Tötung der bösen Natur"? Was beabsichtigt R. Jehoshua ben Levi mit der Formulierung, daß der Mensch seine böse Natur töten will? Was bedeutet „Beichte" in diesem Kontext? Beichten verweist in der rabbinischen Religiosität auf die Kategorie *teschuwa-* „Umkehr". Der Begriff „Umkehr" umfaßt im rabbinischen Verständnis drei verschiedene Aspekte:

1. Reue gegenüber der Vergangenheit. Dies schließt im rabbinischen Verständnis einen Bruch mit der Vergangenheit, eine Unfähigkeit oder ein Unwillen, das „Gesündigthaben" als ein Teil der jetzigen Identität als Mensch wahrzunehmen, ein. Wenn man die Obzession mit dem „Gesündigthaben" als eine Verankerung in der Vergangenheit und eine Unfähigkeit, auf der Achse der Zukunft zu werden, begreift, dann bedeutet dieser Bruch, zwar mit all seinen Gefahren, eine neu errungene Freiheit.

2. Beichten. Dieses „Beichten" versteht sich jedoch nicht im Sinne des Ablegens einer Beichte gegenüber einer Instanz, welche für die Herstellung von Versöhnung verantwortlich sein soll, sondern in der rabbinischen Religiosität bedeutet dies vor allem das *Aussprechen* der Sünde. Dieses Aussprechen soll vor einer anderen Person stattfinden,

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

nur insoweit die Sünde diese andere Person oder Personen betrifft, und die Aussagen deshalb das Wiedergutmachen der Sünde voraussetzt. Eine Beichte gegenüber einer Instanz ist als solche wirkungslos. Die Substanz der Wirkung von *teschuwa* ist die Umwandlung der menschlichen Identität und dies ist wiederum nur in einer von innen gesteuerten Änderung der Handlung authentisch. Dies bedeutet zweierlei:
a. Hierbei geht es um selbständige Handlungen, und nicht um einen Begriff der „Erbsünde", in welcher der Mensch in der Konstitution seiner menschlichen Natur, wie zum Beispiel seiner Sexualität innerhalb bestimmter Religionen als sündhaft wahrgenommen wird.
b. Handlungen, welche die Person als „böse" hätte wahrnehmen sollen, als er „gesündigt hat". Wir bezeichnen dies als eine ethische Sensibilität, obwohl ich keineswegs beabsichtige, eine apologetische Identifizierung des rabbinischen Begriffs der Sünde mit einem modernen ethischen Verständnis vorzunehmen. Wichtig für beide Begriffe ist, daß die Person niemals vor einer allmächtigen Instanz steht, die seine Taten, und zwar im Widerspruch zu seiner menschlichen Natur oder im nachhinein, für sündhaft erklärt, ohne daß der „Täter" überhaupt die Gegelegenheit erhielt, eine innere Auseinandersetzung mit dem Verständnis von „gut" und „böse" im Moment seines Handelns zu führen. Die Gefahr einer Neutralisierung und Vereinnahmung der menschlichen Verantwortung dessen, was wir als Gewissen bezeichnen würden, ist in etablierten Religionen immer gegenwärtig, und nicht weniger im rabbinischen Judentum selbst. Der Ton, die Wörter von R. Jehoshua ben Levi werden jedoch zunehmend als authentisch wahrgenommen, wenn wir in Richtung eines Begriffs des Gewissens hinsichtlich der Sünde tendieren. Beichten bedeutet in dieser Tradition eine bekennende Erkenntnis gegenüber den eigenen Taten. In diesem Prozeß des Aussprechens kommt es somit zur Konkretisierung tatsächlicher, wirklicher Handlungen und ihrer Bewertung.

3. Eine Verpflichtung, zukünftig anders und besser zu handeln. Wie bereits betont, geht es um die Verwandlung der menschlichen Identität. Der „Stoff" der menschlichen Identität innerhalb der rabbinischen Anthropologie ist *sein Handeln.* Hat die Person ihre Identität geändert, so ist ein anderes Handeln schon in dieser Änderung, insoweit es authentisch ist, angelegt. Die *teschuwa* ist deshalb in dem Moment der inneren Umkehr, noch bevor die Entfaltung einer neuen Handlung auf der Achse der Zukunft eintritt, vollendet. Die *Voraussetzung* für eine echte *teschuwa* besteht zwar in der Wiedergutmachung und

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Korrektur der begangenen schlechten Taten, insoweit dies möglich ist. Hat sich eine Person zum Beispiel etwas unrechtmäßig angeeignet, muß sie es zurückgeben, wurde etwas zerstört, muß man es wieder errichten usw. Dies bildet jedoch nur die Voraussetzung für eine Möglichkeit der Umkehr, und ist nicht mit der „Umkehr" selbst identisch. Denn eine „Umkehr" schließt wesentlich eine, für den Menschen wirkungsvolle Befreiung von Sünde ein, und damit den Prozeß von Umkehr-Reue-Beichte-Entscheidungen. Auf diese Weise wird der Prozeß für das zukünftige Handeln bedeutsam. *Der zentrale Punkt besteht in der Umwandlung des, in der Vergangenheit verankerten Daseins in jenes, auf eine Zukunft gerichteten Daseins.*

Dies ist die Dimension, in welchem die „böse Natur getötet" wird. Die radikale Umkehr, *teschuwa,* ist gegründet in einer Reue gegenüber der Vergangenheit. Weshalb kann diese „Umkehr" jedoch eine Befreiung von der Sünde bewirken? Doch zuerst: Was bedeutet es überhaupt, in der Konstellation „gesündigt zu haben" gefangen zu sein?

Innerhalb der Handlung der Sünde findet noch keine „Umkehr" statt. Denn die Schuld schließt immer die Reflexion auf die Vergangenheit ein, indem die „Tatsache" thematisiert wird: „Ich *habe* gesündigt". Konsequenterweise beschreibt dies eine Hermeneutik der Vergangenheit. Diese Hermeneutik erfaßt ein Dasein, welches sich auf der Achse von Vergangenheit-Gegenwart-Zukunft entfaltet, wobei die Vergangenheit auch die Hermeneutik der Zukunft determiniert und diese letzendlich verhindert. Es bedeutet im Grunde eine fortwährende Verankerung und Verklammerung und ständige Bindung an die Vergangenheit, in dem Sinne: „Ich habe dies und jenes getan, das ist meine Identität als Person". Die Kontinuität der Person verhindert die Befreiung gegenüber der Vergangenheit sowie das Werden in die Zukunft. Deshalb liegt der erste Schritt zu einem befreiten Werden in der Loslösung, in der Reue. In der Bloßlegung der zentralen Bedeutung der eigentlichen Identität erhält die Aufwendung des *eigenen Willens* erstmals seine mächtige Wirkung. Hierin wird das Hauptziel, eine Distanzierung zur Vergangenheit, erreicht. Die Anerkennung der Echtheit der Überzeugung des Subjekts äußert sich jetzt: „Mein Wille ist fähig zu bewirken, daß ich dieses und jenes nicht mehr tun werde." In diesem theologischen Verstand weist der Wille, dies oder jenes *jetzt* nicht zu tun, auf eine vollzogene Überwindung der Vergangenheit. Zu einer wesentlichen Dimension des zeitlichen Daseins in der Reue wird die Kategorie des *„jetzt", die Gegenwart als eine zentrale Kategorie des Seins,* vorausgesetzt ein Individuum ist Träger dieser Entscheidung. Nur wenn der individuelle Wille so bestimmend

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

und determinierend ist, daß die Gegenwart als der allerstärkste Moment des Seins wahrgenommen wird, kann die Gegenwart letztendlich zur zentralen Kategorie des Seins aufsteigen. Zumeist jedoch reduziert sich die Gegenwart zu einem kurzen Moment, welcher „durch die Finger rinnt". Aber der Einsatz des Willens als Entscheidung: „Jetzt handle ich so und nicht anders", verleiht der Gegenwart des Menschen, der sich hauptsächlich als Handelnder versteht, eine Bedeutsamkeit, welche sämtliche anderen zeitlichen Bestimmungen aufzuheben vermag.

Die Kategorie des Seins „Ich bin" unterscheidet sich damit vollständig von dem Begriff der „Erinnerung". Doch die Bedeutsamkeit und das Gewicht dieser Kategorie wird erst durch die Selbstwahrnehmung des Subjekts hergestellt, und dies wiederum wesentlich in der Energie des *Willens* festgehalten und zusammengefaßt. Deshalb muß eine „Umkehr", konsequent gedacht, äußerst radikal sein. Denn schließlich handelt es sich um einen Willen der Gegenwart, des „jetzt", welcher imstande ist, die Gesamtheit der Entwicklungen in der Vergangenheit in Frage zu stellen.

Eine vergleichbare Situation entsteht für das Individuum hinsichtlich der Kategorie der Zukunft. Im rabbinischen Verständnis ist der Mensch zwar durch keine „Erbsünde", im Sinne einer vorgegebenen Sündhaftigkeit belastet, doch eine bloße *Gegebenheit*, ohne den Aspekt einer kulturellen, damit auch ethischen oder religiösen Bestimmung, erzeugt den anhaltenden Grund der Sündhaftigkeit des Menschen, im Sinne einer Unvollkommenheit. Die bloße Gegebenheit der Gegenwart kann deshalb weder zu eine Befreiung von der Vergangenheit führen, noch eine absichtsvolle Ausrichtung auf eine Zukunft garantieren. Überdies: Die Entschiedenheit und die Wahrnehmung des Willens in der Gegenwart können ebenso die Tragfähigkeit und Bestimmung der Zukunft, genauso wie der Vergangenheit in Frage stellen. In diesem Sinne *ersetzt* das Versprechen: „Ja, ich *werde* dies und jenes in Zukunft ändern . . ." *nicht die Handlung in der Gegenwart*, wie es sonst üblichweise geschieht, indem die Tat zur „Umkehr" in eine (ferne) Zukunft rückt, oder gar schicksalhaft an eine andere (fremde) Instanz verwiesen wird. Diese Verweisung auf einen Prozeß in der Zukunft kann die Bedeutung der Gegenwart nicht wirklich erkennen. Deshalb wird die Rückwendung auf eine teleologische Entwicklung wird reduziert zugunsten einer Handlung des Subjekts, welche nicht teleologisch determiniert ist, so daß die subjektive, individuelle Tat gegenüber einem Telos hierarchisch aufgewertet würde.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Der Mensch ist in der Lage, sich von seiner Vergangenheit zu befreien, wenn er befähigt ist, in der Gegenwart, trotz der „Erinnerung" zu handeln. Und der Mensch befreit sich gleichsam von der Zukunft, indem sein Handeln nicht teleologisch determiniert ist. Die „Umkehr" schließt innerhalb der rabbinischen Religiosität theologisch und paradigmatisch eine Befreiung von der Sünde, also eine Befreiung ein, insofern „Umkehr" immer allein vor Gott vollendet wird. Mit Maimonides: das Wesen der *teschuwa* ist, daß der Mensch Gott als Zeugen rufen soll, daß er (der Mensch) niemals zu dieser Sünde zurückkkehren wird. Die göttliche Wahrnehmung ist die einzige „Instanz", welche „bezeugen" kann, daß für den Menschen das „jetzt", die Gegenwart zur wichtigsten und entscheidensten Kategorie des Seins formiert. Gott wird zum Zeugen der absoluten Zentralität des menschlichen Willens gezwungen. In diesem Sinne ist gleichzeitig eine kritische Aussage gegenüber anderen Instanzen inhärent, insofern das Subjekt davon überzeugt ist, daß einzig Gott Zeuge seiner Umkehr sein kann und somit sämtliche äußerlichen, inadäquaten Urteile und Bestimmungen aufgehoben werden.

In meinem Buch *The Binding of Isaac and Messiah: Law, Martyrdom and Deliverance in Early Rabbinic Religiosity* versuche ich als den radikalsten Ausdruck dieser Mentalität von „Umkehr" das Phänomen *des Martyriums* zu entwickeln. Im Martyrium befreit sich der Mensch von der Vergangenheit (indem er die Vergangenheit versöhnt, denn es gibt keine Sünde mehr, weil er „gereinigt, rein" ist) und dadurch auch von der Zukunft, da diese für den Märtyrer nicht mehr vorhanden ist. Das Martyrium stellt deshalb eine beinahe groteske, nihilistische Verabsolutierung des Moments der Gegenwart dar, insofern irgendeine Erinnerung die Entscheidungen des Individuums nicht länger determinieren kann. Ebenso existiert keine Zukunft, das das ganze Dasein von der Vollendung des Martyriums abhängig ist (märtyrerische Handlungen des „Jetzt"). Martyrium kann deshalb eine paradigmatische Hermeneutik der „Umkehr" darstellen, obwohl im Martyrium der Heilsmoment der „Umkehr" nur in der Hermeneutik sichtbar wird.

Zudem muß man jedoch berücksichtigen, daß *teschuwa*—Umkehr—doch ein Aspekt der märtyrischen Phänomenologie enthält, insoweit der Wille der Gegenwart die Vergangenheit vernichtet und die Zukunft so blaß erscheinen läßt, daß deren Auslöschung bedroht wird. Innerhalb des Martyriums ist einzig die Kategorie des „Jetzt" bestimmend, in dem Sinne wie auch die Kategorie des „Selbst" oder des „Ich" zum Träger der gesamten Handlung wird. Denn wodurch zeichnet sich

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

die Mentalität des Märtyrers aus? Die anderen Menschen versuchen den Märtyrer zu überzeugen: „Sündige jetzt, zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt kannst du ja bereuen, doch tue dies jetzt, so daß du überleben kannst!" Doch der Märtyrer entgegnet: „Nein! Es gibt nur den Moment des *Jetzt*". Die Berufung auf einen späteren Zeitpunkt, in welchem man dann ein besserer Mensch werden kann, ist ausgeschlossen. Die Menschen um den Märtyrer verweisen auf die vermeintliche Sinnlosigkeit seines Todes und die ewige und unendliche Existenz des Bösen trotz der Entscheidung für eine märtyrerische Handlung. Doch der Märtyrer ist davon überzeugt, *daß die Existenz der Welt von seiner jetzigen Handlung abhängt.* Die Handlungen und Taten der Anderen besitzen hinsichtlich der ethischen Dimension für den Märtyrer keine Relevanz, solange er nicht selbst als Subjekt handelt. In dieser Entscheidung kann einzig das Selbst als Träger und Akteur der Dimension der Handlung fungieren, und damit bleibt eine Verweisung der Verantwortung an andere Personen oder eine an einen abstrakten Begriff der Gemeinschaft oder ähnliches ausgeschlossen. Die anderen Menschen argumentieren jedoch weiter: "Die römischen Mächte etc. sind ungleich stärker und überlegener, sie werden dich einfach vernichten. Wem hilft also deine Entscheidung?" Der Märtyrer hingegen antwortet: „Nein, *ich* werde siegen. Und *ich* bin es, der treu zur Wahrheit bleibt." Die Handlung und Tat des Märtyrers bedeutet für ihn selbst eine Vernichtung oder zumindest eine kraftvolle Infragestellung des Bösen. Doch der Märtyrer handelt in dieser existentiellen Situation nicht als ein bloßes Individuum, sondern wesentlich, um die Welt und nicht seine eigene Person „zu retten": Er siegt doch über das Böse und damit rettet er die Welt. Aus seiner Perspektive ist die Existenz und das Fortbestehen der Welt von *seiner* Handlung abhängig, und nur in diesem Sinne können die Grundlagen und Voraussetzungen für eine Aufhebung und schließlich Fortentwicklung der Vergangenheit in der Zukunft in anderer Qualität gelegt werden. Zwar wird die Vergangenheit vernichtet und die Zukunft ausgelöscht—in der eigentlichen Dimension des märtyrischen Seins, das heißt der Dimension des „Ich-bin." Aber ironischerweise wird die weltliche Auswirkung des märtyrerischen „Sieges" in einer Dimension wirksam, das durch das märtyrerische Handeln verneint wird.

Der Märtyrer versteht, daß *er* derjenige ist, welcher durch seine Handlung das Böse in der Welt besiegen kann. Er handelt in dieser Erkenntnis für die Wahrheit, für das Gute, obwohl sich die Konsequenz seiner Handlung nur auf die Dimension des „Selbst" bezieht. Somit

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

begreift er sich letztlich als einen zentralen Punkt des Daseins, was nicht heißt, daß eine solipsistische Konzeption des Menschen vorliegt: Der Märtyrer ist das Zentrum der Welt und nicht das Zentrum des Nichts. Von der Handlung des Märtyrers ist die gesamte Existenz der Welt und deren Erlösung abhängig. Er wird zu der Achse, auf welcher der Mensch geheilt, oder erlöst wird. Nur in diesem Sinne eröffnet sich die reale Perspektive einer Möglichkeit des Heils in Form der konkreten Handlung des Märtyrers, und verbleibt nicht bloße Phantasie. Obwohl dies einen nihilistischen Aspekt einschließt, entspricht es der Logik des märtyrischen Daseins überhaupt und in der Erkenntnis dieser Notwendigkeit erschließt sich das Paradigma von Martyrium.

In dem folgenden Text wird zwar nicht das Thema des Martyriums, sondern eher das der Phänomenologie der „Umkehr", *teschuwa* aufgegriffen. Deshalb folgert R. Jehoshua ben Levi, daß die „Umkehr" der Tötung der bösen Natur entspricht. Diese Tötung ist zwar auch märtyrisch, da auch in diesem Kontext die Vergangenheit keine tragende Funktion mehr innehat, und nicht mehr existiert. Man muß innerhalb dieser weitreichenden und konsequenten „Umkehr", der Entscheidung des „Jetzt", eine andere Person zu werden, die Möglichkeit der Veränderung und der neuen Entwicklung des Individuums wahrnehmen. Dies entspricht einer Art des Martyriums, insofern die eigene Erinnerung (als Vergangenheit) ausgelöscht, und somit auch ein Teil des Menschen selbst, seiner bösen Natur (insofern er böse gehandelt hat) aufgehoben wird. Auch das Verblassen der Zukunft gegenüber der Entschiedenheit des Subjekts in der Gegenwart, die Überzeugung, daß die Entscheidung, nicht mehr zu sündigen einen „Tod der bösen Natur" darstellt, entspricht einer märtyrischen Auslöschung der Fähigkeit oder des Willens, die Zukunft in allen ihrem Reichtum wahrzunehmen.

Der positive Aspekt dieses Prozesses als ein Prozeß des Lebens und nicht des Todes in unserem Verständnis liegt in der, durch Befreiung offengelegten Möglichkeit der Zukunft selbst. Ein Neuwerden ist in Reichweite. Zukunft wird in diesem Kontext ganz anders definiert, nicht als Telos, Zweckbestimmtheit, sondern als Möglichkeit der Möglichkeit des Seins. In der Apokalyptik wird dies zum entscheidenden Aspekt: die Apokalyptik bildet selbst die Offenbarung des Neuanfangs, das Neugeborenwerden in einem Moment totaler Vernichtung, in welchem die Negation der Vergangenheit und (der bisherigen) Zukunft die Perspektive von Möglichkeit erst freilegt.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

In der, an der märtyrischen Phänomenologie teilnehmenden Umkehr, *teschuwa*, wird der Mensch zu einem Gerechten, da er offen ist für alles Gute, er ist ein absolut Gerechter, nicht nur in seinem Freiwerden von Sünde, sondern wesentlich durch seine Entschiedenheit zum *Handeln*. Im Sinne der Hermeneutik der obene zitierten Psalmen steht die Vernichtung der bösen Natur mit dem *chassid*-Werden in Verbindung. Seine eigene Person wird von der Vergangenheit und Zukunft gelöst, und erhält die Freiheit für eine neues Werden. Insofern die Achsen von Vergangenheit und Zukunft, und damit auch des gesellschaftlichen Seins, welche auf diesen Grundlagen ursprünglich basiert, aufgehoben werden, kommt es zur Begründung einer Gesellschaft der Auserwählten, welche die Bedeutung der Welt tragen. Dies entspricht dem Verstand des Opfers bei R. Jehoshua ben Levi. Opfer ist hier das Martyrium, nicht das paradigmatische Martyrium, sondern insofern die radikale „Umkehr" als eine Art Martyrium gefaßt wird. Damit ist jedoch noch nicht der Aspekt der Vernichtung der bösen Natur vollständig thematisiert, wie man in der Lesung des Textes von *Sukkah* erkennen konnte. Denn bei R. Jehoshua ben Levi verbleibt diese Thematik in einem Weiterleben, in einer Phänomenologie.

Den zweiten Psalm (Psalm 51), welchen R. Jehoshua ben Levi im Zusammenhang mit seiner Aussage zitiert, wonach derjenige, der einen demütigen Geist hat, sich so verhält, als ob er alle Opfer in der Welt gebracht hätte, muß in folgender Weise gelesen werden:

> Ein Psalm Davids, vorzusingen, Da der Prophet Nathan zu ihm kam, Als er war zu Bathseba eingegangen.
>
> (Psalm 51, Vers 1–2)

Gemeint ist die Sünde Davids mit der Frau von Uriah, dem Hetiter (II. *Samuel*-Buch, Kapitel 11; 2–12; 25).

Der Psalm reflektiert eine paradigmatische religiöse Reaktion auf eine erschütternde und tragische Sünde.

> Gott, sei mir gnädig, nach deiner Güte, Und tilge meine Sünde, nach deiner großen Barmherzigkeit.
>
> (ebd.: 3)

Daß die „Sünde" getilgt werden muß, und zwar durch Gottes Gnade bedeutet, daß das Sündebewußtsein einer Wahrnehmung der Vergangenheit, oder bestimmter Teile der Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart vorgeblich weiter existieren. In der gesellschaftlichen Realität wird

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

die nachhhaltige Existenz der Vergangenheit hinein in die Gegenwart wahr-genommen, zum Beispiel in Strafgesetzen oder in dem Besitz von Land und Gütern; in der Erwerbung von Grundbesitz durch unbekannte oder längst vergessene Vorfahren etc. Die psalmistische Wahrnehmung, wonach die Sünde durch Gottes Gnade getilgt werden muß, entspricht einer Wahrnehmung der Untilgbarkeit der Sünde, also der Vergangenheit in der gesellschaftlichen Realität. *Teschuwa*, Umkehr, eine wirkungsvolle Befreiung von der Sünde ist nur durch die Aufhebung der Vergangenheit gegeben.

> Wasche mich wohl von meiner Missetate Und reinige mich von meiner Sünde. Denn ich erkenne meine Missetat Und meine Sünde ist immer vor mir.
>
> (ebd., 4–5)

Bei der Übersetzung von Vers fünf muß man bewußt sein, daß das Wort, welches Luther mit „erkenne" übersetzt, im Hebräischen „wissen" bedeutet, das im Kontext des Psalmes eine stärkeren Inhalt als „erkennen" vermittelt. Hierbei liegt eine Rationalisierung des Begriffs der Sünde vor. Voraussetzung für eine Umkehr im Kontext der Psalmen ist das *Wissen*, daß man gesündigt hat, eine Erkenntnis über die Genese und Konsequenz der Sünde selbst. Dabei handelt es sich nicht um einen kultischen Verstand von Sünde (also um eine institutionell, kirchliche Bestimmung des Begriffs und des Inhalts der Sünde). Die erschütternde und für den menschlichen Verstand begreifbare Bosheit der Sünde kommt im kommenden Vers zum Ausdruck.

> An dir allein habe ich gesündigt Und Übel für dir getan.
>
> (ebd., 6a)

Hier erhält man ein echtes religiöses Verständnis des Begriffs der Sünde. In den Mittelpunkt rückt nicht die Sünde gegenüber einem anderen Menschen, denn diese Sünde ist nicht tilgbar, für diese Sphäre erweist sich der Begriff der Umkehr nicht als tragfähig. Der radikale Ausdruck der *teschuwa*, Umkehr bezieht sich in seiner Konsequenz auf einen ebensolchen radikalen wie konsequenten Ausgangspunkt, nämlich der Sünde gegenüber Gott. Nur diese tiefgreifende und schreckliche Dimension dieses Ausmaßes läßt das Denken und die Möglichkeit einer Umkehr als real erscheinen. Gott kann, rabbinisch formuliert, den neuen Menschen wahrnehmen, die Gesellschaft hingegen nicht. Im Rahmen der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung ist der Mensch immer mit seiner Körperlichkeit, als wesentlicher Gegebenheit identifizierbar, ewig

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

gleich und ohne die Möglichkeit, eine neue, und grundlegend andere Identität zu gewinnen. Doch im Falle der Sünde gegenüber Gott, ist Gott fähig anzuerkennen, daß es sich um einen erneuerten, „neugeborenen" Menschen handelt. Ausgerechnet die Wahrnehmung, welche den tiefen Abgrund der Sünde bedeutet, ermöglicht das Freiwerden von dieser. Sünde ist niemals tagtäglich und ordinär und bildet damit *nicht* die Grundlage der menschlichen Existenz.

> Siehe, ich bin auf sündlichen Samen gezeuget Und meine Mutter hat mich in Sünden empfangen.
>
> (ebd., Vers 7)

Im rabbinischen Verständnis steht dies nicht im Zusammenhang mit einer „originalen" oder „Erbsünde". In den Augen eines Menschen, welcher selbst gesündigt hat, besteht sein Wesen darin, *als ob* er in Sünde geboren wurde, *die Sünde wird zum Teil seiner Identität. Von dieser Identität muß er sich befreien*—auf diese Weise würde ich selbst einen rabbinischen Midrasch zu diesen Text bilden.

Im Vers acht wird deutlich eine wichtige Aussage des Psalms formuliert:

> Siehe, du hast Lust zur Wahrheit, die im Verborgenen liegt. . . .
>
> (Vers 8a)

Gott erkennt demnach, daß im Menschen eine grundsätzliche andere, differenzierte Dimension des Seins im Gegensatz zur bloßen Gegebenheit des Menschen verborgen und enthalten ist.

> . . . Du läßest mich wissen, die heimliche Weisheit.
>
> (Vers 8b)

Es ist die göttliche Wahrheit, daß die Möglichkeit ein anderes Dasein verbirgt; die „Vertilgung der Sünde", welche phänomenologisch gesagt in dem Freiwerden von der Vergangenheit eine neue Identät des Menschen bildet. Dies ist deshalb möglich, weil in der Weisheit Gottes das menschliche Dasein nicht begrenzt zu einer äußerlich wahrgenommenen Identität als einer einfachen, trägen Gegebenheit, vorliegt.

Der Mensch ist demnach doch in der Lage und verfügt über die Möglichkeit, eine andere Identität anzunehmen, dabei handelt es sich nicht um einen Erbsündebegriff.

> Entsündige mich mit Ysop, daß ich rein werde, Wasche mich, daß ich schneeweiß werde.
>
> (Vers 9)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Ein Verständnis, nach welchem dies als eine äußerliche, von außen kommende Versöhnung aufgefaßt wird, muß phänomenologisch verstanden als magisch interpretiert werden: Es ist die Sünde in einem religiös wahrgenommenen Substratum, die verschwindet, dessen „Substanz" wird aufgelöst und nicht die Substanz der menschlichen Identität, welche eine Änderung erfährt. In der rabbinischen Auslegung handelt es sich jedoch um die Bildung einer neuen Identität, welche das Individuum *selbst* erreicht, und die von Gott anerkannt wird—*das* ist der Inhalt seiner Gnade, wohingegen dies für die gesetzliche Handlung der Gesellschaft bedeutungslos erscheint. Die Unterwerfung unter das Gesetz ist letztlich das Kennzeichen einer geordneten Gesellschaft.

> Laß mich hören Freude und Wonne, Daß die Gebeine fröhlich werden, die du zerschlagen hast.
>
> (Vers 10)

Rabbinisch formuliert, ist die Möglichkeit der Befreiung von Sünde schon in der psalmistischen Anthropologie implizit; der Mensch, welcher Gott sieht, ist einer, der fähig ist, sich zu verwandeln, und zwar in Wirklichkeit und nicht in Träumen.

> Verbirge dein Antlitz vor meiner Sünde Und tilge alle meine Missetat.
>
> (Vers 11)

Dazu ist der Mensch selbst aufgefordert, das zu unternehmen. Anschließend wird das Bild von dem „Prozeß des Neuwerdens" entwickelt.

> Schaffe in mir Gott ein rein Herz, Und gib mir einen neuen gewissen Geist.
>
> (Vers 12)

In diesem Kontext kommt es zur Fassung und begrifflichen Formulierung einer neuen *Innerlichkeit.* Das dieser neue Geist wie von Gott geschaffen wahrgenommen wird, schließt für die rabbinische Religiosität in unseren Texten nicht einen Ausdruck der Passivität des Menschen ein; vielmehr drückt dies eine menschliche Bewunderung seiner eigenen Fähigkeiten, eine Identität zu schaffen, die wie von Gott geschaffen empfunden wird, aus. Es mag sein, daß letztlich diese Verwandlung theologisch, im Sinne einer von Gott „erlassenen " Gnade verstanden wird; die Energie aber, mit welcher ein rabbinischer Jude *teschuwa,* Umkehr, durchführen muß, beschreibt doch die Erkenntnis, daß ohne

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

die menschliche Initiative jede Substanz für eine göttliche Versöhnung fehlt.

> Verwirf mich nicht von deinem Angesicht, Und nimm deinen heiligen Geist nicht von mir.
>
> (Vers 13)

Der religiöse Mensch empfindet die Gefahr eines Mangels göttlicher Versöhnung als eine Bedrohung seiner Existenz selbst. Der „alte Mensch", derjenige, der gesündigt hat, gehört zwar der Vergangenheit und nicht der Gegenwart an; doch der neue Mensch, der vor Gott bestehen bleibt, empfindet sein jetziges Dasein als ein Sieg gegenüber jeder Bedrohung seiner Existenz als Person.

> . . . nimm deinen heiligen Geist nicht von mir.

Der Ausdruck heiliger Geist erinnert an eine christliche Terminologie. Wortwörtlich aber muß man dies mit „der Geist der Heiligkeit" übersetzen. Im rabbinischen Verständnis handelt es sich um die menschliche Lebendigkeit, und nicht um einen äußerliche hinzukommenden Aspekt. Der menschliche Geist selbst ist der Geist der Heiligkeit und in der Überwindung der Sünde beweist dieser sein Durchhaltevermögen. Der „neue Mensch" ist die Person in all ihrem Reichtum, eingeschlossen seiner Vergangenheit, obwohl jetzt nur als eine böse Erinnerung; also eine Person mit Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft. Der „neue Mensch" entsteht anstatt des „alten Menschen" als Handelnder, der Mensch als Mensch wird nicht überwunden. Obwohl in der Radikalität der hier zitierten rabbinischen Texte schließlich jedoch ein (apokalyptischer) Bruch mit der menschlichen Natur wahrgenommen werden muss.

Da Innerlichkeit und Handeln eine Einheit in Identität bilden, kann die gesellschaftliche Dimension nicht ausbleiben:

> Denn ich will die Übertreter deinen Weg lehren, Daß sich die Sünder zu dir bekehren.
>
> (Vers 15)

Darin ist klar erkenntlich, daß die starke Beschäftigung mit der eigenen Persönlichkeit nicht zu einem solipsistischen Verständnis führt. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Sünde ist die Auseinandersetzung mit einem gesellschaftlichen Verständnis von „gut" und „böse" und eine Kommunkation muß deshalb mit anderen Mitgliedern der Gemeinde stattfinden.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> Errete mich vor den Blutschulden Gott, der du mein Gott und Heiland bist, Daß meine Zunge deine Gerechtigkeit rühme.
> (Vers 16)
> Herr tu meine Lippen auf, Daß mein Mund deinen Ruhm verkündigt.
> (Vers 17)

Der Psalmist erfährt seine Fähigkeit, Gott zu rühmen als eine gottgegebene Kraft, da er diese Fähigkeit bewundert. Ein moderner doch sympatisierender Kritiker würde sagen, daß die ständig notwendige Auseinandersetzung mit einer Selbstidentität, die gesündigt hat, eine Energie der Selbstbestimmung erfordert, die das Preisen Gottes vielleicht zum übermenschlichen Anspruch macht.

Danach folgt für die hier diskutierte rabbinische Auslegung ein entscheidender Vers (dieser steht mit dem früheren Psalm in Verbindung), und es ist kein Zufall, daß R. Jehoshua ben Levi beide Psalmen zusammenführt:

> Denn du hast nicht Lust zum Opfer, Ich wollte dir es sonst wohl geben, Und Brandopfer gefallen dir nicht.
> Die Opfer die Gott gefallen sind ein geängsteter Geist, Ein geängstigtes und zerschlagenes Herz wirst du Gott nicht verachten.
> (Vers 18 und 19)

Der Hintergrund dieser beiden Verse bildet ein Moment der Reinterpretation des Opfers, und zwar in einem doppelten Sinn. Die Messung des Opfers faßt nicht mehr das, was übergeben wird, also an Gott oder seine Zöllner, sondern das Maß des Von-sich-nehmens bildet jetzt den Wert des Opfers. Die Logik des Aufgebens, des Aufopferns, das dabei erfahrene Dasein bestimmt danach den Ablauf der Opfer und nicht die Logik des Gebens. Deshalb ist nicht nur der Vektor der Opfer geändert, sondern auch seine Substanz. Die menschliche Einstellung gegenüber der eigenen Person—ein „Geist" die ein Dasein darstellt—wird zur Opfer Substanz. Für R. Jehoshua ben Levi verlangt Gott nach den *Opfern, welche die Schöpfung einer neuen Identität tasächlich beinhaltet.*

> . . . ein geängsteter Geist, Ein geängstigtes . . . Herz.

Ich würde an dieser Stelle eine wortwörtliche Übersetzung in „gebrochener Geist . . . und gebrochenes Herz" vorziehen. Für R. Jehoshua ben Levi geht es um eine völlige Negierung der Identität der Person als eine die gesündigt hat, und sündigen wird. Die Daseinsachse von Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft sollte zerbrochen werden insoweit

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

dies die Sünde betrifft, die „neue Person" ist weder ein Sünder in der Vergangenheit noch in der Zukunft, der Unwiderstehlichkeit der Wirklichkeit zum Trotz. Eine Negierung eines Teils der Person muß stattfinden, ohne daß dieses, so hofft R. Jehoshua ben Levi die Aufhebung der Person einschließt. Die Bloßlegung der Gegenwart, der Moment der *teschuwa*, Umkehr, die schicksalvolle Entscheidung zur Änderung, als der zentrale Moment des Daseins muß vollzogen werden. In der midraschischen Radikalisierung der psalmistischen Theologie wird der Mensch zu einem *Ich-bin* anstatt eines *Ich-war* oder *Ich-werde*-sein. Aus dem nihilistischen Umgang mit einer ungewollten Vergangenheit, durch eine Aufhebung der Kontinuität, und mit einer Befreiung von einer unausweichlichen Zukunft durch Verdrängung entsteht die Bewertung des maßgeblichen Gewichts der Gegenwart. Der „neue Mensch" ist hier nicht mehr eine neue Gattung, der sein Wesen als Objekt betrachtet, als „er" oder auch als „du", wie biblisch erwartet, sondern ein neues *Ich-bin*.

Nach der Auffassung R. Jehoshua ben Levis geschieht dies durch *Demut*. Warum wird jedoch die Demut zu einer Möglichkeit, in dieser „Umkehr" weiter zu existieren, so daß nicht allein der Tod als einzige Konsequenz (im Martyrium) verbleibt? Mit dem Verlust der Arroganz wird der Anreiz zum Vorwurf der Sünde gegenüber anderen, der Hochmut aufgehoben. Mit dem Verlust des Vorwurfs der Sündigkeit gegenüber anderen ist man imstande, die eigene Identität als Sünder preiszugeben. Mit dem Verlust des Vorwurfs der Sündigkeit gegenüber anderen überwindet man zugleich die eigene Sünde. Die Fähigkeit, mit der menschlichen Unzulänglichkeit zu leben, erlaubt letztlich, die eigene Unzulänglichkeit zu akzeptieren und diese anzunehmen. Dadurch wird der Mensch befähigt, die Last von der eigenen Unzulänglichkeit in der Vergangenheit aufzuheben. Die Akzeptanz des Menschen in seiner eigenen Unzulänglichkeit impliziert zugleich auch die Akzeptanz seiner eigenen Person *in seinem Willen*. Obwohl wir hier eine Person thematisieren, die von der eigenen Sündhaftigkeit überzeugt ist, ist dies die Fähigkeit, eine eigene neue Identität als ein Nichtsünder zu akzeptieren, wenn man die Schuldlosigkeit des Anderen voraussetzt. Weiterhin: In der Einstellung der Arroganz wird das Dasein auf der Achse von Vergangenheit-Gegenwart-Zukunft als eine Errungenschaft erfaßt. In Demut ist die Person in ihren eigenen Augen eine, die nichts verdient hat (im ethischen Sinne) und nichts verdienen wird. Demut erlaubt deshalb kein eifriges Festhalten an der Vergangenheit und der Zukunft. Die Person jedoch, welche Demut

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

bewußt umarmt, ist keine, welche ihr Dasein verneinen will. Die Beschäftigung mit dem Wert der eigenen Existenz ist eine Bejahung dieser und nicht eine Verneinung. Für die Person in bewußter Demut ist die Zeitkategorie der Überlegung, also die Gegenwart die Kategorie der Frömmigkeit, die Kategorie des religiösen Daseins. Demütig zu sein ist immer ein Dasein in dem *Jetzt*: Für denjenigen, der sich als demütig versteht, ist die Erinnerung an eine Demut in der Vergangenheit ein Hochmut, ohne einen Gehalt für die Gegenwart; und in seiner echten Demut gerät die Zukunft zu einem bloßen Vorhaben.

Es handelt sich hier nicht um ein neues Dasein im Zwang, ein neues „Zukunftsschicksal" anstatt des alten, abgelehnten. Vielmehr geht es um eine Entschiedenheit, in welcher die Spannung der Entschiedenheit so groß ist, wie das Wissen, daß man nicht Herr der Zukunft ist. Die Überzeugung von der Wahrhaftigkeit der *teschuwa*, „die Gott selbst bezeugt", bildet den Inhalt der Phänomenologie der Gegenwart als einer alles beherrschende Bewertung des Daseins und nicht einer Divination oder Vorhersage. Die Unzulänglichkeit des Daseins wird in eine Freiheit transformiert, einen neuen Beginn zu bestimmen; zwar beherrscht man nicht die Zeitachse, aber man wird von dieser auch nicht gezwungen. Die Gestaltung der Zukunft wird in dieser Hinsicht nicht zu einem Zwang oder unausweichlichem Diktum, es begreift vielmehr einen ständigen Versuch, das Gute zu tun, ein, und die Möglichkeit zukünftiger Entwicklung wird niemals als unerreichbar konzipiert.

Damit kehren wir zum Text in *Sukkah* zurück. Beide Aspekte, die Tötung des Messias, der Sohn von Joseph sowie die Tötung der bösen Natur werden nun miteinander verbunden. Bisher wurde das Verständnis herausgearbeitet, aus welchem phänomenlogischen Kontext die rabbinische Auffassung von der Tötung der bösen Natur hervorgeht. Doch in dem vorliegenden Text in *Sukkah* werden einige andere Merkmale relevant:

Es geht nicht um einen „Tod des Messias" als die Vorhersage einer, sich in der Zukunft ereignenden „Tatsache". Die Scheiterung des Messias bildet vielmehr eine gescheiterte Eschatologie. Der vorliegende Text soll deshalb als eine Kritik der märtyrischen Mentalität begriffen werden. Unser Text in *Sukkah* erhält dadurch eine doppelte Bedeutung. Es liegt eine Kritik hinsichtlich der märtyrischen Eschatologie oder seiner Phänomenologie vor, weil der Text aussagt, daß

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

die Tötung der bösen Natur auch eine Tötung des Messias selbst einschließt oder parallel dazu steht. Das bedeutet gleichzeitig, daß diese Vernichtung oder Aufhebung ein Aspekt der menschlichen Natur auch und gerade in dem Eschaton nicht denkbar ist, da die Vernichtung der menschlichen Natur auch die Möglichkeit von Erlösung grundsätzlich in Frage stellt. Andererseits interpretiert und kritisiert der Text einen anderen Text, welcher hier apokalyptisch verstanden wird. Das gesamte Kapitel in *Zechariah* wird innerhalb dieses Textes als ein Tod des Messias im Sinne eines apokylyptischen Ereignisses verstanden. Aus diesem Grund findet sich nicht nur eine Kritik der märtyrerischen Mentalität, sondern auch eine Kritik des apokalyptischen Messianismus. Eine Kritik des apokalyptischen Messianismus ist auch eine Interpretation, und ich beabsichtige diesen Text für das vorliegende Thema „Apokalyptische Zeit" aufzugreifen, um den Begriff des apokalyptischen Messianismus zu interpretieren. In diesem Sinne werde ich diesen Text als eine Interpretation und gleichzeitige Kritik des apokalyptischen Ereignisses sowie des Messianismus auffassen.

Argumentiert man gegen die Absicht des vorliegenden Textes, jedoch gemäß seiner Logik, wonach die menschliche „böse Natur" aufgehoben werden konnte, so wird die Phantasie einer radikalen Umkehr applizierbar, welche in ihrer absoluten Wahrnehmung der Gegenwart die Illussion erzeugt, (und darin besteht der Kern der radikalen Umkehr) daß es möglich ist, über die Zukunft nicht zu reflektieren, und damit die Kategorie der „Gegenwart" zu verewigen. Schlußfolgernd könnte man zusamenfassen, und darin besteht meine These, daß die apokalyptische Vision seine Geburt und Glaubwürdigkeit in der radikalen Erfahrung von Umkehr, *teshuwa*, seiner Metrix findet. Anders ausgedrückt: Es ist die radikale Erfahrung von Umkehr *teshuwa*, welche das Martyrium als eine unwiderstehliche Versuchung erscheinen läßt und es ist diese Versuchung, die die apokalyptische Vision ernährt. In der Beschreibung apokalyptischer Ereignisse findet man ebensolche Charakteristika wie im Text *Sukkah*. Worin besteht die apokalyptische Vision? Diese bezieht wesentlich eine Vernichtung der Welt in ihrer Gegebenheit und trägen Beschaffenheit ein. Es erscheint zwar für uns eine phantasievolle Idee zu sein: Unsere Aufgabe ist es aber zu fragen, unter welchen Voraussetzungen ist die Vorhersage eines solchen Ereignisses glaubwürdig und sogar notwendig? Es ergibt sich ebenso die Frage, warum ausgerechnet in der Vernichtung der Welt deren Erlösung gesucht und entdeckt werden soll? Wenn wir

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

unser apokalyptisches messianisches Szenarium als eine phänomenologische Übersetzung der Erfahrung der radikalen Umkehr verstehen, dann wird die Verwirrung unserer Fragen aufgehoben.

In der *teschuwa*-Umkehr Erfahrung, deren Radikalität mit der märtyrischen Versuchung verknüpft ist, wird die „Welt vernichtet". Die Welt in ihrer trägen Gegebenheit wird für den *Baal-Teshuwa* aufgehoben, es vollzieht sich eine Tilgung einer Erinnerung von „Ich habe gesündigt", die eine Tilgung eines Teils der Vergangenheit des Reuemütigen bildet. Ein Teil der Welt, als ein *Ich-bin-in-der-Welt* hört auf zu existieren. Für den Reuemütigen ist dies keine Vernichtung einer bloß subjektiven Realität. Weil das Sündigen für ihn eine objektive „Realität" bildet, ein Handeln, welches die Welt als „du", „wir" und „es" in Mitleidenschaft zieht, erschüttert dessen Aufhebung (des Sündigen) die Realität als ein objektives Dasein. Es vollzieht sich eine Vernichtung der Welt, inwieweit der Mensch diese bis „jetzt" erfahren hat.

In der Apokalypse wird die Vision der Vernichtung ungleich verallgemeinert und universalisiert. Nicht nur die eigene, „objektive" Welt gerät in den Sog der Zerstörung, sondern die gesamte Welt fällt der Vernichtung anheim. Die Substanz des Vernichteten ist, ähnlich wie in der *teschuwa*, die Achse der Zeit. Mit dem Wegfallen der Zeitachse ist die Welt sowohl in ihrer Vergangenheit als auch ihrer Zukunft aufgehoben. Da die Existenz der Welt auch für die apokalyptisch phantasierende Person solch eine unausweichliche Tatsache darstellt, muß die Welt trotz der Abhandenheit der alten Zeitachse weiter existieren: Aber es wird „dann" auf einer neuen Zeitachse existieren, mit einem „neuen Menschen" in einer „neuen Welt". In der apokalyptischen Vision der Vernichtung, in dem Zeitplan eines „Dann", wird das Drama des Untergangs der Welt in seiner vertikalen Achse betont. Der Schwerpunkt der Erschütterung liegt in dem Wegfall der alten Zukunft. Was die horizontale Achse betrifft, sind doch alle Gleichgesinnten „gerettet", ebenso wie der Visionär selbst. In der märtyrischen *teschuwa*, Umkehr erhält die horizontale Achse ein besonderes Gewicht. Der Märtyrer allein wird zum „Erlöser". Die horizontale menschliche Achse, die menschliche Gemeinschaft geht unter, insofern die Existenz der Welt einzig von der Handlung und dem Willen des Märtyrers abhängt. Die Verallgemeinerung seiner eigenen Vernichtung findet statt; obwohl sich seine eigene Vernichtung zu einem Sieg gestaltet, und die Existenz der Welt wird gerade in seiner Abhängigkeit von dem Märtyrer als eine Rettung der Welt

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

wahrgenommen: Vernichtung und Sein konstituieren für den Märtyrer gleichermaßen die Voraussetzung des alles beherrschenden Wesens der Gegenwart.

In der märtyrischen *teschuwa*, Umkehr wird der Reuemütige erlöst, er ist frei, und wird neugeboren. Er erlangt die unendliche Möglichkeit, neu zu werden. Ähnlich bedeutet das apokalyptische Ereignis für seinen Visionär die Erlösung und Neugeburt der ganzen Welt. Apokalyptische Zeit als die Zeit der Welt und Umkehrzeit oder *teschuwa*-Zeit als die Zeit des Individuums eingeschlossen seiner Welt, ist in der selben phänomenologischen Hermeneutik der Zeit gewurzelt. In der apokalyptischen Wahrnehmung kehrt sich die Welt von innen nach außen und die innere Zeit wird zur Weltzeit.

Das märtyrische *Jetzt* und das apokalyptische *dann* bilden *einen* Zeitpunkt, ihre Entfernung auf dem Kalender des menschlichen Leidens nicht berücksichtigend.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

DATING THE ESCHATON: JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN APOCALYPTIC CALCULATIONS IN LATE ANTIQUITY*

Oded Irshai

In a recent survey on the Messiah and the Messianic age in Qumranic circles, Shemaryahu Talmon cautioned against the misunderstanding and misuse of the term Messiah in regards to the Dead Sea Scrolls. He suggested avoiding as much as possible the term "eschatology" which bears the stamp of "Metahistory". He preferred to describe the end of days according to the people of Qumran as "an Age to come ... perceived within the framework of actual history, expecting it to set in a preordained stage in the progress of history."[1]

It seems that the centrality of "The End" to the Qumranic mind (whether or not we accept Talmon's reservations regarding terminology), was never doubted. However, its scope and acuteness have become a center of attention in recent years. In a most revealing survey of Qumranic terminology, Annette Steudel[2] (perhaps, contra Talmon) has sketched the linear development of the term קץ הימים in the sect's own writings, and pointed out the fact that the Qumran people actually perceived themselves as living in the midst of "the final period of history". Accordingly, they utilized this term to denote events in their past, present and near future. In order to determine the "End of Days" (קץ הימים) within the constraints of "Historical

---

* This is an enlarged version of the paper delivered at the conference. I would like to express my gratitude to Richard Landes, Israel Yuval and Paula Fredriksen for many fruitful discussions and for their illuminating suggestions. It goes without saying that responsibility for any remaining flaws rests entirely with me.

[1] S. Talmon, "Waiting for the Messiah etc.", in *Idem, The World of Qumran from Within*, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 273ff. at p. 277. On the perception of "historical time" in Qumranic circles see J. Licht, "The Doctrine of 'Times' According to the Sect of Qumran and Other 'Computers of Seasons'", *Eretz-Israel* 8 (E.L. Sukenik Memorial Volume), ed. by N. Avigad *et al.*, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 63–70 (Hebrew).

[2] A. Steudel, "אחרית הימים in the Texts of Qumran", *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1993), pp. 225–246. For a different view on the Qumranic concept of אחרית הימים see John J. Collins, "Teacher and Messiah? The One Who Will Teach Righteousness at the End of Days", *The Community of the Renewed Covenant—The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. by E. Ulrich and J. Vanderkam, Notre Dame, 1994, pp. 193ff. esp. p. 199.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Time", the Essenes strongly focused on what they knew best, i.e. interpreting biblical prophecy, extracting from it its schemes and redemptive time tables and applying them in different modes solely to their own world.[3]

The Book of Daniel and the Qumran People: Initial Stages in Determining the End of Days

One of the main sources of inspiration for the people of Qumran was the book of Daniel, which they regarded as a prophecy and relied on its apocalyptic calculations. The striking number of copies of that book found in the sect's library points to its prominence in its members' lives and explains the fact that the "Seventy Weeks" scheme in Daniel (9, 24–27) (along with other texts such as Apocalypse of Weeks [I Enoch 93]) were time and again readjusted and readapted to the changing historical circumstances of the sect.[4] Here lies the

[3] The mode of the biblical lemma plus comment known as the *Pesher* was most apt for this type of exegesis. The Qumran people used this technique to elucidate prophetic oracles. The definition of a *Pesher*, its form and technique, have long been based on the study of the most famous of the Qumran Pesharim the Pesher Habakkuk (1QpHab). See B. Nitzan, *Pesher Habakkuk: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judaea*, Tel Aviv, 1986, pp. 29–79 (Hebrew); A. Steudel, *Der Midrasch zur Eschatologie aus der Qumrangemeinde (4QMidr Eschata.b)*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 187–189. Recently, however, some fundamental questions have been raised concerning the genre, its patterns and relations to other exegetical modes found in Qumran literature. See for instance M.J. Bernstein, "Introductory Formulas for Citation and Re-citation of Biblical Verses in the Qumran Pesharim", *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1 (1994), pp. 31–34. A clearer definition has been proposed recently by George J. Brooke. According to him the Pesher serves as a mode of explicit exegesis which is particularist in nature, "most readily concerned with relating the authoritative text to the current circumstances, practices and aspirations of the commentator's community". "4Q252 as Early Jewish Commentary (1)", *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996), p. 396. I thank Cana Werman for the latter references.

[4] The importance of the book of Daniel for the Qumranians is attested by the multiple copies of the book found there, see, John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Minneapolis, 1993, pp. 2–3 and more recently, Peter W. Flint, "The Daniel Tradition at Qumran," in: Craig E. Evans and Peter W. Flint (Eds.), *Messianism, Eschatology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids, MI 1997, pp. 41–60. Of special importance is what seems to be the sect's preoccupation with the scheme of "seventy weeks of years". For, it did not only supply the historical framework for the emergence of the sect as seen in the Damascus Covenant 1, 5–6, but, might have been utilized to readjust and meet later eschatological aspirations. See, R.T. Beckwith, "The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology", *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1979), pp. 179–180 (expecting the Messiah between 3 B.C.E.–2 C.E. not without significance for early Christian hopes and calculations). Recently D. Dimant managed to display the far-reaching implications of that scheme for a comprehensive understanding of the chronology and eschatology

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

greatest merit of Steudel's survey, whereby we are able to observe the actual and constant postponement of the designated "End" in a society that conducted its entire existence according to an acute messianic timetable.[5] Steudel's survey has in fact confirmed the existence of a mechanism of constant readjustment.

Daniel's eschatological scheme contained yet another important element by which the duration of world history was calculated, namely, the division of world history into four ages—empires symbolized by the Four Beasts.[6] This element was to play a major role in the development of future eschatological scenarios, subjected time and again to readjustment. However, in the sect's view of history this scheme played but a small part. It is well known that the compilers of the famous *Pesharim* on Nahum and Habbakuk, though very much aware of Rome's initial involvement in local Palestinian affairs and treating its collaboration with their opponents with mounting abhorrence, refrained from identifying this power with the Fourth

---

of the Qumran people. See eadem, "The Seventy Weeks Chronology (Dan. 9.24–27) In the Light of New Qumranic Texts", in: A.S. Van der Woude (ed.), *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings*, Leuven, 1993, pp. 57–76.

[5] In her survey Steudel has confirmed the existence of a mechanism of constant readjustment of the eschatological timeframe. This sort of mechanism is characteristic of societies that are founded on an extreme and acute apocalyptic scenario. A fine example of Qumranian eschatological readjustment has been proposed recently by M.O. Wise, *The First Messiah: Investigating the Savior Before Christ*, San Francisco 1999, pp. 226–234. Unfortunately, Wise's fascinating book reached me too late to be fully integrated in this article. The existence of such a mechanism in early Christian circles has been demonstrated in a lucid manner by Richard Landes in his "Lest the Millennium be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100–800 C.E.", in: W. Verbeke *et al.* (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Leuven, 1988, pp. 137–211.

[6] On this, see H.H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires*, Cardiff 1935; J.P. Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies", *Classical Philology* 30 (1940), pp. 1–20. Swain pointed out the emergence of the apocalyptic *topos* of the four plus one (i.e. Rome) monarchies in the early Greek and Roman literature. On this see D. Mendels' reservations concerning its emergence prior to the second half of the first century B.C.E. cf. idem, "The Five Empires: A Note on a Propagandistic Topos" *American Journal of Philology* 102 (1981), pp. 330–337. See further D. Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel", *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), pp. 148–175, and G.F. Hasel, "The Four Empires of Daniel 2", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 12 (1979), pp. 17–30. On the possible influence of the Hesiodic myth of decline on the Danielic scheme of four empires, see A. Momigliano's classic essay, "The Origins of Universal History", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, Serie III, Vol. XII, fasc. 2 (1982), pp. 533–560; Gershon D. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition (Sefer Ha-Qabbalah) by Abraham Ibn Daud*, Philadelphia, 1968, pp. 223–250. On the four kingdoms scheme in the book of Daniel found in Qumran literature, see recently, D. Dimant, "The Four Empires of Daniel Chapter 2, in the Light of Texts from Qumran", in: R. Elior and J. Dan (eds.), *Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume*, Part I, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 33–41 (Hebrew). See the following note.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Kingdom.[7] This is to say that though the sect was cognizant of the "four kingdoms" scheme, its eschatological "sundial" was adapted to a more acute and more specified timetable.[8] However, when it became apparent to the Qumran people that Rome was here to stay, their scenario of the eschaton, as recently suggested by Stegemann, most probably changed.[9]

Following the initial occupation by Rome in 63 B.C.E., that led to the accession of Herod the Great, the Qumran people began to show signs of growing messianic excitement. According to a recent suggestion by I. Knohl, we witness the emergence of a messianic figure, which in turn was followed by the formation and composition of the early portions of the War Rule describing the final battle with the *Kittim* (= Rome). The Qumran messiah is identified by I. Knohl as the famous Manaemus the Essene described by Josephus as "King Herod's friend".[10] Knohl contends that the early actions of Herod, namely, the rejection of the Zadokite priestly leadership and the persecution of the Hasmoneans, were seen by the Qumran

---

[7] It would seem that in the eyes of the Qumran people the capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in 63 B.C.E. was a turning point in their attitude to Rome (= *Kittim*). They incorporated in their own internal calendar the events leading to the Roman occupation (the tension between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II), and the events that ensued (the massacre of the leaders of Aristobulus' party by Syria's Roman governor Aemilius Scaurus), cf. recently, M.O. Wise, *Thunder in Gemini and Other Essays on the History, Language and Literature of Second Temple Palestine*, Sheffield, 1994, pp. 186–221. From thence they aspired Rome's demise, as can be clearly envisaged from Pesher Nahum (4Q169) 1,4: He rebu[kes] the sea and dri[es it up]. Its [int]erpretation: the sea is all the K[ittim who are] . . . to execut[e] judgement against them and destroy them from the face [of the earth] . . . See next note.

[8] The only clear testimony mentioning Babylon and Persia appears in an unpublished document in Starcky's lot (registered as 4Q552, 553) and quoted by J.T. Milik, "Prière de Nabonaide", *Revue Biblique* 63 (1956), p. 411 note 2. The allusion to "kingdoms" in 4Q Aramaic Ps Daniel (fr. A lines 32, 35) does not amount to much.

[9] H. Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus*, Freiburg, 1991, pp. 180–188. For an overview of Rome's image within Qumranic circles see now H. Lichtenberger, "Das Rombild in den Texten von Qumran", in: H.J. Fabry *et al.* (hrsg.), *Qumranstudien*, Göttingen, 1996, pp. 221–230 (with extensive bibliography).

[10] On the date of the War Rule (1QM) see in short G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Revised and Extended Fourth Edition), London, 1995, p. 124. On Manaemus the Essene, see Josephus, *Antiquities* XV, pp. 373–379 and Mishnah Hagigah, 2, 2 and L. Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore*, Philadelphia, 1955, p. 101. Knohl seems to base his suggestion on the phrase [דושים]ק לך רע המלד ידיד (friend of the king companion of the ho[ly ones . . .]) found in what has been termed as a self-glorification hymn of the eschatological High Priest (4Q471[b] and parallels). Cf. I. Knohl, "'The Friend of the King': The Messiah of the Qumran Sect," *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 243–258 (Hebrew). See however, E. Eshel 4Q471[b]: A Self Glorification Hymn", *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996), pp. 175–203. Michael Wise seems to proceed along similar lines, although according to his reconstruction the persecuted and slain

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

people as a radical change in their fate and a new stage in their unfolding eschatological scheme. These developments were followed by the return of the sect's members to Jerusalem, their settlement on Mount Zion (ca. 24 B.C.E.), and the revelation of Manaemus as their messiah. Following Herod's death (4 B.C.E.), this radical group inspired by its War Rule led an armed rebellion against Rome only to be brutally crushed by Varus, the Roman governor of Syria. This reconstruction (here, slightly abridged) demonstrates the historical circumstances that triggered the eschatological scenario and points to the atmosphere in which it became acceptable to the sect's members. In this sense it focuses our attention on the impact of the "opportune period"[11] (Herod's reign) on the unfolding eschaton.

The unfolding messianic scenario of Qumran at the above mentioned "opportune time" had most probably, great influence, on another famous messianic revelation, that of Jesus and his circle. His image was modeled by his followers on the Qumranic doctrine of the two messiahs (of Israel {= David} and Aaron),[12] though, his line of descent was presented as a fusion of both branches.[13] However, there seems to have been a fundamental difference between the Qumranic view of the eschaton and the early Christian "End of

---

messiah (the Teacher of Righteousness) was murdered in different circumstances in the days of the Hasmonean ruler Alexander Jannaeus. The historiographic implications of Wise's reconstruction are too far reaching to be discussed here.

[11] It is tempting to link this outcome to the engendered belief supported and promoted by the king himself that he was a ruler from the House of David. On this, no doubt, propagandistic presentation, see, A. Schalit, "Die früchristliche Überlieferung über die Herkunft der Familie des Herodes", *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 1 (1962), pp. 109ff.; See *Idem, König Herodes Der Mann und Sein Werk*, Berlin, 1969, pp. 472–481. The political and ideological climate in the age of Augustus which was saturated with triumphalism and clearly reflected an atmosphere of a new age might have enhanced Herod's aspirations. On the political spirit in the Augustan age see E. Gruen, "The Expansion of the Empire under Augustus", in: A.K. Bowman *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History* (second ed.) Vol. X, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 188–194.

[12] See J. Starcky, "Les quattre étapes du messianisme à Qumran", *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963), pp. 481–505, and B. Nitzan, "Eschatological Motives in Qumran Literature: The Messianic Concept", in: H. Graf Reventlow (ed.), *Eschatology in the Bible and in Jewish and Christian Tradition*, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 132–151 (esp. 134–148).

[13] See W. Adler, "Exodus 6:23 and the High Priest from the Tribe of Judah", *Journal of Theological Studies* 48 (1997), pp. 24–47. Adler, who revives the premises of the now long rejected work by V. Aptowitzer, *Parteipolitik der Hasomonäerzeit im rabbinischen und pseudo-epigraphischen Schrifttum*, Vienna, 1927, omits entirely any mention of the important link found in the Qumran literature. Another refutation of the views opposing Aptowitzer's conclusions was offered by D.R. Schwartz, "On the Pharisaic Opposition to the Hasmonean Monarchy", *idem, Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, Tübingen 1992, pp. 31–33.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Days" scenario in regard to the time frame in which it took place.

Just as the eschatological clock of the Qumran people was governed by the "70 Weeks" time span found in Daniel, there are signs that the early eschatological plan of the circle surrounding Jesus and that of his immediate followers was based too, albeit in a more simplified manner, on a division of world history. However, from a later vantage point, Jesus' revelation was predominantly seen as part of the Danielic scheme of the "70 weeks" blueprint.[14] From this point of view Jesus' appearance on the stage at that time and place, was not much different than the rise of other popular prophetic movements, predicting the imminent "End" and creating an acute apocalyptic atmosphere.[15] But were these agitators only leaders of some splinter groups[16] engaged in prophetic eschatological speculation, or were they part of a larger trend? The latter possibility seems to carry some weight.

In a recent study Albert Baumgarten presents a new and radical assessment of the late Second Temple Jewish millenarianism. Baumgarten argues for a much wider attentiveness to messianic expectations within Pharisaic circles during that period. He bases this notion on a recent scholarly contention that contrary to the widely held opinion that millenarianism is cultivated among the deprived and vanquished, it should be traced among victors as well. Thus, not only the members of the Qumran sect were absorbed in speculation about the approaching "End", but also people belonging to the

---

[14] On the messianic expectations surrounding Jesus see Dale C. Allison, "The Eschatology of Jesus", in John J. Collins (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 1, Grand Rapids MI 1998, pp. 267–302. See also note 24, below.

[15] See P.W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets—A.D. 40–70 Their Intention and Origin", *New Testament Studies* 27 (1984), pp. 679–697; R.A. Horsley, is of the opinion that these prophetic movements did not see themselves as part of a set divine timetable, but as participating in an apocalypse of the present and not of the future, see his "Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus their Principal Features and Social Origin", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (1986), pp. 3–27. For a more sceptical view of the first century events, see M. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome A.D. 66–70*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. 90–94. See further my remarks in note 30.

[16] See R.A. Horsley, "Menachem in Jerusalem: A Brief Messianic Episode among the Sicarii—Not 'Zealot Messianism'", *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985), pp. 334–348. The historical Menachem might have prompted later legendary midrashic depictions of a messianic figure carrying the name, that clearly had a strong sentiment of a counter Christian narrative. See G. Hasan-Rokem's most revealing study, *The Web of Life—Folklore in Rabbinic Literature: The Palestinian Aggadic Midrash Eikha Rabba*, Tel Aviv, 1996, pp. 163–172 (Hebrew). On the circumstances in which this messianic episode took place and on its social context, see M. Stern, "Zealots", *Encyclopaedia Judaica Year Book 1973*, pp. 140–145.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Pharisaic sect. The latter phenomenon did not arise from the hardships encountered by the Pharisees during the decades preceding the Great Revolt (hence its eruption in the form of the above mentioned movements), but was present throughout the Hasmonean period (though probably confined to certain quarters).[17] It is difficult to discern the eschatological timeframe on which the prophetic movements of the first century based their expectations. Nevertheless, there are signs that within this context the Book of Daniel "which spoke to a wide range" might have played an important role. Whether we are able to draw a straight line between these Pharisaic sentiments and the later rabbinical approach to eschatological computations remains to be determined.

The Destruction of the Temple and its Aftermath: A Period of Transition

Although we know quite little about the rabbinical attitude towards eschatology before 70 C.E., the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the ensuing events up until the Bar-Kochbah revolt, should be regarded as a turning point in rabbinical reflections on the eschaton. Here, for the first time we encounter notions emanating from mainstream Judaism concerning the "Evil Kingdom," i.e. Rome and identifying it with the "Fourth Beast" mentioned in the Book of Daniel.[18] Rome's role in history, its future and fate became subject to constant reflection, particularly in the growing wave of Apocalyptic literature written in the last decades of the first century, namely Fourth Ezra, the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch and in Christian circles

---

[17] *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*, Leiden, 1997, pp. 152–187. A good example (one of the very few) is the Psalms of Solomon, composed in the wake of Roman conquest of Judaea. However, it seems that the overwhelming evidence for apocalyptic speculation comes from Qumran circles (hence our own emphasis on these sources) and their surrounding millieu. See, however, John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, second edition, Grand Rapids MI 1998, pp. 37–38.

[18] On Rome's role as the fourth kingdom cf. M. Hadas-Lebel, "Rome 'Quatrième empire' et le symbole du porc", in: A. Caquot *et al.* (eds.), *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage a Valentine Nikiprowetzky*, Leuven-Paris, 1986, pp. 297–312. Rome's demise definitely became a focus of eschatological hope, as can be gleaned from the third book of Sibylline Oracles, a composite work, gathering various prophecies from different periods. Though the provenance and date of the composition remain uncertain, as the book contains the aspirations of Jews widely scattered in the Mediterranean basin, it must have reached its final form when Roman yoke disappointed initial welcome and acceptance. See Eric Gruen's illuminating appraisal, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*, Berkeley 1998, pp. 268–290.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the Book of Revelation. If we follow the aspirations voiced by the anonymous seer in the Apocalypse of Fourth Ezra, Esau's (= Rome) destruction and the ushering in of Jacob's kingdom were at the top of his agenda.[19] The Book of Daniel supplied the rabbis with yet another element, the "Seventy Weeks" scheme enabling them to come to grips with the course of history. The rabbis, as demonstrated by the only rabbinical chronography, Seder Olam Rabbah (attributed by tradition to R. Yossi—a second century Galilean sage), were prepared to adopt this computation only to verify past events. To them, it indicated the time that elapsed between the destruction of the first and second temples. This notion was also adopted retrospectively by Josephus.[20] Josephus' treatment of the Book of Daniel is instructive.

---

[19] Fourth Ezra 12,10–36 reinterpreted Daniel's vision of the "Fourth Kingdom". The identification of Rome with Esau emanates from the vision expounded in 6, 7–10 on which see M.E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, Minneapolis, 1990, pp. 160–161. However, G. Cohen has reservations about such an identification prior to the mid-second century, see, "Esau as a Symbol in Early Medieval Thought", in: A. Altman (ed.), *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Cambridge MA, 1967, pp. 19–20. At the same time Rome became the center of Christian apocalyptic speculation. Rome – Babylon was seen as a harlot city, and Nero its ruler and the persecutor of the Christians was regarded as the Antichrist, cf. R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation*, Edinburgh, 1993, pp. 343–350. Having though said that, one ought to remember that the identification of Rome with the "Fourth Beast" was adopted by mainstream Christian circles with great reservation. For, according to Paul (II Thessalonians, 2, 7) the "mystery of the lawlessness was already active" though it was being held back by someone. Paul speaking covertly welcomed the curb imposed on the forces of lawlessness (i.e. Antichrist). The restraining power was identified by Church Fathers such as Tertullian (*De ressurectione mortuorum*, 24, 18–19) as no other than the Roman Empire. The rabbis, however, had no qualms about speculating on this element (the prophecy on the Four Beasts) in Daniel's eschatological scenario. This element is quite apparent in the classical Hebrew *Piyyut* (cf. Yahalom, *infra* note 104). Further remarks on the reactions to the destruction of the Temple, see, M.E. Stone, "Reactions to Destructions of The Second Temple", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 12 (1981), pp. 195–204.

[20] Though the acceptance of the book of Daniel into the Biblical Canon reflects the high esteem the book enjoyed among Jews, rabbinical views on Daniel as a prophet were somewhat more ambivalent. See, Babylonian Talmud *Megillah* 3a (compare *ibid.*, *Sanhedrin* 93b–94a). Against the view expressed there, see *Mechiltah Pischa*, I. On the other hand, Josephus, (*Antiquities* 10, 210), regarded the book as an important source of "exact information of hidden things that are to come", thus, deserving its place in the sacred writings. Was Josephus expressing a long-standing view about Daniel's prophetic reliability? (see note, 21). On Daniel and the Biblical canon, see M. Haran, *The Biblical Collection Its Consolidation to the End of the Second Temple Times and Changes of Form to the End of the Middle Ages*, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 123–124; 315; 331–355 (Hebrew). All this does not mean that Daniel's eschatological scheme and messianic computations were ignored, as could be clearly gleaned from the *Seder Olam Rabbah*. See the following note. On the *Seder Olam Rabbah* as a reflection of rabbinical chronography within the Hellenistic and Roman chronographical milieu, see Milkowsky's succinct presentation of the main issues, "Seder

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

In his opinion the Book of Daniel incorporated prophetic traditions pertaining to the Flavians. Thus, in his *Jewish War* he regarded the current hegemony of Rome in Palestine as the fulfillment of Daniel's predictions concerning the "Fourth Beast and its Ten Horns", the "Tenth Horn" being Vespasian.[21] Dating the "End" was an entirely different matter.

The "Seventy Weeks" scheme was not to be used in order to determine the future. The only minor modification of that computation in Rabbinic sources is the addition of the fifty-two years to

---

Olam and Jewish Chronography in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods", *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 52 (1985), pp. 115–139. Though, the *Seder Olam* does occasionally refer to the Sabbatical cycles (ed. Ratner, 11, 15, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), this cycle does not seem to serve as a governing principle of its chronological framework, save in the concluding chapters 29–30, where the Danielic messianic chronology of 490 years (9, 24–27) is used to demonstrate the span of time between the establishment of the Second Temple and its destruction (compare Babylonian Talmud, *Nazir* 32b, *Yalkut Shimoni* sec. 1062). Accordingly, B.Z. Wacholder's suggestions (*Hebrew Union College Annual* 46 (1975), p. 211ff.) concerning the *Seder Olam* as representing a rabbinic chronomessianic school are far from convincing. The Bar Kochbah revolt signified the final blow to Jewish national and cultic independence, and in Christian eyes the final accord of heavenly retribution. For a short appraisal of Christian views on the Bar Kochbah revolt see my "Constantine and the Jews: The Prohibition Against Entering Jerusalem—History and Hagiography", *Zion* 60 (1995), pp. 129–135 (Hebrew).

We would not be far off the mark if we assume that the rabbis avoided further usage of the "70 Weeks" cycle because it was "identified" with the sectarian apocalyptic scheme (= Qumran) on which see D. Dimant's study (*supra*, note 4), as well as with Christian chronomessianism. At least in one case this very same cycle is used in what seems to be an implicit polemical note against the Jews (see *infra* note 24). Other early Christian computations saw the consummation of the 490 years in the birth of Christ, (see *infra*, note 000). While other later Christian traditions disclose an effort to readjust the "Sabbatical Cycles" (see *infra*, notes 000).

[21] There seems to be no consensus concerning Josephus' treatment of Daniel, especially in regard to his interpretation of Daniel as predicting the destruction of the Temple. See F. Millar, "Hellenistic History in a Near Eastern Perspective: The Book of Daniel" in: P. Cartledge *et al.* (eds.), *Hellenistic Constructs: Essays in Culture, History and Historiography*, Berkeley, 1997, pp. 96–97. Millar's careful reservations stand in stark contradiction to F.F. Bruce's study "Josephus and Daniel", *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 4 (1965), pp. 148–162. S. Mason has presented a firm case for the identification and centrality of Daniel's predictions concerning the "Fourth Beast" i.e. Rome in Josephus' historical outlook, which enhances the assumption that he regarded the Book of Daniel as a prophecy and not merely as a "pseudo-prophecy" describing recent events in the early days of the Hasmonean Revolt, cf. his "Josephus, Daniel and the Flavian House" in: F. Parente & J. Sievers (eds.), *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith*, Leiden, 1994, pp. 161ff. especially pp. 178–191. It ought to be stressed further that Vespasian held a special position in Josephus' eyes as seen in the latter's famous "prophecy" on that emperor's role in history. On this anecdote and its parallels in the sibylline and rabbinical tradition see A. Schalit, "Die Erhebung Vespasians nach Flavius Josephus, Talmud und Midrasch. Zur Geschichte einer messianischen Prophetie", *ANRW* II, Berlin-New York 1975, pp. 208–327.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the sum of 490 years, based on Daniel's prediction: "He shall make a firm league with the mighty (or: many) for one week and, the week half spent" (9, 27). This modification though signifying the period between the destruction of the Temple and the end of the Bar-Kochba revolt, was most probably modeled on the fifty-two years that elapsed between the destruction of the first temple and the Cyrus declaration. In the post second Temple context it referred to the tradition alluding to a similar permit granted by Hadrian some time at the early stages of his reign.[22] The Seventy Weeks scheme appears to have been vastly exploited by the early Church Fathers. The latter, so it seems, had a great impact on the usage of this timeframe by the rabbis. The rabbinical motivation to incorporate this scheme was twofold: first, to consolidate an imagery of symmetry between the destructions of both temples, which in a way resembled the Qumranian idea of two parallel aeons.[23] Second, was to refute any usage of that scheme as part of a current or future eschatological scenario. The latter had a polemical end. Early Church chronographers, such as Julius Africanus and later, Eusebius of Caesarea, followed still by others, used the "Seventy Weeks" timetable to demonstrate its applicability to the events surrounding the Incarnation of Christ during the Herodian period. In their understanding Jesus' epiphany was at the age about which Jacob the patriarch prophesied "A Prince shall not fail out of Judah . . . until there come the

[22] Jerusalem Talmud, *Taaniot* 4, 8 (69a) in the name of R. Yossi. Compare, *Lamentations Rabbah*, 2, 2 and *Seder Olam*, 30 (a different tradition). Hadrian's permit was hinted at in the Epistle of Barnabas, 16, 3–4, on which see the remarks of D.R. Schwartz, "On Barnabas and Bar-Kokhba" *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, Tübingen, 1992, pp. 147–153. There have been attempts, however, to interpret the tradition in the Epistle of Barnabas as relating to events during the emperor Nerva's days, whose attitude to Jews was in stark contrast to that of the Flavian emperors, see, P. Richardson & M.B. Shukster, "Barnabas, Nerva, and the Yavnean Rabbis" *Journal of Theological Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 31–55. In any case the expectations of the Jews regarding the renewal of the Temple were highlighted too in a counter apocalypse of Jewish-Christian origin, The Apocalypse of Peter which is assumed to have been composed during the very days of the Bar Kokhbah revolt, see R. Bauckham, "The Apocalypse of Peter" *Apocrypha* 5 (1994), pp. 7ff., esp. 39–43. On the 52 years that elapsed between the destruction of the first Temple and Cyrus' declaration, see *Seder Olam*, 29 and parallels. The tradition concerning the Bar Kochbah revolt surfaced later, in several of Jerome's commentaries to the Bible, on which, see most recently H.I. Newman's arguments, *Jerome and the Jews* (Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University) Jerusalem, 1997, pp. 204–206 (Hebrew). From the current Christian perspective Hadrian's permit signified the coming of the "last days" which consummated the epoch of the evil, see the Epistle of Barnabas, 2, 1; 4, 9.

[23] See Talmon (*op. cit.*, note 1), pp. 294–295.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

things stored up for him and he is the expectation of the nations" (Genesis, 49, 10).[24] In contrast, the rabbis, contrary to all accepted traditions, dated Jesus' activity to the time of R. Joshua the son of Perajah i.e. to the days of Alexander Jannaeus (nearly a century earlier).[25] This served them not only to counter the above mentioned Christian tradition, but also to distance Jesus' crucifixion from the destruction of the Temple,[26] described by early Church Fathers as an act of Divine retribution to avenge the killing of the Messiah.[27] But, there were clear signs that later Christians were continuously exploiting the "70 Weeks" scheme to determine the approaching age of the Antichrist which was to be followed by the aspired Parousia.[28]

---

[24] Julius Africanus concluded his reckoning of the 490 years with Christ's crucifixion, see, apud Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* VIII, 2 (ed. I.A. Heikel, GCS 23, Leipzig, 1913, pp. 375ff.). Compare Tertullian, *Adversus Judaeos* 8 (ed. A. Gerlo, CCSL 2, Turnholt, 1954, pp. 1356–1364) who tended to identify the ending of the "70 Weeks" cycle with the destruction of the Second Temple. See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I, 21, who arrives at the same result in an original manner, essentially dividing Daniel's reckoning to two distinct periods of time with a long interval between them, compare, Eusebius, *ibid.* See too, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XII, 19 (PG 33, cols. 748–749). See further William Adler's illuminating survey in: James C. VanderKam and William Adler (Eds.), *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, Assen/Minneapolis 1996, pp. 201–238.

[25] Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 107b; *ibid.*, *Sotah* 47a. Compare traditions in the texts of *Toldoth Jeshu*, see S. Krauss, *Das leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen*, Berlin, 1902, pp. 38ff.; 182–185.

[26] As pointed out by J. Rosenthal (based on mediaeval Jewish polemical texts), "The State of Israel in the Light of Christian Theology", *idem, Studies and Texts in Jewish History, Literature and Religion*, Vol. II, Chicago & Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 557–558 (Hebrew). Though our assumption might require further proof, the rabbinical tradition dating Jesus' life nearly a century earlier than the accepted date should not be brushed aside as a mere chronological blunder on their part.

[27] See G.W.H. Lampe, "A.D. 70 in Christian Reflection", in: E. Bammel & C.F.D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 153–171, esp. pp. 166–171.

[28] In the turn of the second century a writer named Judas reckoned that the seventy weeks should end at the time of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus. See, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 7. Still again in the second half of the fourth century Apollinarius of Laodicea determined the approaching "End" according to the Book of Daniel to the year ca. 490 C.E., cf. Jerome, *In Danielem*, III, 9, 24. (See further p. 144, and note 92). We ought not forget too, that the Christians were driven to vindicate Daniel's predictive calculations due to Porphyry's (Daniel's late third century pagan commentator) sharp criticism of Christian use of the Book of Daniel, which to him represented a treatise not composed by the person ("seer") under whose name it appeared, but by a contemporary of Antiochus Epiphanes, who was describing current affairs, see Jerome's introduction to his Commentary to Daniel. What was at stake in the Christian mind was aptly described by Oliver Nicholson, "Golden Age and the End of the World: Myths of Mediterranean Life from Lactantius to Joshua the Stylite", in: M.J. Chiat and K.L. Reyerson (Eds.), *The Medieval Mediterranean: Cross-Cultural Contacts*, St. Cloud 1988, pp. 11–18 (at p. 13).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The effort of the rabbis to limit the scope of Daniel's prophecy, might have been in order to refute or dismiss the Christian endeavour. We shall try to demonstrate later on, a similar reaction on the part of the Church Fathers encountering an alternative eschatological scheme being cultivated by the rabbis.

At that very same period, early signs of a change in the rabbis' outlook on the issue of national and historical redemption of the people of Israel, were beginning to emerge. The traumatic event of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple shifted the rabbis' attention from the salvation of the individual to that of the people. From a plan of redemption based on prophetic restorative notions of an amorphious plan of nature, to a much more radical (accompanied by catastrophic elements) and acute scenario of national collective deliverance. Clearly there was no essential need or craving for a redemptive scheme of the latter model prior to the most brutal blow to Jewish nationalistic and religious image by this foreign and hostile power. With all the continued criticism voiced by the Pharisees and other segments of the Jewish public against different sovereigns governing the affairs of Judaea, there was neither a real sense of eschatological urgency, nor the need for radical change, beyond (except in some details) what the bible envisaged as the scenario of the Eschaton.[29]

But then, an alternative emerged, after the fall of Jerusalem, based on the only model of biblical national salvation ever realized, the story of the Exodus from Egypt.[30] It had all the ingredients other Prophetic schemes lacked, especially the element of liberation from the yoke of an oppressing power, a yoke that was according to the

---

[29] See in short, E.E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Jerusalem, 1975, pp. 651–653. See, however, Baumgarten (*supra*, pp. 118–119 and *op. cit.*, note 17).

[30] I am slightly sceptical whether one ought to regard the prophetic movements that roamed the countryside around Jerusalem between 40–70 C.E., heralding apocalyptic events and signs borrowed from the biblical Exodus-Conquest context, as early precursors of the phenomenon described here. If I am right the latent usage of this model of divine redemption deserves some explanation. If we are to accept some innovative insights proposed recently by E. Gruen in a study on the nature of Graeco-Roman literature on the Jews we might possess a clue. According to Gruen, in some Jewish quarters in the Diaspora or more precisely in Egypt the Exodus story was presented in a much adapted form in an edifying manner describing the Israelites as one time rulers of Egypt and Moses as their leader who cleansed the land of Egypt from its false idols. This adaptation was designed, "to establish the claims of Jews to a place of eminence in the history of Egypt" and exalt their return to that land. It is this adaptation, he contends, which enables us to reevaluate the presentation of the Exodus story by the Graeco-Roman writers cf. *idem*, "The Use and Abuse of the Exodus Story", *Jewish History* 12 (1998), pp. 93–122.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Divine promise to be limited in time (400 or 430 years). The immediate urge to bring this somewhat latent eschatological scenario (time and again reflected on as a model by the Bible itself) into the focus of the public was the need to celebrate the Passover without a Temple. Passover was, after all, the focal point of Second Temple pilgrimage. The atmosphere of dismay and lament that engulfed many Jews after 70 C.E. presented an extreme contrast to the elation of the pilgrims and celebrants flocking to Jerusalem prior to that year.[31] In these circumstances the rabbis laid down the foundations of a novel way to celebrate the Exodus and the Passover night by transforming it from a sacrificial meal into an occasion of reflection on and study of the Exodus narrative. There and then the Passover Haggadah made its initial steps.

There was however, another and no less important element that contributed to this important change, the adoption of the Exodus narrative by the earliest Christian traditions[32] and its typological centrality for the early church's historical and theological message of the crucifixion story, as clearly demonstrated in Melito of Sardis' homily *Peri Pascha* (= On Pascha) composed ca. 160 C.E.[33] Melito's homily presented a great exegetical challenge, for it articulated in a very subtle manner the Christian argument based on typology, "that the mock-up story, i.e. the Biblical Exodus was superseded by the finished article", the story of Christ.[34] Was this in itself sufficient to

---

[31] On the mood following the destruction of the Temple, see Urbach's now classic study, "Ascesis and Suffering in Talmudic and Midrashic Sources" in: S.W. Baron *et al.* (eds.), *Y.F. Baer's Jubilee Volume*, Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 48ff., esp. 54–56 (Hebrew).

[32] On the adoption of the Exodus imagery in the New Testament corpus, see, H.W. Kuhn's summary s.v. "Exodusmotive III", *Theologische Realenzyklopädie Bd.*10, Berlin-New York 1982, pp. 741–745. It goes without saying that this notion may have been entertained within mainstream Jewish circles too.

[33] On the Passover Haggadah as a counter narrative to the Christian salvation history, see a most illuminating study by I.J. Yuval, "Easter and Passover as Early Jewish-Christian Dialogue" in: P. Bradshaw & L.A. Hoffman (eds.), *Passover and Easter: Origins and History to Modern Times*, Notre Dame 1999 pp. 98–124. On Melito's *Peri Pascha* within the context of Jewish-Christian relations in second century Asia Minor, see J. Lieu, *Image & Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century*, Edinburgh, 1996, pp. 199–240.

[34] The definition of Typology as well as other modes of patristic exegesis, and their employment in early Christian texts have received recently a new and thorough re-examination. See F. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 193–200 (on Melito's use of typology).

An important element in Melito's interpretation of Christ's saga was its typological resemblance with the biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis, 22), {see

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

bring about a polemical response to counter the latter narrative? Seen from the perspective of a ruined Temple[35] and a persecuted people—a fate that was being attributed openly by the Christians to the Father avenging the killing of his Son, the messiah, or, according to others, the martyrdom of the "Lord's brother," James[36]—the emerging Haggadah was to serve an entirely different purpose. It was the foundation of a new and more promising salvation story for the Jews. The Exodus story was essentially not messianic or apocalyptic in nature, but it nevertheless was drawn into the center of Jewish future hope.[37] The great exegetical effort of interpreting the Exodus narrative resulted in the composition of substantial portions of midrashic literature. In the course of this exegetical endeavour, much attention was paid to the set timetable designated by the Divine commitment to Abraham to free his descendents from the yoke of a foreign nation, i.e. 400 years, a commitment kept to the letter. Thus, an old/new scheme of deliverance with its old/new timetable, was revitalized. At

---

text in S.G. Hall (ed.), *On Pascha and Fragments*, Oxford, 1979, pp. 74–79 (Fragments 9–12)}. According to an early, though esoteric, Jewish tradition this event occurred on the first day of the Passover, cf. Jubilees, 17,15–18; 19,1. This tradition reappeared in later rabbinical texts too (for instance in the *Mechilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Pisha*, 11 {3rd century}, as well as in several parallel targumic and midrashic texts). The rationale behind this tradition, at least in its rabbinical phrasing in the *Mechilta*, was to tie the martyrdom like sacrifice of Isaac with the redemption of his descendants from Egypt, hence the blood on the door threshold (Exodus, 12, 13). The resemblance to the crucifixion of Jesus and the salvation it entails in Christian thought was striking. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that as from a short while later, the rabbis changed their views about the dating of Isaac's sacrifice by shifting it from the Passover to Rosh Hashanah, cf. *Leviticus Rabbah*, 29,9 with parallel hints in Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah*, 31a. What most probably decided the matter was the fact that the latter notion became firmly fixed within the liturgical rite. Notwithstanding diverse or even conflicting scholarly views on the matter, it is quite plausible in my judgement, to see the inception of this new rabbinical tradition as a result of the direct confrontation with the opposing Christian image. I would like to thank my student Shalhevet Dothan for sharing her attractive conclusions on this topic with me.

[35] The earliest among the Christians to allude to the connection between the ruined and deserted Temple and the cessation of the Paschal sacrifice, which gave way to Christ's Passover, was Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, 123, 134–135. See R.A. Clements, *Peri Pascha: Passover and Displacement of Jewish Interpretation Within Origen's Exegesis*, (Doctoral Thesis, Harvard Divinity School) 1997, pp. 149–150.

[36] As stated by Hegesippus, apud Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 23, 18. Compare, Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I, 47, wrongly attributing this notion to Josephus, (see *supra* note 27).

[37] See A. Momigliano's remark, "Preliminary Indications on the Apocalypse and Exodus in the Hebrew Tradition" in: *Idem, Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, (ed. by S. Berti), Chicago, 1994, pp. 98–99.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

first glimpse, a time span of 400 years was actually quite a long duration in eschatological terms, and its introduction might have essentially reflected a hidden intention to postpone the aspired date and to ward off acute and intense expectations. Nevertheless, it offered a new hope based on a limited and relatively short term expectation, which penetrated slowly into the minds of the people.

The Christian perception of the Exodus story was entirely different. The saga served as a type that had reached its full realization in the history of the emerging Church,[38] and therefore it was finite too.[39] Many of the Church Fathers reiterated this in their public homilies, biblical commentaries and catechetical courses.[40] Thus, Origen in his biblical homilies systematically excluded the Jews from the real and hidden meaning of the Exodus saga. He argued that their readings and interpretation of the story were merely literal "historical" and that their claim to be the recipients of biblical promises lacked foundation. He later placed the entire biblical narrative of the departure from Egypt and the subsequent journey through the desert on a new footing by regarding it typologically as a description of the Christian's path to spiritual perfection.[41] Every element in the story was thus seen as prefiguring an actual and by far more significant event in the recently realized Christian narrative. Therefore, the Church Fathers were prepared to utilize the Exodus narrative only inasmuch as it vindicated or verified the epiphany of Christ and that of the Church; it was not to be utilized as an eschatological scheme yet to be fulfilled. Thus, again according to Origen the forty-two stages or stops in the journey of the Children of Israel from Egypt to the promised land, symbolized the duration of forty-two generations from Adam to Christ according to the Gospels.[42]

The superiority of the Christian veritas over the Jewish figura became primal in later Christian exegesis and preaching. The latter notion was emphasized especially in commentaries composed during the fourth century and onward dismissing any Jewish attempt to view

---

[38] Cf. Irenaeus, *Demonstration*, 46, who contended that the Exodus from Egypt was a figure of the later Exodus of the Church from among the nations.

[39] See the foundation of this notion in I Cor. 10, 11.

[40] See J. Danielou's concise presentation in his *From Shadow to Reality: Studies in Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, Westminster MD, 1960, pp. 175–201.

[41] Cf. Origen's *Peri Archon* IV, 2.6; 3.12, *Homilies on Exodus*, IV–VII. See further Clements (*supra*, note 35) pp. 171–180.

[42] Origen, *Homilies on Numbers*, 27, 3. Later reiterated by Jerome, *Epistle*, 78, 2.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the Exodus narrative as having present significance most probably (as I shall try to demonstrate) reflecting contemporary Jewish aspirations.[43] However, at the same time, during the second half of the fourth century, contrary to the above trend, leading Christian theologians like Apollinarius of Laodicea were advocating a full fledged "materialistic" eschatological scheme based on the famous biblical apocalyptic chart of the "70 Weeks". We thus witness a reverse picture of what has been demonstrated above, concerning the rabbinical attitude toward the eschatological calculations in the Book of Daniel.

We are able to conclude so far that a readjustment mechanism, though not so similar to the one we have encountered above, within the Qumran circle, seems to have developed within rabbinical circles as well. We may also infer (and later try to demonstrate), that from thence Jewish eschatological schemes and calculations were being moulded in conjunction or as a reaction to the eschatological models that were being disseminated in Christian circles. It is my contention that the rabbis, though aware of the far-reaching social implications of apocalyptic miscalculations,[44] did not hesitate to delve themselves openly into such computations. The aim of this study is therefore, to demonstrate how Jews in late antiquity calculated the "End" and tried to apply their computations within a complex cultural atmosphere in the midst of rapidly changing historical circumstances. At the center of our interest lies the mechanism by which this process took place. It should be stressed, however, that

[43] This is the impression one receives from arguments voiced by Ambrose of Milan and Zeno of Verona and other current and later exegetes. See the remarks by R. Hillier, *Arator on the Acts of the Apostles: A Baptismal Commentary*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 163–169.

[44] The rabbis' harsh judgment of those who were discouraged by the failure of such calculations to materialize is voiced in their famous maxim: "R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end etc." (Bab. Talmud *Sanhedrin* 97b). On the division, between those who expect attentively and acutely the appearance of the Messiah, and those who watch all this with reservation, and its impact on the historical documentation of apocalyptic expectations, see R. Landes, "On Owls, Roosters and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method of Reading a Refractory Documentation", *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly* (1997), pp. 49–69 (especially pp. 49–59). Landes follows a rabbinical metaphor about a cock and a bat discussing the coming dawn (Babylonian Talmud, *ibid.*, 98b). In the following discussion I shall restrict my observations to two types of eschatological computations within rabbinical sources: (a). The acute and precise dating (b). The redemptive typological cycles (400/430 years in Egyptian exile) of which we have external (i.e. Christian) testimony as to their presence and importance in Jewish circles.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

neither the terminology nor the nature or the scope of the apocalyptic scenarios envisaged by the rabbis (or the Church Fathers) will be discussed here.

Deferring the Moment and Relying on Others

Following the humiliating defeat of the Bar-Kochbah rebels, the rabbis made an effort to quell messianic fervor by toning it down.[45] It finally dawned on the members of Rabbinic circles that Rome was not a passing phase in history, and that its supremacy was part of a divine mission.[46] Not entirely surprisingly and based on the recent Jewish debacle, though perhaps for other reasons as well, early Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon were advocating the idea of a terrestial kingdom of Christ in Jerusalem.[47] Rabbinical effort to quell active messianic fervor was apparent in more than one way. While on the one hand they reiterated the importance of the "Four Empires" scheme, stressing its preordained nature,[48] on the other hand they introduced a septennial scheme of the "Signs of the End" of an extremely amorphous character, resembling similar schemes found in earlier apocalyptic texts such as the Apocalypse of Baruch. At the same time they refrained from specifying when all this actually will come to pass.[49] This attempt seems

---

[45] On the messianic foundation of the Bar Kochba revolt, see among other studies, P. Schäfer, "Akiva and Bar Kokhba" in: W.S. Green (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, Vol. II, Michigan, 1980, pp. 113–130; A. Oppenheimer, "The Messianism of Bar Kokhba" in: Z. Baras (ed.) *Messianism and Eschatology*, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 153–165 (with further references) (Hebrew); and I.M. Gafni, *Land Center and Diaspora—Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity*, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 71–73.

[46] Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 18a. The Rabbis seem to have been the last to accept the scope and duration of Roman rule. Compare Josephus, supra n. 21. Skepticism concerning Rome's role in universal history was not limited to her rivals. See E. Gabba, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome*, Berkeley 1991, pp. 192–194.

[47] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80–83; 118,2; 138,3. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses* 5.33–36, confuting Christians who see only symbols in millenarian texts.

[48] *Genesis Rabbah* 2.4. This saying is attributed to R. Simon. b. Lakish (mid third century), but it may well reflect a longer standing tradition.

[49] *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, "This Month", 9 and parallels, among others, compare Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 97a. The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch alongside Fourth Ezra offer a different division of the "signs of the End" comprising of twelve eras. The apocalyptic scenario in Baruch leads to a cosmic annihilation followed by a new era, the age of the Messiah. In the past it has been debated time and again whether the eschatological scenario according to mainstream Jewish circles carried within it a catastrophic dimension. In any case, the early Christian tradition

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to have been enhanced later by an expansion of the eschatological time frame, introducing a scheme of a preordained plan of world history of seven millennia based on the famous verse in Psalms: "For a thousand years in your eyes are like a day etc." (90, 4).[50] This concept made its way into the early Christian visionary apocalyptic literature via the Book of Revelation (20; 21) and the Second Epistle of Peter (3, 8).[51] This scheme and particularly its subdivision into three eras of two thousand years each, might have originated within early Iranian Apocalyptic literature, as reaffirmed recently,[52] but it was introduced concurrently in Christian as well as in rabbinical circles.[53] The shared concept of a "world week" served as yet another

developed this characteristic which influenced apocalyptic tradition such as the one found in the Apocalypse of Baruch. Cf. R. Nir-Grinstein, "*The Destruction of Jerusalem and Eschatology in 'The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch'*", Doctoral dissertation, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv, 1996, pp. 131–138. R. Nir's view goes against the grain of current opinion concerning the nature and sources of this apocalypse, therefore the presence of the above mentioned notions in later rabbinical sources could be attributed to the absorption of Christian ideas.

[50] Babylonian Talmud, 97a; *Genesis Rabbah*, 8, 2 and parallels.

[51] On the Christian concept of the "cosmic week" see, J. Daniélou, "Le typologie millénnariste de la semaine", *Vigiliae Christianae* 2 (1948), pp. 1–16.

[52] See P. Gignoux, "Hexaéméron et Millénarisme: Quelques motifs de comparaison entre Mazdéism et Judaïsme", in: S. Shaked & A. Netzer (eds.), *Irano-Judaica II: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, Jerusalem, 1990, pp. 72–84, esp. 81–84.

[53] Though, admittedly, some traces of it are to be found in earlier esoteric Jewish traditions such as in the Assumption of Moses, 10, 2 (first century C.E.). As for the Christian tradition see, Epistle of Barnabas, XV, 4. For a different view of Barnabas as an early representative of millenarianism describing him rather as a propagator of the eighth day, the "new aeon", see E. Ferguson, "Was Barnabas a Chiliast?", *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham Y. Malherbe*, ed. by D.L. Black *et al.*, Minneapolis, 1990, pp. 157–167. The theory of the six millennia was later to be transformed by Augustine, who "replaced" it by the notion of the six *aetates mundi* (= ages of the world). See Augustine, *De civitate dei* 22,30. See further the important study by R. Schmidt, "Aetates Mundi: Die Weltalter als Gliederungsprinzip der Geschichte", *ZKG* 67 (1956), pp. 288–317.

On the adoption of a millenarian scheme by later Church Fathers, see A. Luneau, *L'Histoire du salut chez les Péres de l'Eglise: la doctrine des âges du monde*, Paris, 1964, pp. 47ff. Contrary to traditional scholarly views on the scope of millenarianism, in the thought of the church fathers, such as Hippolytus, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Lactantius and others, Charles C. Hill has raised some fundamental objections challenging the current view that chiliasm was widespread. See his *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity*, Oxford, 1992, *passim*.

This view was however, central to Julius Africanus' concept of Chronology. Cf. Alden A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition*, Lewisburg, 1979, pp. 146–147. On Eusebius' manner in tackling this scheme, see B. Croke, "The Origins of the Christian World Chronicles", *History and Historians in Late Antiquity*, ed. by B. Croke & Alanna M. Emmett, Sydney, 1990, pp. 120–121;

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

means to defer acute messianic expectations in Jewish circles: the Messianic Age was to begin only in the year 240 C.E.[54] In the case of the Church the aim was to defer the close consummation of the *Parousia* (i.e. the second coming) in face of arousing expectations towards the turn of the second century.[55] However, the sub-division of the 6000 years into three eras of 2000 years each, 2000 of Chaos followed by 2000 years of Law (= Torah) and then 2000 years of Messianic age, though accepted in principle by both religions,[56] incurred some difficulties in both camps and was subjected to ongoing

---

On its use by later Byzantine Chroniclers, see E. Jefferys, "Chronological Structures in Malalas' Chronicle", *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. by *idem et al.*, Sydney, 1990, pp. 111–120.

[54] In the eyes of third century rabbis like the famous Babylonian sage Rav (d. 247 C.E.) the appearance of the Messiah in a time when "all the predestined dates have passed", was entirely dependent on the "repentance and good deeds" of the people, Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 97b. Compare the saying, *ibid.* that the Messiah should have come at the beginning of the 2000 years of the Messianic era, and therefore any delay should be attributed to iniquities of the people.

[55] The Christian writer Judas composed a discourse on the weeks in the book of Daniel. His record stopped at the tenth year of the reign of Septimus Severus (ca. 202 C.E.), and he was of the opinion that Antichrist was near. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 7. Compare Hippolytus' anecdotes on the occasional cases in which bishops induced their flock to expect the imminent return of Christ, *Commentary on Daniel* III, 18, 19. The second half of the second century saw an intensification in the composition of Christian *Sibyllina* (i.e. the *Seventh* and *Eighth Sibylline Oracles*) with an acute sense of the approaching "End" coupled with a vehement attack on Rome, cf. in short B. McGinn, "*Teste David cum Sibylla*: The Significance of the Sibylline Tradition in the Middle Ages", *Idem, Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*, Aldershot 1994, (Variorum Rep. No. IV), pp. 12–14.

Although, widely accepted opinion attributed to the early Montanists the belief in chiliasm and the belief in an approaching *Parousia*, recent research along the lines suggested by Hill (*supra*, note 53) demonstrates a much more complex picture. See C. Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 95–105.

[56] Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 97a–97b; compare Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah*, 9a. Paul himself already, seems to hint at the existence of three stages in history (Romans 5, 12–17) namely Adam = sin; Moses = Law; Christ = Messiah. This subdivision of time appears later in Augustine's *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistola ad Romanos*, 13–18, though he himself was as has been reiterated time and again a great opponent of the millennial scheme. See R. Landes (*op. cit.*, note 5), pp. 156–160. For a more moderate view of Augustine's attitude to millenarianisn, see G. Bonner, "Augustine and Millenarianism", in: R. Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 235–254.

However, this division of history became an important component in later chronographical works such as in the case of John Malalas. See Jeffreys (*supra* note 53), p. 113; Procopius' of Gaza, *Commentary on Genesis*, XI (*PG* 87, col. 316). It appeared later in the Western chronographical tradition, in treatises such as the Laterculus Malalianus, cf. recently, J. Stevenson, *The "Laterculus Malalianus" and the School of Archbishop Theodore*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 23–25; 122 (text), 173–174 (notes).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

polemics. For, in the first place, schematically speaking the year 240 C.E. was 4000 years from the creation, according to an accepted tradition. Nevertheless, on closer Rabbinical scrutiny, the era of the Law did not end in 240 C.E.; indeed, it was nowhere close to it.[57] Secondly, and more importantly, although there were signs of internal rabbinical debate on the nature and duration of the messianic era in contrast with the age of Torah (= Law),[58] the greater "embarrassment" lay in fact that from the Church's point of view Jesus' incarnation and crucifixion annulled the importance of the Law. The approach of the predicted *Parousia* must have only aggravated the tension.

The centrality of the latter element in the debate becomes quite apparent when seen from Eusebius' chronographical perspective. In his opinion, the year 29 C.E. the year in which Jesus was crucified, was actually the beginning of the 81st Jubilee of the world according to the Hebrews (*Principium LXXXI lobelei secundum Hebraeos*), i.e. the beginning of the messianic era.[59] This apparently polemic statement

---

[57] See Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah*, 9a. This element in rabbinical chronology was the subject of an on-going philological-historical discussion in Geonic and later medieval Jewish Talmudic commentary. For a succinct discussion of some of the problems see D. Rosenthal, *Mishna Aboda Zara—A Critical Edition*, Part 2, Jerusalem 1980, pp. 100–106. See also below, n. 63.

[58] Namely, the role of the Torah in the messianic age, on which see Davies' comprehensive survey, W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on Mount*, Cambridge 1964, pp. 156–190.

[59] Eusebius, *Chronicle* (ed. R. Helm, GCS 47, Berlin, 1956, p. 174). Apparently, the rabbis as well as Eusebius, calculated the years "ab Abrahamo", though they differed in their reasoning and actual results. Eusebius "Considered Abraham to be the most ancient figure whose date could be established with credible precision", so Mosshammer (*op. cit.*, note 53), p. 25. He therefore, introduced the date of Abraham's birth into his Canons as a universal standard. On this matter Eusebius differed from Julius Africanus who began his chronography from the creation, thus dating Christ's birth to the year 5500.

Jewish tradition, reckoning the world's chronology from Adam's birth, followed two different schemes for the computation of the antediluvian chronology. The first, based on the Massoretic Text, (cf. *Seder Olam*, Ch. 1), totalled 1656 years, whereas the second was based on the Septuagint version followed among others, by Josephus (*Antiquities* 1, 82), totalled 2262 years. It seems that the rabbis tended to agree with Eusebius on the fact that with Abraham a new era had began. Thus, according to one rabbinical tradition the age of Torah (= Law) should be reckoned from the date Abraham migrated from Harran, at the age of 52, totalling 2023 years from Adam (Babylonian Talmud, *Avoda Zarah* 9a). Compare, Eusebius' reckoning according to which the fifty-first year of Abraham was the beginning of the forty-first Jubilee of the Jews, totalling together 2000 years from Adam. Cf. apud Georgios Syncellus 185.3 (ed. Alden A. Mosshammer, Teubner, 1984, p. 28 112), compare however, Eusebius, *Chronicle* (ed. R. Helm, p. 250) totalling 3184 years between Adam and Abraham, cf. Mosshammer, (*op. cit.*, note 53) p. 78. According to Eusebius the Exodus from Egypt took place 1512 B.C.E. Along these lines, Eusebius concluded

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

was meant not only to counter the current rabbinical tradition which dated the beginning of the messianic era to the year 240 C.E., but also to demonstrate that even according to an authentic Jewish tradition this era was supposed to be calculated from Jesus' crucifixion.[60]

Alongside these bold attempts to consolidate a reconfiguration of the "Eras of the World" in order to ward off and postpone the expected "End", we witness, as mentioned earlier, an opposite attempt demonstrated in a growing exegetical effort to "narrow down" the duration of the eschatological time frame. The alternative was supposed to be more applicable. Thus, as early as the late Tannaitic period, calculations were being modeled on the biblical precedent of the deliverance from Egypt. In this context it becomes quite clear, that the wide array of computations found in the *Mekilta* and *Seder Olam Rabba* was not designed as a mere Midrashic exercise. It contained an element of typological and eschatological speculation.[61] It is not surprising therefore, that the seemingly contradicting time spans the Israelites spent in Egypt, 400 years (according to Gen. 15, 13) or 430 years (Exodus 12, 40–41) brought about a rich display of chronological solutions embodying a whole set of intermediary dates, all applicable to the period of sojourn in Egypt (210; 116/117; and 350 years).[62] When taken at face value the Egyptian set of "target dates" of deliverance meant a rich "selection" of future dates for the awaited deliverance from Rome. In which case, for instance, the 400 year mark, if calculated from the period following the Bar-Kochbah revolt meant that the Children of Israel were yet to be redeemed.

---

that Christ's crucifixion, which inaugurated yet another era (= Messianic age), occurred on the eighy-first Jubilee of the Jews. It seems that Eusebius took this reckoning from traditions similar to those prevailing in Qumran, see now the chart drawn out by D. Dimant (*supra*, note 4) pp. 67–68; 70–71. Eusebius goes on to mention the seventy-first Jubilee year 3500 (p. 109); the beginning of the ninety-sixth Jubilee year 4250 (p. 233) concerning which see *infra* a rabbinic tradition, p. 147.

[60] See *infra* notes 88 and 109.

[61] *Seder Olam*, 14; *Mekilta de Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai*, *Bo*, 12, 39–40; Compare *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, "The Month", 9; *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 48. The rabbis themselves imagined the Jews in Egypt engaging in speculative computations concerning the duration of their enslavement. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Vol. II, p. 237; compare *Exodus Rabbah*, 5, 18.

[62] Though strictly speaking these calculations were to be found in a few non-rabbinic Second Temple period sources (in some cases only in an implicit form), they surfaced later in abundance and in a much detailed form in rabbinical sources. Of all the cited figures in the diverse traditions the one most cited for the duration of Children of Israel's stay in Egypt is 210 years (out of 400), on this see, J. Heinemann, "210 Years of Egyptian Exile", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 22 (1971), pp. 19–30.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

If, however, the 210[63] year mark was calculated from the earliest days of Roman hegemony in Eretz-Israel (i.e. 63 B.C.E.), that day was not too far off, though, the latter date seems to have left few traces in rabbinical tradition.[64]

Could this distortion have occurred on account of the later more traumatic event of the destruction of the Temple, which naturally had a greater impact on the rabbinical perspective of Rome's historical role? Seen from a later perspective this must have been a result of the extreme messianic tension existing between 66–135 C.E. which resulted in three anti-Roman insurrections.[65] One should not discount

---

[63] It is interesting to note the usage of this very same figure by Josephus in his statement concerning the duration of time between the prophecy of Isaiah (44, 28) and Cyrus' famous declaration ending the Babylonian captivity (*Antiquities*, 11, 1–7), a figure which is not wholly consistent with his own chronology given earlier.

[64] Though in current Pharisaic and sectarian local traditions it received its due attention. See Pesher Ha-bakkuk (1Qp Hab) 8, lines 6–7; Psalms of Solomon VIII, 15–21, on which see most recently M. Stern's remarks, *Hasmonean Judaea in the Hellenistic World: Chapters in Political History*, ed. by D.R. Schwartz, Jerusalem, 1995, pp. 203–212, esp. 209–212 (Hebrew).

Rabbinical tradition on the matter is evasive. Though, Pompey's name is not mentioned at all, nevertheless, the Hasmonean power struggle between the brothers Hyrcanus II and Aristobolus II (culminating in the Roman siege and capture of Jerusalem), was described by the rabbis (Babylonian Talmud, *Menachot* 64b and parallels; Jerusalem Talmud, *Taanit*, IV, 68c and parallels) in terms resembling their description of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 69/70 C.E.

Scholars who have dealt with these traditions have tended to dwell on their interdependence and on their relationship to Josephus' account in *Antiquities* XIV, 25–28, ignoring their affinity with and their location within the context of the traditions of the destruction of Jerusalem. See R. Wilk, "When Hyrcanus was Besieging Aristobulus in Jerusalem", *Dor Le-Dor—From the End of Biblical Times Up to the Redaction of the Talmud: Studies in Honor of Joshua Efron*, Jerusalem, 1995, pp. 99–104 (Hebrew). If we are to follow the impression conveyed here by the rabbis one could infer that they regarded the event as one of those that heralded the destruction of the Temple, but not as an event that stood on its own. This could be seen as an intentional distortion on their part for reasons similar to those employed in the dating of Jesus' activity (see notes 26; 27).

All in all, the pre-destruction chronology in rabbinical tradition cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Avoda Zarah*, 9a–9b; *Seder Olam*, 30, merits a separate discussion. See also D.R. Schwartz, "On the Pharisaic Opposition to the Hasmonean Monarchy", *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, Tübingen, 1992, pp. 51–52. Schwartz tends to accept the accuracy of the rabbinical chronology by linking the time divisions pointed out by them to certain events in the history of the Hasmonean monarchy.

[65] See M.D. Herr's survey "Realistic Political Messianism and Cosmic Eschatological Messianism in the Teaching of the Sages", *Tarbiz* 54 (1985), pp. 337–339 (Hebrew). On the messianic background of the revolt under Trajan, see, T.D. Barnes, "Trajan and the Jews", *Journal of Jewish Studies* 40 (1989), pp. 145–162, and more recently in W. Horbury's study, "The Beginnings of the Jewish Revolt Under Trajan", *Martin Hengel's Festschrift*, Tübingen, 1996, pp. 283ff. (esp. pp. 295–303) making a firm case for messianic fervor guiding the revolt. See also *supra* notes 15 and 22.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the possibility that this "distortion" might have had some polemical anti-sectarian aims too. 70 C.E. was a more suitable date to start a new eschatological "count down" of the approaching end of the Fourth Empire.[66]

During the third century which witnessed the greatest crisis of the Roman Empire yet to occur,[67] we encounter a new element in rabbinical messianic expectations. The Rabbis were diverted from inward looking eschatological speculations and calculations, to the realm of aspirations based on political.[68]

Thus, much of the expected scenario was based on what the rabbis observed in the political arena surrounding them, especially in the Roman Near East. Accordingly, the demise of the Fourth Kingdom was to come as a result of internal strife, economical hardships and above all, through overwhelming external pressure caused by the Barbarians, the Palmyrenes or by the hands of the greatest opposing power, Sassanian Persia. It was indeed a passive apocalyptic scenario shared by non-Jewish circles as well, such as the ideas expressed by the anonymous author of the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle.[69]

---

[66] The redactor of *Genesis Rabbah* clearly tried to convey this impression by juxtaposing the scheme of the "Four Empires" (ending with Rome), to that of the 400 years duration promised to Abraham at the "covenant between the parts" (Genesis 15), cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 44, 12–14.

[67] D.S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 3–69; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 B.C.–A.D. 337*, Cambridge MA, 1993, pp. 141–173. It is in this context, ca. 250 C.E., and most probably under the impression of the universal concerted imperial prosecution of the Christians, that the Church Father Cyprian expressed his view on the *senectus mundi* (= aging world), leading to the inevitable end, *Ad Demetrianum* 3–4.

[68] This aspect of rabbinical thought has been somewhat neglected. Herr (*supra* n. 65), pp. 340–342 is of the opinion that this attitude could be traced back to the earliest days of Roman occupation of Palestine. However, in his survey he tends somewhat to blur the unique historical circumstances of the third century to which the rabbis paid special attention. Some rabbinical observations on that period have been dealt with in S. Lieberman's classic study, "Palestine in the Third and Fourth Centuries", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 36 (1946), pp. 329ff.; *Ibid.* 37 (1947), pp. 31–41. It seems on the whole that the rabbinical approach towards Roman hegemony was of a more dialectical nature. See N.R.M. de Lange, "Jewish Attitudes to the Roman Empire", *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, ed. by P. Garnsey and C.R. Whittaker, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 255ff. (esp. pp. 269–281). An interesting parallel could be drawn from the evolving Christian attitude towards Rome about the same time as seen through the eyes of Hippolytus, cf. David G. Dunbar, "The Delay of the Parousia in Hippolytus", *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983), pp. 113–127. See too G. Alföldy, "The Crisis of the Third Century as Seen by Contemporaries", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 15 (1974), pp. 89–111.

[69] D.S. Potter (*op. cit.*, note 67), p. 238. Most instructive in this sense is the rabbis'

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

One of the common features of the book of Daniel and the Sibylline Oracles was the use of allegedly significant numbers in set patterns in order to calculate the End. The rabbis' new disposition towards a passive eschatological scheme brought to their attention a different set of dates that were lurking behind numerals, such as those recently defined by David Potter as "tools used to contextualize contemporary events".[70] It is not without significance that the rabbis who resorted to an unassertive scenario relied on the power struggle of mighty external forces which were seen as pawns in a universal salvation scheme. At the same time they aspired to harmonize it with a set of dates determining the "end of Rome", based on the millennial anxiety cultivated in Rome itself. This explains, to some extent, the current rabbinical preoccupation (according to some of the traditions) with the legendary stories concerning the foundation of Rome.[71] All this came about at an "opportune moment", the

---

attitude to the role of Palmyra as an ally of Rome in the East. Following the Palmyrene nobleman Odenathus' expeditions against Persia in the early 260s we encounter this rabbinical Midrash: "Deliver me, I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau" (Genesis 33, 10): from the hand of my brother, who advances against me with the power of Esau. Thus, it is stated, "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one" (Daniel 7, 8)—this alludes to the son of Nazor, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by their roots (ib.)—that alludes to Macrinus, Carinus and Kyriades' (*Genesis Rabbah*, 86, 6). Bar Nazor should be identified with Odaenathus as apparent from local inscriptions. On Odaenathus, cf. Potter (*op. cit. supra* note 67), pp. 381–394. The other princes/kings were the famous usurpers Macrinus and Quietus his son who were slain by Odenathus, all in the cause of restoring imperial interests in the East (compare, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Tyranni Triginta, XV). See S. Lieberman (*op. cit.*, note 68), *JQR* 37 (1946/7), p. 38. The rabbis' attitude towards the Palmyrenes smacks of blatant reproach of the latter's role on Rome's behalf. The only consolation they could offer was to portray the Palmyrene actions as the final stages of Roman universal power hence the "small horn", the "final horn" in Daniel's vision, after which he envisaged the dawning of the End. In this context R. Yohanan (d. 279 C.E.) uttered the following: "Blessed be he who lives to see the demise of Tadmor (= Palmyra)", (Jerusalem Talmud, *Taanit* 69b and parallels). After a short spell of rebellion against Rome in the late 260s and early 270s during which the Palmyrenes succeeded in establishing a local "Empire" which included Roman Egypt too, they were crushed by the Roman emperor Aurelian in the year 272, never to recover again. R. Yohanan's statement that was most probably uttered earlier was nevertheless symptomatic of the current rabbinic view of the course of world history.

[70] D.S. Potter, *Prophets & Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius*, Cambridge MA, 1994, p. 101.

[71] This notion is reflected in a unique tradition attributed to R. Levi (second half of third century), about a certain wise old man named Abba Kolon, who advised the Romans, troubled by the fact that two huts that were built in Rome collapsed, that unless water brought from the Euphrates were mixed with mortar these huts

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

dawning of a new messianic era, i.e. 240 C.E., the beginning of the fifth millennium. Thus, the first millennium of Rome in 248 (according to widely accepted tradition)[72] a date that caused great anxiety coincided with the Messianic age targeted by the rabbis. "Rav Judah said in the name of Samuel: They observe yet another festival in

---

would not stand (*Song of Songs Rabbah* 1,6,4 and parallels). This strange tradition was interpreted recently by L. Feldman as referring in a symbolic way to Palmyra's role in maintaining Rome's stability in the East (the huts being the legendary huts built by Romulus) see, "Abba Kolon and the Founding of Rome", *Jewish Quarterly Review* 81 (1991), pp. 239–266. It seems to me, however, that Feldman has overstated his case. This rather bizarre tradition is far more sophisticated than so far interpreted. It should be seen on the one hand rather as an ironic twist on the part of the rabbis, of a widely disseminated foundation myth, (cf. M. Eliade's hints in his, *Zalmonixs: The Vanishing God*, Chicago, 1972, pp. 179–181). In this context it is important to draw attention to a further parallel—most probably widely known—between figures surrounding the foundation legend of Rome and the figures cited in the Bible in conjunction with the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt. For it has been noted that the period of time that elapsed between the fall of Troy and Aeneas journey to Italy and the foundation of Rome by the two famous twins amounted according to most traditions (including, Eusebius) to approximately 430 years, resembling the time lapse cited in the Bible between the divine promise granted to Abraham and the actual deliverance of his descendents from Egypt. See N.H. Horsfall, "Virgil's Roman Chronography", *Classical Quarterly* 24 (1974), pp. 111–116; M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land: The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites*, Berkeley, 1993, pp. 6–7. See my forthcoming study "Roman Myths and Christian Foundation Stories in Rabbinical Eyes".

[72] D. Potter, *ibid.* But was the Varronian Calculation, which dated the foundation of Rome to 753 B.C.E. an accepted calculation among late antique writers? On this see A.E. Samuel's reservations, *Greek and Roman Chronology: Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity*, Munich, 1972, pp. 251–252. It seems too that it was not widely used in Christian chronologies. Cf. recently M. Bland Simmons, *Arnobius of Sicca: Religious Conflict and Competition in the Age of Diocletian*, Oxford 1995, pp. 58–60. Alternative calculations, such as the one referred to in the Eighth Sibylline Oracle, 147–150 (which was an amalgamation of Jewish and Christian traditions) dated the final destruction to the year 948. If calculated according to Varro it would have fallen in the days of Septimius Severus, however, if calculated according to the third century Greek historian Timaeus who dated Rome's foundation to 814 B.C. the 948th year would have fallen during the days of the Bar-Kockba revolt. Cf. Potter, *ibid.*, p. 104. In either case we are able to detect the presence of Jewish messianic aspirations. For the latter example, see (*supra*, note 58), as for the former, one has only to recall the rabbinical traditions describing R. Judah the Patriarch's messianic like image which was promoted by him to extremity, see M. Aberbach, "Hezekia King of Judah and Rabbi Judah the Patriarch—Messianic Aspects", *Tarbiz* 53 (1984) pp. 353–371. On the Davidic genealogy of the Patriarchate that was based on traditions that surfaced during Judah's time in office, see D. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity*, Tübingen, 1994, pp. 147–175. For counterclaims from different quarters, see A.I. Baumgarten, "R. Judah I and His Opponents", *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 12 (1982), pp. 145–149. The thickening atmosphere of tension and despair during the second half of the third century had its impact on Christian circles too. For instance, in the Arsinoite nome in Upper Egypt extreme social conditions were linked up with a nationalistic and

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Rome which occurs every seventy years"[73] the underlying message being the implicit hope that this would be the end of all festivities in Rome.

Towards the end of the century hopes flared up again, probably triggered by the typology of the salvation from Egypt which heralded new opportunities. Under the heading Esau or Edom (= Rome), Palestinian Amoraim of the third century toyed with the idea of identifying the Biblical rulers of Edom listed in Genesis 36 with Roman emperors and usurpers of their time. Thus, when Diocletian was crowned, R. Ami (late third century) had a dream in which it was revealed to him that Diocletian should be identified as the biblical "Aluf Magdiel" (*ibid.*, 36, 43), to which he uttered "Another king to go before Rome's demise".[74]

R. Ami's statement could easily be attributed to his objective and realistic observation of the horrendous state of the empire. However, it might have also been prompted by a genuine calculation based on the typology of Egypt according to a widely received tradition cited above, that maintained that the duration of the period of enslavement of the Children of Israel in Egypt was only 210 years.[75] If reckoned from the destruction of the second Temple, this period would have ended in the early eighties of the third century, around the days of Diocletian's accession. To that period we could also attribute the following dialogue between a Roman prefect and one of the members of the Silani clan (דבי סילאני): The Roman prefect asked . . . Who will enjoy power after us? [In reply the member of the Silani family] brought a blank piece of paper, lifted a quill and wrote upon it "And after that came forth his brother and his hand had hold on [Esau's] heel" (Genesis 25, 26).[76] The date of the destruc-

---

political rebellious mood in Alexandria (in fact aggravated by the Palmyrene invasion in 269 C.E.) to generate a Christian millennialistic movement. In this atmosphere the Apocalypse of Elijah was composed. See D. Frankfurter, *Elijah in Upper Egypt: The Apocalypse of Elijah and Early Egyptian Christianity*, Minneapolis, 1993, pp. 249–278.

[73] Babylonian Talmud, *Avodah Zarah* 11b and S. Lieberman (*supra*, note 68), pp. 39–40.

[74] *Genesis Rabbah*, 83, 43 on which see recently D. Sperber, "Aluf Magdiel: Diocletian", *Idem, Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature*, Ramat Gan, 1994, pp. 127–130.

[75] See sources cited (supra n. 61).

[76] *Genesis Rabbah*, 63, 9. Members of this aristocratic and rich family are mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud in conjunction with the late third century Palestinian sage R. Hiyya bar Abba, cf. *Horayot* 3, 7 (48a).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

tion of the Temple became, as will be elaborated later on, the most appropriate date to begin such eschatological computations. These intermediary calculations and dates, might seem at first to be coincidental in nature and perhaps secondary if not marginal. Nevertheless, these time elements probably did not escape the attentive mind of the third century Jew.

The Christian Challenge: The Interplay of Parousia *and* Geula[77]

The triumph of Christianity in the fourth century turned the tables on this somewhat passive eschatological scenario. It was indeed a major transformation in the course of Roman history epitomized in the rapidly growing numbers of Christian followers.[78] In the eyes of the Jews, no doubt, Christianity was emerging at the turn of the third century as a much greater challenge, if not a real threat, than previously suspected. The apocalyptic scenario in which "the entire kingdom was being converted to heresy", was close at hand.[79] Once Christianity or Esau or Edom were all being identified with Christian Rome, the eschatological aspirations based on a shared textual foundation became mutually contradictory if not hostile. At this stage both sides were making use of the same biblical imagery to portray their anxiety and hope, most conspicuously the deliverance from Egypt. Thus, in the wake of what seemed to be the beginning of Christian triumph, the rabbis voiced the notion of divine retribution

---

[77] Some of the following traditions were assembled in the memorable but rather inept survey of A.H. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*, Gloucester MA, 1978 (reprint), pp. 25–35.

[78] An experiment in estimation of the numbers of Christians along successive stages of early Christian evolution and examined for its historical implications was carried out recently by K. Hopkins who demonstrated that the great surge in the numbers of Christians occurred only between the third and first half of the fourth century, cf. "Christian Numbers and Its Implications", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998), pp. 185–226.

[79] Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 97a in the name of R. Yitzhak. Compare the addition to Mishnah tractate *Sotah*, 9, 15. If taken at face value this rabbinic saying touched upon a sensitive cord in Christian political ideology, namely, the task of the Christian emperor to achieve and enhance unity and concord in the world under the symbol of the cross. On the prospect of achieving Christian universalism in the fourth century see H. Chadwick, "Christian and Roman Universalism in the Fourth Century", in: L.R. Wickham *et al.* (eds.), *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, Leiden, 1993, pp. 26–42.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

(based on the model of the ten plagues in Egypt) which will be meted out to the evil kingdom of Edom.[80] At the very same time, following the major outburst of hostilities against the Christians at the beginning of the fourth century ("The Great Persecutions"), the North African church father Lactantius, a leading propagator of the notion of the approaching "End", described the servitude in and redemption from Egypt as follows. It is "a pre-signification and figure of a great thing which the same God is going to do at the final consummation of time. For He will free His people from the heavy servitude of the world ... the end of this age is drawing near".[81] But, although it was used, the biblical model of the Exodus was not at the heart of Christian eschatological speculation.

By the fourth century the Christians were according to their own eschatological time table (advocated by leading Church Fathers) only two centuries away from their expected Eschaton, i.e. end of the sixth Millennium *Consumatio Mundi* (= End of the World) which was to be subsequently followed by the *Parousia*. Some of them were paving the way to the final date of the *Consumatio Saeculi* at the year 500 C.E.,[82] with intermediary dates such as 350 years, using the symbol 3.5 years found in Daniel (9, 27) and Revelation, or 365 years (according to the number of days in the solar year, a notion which they shared with the Pagans and Jews), calculated from the Incarnation or from the Crucifixion of Christ.[83] Beginning in 350 C.E. the Christians

---

[80] *Pesikta deRav Kahana*, 7 ("And it came to pass in the midnight"), 11 (R. Levi son of Zechariah in the name of R. Brechiah). The same concept was reiterated in the sixth century in the early Piyyut, cf. M. Zulay, *Piyutte Yannai—Liturgical Poems of Yannai*, Berlin, 1938, pp. 90–91 (Hebrew).

[81] *Divine Institutes*, 7, 15. This treatise was composed most probably shortly after the promulgation of the "Edict of Milan", ca. 313, see E. DePalma Digeser, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), pp. 33–52. On the eschatological time chart of Lactantius and its roots see, O.P. Nicholson, "The Source of the Dates in Lactantius' Divine Institutes", *Journal of Theological Studies*, 36 (1985), pp. 291–310.

[82] Hippolytus of Rome, *In Danielem*, IV, 4, 23–24. On the background of Hippolytus' eschatological calculus which was anti-Apocalyptic in nature (aiming to defuse late second and early third century acute messianic tendencies), and on its profound impact on later Christian chronology, see, R. Landes, (*supra*, note 5), pp. 144–149. Approximately two centuries later, in the year 397 C.E., an African Christian writer named Hilarianus wrote that Christ's *parousia* is due in 101 years. Cf. *de cursu temporum* 16–17. However, as stressed above, not all Church Fathers adopted this scheme, chief among them at the time of Hilarianus was Augustine. See R.A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 17–21.

[83] The rabbis allude to the latter in their description of Rome, Babylonian Talmud, *Pesachim* 118b. Compare the tradition concerning the number of markets in Rome,

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

entered what one might rightly define as the "Hot Time Zone" of intensified Apocalyptic expectation, in which practically every major historical event especially when accompanied by supernatural portents and prodigies, was interpreted in Apocalyptic terms.[84] In some cases the eschatological agenda, though presented in general terms and based on what seemed to be sound biblical exegesis, actually reflected sectarian aspirations coupled with an acute sense of imminent fulfillment.[85] The Jews too, according to their own eschatological timetable described above, were by the fourth century entering a period in which their own model of biblical redemption was becoming more and more applicable. A series of events occurring between 350 and 500 C.E. in which the Jews were at the center (described here only in brief), with distinct messianic connotations, must have added much to their Messianic agitation. At the same time, I presume, it aroused Christian Messianic fervor, as well.

In the Spring of 351 a luminous cross was seen in the sky above Jerusalem. This event had an immense impact at the time and ample attestation in Christian chronicles. The local recipients of this heavenly portent viewed it as an apocalyptic event, as the sign of the

---

365 in number, one for each day, see Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 6a. Compare too, R. Judah the Patriarch's saying Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin*, 99a. The tradition concerning a target date of 365 years for the duration of Christianity (dated from the crucifixion) was referred to as some sort of "pagan prophecy" which was being circulated during the last decade of the fourth century. See Augustine, *De Civitate dei* XVIII, 53, 2; Slightly earlier, Filastrius of Brescia noted an heretical tradition according to which the world would come to an end 365 years after the Incarnation, bringing us approximately to the days of Julian the "Apostate". On these traditions see H. Chadwick, 'Oracles of the End in the Conflict of Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century', *Mémorial André-Jean Festugiére: Antiquité païenne et Chrétienne*, E. Lucchesi and H.D. Saffrey (eds.), Geneva, 1984, pp. 125–129, at p. 127, see our further remarks *infra*, note 97.

[84] See Landes (*supra*, note 5), pp. 155–156. In the view of many scholars, the most famous propagator of the target date of 350 years from the crucifixion or Passion was probably the Donatist Tyconius who grounded his calculations on biblical verses. See *Liber regularum*, V (ed. F.C. Burkitt, *The Rules of Tyconius, Texts and Studies*, Vol. III/1, Cambridge, 1894), p. 60f. See, however, P. Fredriksen's comprehensive evaluation of Tyconius' views, presenting a case against the grain of accepted scholarship, arguing that Tyconius did not share contemporary enthusiasm concerning the approaching End, "Tyconius and the End of the World", *Revue des études augustiniennes* 28 (1982), pp. 60–63.

[85] This might have been the hidden agenda in Tyconius' calculations as expressed by Chadwick (*supra*, note 79). St. Martin of Tour (316–397) is reported to have told his disciple Postumianus that Antichrist had been born already and that he was about to come to power in a rebuilt Jerusalem. See Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, 2, 14 on which see H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 9–10.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

"Coming of the Son of Man" to judge those who have judged him (i.e., the Jews), on the eve of the *Parousia* as described in the gospels.[86] Some months later a Jewish uprising, known as the Gallus Revolt broke out in Galilee. From the little evidence we possess regarding this event, it might have been headed by a Jew named Patricius whom the Jews raised to royalty. The circumstances preceding the sedition are far from clear.[87] Had the above mentioned prodigy any bearing on the outburst of hostilities? Was this opportune moment chosen for its discernible messianic connotations, ca. 350 years of Christian existence, or better perhaps for its proximity to the 400 year mark since the inception of Christianity according to Jewish traditions? These questions remain open ended. With all probability these calculations became much more useful a decade later.

The next event, which came during the spring of 363, namely, the abortive plan of Julian "the Apostate" to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, needs neither introduction nor detailed description. Following the disastrous outcome of the plan, aborted among other reasons due to a major earthquake destroying several towns in Eretz Israel and claiming the lives of many, the messianic overtones of this event were alluded to only very vaguely in rabbinical sources. However, in Christian sources dating from just a few months later the apocalyptic dimensions of the episode were strongly emphasized. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, Cyril of Jerusalem, in his fifteenth catechetical lecture chose to describe the future Antichrist and his actions in the End of Days with characteristics resembling Julian's character and actions, portraying the coming of the Christian *Parousia* in a manner of a *Vaticinium ex Eventu*.[88] Some of his contemporaries, Ephrem the Syrian and Gregory Nazianzus, chose rather to describe in their invectives, the outburst of messianic expectations among Jews on receipt of the imperial promise, and during the ensuing preparations. Some of the imagery they employed was based on the biblical description of the Exodus from Egypt, and its disastrous

---

[86] See my recent study "Cyril of Jerusalem: The Apparition of the Cross and the Jews", in: O. Limor and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Contra Judaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews*, Tübingen, 1996, pp. 85–104.

[87] On the circumstances of the revolt, or better even a skirmish, which was crushed in the summer of 352 C.E., see J. Arce, "La rebelation de los Judios durante el gobierno de Constancio Galo Cesar: 353d.C.", *Athenaeum* 65 (1987), pp. 109–125.

[88] *Historical Aspects of the Christian-Jewish Polemic Concerning the Church of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century* (Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University), Jerusalem, 1993, pp. 148–168 (Hebrew).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

anti-climax when the Children of Israel created the Golden Calf.[89] Why did they use this imagery?

The reasons behind this imagery may be rooted in the plausible observation arrived at by those Church Fathers, while documenting Jewish enthusiasm, indeed, perhaps even based on a genuine Jewish tradition that the year 363 C.E. was approximately 430 years since the first Roman occupation of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. Or, might it have been the 400 years mark reckoned since Christ's death, according to a popular Jewish calculation dating it to the early dàys of Herod. Although the latter tradition as we know it dates from the twelfth century,[90] it was in all likelihood in use earlier. Suffice it here to state that it accords with the common rabbinical tradition mentioned above (p. 123).

Julian's failure gave Ephrem the Syrian the opportunity to describe Jews of his time, the followers of Julian, as Golden Calf worshipers and not as a people who merited redemption. In light of the outcome of the event, the rabbis' startling silence about the whole episode might have had after all something to do with their reservations concerning the use and abuse of messianic computation, after all the Rabbis did caution against speculation on the End. It seems that although Ephrem's allusions to the biblical Exodus had traces of speculative imagery, it nonetheless rested on firm ground. In the late fourth century, Church Fathers demonstrated their profound awareness of the centrality of the Exodus precedent (400/430 years) among the Jews of their time. Although, Filaster of Brescia wrote about this without disclosing its origin,[91] Jerome attributed it with

---

[89] Gregory Nazianzus, *Sermon* V (Contra Julianum), 3, 4. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns against Julian*, I, 16–17. See my discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 157–159, 165–166.

[90] See A. Marx, "A Tractate on a Salvation Year", *Ha'Zofe le-Chochmat Yisrael* 5 (1921), pp. 198–200 (Hebrew). Compare similar (though not parallel) traditions in other mediaeval chronologies published by A. Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles II*, Oxford, 1887, p. 194. For a wider array of traditions alluding to Jesus' birth in Medieval Jewish sources see now S. Emanuel "A Jewish-Christian Debate: France 1100" *Zion* 63 (1998), pp. 143–155 (Hebrew).

[91] Filaster of Brescia, *Diversarum Haereseon Liber*, 106, citing an heretical tradition according to which from the Incarnation until the End "not more and not less than 365 years will pass" (*non plus non minus fieri annorum numerum misi trecentorem sexaginta quinque*). However, Filastrius refutes this tradition stating that 400 years (*ibid.*) or later in the text 430 years (*ibid.*, ch. 112) will have passed since the time of Christ. Though the first modern editor of Filaster's treatise F. Marx (*CSEL* 38, Vindobonae, 1898, pp. XI–XV), followed by H. Chadwick (*supra*, note 79), p. 127, assume that these dates in fact indicated the dates of compilation or a copyist revision of the work or might have even reflected a "limited capacity to count" (Chadwick) it

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

no hesitation to the Jews.[92] From thence this notion was subjected to constant readjustment by the Jews and at the same time in a subtle way was being reiterated by Christian historiographers. Thus, ca. 400 C.E. Sulpicius Severus, stating in his *Chronicle* that the last persecution of the Christians occurred in the days of Diocletian, added the following:

> From that time, we have continued to enjoy tranquility nor do I believe that there will be any further persecutions except that which Antichrist will carry on just before the end of the world. For it has been proclaimed, in divine words, that the world was to be visited by ten afflictions (*decem plagis*) and since nine of these have already been endured the one, which remains, must be the last.[93]

It appears that the fascinating Exodus typology seems to have triggered mutually contradicting eschatological scenarios in both camps. Millennial bells were sounding. It is tempting to link Julian's aborted plan with Apollinarius of Laodicea's radically materialistic Christian millenarian scheme, advocating among other things the renewal of the Jerusalem Temple with its sacrificial cult, the appointment of a high priest and the sprinkling of the Red Heifer's ashes.[94]

---

seems more plausible to adduce the usage of these dates as part of the operative biblical cycle. In all, it seems that Julian's attempt to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple rekindled the notion that Antichrist was no demonic or superhuman figure, as can be seen from John Chrysostom's homily on 2 Thess. 3.2 (*PG* 62, col. 482).

[92] *In Joelem*, III, 19 (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 76, Turnholt, 1969, p. 208).

[93] *Chronicon*, II, 33, compare Orosius, *Historiarum adversus paganos*, VII, 26–28. On this theme see V. Grümel, "Du nombre des persécutions païennes dans les anciennes chroniques", *Revue des études augustinienne* 2 (1956), pp. 59–66.

[94] Our main sources for Apollinarius' messianic scheme come from his opponents, described by them with a variable degree of invective. So Basil of Caesarea, *Epistles*, 263, 4; 265, 2; Gregorius Nazianzus, *Epistle*, 102,14 and Jerome (among several passages), *De viris illustribus*, 18 (placing Apollinarius in a long chain of millenarians beginning with Papias). At the same time, though, Epiphanius seems to deny the attribution of such views to Apollinarius. See, *Panarion*, 77,36–38. It is difficult however, to ascertain when and more important in what circumstances Apollinarius' messianic Judaizing tendencies were formed. For some clue as to the surroundings in which such views were sounded one might follow the clue offered by Gregorius of Nyssa who on a study mission to Jerusalem in the early 80s of the fourth century encountered similar views among the locals, cf. *Epistle*, 3, 24. The exact nature of these notions, their possible background in the local scenery and their connection to Apollinarius' views have yet to be determined (as for now see, P. Maraval, "La lettre 3 de Gregoire de Nysse dans le débat Christologique" *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 61 (1987), pp. 74–89). On Jerome's criticism of millenarianists views (among them Apollinarius) see, M. Dulaey, "Jérôme, Victorin et le Millénarisme", in: (Y.-M. Duval éd.), *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient*, Paris 1988, pp. 83–98. However, for a more convincing

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Events unfolding in different parts of the empire from Constantinopolis to Minorca, between 398–418 C.E. reflected growing anxiety and excitement. Beginning in the year 398 C.E. in Constantinopolis, with signs of an approaching fire from heaven, continuing with the sack of Rome by the Barbarians in 410,[95] and culminating with the coercive conversion of the Minorcan Jews in the year 418, an act triggered at least partially by millennial anxiety,[96] we see a vivid picture of the social tension and upheaval in which the Christian society was living nearly a century prior to the "designated" end of the "Cosmic Week" (ca. 500 C.E.).[97]

---

view expounding Apollinaris' scheme as a Jewish component within a wider Christian construct see now H.I. Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers", forthcoming.

In this context it is important to note that the attention drawn to Jerusalem at that period might have triggered yet another literary venture, that of Pseudo-Hegesippus. His treatise bearing the name *De excidio Hierosolymitano*, was an adaptation of Josephus' *Jewish War*. It was most probably composed ca. 370 by an anonymous author, who set out to demonstrate to his readers that the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus was a final act—*supermum excidium*, an act of God designed to destroy the Jewish people. This message no doubt carried special significance for the generation that witnessed the sinister threat to Christian supremacy posed by Julian. On the Pseudo-Hegesippus see, Albert A. Bell, "Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus", in: L.H. Feldman and G. Hata (eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, Detroit, 1987, pp. 349–361.

[95] Events in Constantinopole towards the end of the century, namely, the earthquake of 396 C.E. were reported by Orosius, *History Against the Pagans*, III, 3, 2 (compare Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle* s.a. 396) followed by signs and prodigies in the year 398 C.E. which caused panic in the Byzantine capital. Cf. Augustine, *Sermo de exicidio urbis* 6, 7, were all seen within an apocalyptic context. It is not surprising therefore that in the midst of these events a Western Christian chronographer began a count down pointing out that only 101 years remained until the end of the sixth millennium. Cf. Julius Hilarianus, *De duratione mundi* (ed. C. Frick, *Chronica Minora* I, Leipzig, 1892, pp. 153ff.).

The sack of Rome in 410 had the most profound impact on public atmosphere. On its reflection in current Christian thought, particularly the notion of "Christian times" (*tempora Christiana*), see W.H.C. Frend, "Augustine and Orosius on the End of the Ancient World", *Augustinian Studies* 20 (1989), pp. 9–38. On the rhetoric and arguments Augustine used to dispel his congregation's anxiety see Theodore S. De Bruyn, "Ambivalence Within a 'Totalizing Discourse': Augustine's Sermons on the Sack of Rome", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1 (1993), pp. 405–421.

[96] See most recently the comprehensive study of the episode by S. Bradbury (ed. and trans.), *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 43–53. Bradbury himself, it must be added, tends to tone down messianic anxiety as a factor guiding Severus' actions. Nevertheless, it is still plausible to assume that Severus was incited to coerce the local Jewish community to convert by the very same rumours that Jerome (*op. cit.*, note 88) was citing in the name of the Jews. These rumors might very well have accompanied the remains of St. Stephen, brought to Minorca from Palestine by Orosius.

[97] It is tempting to see in the major project undertaken ca. 400 C.E. by the

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Approximately fifteen years after the Minorcan episode yet another abortive plan to redeem the Children of Israel, was attempted. Equipped with the salvation story of the captives in Egypt accompanied by some sort of messianic computation, an unknown impostor pretending to be Moses, approached Jews dwelling in Crete and promised them a swift deliverance and a safe conduct from the island through the sea to the Promised Land. The Constantinopolitan historiographer Socrates Scholasticus, who is unfortunately our only early source for this episode, described vividly the outcome of this illusory attempt.

Deluded by such expectations, they (= the Cretan Jews) neglected business of every kind, despising what they possessed . . . When the day appointed by this deceiver for their departure had arrived, he himself took the lead and all followed with their wives and children. He led them therefore until they reached a promontory that overlooked the sea, from which he ordered them to fling themselves headlong into it. Those who came first to the precipice did so and were immediately destroyed . . . When at length the Jews perceived how fearfully they had been duped, they blamed first of all their own indiscreet credulity and then sought to lay hold of the pseudo-Moses . . . In consequence of this experience many of the Jews in Crete . . . attached themselves to the Christian faith.[98]

Even if we take into account the apparent anti-Jewish bias of that ecclesiastical historian, writing about a decade after the event, the intense atmosphere of the messianic delusion engulfing the local Jews, is inescapable. It is tempting to see in the Cretan episode a repeated performance based on the Minorcan precedent. We can only speculate about what might have stirred up this extraordinary

---

Alexandrian monk Panodorus to synchronize the chronological systems of Eusebius and that of Julius Africanus in order to determine the correct date of Christ's Incarnation relative to the date of Creation, as emenating (among other reasons) from the saturated apocalyptical atmosphere of the period. On Panodorus' enterprise see, Alden A. Mosshammer, (*op. cit. supra*, note 50), pp. 77–78.

[98] Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* VII, 38 (the text here is taken from A.C. Zenos, *NPNF*, Vol. II, Grand Rapids, 1979, pp. 174–175). This anecdote has no parallel in contemporary sources (only in later ones) and its bearing on Socrates' historical framework has yet to be determined. Indeed the outstanding presence of traditions and anecdotes involving Jews in this important historiographical treatise is in need of a thorough investigation, a subject I shall be dealing with in a forthcoming study. As for now, see the rather simplistic comments on the "Jewish Theme" in Socrates' history, by T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinopole Historian of Church and State*, Ann Arbor, 1997, p. 85.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

event. For, at least in one aspect this was no "repeat performance" of the events in Minorca which were entirely instigated by the local bishop Severus, while, in the latter case local Jewish expectations were the driving force.

Even when given the apparent presence of the Exodus story in Socrates' account, it is doubtful whether we can safely assert that the "deceiver's appointed day" was based on the recurring cycle of 400/430 years. The starting point of this computation would place it very neatly within Christian chronology; namely, the Incarnation or the Crucifixion, which would undoubtedly not have persuaded the local Jewish population. If however we resort to the usage of intermediary dates, such as those suggested in rabbinical and other sources, the number 350 for the duration of stay in Egypt crops up leading us approximately to the year 70 C.E. We do not know what might have triggered this event, especially the circumstances in which the local Jews were tricked into participation in the deceiver's scheme. There exists a remote possibility that the demise of the Jewish Patriarchate only a short while earlier might have sounded the messianic bells.[99] At the time, the Patriarchate was a dominant symbol of messianic imagery within Jewish society.[100] Could this "messianic eruption", have been fueled by the famous rabbinical maxim that the Messiah will come once the Patriarchate is abolished?[101] In an

---

[99] See Codex Theodosianus XVI, 8, 29 (30 May, 429) (which alludes to the fact that the Patriarchate is a matter of the past). See A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, Detroit, 1987, pp. 320–323.

[100] See recently, Goodblatt (*op. cit. supra*, note 72) esp. pp. 169–175. The Patriarchate became a prime target of Christian polemic and criticism during the fourth century. Epiphanius of Salamis published the life story of Joseph the Comes who vowed that he saw the Patriarch Judah baptized in the name of Christ on his death bed. Joseph, who claimed to be a member of the inner circle of the Patriarch, went on to describe the disgraceful conduct of the Patriarch's sons. Though the story which appears in Epiphanius' *Panarion*, XXX, 4–12 seems to be essentially a legendary account of events during the days of Constantine the Great, there are some who tend to detect in it a kernel of historical truth. Cf. T.C.G. Thornton, "The Stories of Joseph of Tiberias", *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990), pp. 54–63. However, in the debate surrounding the historicity of the account the main purpose of its dissemination has been somewhat overlooked. For, the manner of ridicule and caricature in which the Patriarchate is portrayed by Joseph was meant not only to add yet another invective against the Jews but was part of a general onslaught on the legitimacy of the inherited and "divinely chosen" leadership of the Jews. Further remarks by Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, XII, 17 (PG 33, cols. 744–745) and later (fifth century) by Theodore of Cyrus, *Eranistes*, Dialogue I, and others serve to elucidate our point.

[101] Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 38a. The saying was a critique on the claim of the Patriarchs that they were descendants of the house of David.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

atmosphere of growing disillusion as a lesson to be remembered, the rabbis depicted a similar scene from the lives of the captives in Egypt to their followers. "Therefore (said Pharaoh) they cry . . . let heavier work be laid upon the men—and let them not regard lying words (Exodus, 5, 9). This is to teach us that the Israelites possessed scrolls with the contents of which they regaled themselves each Sabbath, assuring them that God would redeem them".[102]

All in all, the picture emerging from our portrayal of the events beginning ca. 350 C.E. is of a somewhat entangled set of messianic computations based on the same or similar biblical typology, or imagery, exploited vigorously by opposing camps. We know that at least in some Christian circles serious attempts were made out to quell this fervor and to place the biblical symbolism of the current millennial expectation on an entirely different footing.[103]

Turning back to what went on in Jewish society, we observe a change. If until then we are only able to expose what might seem as the hidden foundations of the target dates based on biblical precedents, that might have served only esoteric circles, towards the end of that century they surface as part of the main stream messianic scenario.

The Babylonian Talmud records a small list of designated dates and calculations of an eschatological nature.[104] The first statement is as follows: A. "After the four hundredth year of the destruction of the Temple if someone offers you a field worth a thousand dinars for just one do not buy it". B. The same formula with a slightly different ending: "do not buy it after the year 4231 A.M.". C. "Elijah said to R. Judah, the brother of R. Salla the Pious: 'The world shall exist not less than eighty five jubilees and in the last jubilee the son of David will come'. He asked him at the beginning or at the end (of the jubilee)? He replied: 'I do not know'. Shall this period be

---

[102] An anonymous tradition, *Exodus Rabbah*, 5, 18. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 5, p. 405 (note 72).

[103] On the North African example see P. Fredriksen, "Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse", in: Richard K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, 1992, pp. 20–37, see too G. Bonner (*op. cit. supra*, note 56). On Jerome's attitude see M. Dulaey (*op. cit. supra*, note 93). For the local angle of Jerome's polemic with the millenialists see recently, Hillel I. Newman, "Between Jerusalem and Bethlehem: Jerome on the Holy Places of Palestine", in A. Houtman *et al.* (eds.), *Sanctity of Time and Place. Tradition and Modernity*, Leiden, 1998, pp. 215–227.

[104] Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 97a–97b.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

completed or not? I do not know he answered. R. Ashi said: 'He spoke thus to him. Before that do not expect him, afterwards thou mayest await him'."

The dates referred to in these statements corresponded to ca. 470/471 C.E. and 441–491 C.E. respectively.[105] The typologies underlining them have been discussed extensively by David Berger,[106] who went to great lengths to expound them within their Jewish context. So did Jacob Neusner some years ago, who pointed out their probable local Babylonian messianic context.[107] However, according to what we have seen so far, whatever their origin, these traditions deserve to be analyzed within a wider Christian context.

During the same period, thousands of miles west of Babylon, in Gallaecia (North Western Spain), a relatively unknown chronicler, Hydatius bishop of Aquae Flaviae voiced strong sentiments concerning the *Consumatio Mundi*. His chronicle, which is filled with portents, prodigies and pessimism, comes to an end in the year 468 announcing that Jesus' Second Coming—the *Parousia*—will occur on the twenty-seventh of May 482 C.E., nine jubilees after the Ascension.[108]

---

[105] With slight modifications arising from the problem of the extant dating of the fall of Jerusalem on which see, M. Assis, "A Responsa Regarding the Fixing of the Year 4834 A.M. (1077/8 C.E.)", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 49 (1978), pp. I–XXVII (Hebrew). A possible source (or parallel) for this dating could be traced back to the early first century Jewish apocalyptic text, The Assumption of Moses, 10, 12: "For from my death, my being taken away until his advent, there will be 250 times that will happen . . .". It has been quite plausibly suggested (by R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudo-epigrapha*, vol. II, Oxford, 1913, p. 423), that this figure should be regarded as symbolizing 250 year weeks or 1750 years and as according to the same writer Moses died 2500 years after the creation (*ibid.* 1,2), the final judgement will occur 4250 years or 85 jubilees following the Creation.

[106] "Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism: Messiah Son of Joseph, Rabbinic Calculations and the Figure of Armilus", *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 10 (1985), pp. 141–164, esp. pp. 149–155. It was already I. Levi who identified some of these traditions and others as segments of now lost apocalyptic texts compiled during the Talmudic era, see his note in *Revue des Études Juives* 1 (1880), pp. 108–114.

[107] *History of the Jews in Babylonia*, Vol. V, Leiden 1970, pp. 60–69, esp. 67–69. See further note 113.

[108] R.W. Burges, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 122–123. Similar sentiments, however, emanating from a different point of view though containing signs of bitter criticism of Rome and a growing list of her defeats and disasters, are to be found in the anonymous Gallic Chronicler of 452. His list of uninterrupted disasters beginning in the year 440 C.E. was presented in clear negation to the successes of the emperors at the end of the fourth century combating the heretics from within and the Barbarians from without. See S. Muhlberger, *The Fifth Century Chroniclers: Prosper, Hydatius, and the Gallic Chronicler of 452*, Leeds, 1990, pp. 185–191. In fact the tide of outstanding events which intensified the atmosphere

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The tradition itself originated in "a certain book written by the Apostle Thomas" in which the latter quoted a tradition transmitted to him by no one else but Jesus himself. Hydatius' usage of this tradition reflected his own need to anchor his eschatological speculation in an apocalyptic chronology that had a prophetical aura. In fact Christ's crucifixion was dated in the Chronici Canones of 381, and according to the Jews, this event happened in their eighty-first jubilee.[109] As clearly sketched recently by Richard Burgess, Hydatius was agitated by the penetration of the Barbarians into Roman territory. As a result, Hydatius envisaged the collapse of the frontiers guarding the Roman world thus heralding the *Consummatio Mundi*.[110]

The anxiety created by the approaching date of the "End of the

---

during the latter part of the fifth century began with a fusion of natural disaster with the enemy's wrath. Thus, on 26.1.447 a major earthquake shook Constantinople destroying large sections of the Theodosian Wall, claiming many lives, causing hunger and creating havoc and fear, which led people to leave the city (Marcellinus Comes s.a. 447 compare John Malalas, 363.20–364.2). Certain monks prepared to retreat to Jerusalem (Callinicus, *Vita Hypatii*, 52, 3). A few months later the Huns invaded Thrace and headed to Constantinople whose people rebuilt its wall in sixty days (by March) to avert the approaching danger. This earthquake received due commemoration in local liturgy. Cf. B. Croke, "Two Early Byzantine Earthquakes and their Liturgical Commemoration", *Byzantion* 51 (1981), pp. 122–147, at 131–140.

[109] Hydatius came across this tradition in Jerome's *Chronici canones*. It appears as an interpolation in Fotheringham's apparatus of the Bodleian manuscript of the *Chronicle*. See J.K. Fotheringham, *The Bodleian Manuscript of Jerome's Version of the Chronicle of Eusebius*, Oxford, 1905, p. 256. See Burgess (*op. cit.*, note 104), pp. 31–32. For a different view on Hydatius' apocalyptic aspirations, placing Hydatius within a more conservative and more reserved line of Christian writers, see Muhlberger (*op. cit.*, note 104), pp. 262–264.

[110] "Hydatius and the Final Frontier: The Fall of the Roman Empire and the End of the World", in: Ralph W. Mathisen and Hagith S. Sivan (eds.), *Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, Aldershot, 1996, pp. 321–332. Compare the contemporary saying of the North African Church Father Quodvultdeus, that the Goths and Maurs were the Biblical Gog and Magog, cf. *Dimidium Temporis* 22 (*CSEL* 60, p. 207). A major event in the agitation of the time was the fall of Rome, in 476 C.E., in the course of which the last emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by a barbarian officer, Odoacer.

Much attention has been paid to this event most notably in the comprehensive study of M.A. Wes, *Das Ende des Kaisertums im Westen des Römischen Reichs, 's-Gravenhage* 1967, who traced the origin of the idea found in sixth century historiography about the "end of the Western Empire" to a circle of leading anti-Ostogothic Italian aristocrats who disseminated it. However, a thorough study of chronographic sources has shown that the event in Rome in 476 C.E. made the greatest impression on the people of the eastern capital, Constantinople. In their eyes, as described by the chronographs Jordannes and Marcellinus Comes, the fall of the Western Empire (*Hesperium imperium*) in 476 marked the End. See B. Croke, "A.D. 476: The Manufacture of a Turning Point", *Chiron* 13 (1983), pp. 81–119, at 114–115. Indeed, this idea had its own Western adherents who were not dependent on the tradition pointed out by Wes. Such was the case of Eugippius writing ca. 488 the Life of St. Severinus.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

World" was shared by other Christian writers too. Closer yet to Babylon and for similar reasons to those adduced just now, a group of Syriac Chroniclers described the events and disasters of the End. Joshua the Stylite recorded a series of troubles: drought, famine, plague, and finally a breakout of hostilities between Byzantium and Persia during the years 495–506. Thus, around the year 500 C.E., the predicted date of the *Consumatio Saeculi*, and that of the *Parousia*, Christians were witnessing yet again signs of the possible collapse of the Roman Frontier.[111] At the same time the annotations to the *Pascale Campanum* in the entry to the year 496 C.E. refer to the agitation led by those named the *delirantes*, who have claimed to have seen the Antichrist.[112] In any case the period in question corresponded closely to the commencement of the eighty-fifth Jubilee according to the above mentioned Talmudic calculations. For the first time the dates guiding the exclusive messianic scenarios in both camps nearly merged.

Could there have been any link between the Talmudic preoccupation with apocalyptic calculations at the very time when the atmosphere of apocalyptic anxiety was at its peak in Christian circles? Was this just a mere coincidence?

It must be emphasized that the rabbinical traditions cited above are presented in the context of the Talmudic discussion on the topic of the "Cosmic Week". Were then Jews aware at all of what went

---

Cf. Robert A. Markus, "The End of the Roman Empire: A Note on Eugippius, Vita Sancti Severini, 20", *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 26 (1982), pp. 1–7.

In any rate, the "Eastern" view of things must have been made widely known a possibility, which supplies us with yet another link to Jewish eschatological aspirations. For in some of the Jewish apocalyptic sources we encounter the figure of the final ruler of Rome—Edom named Armilus, who has been identified as fashioned according to the figure of the legendary Romulus, but at the same time signifying that of Romulus Augustulus too, see Berger (*op. cit.*, note 106), p. 158, who in fact cautions against the latter identification, on the ground that the perception of the "fallen" Western empire was not shared by the residents of the Eastern Roman Empire. In light of the above, this reservation is unwarranted. In fact, the symbolic symmetry between Romulus the founder of Rome and Romulus its last ruler did not escape the Byzantine mind. On the contrary, it became part and parcel of later Byzantine chronography. Cf. Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 5965 (= 472/3 C.E.); C. Mango and R. Scott (eds. and trans.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 283–813*, Oxford, 1997, pp. 185–186.

[111] S. Ashbrook Harvey, "Remembering Pain: Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches", *Byzantion* 57 (1988), pp. 295–302. Compare P. Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbeck*, Washington, 1967, pp. 116–120. Both Alexander and Ashbrook Harvey's surveys differ considerably from A.A. Vasiliev's classic study "Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: West and East", *Byzantion* 16 (1944), pp. 462–502, where he states that the date of the 6000 years from creation made little impression on contemporaries.

[112] T. Mommsen, Consularia Italica, *MGH* AA, IX, p. 747.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

on in Christian minds? A definite answer is difficult, if not impossible, but the concurrence is too compelling to be dismissed. In this context, additional intriguing phenomena present themselves.

In the necropolis of the Palestinian southern townlet named Zoara (south of the Dead Sea) archaeologists have uncovered in the past decades a set of funerary inscriptions (ranging from the early fifth century to the year 601) all using dating systems starting with the destruction of the Temple as well as that of the sabbatical cycle. This is indeed a unique discovery inasmuch as it constitutes most of the dated Jewish inscription (mostly funerary) found in Eretz Israel.[113] However, the significance of their location is even greater. For, according to a tenth century Karaite tradition Zoara (alongside Tiberias and Gaza) served throughout the Byzantine period as an alternative pilgrim site to Jerusalem[114] from where the Jews, so tradition has it, were denied entrance by its Christian rulers.[115] Hence correlation between time and place in this case was highly significant and bore all the marks of an acute messianic expectation.

Returning to the Babylonian scene we encounter yet another set of events, with clear eschatological connotations. In the year 468 C.E. (according to a tenth century Muslim tradition) or 470 (according to a Geonic tradition), the Sassanians began a wave of religious persecution against Jews and Christians. As indicated in Rav Sherirah Gaon's famous epistle this wave was much harsher than any ever before.[116] It resulted in the assassination of some of the leading figures of Babylonian Jewry, the imprisonment of others, the closure of synagogues and the kidnapping of children by the Amagushees. Four hundred years after the destruction of Jerusalem Babylonian Jews were encountering their own possible destruction. It did not take much to draw the inevitable conclusions. According to a later, much embellished tradition, during the last decade of the fifth century, led

---

[113] J. Naveh, "The Zoar Tombstones", *Tarbiz* 64 (1995), pp. 476–497. This is a full report on the inscriptions which were first unearthed over sixty years ago. Although the earliest dated inscription is from 282 years after the destruction of the Temple, the majority (eight altogether) cover 388 to 435, all within a reasonable span of time of or close as possible to the biblical cycles.

[114] See the testimony of Sahl ben Masliah, in A. Harkavy, "Me'asef Nidahim", 13, *Ha'meliz* 15 (1879), p. 640.

[115] On this see my study (*op. cit. supra*, note 20), pp. 135–178 (Hebrew).

[116] On this ongoing affair see G. Widengren, "The Status of the Jews in the Sasannian Empire", *Iranica Antiqua* 1 (1963), pp. 143–145. On the Jews and the Mazdak movement see O. Klima, "Mazdak und die Juden", *Archiv Orientalni* 24 (1956), pp. 420–431.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

by one of the last representatives of the "House of David", the Exilarch Mar Zutra (מר זוטרא ריש גלותא), the Jews successfully revolted against the Sassanian authorities and managed to establish autonomous rule for seven years.[117]

I do not accept the current opinion that tends to see the episode entirely within an internal Sassanian context. For, the legendary embellishment of the above mentioned traditions, describing the fate of the Exilarch's family, coupled with yet another tradition recounting the fact that the sole survivor of the family, the young Mar Zutra, emigrated ca. 520 C.E. to Palestine, and was appointed there as a leader of an academy, all have a strong messianic overtone.[118] It seems then, that around the year 500 C.E. we witness a major concurrence between wide spread Jewish as well as Christian expectations. The Jewish calculations of the "End of Days", Redemption or the Coming of the Messiah at that period could and should be viewed in conjunction with the emerging sentiments surrounding the predicted Christian Eschaton, *Parousia* or *Consummatio Saeculi.*[119]

---

[117] *Seder Olam Zutah*, A. Neubauer (ed.), *Medieval Jewish Chronicles II*, Oxford, 1895, pp. 72–73, 76 (Hebrew). A detailed study of the various traditions is offered by J. Neusner (*op. cit. supra*, note 107), pp. 95–105. Neusner tends to regard the *Seder Olam Zuta* story as a fairytale and has great difficulty assigning any historicity to the Jewish revolt and its outcome. In my opinion the value of the tradition about Mar Zutra lies not in its historical validity but in the fact that it reflects genuine trends of messianic fervor among Babylonian Jews emanating from local apocalyptic aspirations embodied in local agitation as well as (perhaps) external computations.

[118] On the interrelationship between Mar Zutra's story and the Bostanai legend see M. Gil, "The Exilarchate", *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society and Identity*, ed. by D. Frank, Leiden, 1995, pp. 33–65. Though Gil tended to regard the *Seder Olam Zuta* tradition as modeled on the Bostanai story, he recently retracted this view, see *In the Kingdom of Ishmael, Vol. I: Studies in Jewish History in Islamic Lands in the Early Middle Ages*, Tel Aviv, 1997, pp. 58ff., esp. 62 note 48 (Hebrew).

[119] Following the year 500 the need to readjust the 'Eschaton' was felt in both camps. Events during the sixth and seventh centuries culminating in the Arab conquest of the Middle East only enhanced this tendency. On the tick and chime of the Byzantine eschatological clock in an age of growing anxiety see the fascinating study of P. Magdalino, "The History of the Future and its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda", in: R. Beaton and Ch. Rouché (eds.), *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on his Seventieth Birthday*, Aldershot, 1993, pp. 3–34. On signs of similar sentiments in Jewish circles, see, Y. Yahalom, "The Transition of Kingdoms in Eretz Israel as Conceived by Poets and Homelists", in: J. Hacker (ed.), *Shalem: Studies in the History of the Jews in Eretz Israel*, VI, Jerusalem, 1992, pp. 1–22 (Hebrew). See also J. Elbaum, "Messianism in Pirqe-de Rabbi Eliezer: Apocalypse and Midrash", *Teuda* XI: *Studies in Aggadic Midrashim in Memory of Z.M. Rabinowitz* ed. by M.A. Friedman and M.B. Lerner, Tel Aviv, 1996, pp. 245–266 (Hebrew).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

"THE TIME OF THE END": APOCALYPTICISM AND ITS SPIRITUALIZATION IN ABRAHAM ABULAFIA'S ESCHATOLOGY

Moshe Idel

כי סתומים וחתומים הדברים עד עת קץ
Daniel 12:9

Introduction

If European philosophy was described as a series of footnotes to Plato, in the words of Whitehead, Western apocalypticism may be understood as a handful of footnotes on the apocalyptic visions of Daniel. The former is the most influential founder of Western cultural metaphysics; the latter is one of the most important founding fathers of a peculiar type of historiosophy. Platonic metaphysical stasis and apocalyptic historical dynamics had a strong impact on generations of commentators because they met different psychological needs. There are numerous links between the ancient Greek and Jewish cultures long before the Middle Ages. However, in this period Greek texts and concepts—via the mediation and elaboration of Arabs—were adopted en masse and perceived as important keys to a better understanding of God, the universe and humankind. The extent of Greek influence on Judaism may be a matter of debate, though such influences are undeniable phenomena insofar as numerous speculations are involved. However, a more dynamic vision of reality, and in our case as denoted by Jewish prophetical and apocalyptic literature, has prevailed in Jewish elitist circles who have been concerned with the study of Greek texts, even in periods when the impact of Greek thought has been evident.

The content of the enigmatic book of Daniel, perhaps the most ambiguous text in the whole Biblical corpus, has fascinated generations of Jewish and Christian authors who attempted to explore the "messages" alluded to by the ancient prophet. To a great extent, Jewish apocalyptic writings are based on the various hints related to the future history of the Jews and of the Gentile nations in general throughout the obscure verses of this book. A survey of the scholarly

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

monographs on Jewish Messianism will easily confirm the centrality of some themes alluded to in the book of Daniel, such as Jewish speculations on the date of the advent of the Messiah.

Apocalypticism should be defined as an expectation of immediate and dramatic changes of the course of the world, which will lead to an improvement described as the end of the previous order, political, social or religious and the installation of another, better one.[1] Although a religious point of view may emphasize the interference of supernatural powers in ordinary events, my description of apocalypticism does not exclude the acute sense of an end even in a secular society, though this aspect will not be elaborated on here. Apocalypticism may gravitate around powerful human protagonists, like the Messiah in Judaism, or Jesus Christ in Christianity, or around a powerful deity which is both capable and willing to intervene in the course of history or of nature, or around a combination of activities initiated by both entities. Indeed the very use of terms like history and nature is, to a certain extent, problematic as it assumes the existence of a dichotomy between the divine will and another, independent order, in a manner that is often times exaggerated. The type of order implicit in the existence of a supernal powerful will is therefore the *sine qua non* condition for the future upheaval of the existing forms of order, which is equivalent to redemption. Unlike other forms of eschatology, apocalypticism is a worldview that believes in, expects and sometimes even calls for a manifest revolution. Nevertheless, the emphasis in apocalyptic expectations, is based upon supernatural revolutions, rather than natural evolutions which exploit potentialities inherent in ordinary processes.[2]

---

[1] On the different meanings of apocalypse, apocalypticism and apocalyptic see Joshua Bloch, *On the Apocalyptic in Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1952); John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination, An Introduction in the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York, Crossroad, 1987) pp. 1–17, Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1979) Revised Edition, pp. 4–6 and for the Middle Ages see Bernard McGinn, *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition* (Variorum, 1994) essays I and II.

[2] Anthony Saldarini, "Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Literature", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, vol. 37 (1975) pp. 348–358; *idem*, "The Use of Apocalyptic in the Mishnah and Tosefta", *ibidem*, vol. 39 (1977) pp. 396–409; Peter Schaefer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie das Rabbinischen Judentums* (Leiden, Brill, 1978) pp. 37–43; B.M. Bokser, "Changing Views of Passover and the Meaning of Redemption According to the Palestinian Talmud", *AJS Review* vol. 10 (1985) pp. 1–18; *idem*, "Messianism, The Exodus Pattern, and Early Rabbinic Judaism" in Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah*, pp. 239–258; Lawrence Schiffman, "The Concept of the Messiah in Second Temple and Rabbinic Literature", *Review and Expositor* (1984) pp. 235–246, *idem*, *Law, Custom and Messianism in the Dead Sea Sect*, tr. Tal Ilan, (Jerusalem, Merkaz Shazar, 1993) (Hebrew).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Resembling a rupture rather than a continuation, apocalyptic salvation involves a drastic restructuring of reality that expresses a protest against the existing order of things. Apocalypticism strives to solve the problem of well defined communities, whether it is a tribe or a nation; it begins not only with the questioning of the human condition,[3] but also with issues related to the specific historical and political vicissitudes of a certain group of people. From many points of view this is an escapist approach, especially because of the massive reliance on a superior active power. One of the components of the apocalyptic approach is the dramatic rupture along the line of time. Ordinary time symbolizes the problematic order that should be transcended by a new order. In Hebrew, this drastic turning point is described in the book of Daniel as the time of the end, *'et qetz*.[4] This temporal rupture is often related to a corresponding rupture on the geographical level, when the end of time will also involve a dislocation of population. Apocalyptic events usually take place in specific sacred sites and the arena of the eschaton is rarely identical to that of ordinary life. In some forms of apocalypticism, the restructuring of the two parameters is accompanied by an increase in the intensity of religious life or intellectual activity. An intensive spiritual life is either the goal of apocalyptic events or a byproduct.

The emergence of Jewish speculative thought in the Middle Ages, either as different philosophical stands, or diverse forms of Kabbalah, brought to the fore much more articulated forms of spirituality. Ultimately based upon Greek sources, and sometimes influenced by the Sufi spirituality, medieval Jewish philosophy moved away from the vision of salvation in terms of national, objective, temporal and geographical changes. Apocalypticism, and sometimes messianism, became understood in new terms, which emphasized spiritual changes over material ones. This new approach did not obliterate the belief in apocalyptic messianism, neither among the masses, nor in some members of the elite. Indeed, as I shall attempt to show in the following discussion, even extreme expressions of spiritual salvation,

---

[3] John J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* vol. 36 (1974) pp. 21–43; Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 22; Bernard McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, (New York, Paulist Press, 1979) pp. 10, 13; Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis, Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988) p. 2.

[4] See e.g. 12:9.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

including those which strove to emphasize the importance of spiritual changes as symptoms or goals of redemption, or even as messianism, were not automatically divorced from apocalyptic elements. This occurred due to political reasons, namely because they had to address larger audiences, or because their vision was much more complex than a simple subscription to just one form of religiosity. Interpretation of apocalypticism in spiritualistic terms should, therefore, not be seen as automatically obliterating the impact of apocalypticism per se, but as one of the possible modes of its reception or appropriation. In other words, there is no reason to create a stark contradiction between an apocalyptic consciousness and its spiritualization, and perceive them as incompatible phenomena. Seen from this perspective, the existence of apocalyptic discussions, and even such treatises among some medieval mystics, like the *Zohar* and those written by Abraham Abulafia, should be seen as a case of addressing different eschatological issues on different terminological levels. When describing Kabbalistic literature of the thirteenth century, we may assume a coexistence, complex as it might have been, of different forms of eschatological discourse which dealt with both spiritual and corporeal forms of salvation. Scholarly views that attempted to disassociate apocalyptic discourse from the speculative corpora of the Middle Ages, and assume that there was no room for messianic theologies in this period should be substantially qualified.[5]

In this paper, we shall be concerned with the various discussions of Abraham Abulafia [1240–c. 1291], a mystic who considered himself to be a Messiah. He composed at least one extant book which should be considered as belonging to the genre of the apocalypse, and engaged issues related to spiritual redemption both within the apocalyptic treatise and elsewhere in his writings. A detailed analysis of his vision of the end will help us understand not only the view of a mystical Messiah par excellence but also the complexities of eschatological topics that appear later on in Jewish mysticism. A prophet of his own messianism, a Messiah who dreamed of bringing prophetic experiences to the masses, Abulafia produced the most extensive, and at the same time most neglected, messianic and apocalyptic literature authored by any known Jewish Messiah.[6]

---

[5] See e.g. Joseph Dan, *The Hebrew Story in the Middle Ages*, (Jerusalem, Keter, 1974) p. 44. (Hebrew).

[6] The single example that may qualify this assertion in the future would be the discovery that the last rabbi of Lubavitch considered himself to be a Messiah.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

One example of the coexistence of a variety of meanings can be found in Abulafia's comments on the term Messiah. In one of his writings he notes:

> the term Messiah is equivocal, [designating] three [different] matters; first and foremost the truly Agent Intellect is called the Messiah . . . and the man who will forcibly bring us out of the exile from under the rule of the nations due to his contact with the Agent Intellect—he will [also] be called Messiah. And the material human Intellect is called Messiah. This is the hylic intellect that is the redeemer and has influence over the soul and all elevated spiritual powers. It can save the soul from the rule of the material kings and their people and their powers, the lowly bodily desires. It is a commandment and an obligation to reveal this matter to every wise man of the wise ones of Israel in order that he may be saved.[7]

Messianism, in the more common sense, related to one specific person that is the Messiah of the Jewish nation, and inner processes that highlight human spiritual faculties on the one hand, and intellectual entities in the supernal world on the other, coexist peacefully in one passage. The apocalyptic and the spiritual forms of salvation are not exclusive modes but seem to coexist, at least insofar as we learn from the above passage of the ecstatic Kabbalist. An examination of rare Kabbalistic material that has not received adequate attention by scholars, extant in various writings belonging to ecstatic Kabbalah, will shed light on this subject below.[8]

However, even in this case, the very recent and impressive literary outpouring of messianic texts, was not conspicuously authored by the Rabbi himself who, unlike Abulafia, did not openly declare himself the Messiah.

[7] Abulafia's *Commentary* to his own prophetic *Sefer ha-Melitz*, Ms. Rome-Angelica 38, fol. 9a;

שתדע ששם משיח משותף לשלשה ענינים אלה. משיח יקרא תחלה השכל הפועל באמת. והרמז וזה שמו אשר להוציאנו מן הגלות מתחת. יקראו ׳ צדקנו. ומשיח יקרא האיש והעתיד ידי האומות בכם שישפיע עליו מן השכל הפועל ומשיח יקרא השכל החמרי האנושי ההיולאני שהוא הגואל והמושיע הנפש וכל כחותיה הנפשיות המעולות מתחת ידי המלכים הגופניים ועממיהם וכחותיהם התאויות הפחותות וזה הענין מצוה וחובה לנלותו לכל משכיל ממשכילי ישראל להושיעו.

M. Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, (Albany, SUNY Press, 1989) p. 66 and *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 127, 140.

[8] On Abulafia's messianism see Abraham Berger, "The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia—A Tentative Evaluation" *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought Presented in Honor of Salo Wittmayer Baron* (New York, 1959) pp. 55–61; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* pp. 45–62, Idel, "The Contribution of Abraham Abulafia's Kabbalah to the Understanding of Jewish Mysticism" in eds. P. Schaefer – J. Dan, *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 50 Years After* (Tuebingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1993) pp. 138–141.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Abulafia's Messianic Decade: 1280–1290

In order to better understand the apocalyptic nature of some of Abulafia's discussions, the date of his vision of the "end of the world" needs to be addressed. Overall, for Abulafia, the period between 1280 to 1290 was fraught with eschatological significance, and during this period, he wrote most of his Kabbalistic corpus. Thus, the above dates do not reveal utopian expectations of a remote, or even near future, but they reflect a feeling of living in the "time of the end". In the *Commentary on Sefer ha-ʿEdut*, one of the most important prophetic writings of the ecstatic Kabbalist, we learn that the most famous passage in the Bible, and in which generations of Jewish thinkers strove to find the clue for the date of the redemption, namely Daniel 12:7, points to the year 1280 of the common era. This computation is based upon the numerical value of the word *ʾEmmet*, deduced by Abulafia as 1440. The Kabbalist proposes to count this figure three times, because of the terms *Moʿed* and *Moʿadim*—the latter term understood as pointing to two times *Moʿed*—so that it amounts to 4320. To this figure he adds a half of *ʾEmmet*, namely 720—because of the other term in Daniel, *va-hetzi*, "and a half", which amounts to 5040. This figure is understood as corresponding to the year 1280 of the common era.[9] According to this same text, the special significance of the figure 5040 is also revealed by counting solar cycles: 180 solar revolutions multiplied by 28, amounts to 5040. The figure 28, in Hebrew *Koah*, means power, but in the medieval understanding of the word it points to potentiality, and thus the revolving of the sun is explained as a preparation for something to emerge out of its potentiality. The actualization of the potentiality is considered to be the time of the end. According to Abulafia, in 1290, the figure 190 will emerge. 190, when translated into Hebrew let-

[9] See *Commentary on Sefer ha-ʿEdut*, Ms. München 285, fol. 38a:

ורמז מלת אמ"ת הוא להודיע בו הסוד שזכרנו מן מועד מועדים וחצי שהרי אמ"ת כשתחשבנו אלף וארבע מאות וארבעים ותקראנו מועד ותוסיף עלו אמ"ת אמ"ת שהם מועדים שנים ותוסיף על הכלל הזה חצי אמ"ת שעולה חש"כ תמצא סד הכל ה' אלפים ומ' שנים והוא הזמן שבו יצאו מחזורי חמה מן כח אל פעל כלומר שאז נשלמו ק"פ מחזורים מן כח כח ועם תוספת י' שנים הנה יהיה המספר שלם הכל בסוד והנה הוא ק"א פ"ע נ' שסודם קנ"א והוא הסוף העולם פ"ו ס"ה ויושלמו ה' אלפים ונ' שנים והוא מה שהניד לא ברמזי המראות שבם נלו לא ק"פ הפלאות והנה נ' ק"פ מחזורים עם י' שנה עלו קץ והוא נק"ם והרמז כי יום נק"ם בלבי שנת נאול"י' באה בשנת ה"א עם נ' סוד יום נאולי שהם כנגד צדיקים שבקש אברהם אבינו

See also the similar discussion of the term *moʿed* and *ʿet qetz* occurring in the roughly contemporaneous *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 153ab.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ters, is קץ namely "end". In 1289, just one year before the expected date, the ecstatic Kabbalist repeated his prophecy. Once again, he describes 1280 as the end of the domination of the sun.[10] The sun and its dominion may point to the Christian calendar, based on solar computation, and potentiality, the figure 180 in *gematria*. Abulafia identified Jesus Christ with corporeality and materiality, and therefore potentiality may be connected to Christianity.[11]

Let us return to Abulafia's use of the word *'Emmet* in the book of Daniel, especially 11:2, as the starting point for Messianic computations. In his *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, he decodes the Hebrew consonants as acronyms for the words *'Eleph, Matayyim, Tish'im*, namely 1290, the year of redemption according to Abulafia.[12] In his writings, he hints several times at the perfection of the term הכל which stands for five thousand years, related to ה and fifty, the numerical value of כל. Abulafia uses *mispar shalem*, a perfect number, whereas elsewhere he employs *mispar muskkal*, an intellectual number, because the letters amount to One: 55 = 5 + 5 = 10 = 1 + 0 = 1.[13] Abulafia states:

> When I arrived at [the knowledge of] the Names, by my loosening of the bonds of the seals, "the Lord of All" appeared to me, and revealed to me His secret, and informed me about the time of the end of the exile[14] and about the time of the beginning of redemption.[15]

---

[10] *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, Ms. München 316, fol. 339b:
חמשת אלפים וארבעים שנה שבם נשלמת ממשלת השמש ופסקה מעל ישראל כי ממשלתו היתה לשבעת ימי בראשית בסוד צירוף הסימנים של הימים הכתובים בו יום על דרך א"ב ג"ד ה"ו ז' שעולה תכלית צרופם אלפים ומ' כמו שרמז בספר יצירה ושנות השמש במחזורו הגדול כ"ח שנה וה' אלפים ומ' עולים פ"ק פעמים כ"ח וסודם מתגלגל ומתחדש כי נפל"ך פ"ק וסודו פע"ל והנה חוז"ז כ"ח וכבדים מהלכן מן כ"ח אל פע"ל שהוא לו י' שנה ויושלם כחו ויוסר שבטו. תכלית נלנולו ובקץ הגלות יהיו ושבט מלכותו מעל י"ב שבטי ישראל

[11] See the texts discussed in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 52–53.

[12] Ms. München 316, fol. 327a:
לזמן הגלות שמספר שנותיו יהיו ארכ"ב אלף ומאתים ועשרים ושתים שנה ויושלם בשנת החמשים וישלימו הנצרים שנת אלף ומאתים ותשעים וזהו מה שרמז באמרו (דניאל י,כא) בתוך דבריו אמר וחזוי ראשה על (שם ד,י) את הרשום בכתב אמ"ת כי משכבה באדין חלמא כתב ראש מלין דניאל חלם חזה אמר והם ראשי תיבות אמ"ת עולין אלף מאתים תשעים ראש"ש מלי"ן אמ"ר מאר"ץ ישרא"ל חלמ"א כת"ב כ"ח א"ם לב"ה ארץ ישראל נבוה מכל הארצות (זבחים יד,ב) ושמה נחלת נוים וחחום.

[13] See *Ve-Zot Li-Yhudah*, p. 25. See also the concise formulation in *Sefer Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Ms. New York JTS 1879, fol. 79b:
קרוב בכח ככה[?] תברכו והוא רמז לזמן הקץ אשר שם הכל כלה.

[14] *'et qetz ha-galut*. This is a phrase occuring in chap. 12 of Daniel. The printed phrase *'ad qetz ha-galut* contains a printing error. More on "name" and messianism see below section 4.

[15] *Ve-Zot Li-Yhudah*, p. 18.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Abulafia uses a phrase found at the end of many versions of *Sefer Yetzirah* which deals with the revelation of "the Lord of All" to Abraham. There can be no doubt that Abulafia was inspired by the mention of Abraham, his own first name. What is the meaning of "His secret" in connection to the "time of the end"? It appears that, the secret is the numerical value of the term הכל that is part of the phrase אדון הכל. The secret is that "the All" stands for 5050—the end of time and the beginning of the redemption. This reading is corroborated by the interpretation of the phrase התחלת הגאולה, namely "the beginning of the redemption".

Unsurprisingly, the numerical value of the consonants of the word *ge'ulah* is fifty.[16] This epistle, written between 1288 to 1289, predicts an imminent date of redemption in a period of months.

Let us return to the passage from the commentary on *Sefer ha-'Edut. Qetz*, 190, is much more complex. Abulafia interprets the famous biblical verse, "Because the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed ones is come," in a messianic way.[17] He points out that the term "revenge" *Naqam*, amounts to 190, like *qetz*. Moreover, he notes that נאולי in *gematria* equals 50, another indication that "end" and fifty are pointing to the same date.[18] He also contends that the Hebrew phrase שנת נאלי באה should be understood as pointing to the precise year of redemption. The end will come in the year of fifty, understood as "in the fifth millennium." This computation is echoed in another passage:

> Indeed in [the year of] five thousand and fifty which is the end of the world and the time of the end, the paths of the revolutions will be revealed and will be changed.[19]

---

[16] On other interpretations of the term *ge'ulah* as pointing to the thirty-six secrets of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* conceived of as redemptive topics see Moshe Idel, "Maimonides and Kabbalah", ed., I. Twersky, *Studies in Maimonides* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) pp. 65–66.

[17] Isa. 63:4.

[18] Compare also to the phrase ,נאלי הדם that occurs as a parallel to the terms נאולה and הכל, in the epistle to Rabbi Yehudah Salmon, *ibidem*, p. 18.

[19] *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 105b:

ואמנם בחמשת אלפים וחמשים שנה שהוא סי"ף מעולם ועת הקץ באמת יודעו
דרכי התקופות וישתנו.

This book was composed during late 1285 and early 1286. More on redemption in 1290 see in *Sefer Mafteah ha-Shemot*, Abulafia's *Commentary on Exodus*, Ms. New York JTS 1879, fol. 68a, where he mentions this year as one of, the apparently many, dates of redemption:

עד אנה ??? העם שענין מספר אנה ה'. הזה וסודם הוא שרמז להם
קץ אחד מקצי הגלות אלפים וחמשים והמבין יבין

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

According to the Jewish calendar, the year five thousand and fifty is equivalent to 1290, namely the date of the book in which this statement is found.

Abulafian Apocalyptic Descriptions of the End

The apocalyptic character of Abulafia's view is not only present in his eschatological computations. Additional evidence of apocalyptic feeling is found in a special literary genre he calls *sifrei nevu'ah*, or "the books of prophecy". Composed between 1279 and 1286, most of these books are lost, but Abulafia's commentaries on them survived.[20] In his commentaries we find some quotations that may stem from the lost originals.

A complete text of the book *Sefer ha-'Ot* does exist. This extraordinary treatise is a fulfledged apocalypse that has not attracted the adequate attention of most scholars who have discussed medieval messianism.[21] A complex and poetic discussion of the end and apocalyptic battles between different kings—interpreted allegorically is found in this treatise. For example:

The end of abomination has arrived
And behold, the destruction of the worshippers of the Cross has come[22]
Because God has examined and tested by means of His name
The heart of His servants.[23]

Or, later on, he proclaims that

The coming day is the day of Judgement
And it is called the day of remembrance
And the time of the trial has arrived

See also *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, Ms. Munchen 316, fol. 333b:
חמשים שערי בינה הנזכרים למעלה שבסופם נחתם הקץ
as well as *ibidem,* fol. 340a.

[20] Moshe Idel, *Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrines* (Ph.D. Thesis, Hebrew University, 1976) pp. 13–15. (Hebrew).

[21] See, however, Adolph Jellinek's description of the book as an "Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Mesias Abraham Abulafia", and Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1979) pp. 178–180.

[22] *'Ovedei sheti va-'erev.*

[23] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 68:
קץ השקץ הניע / וחרבן עובדי שתי / וערב/ הנה בא כי/ יהוה בחן ומנסה בשמו לב כל עבדיו

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

And the time of the end has been accomplished.
The heaven will become earth
And earth will become celestial[24]
Because the Lord of the trial is called by the name YHWH
And His judgement is one of truth,
And his trial is upright.[25]

In the same book, we learn elsewhere that

Until the passage of the time of wrath and of the moment of fury
When the new shepherd has slept[26]
Then YHWH, the Lord of Israel
Has aroused the heart of the shepherd
And he will wake from his sleep
And he will arouse the hearts of the sleepers of dust.
And the dead will live.[27]

A particularistic vision of the end is denoted in the following passage:

He did not do this to every people and nation
As He did to Israel His servant and His nation
For the sake of His Name
And the end of delivery[28] and the day of redemption has arrived
But no one is paying attention to this issue to-day to know it.[29]

Spiritual Interpretations of 'Et Qetz

These apocalyptic understandings of the imminent end notwithstanding, in the same book we find expressions of a spiritual vision

---

[24] Compare to the view found in the anonymous ecstatic treatise Ms. Firenze-Laurentiana II.48, fol. 21a:
והנה בעת קץ חשרה השכינה בישראל בע"ה ויהיו עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה.

[25] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 69:
היום הבא יום / הדין הוא ויום/ הזכרון נקרא/ ועת המשפט/ הניעה וזמן הקץ תם ונשלם/ השמים יהיו ארץ/ והארץ תהיה/ שמימית כי אלהי/ המשפט יהוה/ שמו ודינו דין אמ/ תי ומשפטו ישר

[26] There is no doubt that the shepherd is no one other than Abulafia himself, as he mentions in this book "Zekhariahy the shepherd" *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 77.

[27] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 76:
עד עבר עת זעם ורנע קצף אשר בו ישן הרועה החדש בעת ההיא יעורר יהוה אלהי ישראל לב הרועה
וייקץ משנתו. ויקיץ לבות ישני עפר והמתים יחיו.

[28] Here and below I resort to this noun in order to render the Hebrew *Teshu'ah*.

[29] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 79:
וכן לא עשה לכל עם ולכל גוי כאשר עשה לישראל עבדו ולישראל עמו למען שמו: וקץ החשועה ויום הנאולה בא ואין איש אשר ישים לבו היום לדעת זאת

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

of the end, which assumes not only its historical imminence, but also its spiritual significance. For example,

> You, lovers of the day that validates the revivification, Open the eye of your heart and see the time of its advent, because the time of the end has already come, so that you shall awake, and cause the awakening of the sleepers of the dust, from the sleep of their darkness and the slumber of their ignorance.[30]

In the apocalyptic expression *'Et qetz*, the end, *qetz*, has been used twice in one passage. First as highlighting a point in time, and then in order to emphasize an emergence of a spiritual awareness, extracted from the false similarity between *qetz* and *lehaqitz*. The end is not the historical termination of a period, which is not defined here as exile, but rather as the end of sleepy ignorance.[31] Similarly, we read later that Abulafia thanks God for sending a messenger to him. "In order to vivify my soul, and awake my spirit, and cause the awakening of my heart from the sleep of death."[32] Again, in another similar context we learn that

> The Holy God is awaking the hearts of the sleepers and revives the dead by His giving a new spirit in them, so that they will be resurrected. And whoever will not awake from his sleep and who will not be awakened by his [higher] soul,[33] he will sleep an eternal sleep and will not come to life.[34]

Redemption is therefore not only the end of time but also, and perhaps even more eminently, the awakening of humankind to a spiritual life. This mystical arousal is linked with the advent of the "final hour," but it affects the spirit rather than the body of humankind. In a rather calculated manner, Abulafia resorts to expressions related to the resurrection of the dead, namely the resurrection of the bodies, which is interpreted allegorically as the arousal of souls.[35]

---

[30] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 79:
אתם האהבים יום המאמת התחיה פקחו עין לבכם וראו עת בואה כי כבר הגיע עת הקץ להתעורר ולהקיץ ישני עפר מתנומת המחשך ומתרדמת הסכלות.

[31] This is a topos in ancient and medieval mystical literature.

[32] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 83.

[33] *ve-lo' taqitzehu nishmato.*

[34] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 79:
אלהים בקדושים הוא מעו/ רר לבות ישנים ומחיה המ/ תים בתתו בם רוח חדשה/ להחיותם ואשר לא יעור/ משנתו ולא תקיצהו נשמתו יישן שנת עולם ואל יחיה

[35] This point is also evident *ibidem*, on p. 79.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

In an anonymous Kabbalistic text, written either by Abulafia or by one of his disciples, the author states: "This points on the knowledge of the end and the end of knowledge namely on the *telos* of man, because he is created in the image of God."[36] A similar view also appears in *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, in which Abulafia notes that the "end of the spirit is spirit", namely that the *telos* of the spirit of humankind is the spirit of God.[37] The knowledge of the end is understood as the *telos* of human knowledge, or of the spirit of humankind, which is either an imitation of God, as humans were created in His image, or stems from God, in the case of human spirit. Again, *qetz* has been understood allegorically as the *telos*. This term denotes the spiritual vision of humankind, as more important than an understanding of the end, namely apocalyptic knowledge. With this understanding of *qetz* in mind, let us analyze Abulafia's interpretation of an episode related to Jacob's famous dream. In his *Commentary on Genesis*, the ecstatic Kabbalist writes that:

> God, blessed be He, said to Jacob in this dream "And behold, I am with thee and I shall keep thee in all places to which thou goeth",[38] and then it is immediately written: "And Jacob awoke out of his sleep"[39] and it is said "and he was afraid, and said: How dreadful [is this place]"[40] all this is a hint at the exile of Israel and at the redemption at the end.[41]

The mention of the verb "to awake" and the phrase 'the redemption at the end' may reflect a juxtaposition between the two, namely an attempt to interpret awakening as the end. It also should be mentioned that other eschatological words, like e.g. *Mashiah* in the passage quoted above[42] *teshu'ah*, that appears in another quote[43] and

---

[36] Ms. Firenze-Laurentiana, II.48, fol. 4b:
וזה מורה על דעת הקץ נברא בצלם. ועל קץ הדעת כלומר ועל שהוא לאדם בהיותו אלהים

See also *ibidem*, fol. 9ab.

[37] Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 157b:
וסוד קץ הרוח רוח כל זה התנלגל על רוח הקדש והוא רוח שדי

[38] Genesis, 27:15.

[39] *Ibidem*, 16.

[40] *Ibidem*, 17.

[41] *Sefer Mafteah ha-Hokhmah*, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 30a:
כי אמרו ית' ליעקב ושמרתיך בכל אשר תלך ונו' ואחריו בא' ודע מיד וייקץ יעקב משנתו ונו' בחלומו זה והנה אנכי ונאמ וירא ויאמר מה נורא ונו כל זה היה רמז לענין גלות עמך ישראל ולגאולה בסוף.

[42] See above, section 1.

[43] See *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 79. See also *ibidem*, p. 76.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ge'ulah, have been interpreted by Abulafia as spiritual terms. For example, he writes that upon the last letter of the divine name, namely *He'*, depend

> prophecies and deliveries [coming] to all the speaking and intellectual soul[s]. This is the reason that all illuminati in search of prophecy and delivery, should contemplate the power of *He'*[44]

There can be no doubt that here delivery represents individual redemption of the intellectual soul. Indeed, in a quite interesting discussion, Abulafia combines the two concepts together by making a pun: he interprets the term *mo'ed*, the date of redemption, as an anagram for *'amud*, a pillar, namely the assumption that everything depends on redemption. The verb *no'adeti*, namely "I have encountered with", points to God's revelation to Moses.[45] Spiritualistic interpretations of words that would commonly deal with external realities are well known in Abulafia's writings.[46] However, it seems that even words like heaven and earth, as they appear above, may well represent higher and lower spiritual powers.[47] Thus, major terms for redemption and revelation were perceived as interconnected. This spiritualization of external events is important in understanding the complexities of Abulafia's Kabbalah and its survival.

A Messiah who has failed is usually subject to criticism and his writings are often dismissed as unimportant. However, this is not the case with Abulafia's Kabbalah; it continued to have important repercussions throughout the history of Jewish mysticism. In my opinion, Abulafia's Kabbalah survived because he emphasized individual, spiritual redemption as the ultimate aim of the advent of the Messiah. His ecstatic Kabbalah as a salvific technique could, and should, be understood as relevant beyond the historical circumstances in which it was formulated. In other words, acute messianic expectations and calculations were formulated in an effort to disseminate ecstatic Kabbalah and encourage spirituality in Jewish life. Thus, even when the apocalyptic register was silenced, and Kabbalists did not pay attention to Abulafia's messianic claims, they could recognize his spiritual redemption as a viable mystical option.

---

[44] *Ibidem*, p. 75.

[45] See *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 153ab.

[46] See e.g. M. Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, tr. M. Kallus (Albany, SUNY Press, 1989) pp. 38–55.

[47] *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, p. 21.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Changes of Names

According to Abulafia's view of eschatology, the changing of names, both divine and particular ones, is pivotal at the end of time. For example, he writes:

> There is no redemption but by means of the name of
> And His redemption is not for those who do not request it[48]
> In accordance to His Name.
> This is why I, Zekhariyahu
> The destroyer of the building
> And the builder of the destruction[49]
> Have written this small book,
> By[50] the name of *'Adonay* the small[51]
> In order to disclose in it the secret of YHWH the great.[52]

Therefore, the composition of *Sefer ha-'Ot*, the most apocalyptic among Abulafia's extant prophetic books, aims to disclose the secret of the great divine name. During the writing of his book, the name *'Adonay* was primarily used. Abulafia perceives himself as the revealer of the great Tetragrammaton, apparently unknown beforehand. According to another passage in the same book, the plene writing of the Tetragrammaton, the source of eternal life, is sufficient for those who wish to revive themselves.[53] However, it is not only the new, or renewed, knowledge of the divine name, and its preponderance over other names that are characteristic of the messianic age.

In writing about a change that will bring about this coming age, Abulafia states that

> It is known that these two attributes are changed always in accordance to the nature of creation, to each other. And the secret is that the attribute of mercy is always prevailing, because the numerical value of YHWH is 26 and that of the name *'Elohim* is 86, namely when

---

[48] Namely the redemption.

[49] This vision of building and destruction recurs in Abulafia's writings and this aspect will be analyzed in a different study.

[50] Or, according to another plausible interpretation, "In the name of".

[51] See, indeed, *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 76, where a revelation is described as stemming from *'Adonay*, while later it is predicted that the Tetragrammaton will awake the heart of the shepherd to act as a redeemer.

[52] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 79:

ואין תשועה כי אם בשם יהוה ונאלתו איננה לאשר לא ידרשוהו על פי שמו:
על כן אנכי זכריהו ההורס הבנין הבונה החרבן כתבתי ספר קטן זה בשם
אדני הקטן לנלות בו סוד יהוה הנדול.

[53] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 74.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> someone will add 86 to 26, and when someone will write 26 in its plene form, *kaf vav*, the concealed [name of] 86 under the name of 26 will be found. This means that the attribute of judgement is concealed while that of mercy is revealed. Both are, however, 26 which means that these two attributes are but one attribute.[54]

The letters *K[a]F* and *V[a]V* can be combined to constitute *KaV* whose numerical value is 26, the *gematria* of the Tetragrammaton, and *PaV* which is numerically equivalent to 86, the gematria of *'Elohim*.[55] The passage discusses the concealment of judgement, represented here by the name *'Elohim*, which is contained in the plene writing of the letters of the Tetragrammaton. Thus, the revelation of the divine name of four letters means the preponderance of the attribute of mercy over that of judgement. Indeed, it seems that Abulafia believes that the Tetragrammaton is characteristic of messianic times. He confesses that he has received three revelations: "the belief in *'Elohim"; 'Emunah 'Ahat*, one belief; and *'emunah be-shem hameyuhad* "belief in the name," which is perceived as "a hidden secret" of redemption'.[56] The first belief in the name *'Elohim* and the last in the Tetragrammaton are clear evidence that there is a progression between the two beliefs. The importance Abulafia attributes to belief is quite remarkable both for its consonance to Christianity and for the further development of Kabbalistic messianism, as represented by Sabbateanism.[57]

Similarly, in another book by Abulafia, we learn that "The end of the change of the times has arrived, and so is the end of the order of the stars, in accordance to the attributes. And the attributes and names will change, and the languages will be mixed, and the nations and the beliefs will be distorted, and the diadem of the Israelite [nation] will return to its former state,[58] and the rank of

---

[54] *Sefer ha-Melammed*, Ms. Paris, Biblioteque Nationale 680, fol. 308a.

[55] See also a similar discussion in Joseph Gikatilla's text adduced by Gottlieb, *Mehqarim*, p. 114 note 41.

[56] Commentary on *Sefer ha-'Edut*, Ms. Munchen 285 fol. 37a:

> אמ' שראה ביום ראשון של החודש שהוא יום שבת מראה אחת פנימית ונם היא מנדת האמונה אלא שקרא הראשונה בשם אמונת אלהים בכלל והשנית קראה אמונה אחת סתם ואחר כן הגיד עוד שאמונתו אמונה אמת והיא שהודה עליה על תכניחה הראוי לכל מאמין בשם להאמינה והיא האמונה בשם המיוחד אשר הוא אלהי אבותיו ומי הם השלשה אבות וזה סוד נעלם מאד וכך בא בסוד הנאולה

[57] See Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi, the Mystical Messiah* tr. R.J.Z. Werblowsky, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973) pp. 210–211, 282–284.

[58] See also below the quote from *Sefer Sha'arei Tzedeq*, pp. 17–18.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Jews will be related to the name of the essence [of God] not to the name of [His] attribute. [Then] the revealed will become concealed, and the concealed will become revealed, and the rank of the gentiles—men and women—will be lowered and they will be vanquished, and the rank of the Jews—men and women—will ascend and rise."[59]

Though expressed in rather apocalyptic terms, the changes desired in this passage may be less external than internal. It should be emphasized that a cultural-religious upheaval is the main topic and that Jews will relate now to the essential divine name rather than to an attribute. This crucial issue, as we have already seen in the quotes from *Sefer ha-'Ot*, may have a deeper significance when comparing the last quote to earlier ones. Abulafia employs the verb *Yevulbelu*—translated here as mixed to describe a major change in languages, alluding to the diversity of languages in the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel. Again, this is an "objective" event in the apocalypic scenario: the disappearance of the other opinions, beliefs and nations. This "conversion" should be seen as a move to a more simple, primordial type of language and religion, with the arrival of messianic times.[60]

The term *hilluf*, translated here as change, stands for a change that ocurred in the past and that will cease in messianic times. Or, to put it differently: Abulafia assumes that there is a certain correspondence between divine names, divine attributes, star constellations, and phenomena on earth such as languages, nations, and beliefs. A change of the divine names, namely the emergence, or the re-emergence of the Tetragrammaton brings about a new type of relationship between the divine attributes, different structuring of the celestial constellations, and return of the people of Israel to their lost grandeur.[61] In other words, there is an important element of restoration in Abulafia's vision of messianism.

---

[59] *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 41a:
מפני שהגיע קץ חלוף הזמנים וסוף סדור הכוכבים לפי המדות וישתנו המדות והשמות ויבולבלו הלשונות וישחבשו הדעות האמתות ואמונות וחשוב העטרה הישראלית לישנה והמעלה היהודית תהיה מיוחסת לשם העצם ולא לשם התאר וישוב הנגלה נעלם והנעלם נגלה וחשפל ותכנע מעלת הגוים והנויות ותנשא ותחעלה מעלת היהודים והיהודיות.

[60] More on this issue see M. Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 24–27.

[61] On the nexus between divine names in the Bible and divine attributes in ancient Judaism see A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927) I, p. 44; N.A. Dahl – A.F. Segal, "Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* vol. 9 (1978), pp. 1–28; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 1988) pp. 128–136.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

However, his vision is not identical to more popular versions of the final redemption of the people of Israel. In the eyes of Abulafia, restoration should be understood as part of the rise and decline of political and military powers.[62] A restoration may include the return of Jews to their land, a feature of the messianic age often emphasized in many writings on the subject, but it is totally marginalized by Abulafia who is much more concerned with spiritual aspects. However, Abulafia understood the significance of the name of *YeHUDaH* as a confession in the power of the divine name.[63] In an anonymous ecstatic tract, mentioned here several times[64] the author writes that in eschatological times:

> The comprehension of the Jew will be the comprehension of the Name and this is the way [the name] *Shadday* was interpreted to the effect that for us it suffices the name *'Eheyeh*, and likewise *YeHUDY, YHW DaY, 'Ehad 'Ah 'Ehad*, and by the comprehension of YHWH *'Ehad*, redemption will come to us.[65]

The word *YeHUDY*, Jew, contains the consonants that also constitute the locution *YHW DaY*, which means that the three consonants of the Tetragrammaton are sufficient. A comprehension of the essence of the Jew is therefore identical to the comprehension of the sufficiency of the divine name. By means of *Gematria YeHUDY* amounts to 35 and *'Ehad* equals 13. By doubling *'Ehad* in *gematria* we arrive at 26 and this addition of one to one is the significance of the word *'Ah*, brother. 26 is however, the *gematria* of the consonants of the Tetragrammaton.[66] This comprehension is a salvific one, as we may learn not only from the mentioning of *Ge'ulah* but also from the perusal of the context where the phrase *Mashiah* YHWH is mentioned. In other words, for Abulafia the eschatological success of the Jews mentioned in *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz* may be related to a political and religious ascent of a certain nation and to the emergence of a certain

---

[62] I hope to elaborate on this issue elsewhere. On medieval views of the natural rise of a Jewish state see Shlomo Pines, *Studies in the History of Jewish Philosophy* (Jerusalem, Bialik Institute, 1977) pp. 277–305. (Hebrew).

[63] See "Abraham Abulafia and the Pope", *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1990) pp. 67–69.

[64] See notes 24, 36, 114.

[65] Ms. Firenze-Laurentiana II,48 fol. 21b:

כי תהיה השנת יהודי השנת השם וכן פירשו ש? היה לנו לומר די בשם אהיה וכן יהודי. יהודי אחד אח אחד ובהשנת יהוה אחד תהיה לנו גאולה

[66] This calculation occurs elsewhere. For example, Abulafia points to the mystical experience of the union of man and God by means of comprehension; see the text analyzed in Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 7–8.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

type of centrality of the divine name. It would not be surprising to assume that the term Jew was understood by Abulafia as an allegory for the perfect knowledge of the divine name. In this context let us examine a text about exile in Egypt and language:

> They exchanged their language for numerous foreign tongues, to the extent that one does not understand the other, [and are] almost like animals who do not understand one another and revert to the state of inability of verbal communication.[67]

The cessation of a common language among Jews, namely the oblivion of Hebrew, renders them similar to animals. Multiple languages among Jews in exile denotes a reversal toward animality. In other words, in exile Jews do not possess any special superiority and are ruled by the attribute of judgement. We may assume that the reversal of this situation is the return of mercy, one common language and redemption. R. Nathan b. Saʿadya, the author of *Sefer Shaʾarei Tzedeq*, a follower of Abulafia's ecstatic Kaballah, claims that

> During the time of the Exile, the activity of the names has been obliterated,[68] and prophecy has been cancelled from Israel, because of the hindrance of the attribute of judgement. This state will go on until the coming of the one whom God has chosen, and his power will be great because of what has been transmitted to him related to their power[69] and God will reveal the name to him, and transmit to him the supernal keys.[70] Then he will stand against the attribute of judgement . . . and the attribute of mercy will guide him. The supernal [entity] will become lower, and the lower will become supernal,[71] and the Tetragrammaton, which has been concealed—will be revealed, and

---

[67] *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, Ms. Munich 408, fol. 46a.

[68] This view may have some affinity to the Midrashic vision of the change of the names of the angels by God at the time of the destruction of the Temple. This was done in order to prevent invocation of Jewish masters, or Magicians, who would attempt to oppose the destruction of the Temple.

[69] In the printed version it is written Menahem, which does not correspond to any of the manuscripts nor make sense. In the manuscripts it is written, *mi-koham* and I have translated accordingly.

[70] The topic of the keys is well-known in the Middle Ages, when several books related to magic used the word in their title, some of them belonging to ecstatic Kabbalah. Moreover, R. Joseph Gikatilla, refers several times to the idea of key in his *Shaʿarei ʾOrah*; See also Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* tr. R. Manheim, (New York, Schocken Books, 1969) p. 12. The whole issue deserves a detailed analysis.

[71] This view is similar to that expressed by Abulafia in a passage from *Sefer haʾOt*, p. 69, quoted section 3 above.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> *'Adonay*—which was revealed[72]—will [then] be concealed. Then it will happen to us what has been written[73] "For they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them". Then the natural, philosophical sciences will be cancelled and concealed, because their supernal power was cancelled, but the science of names and letters, which are now unknown to us, will be revealed, because their [supernal] power is gradually enhancing. Then[74] "the Jews will have light and gladness", and sadness and worry will be [the part of] the deniers, and "many of the people of the land become Jews"[75] and "your sons and daughters will prophesy".[76, 77]

Changes in the effectiveness of divine names are related to redemptive events. However, the influence of a certain divine name or another is mainly based on the floruit of inferior types of knowledge of alien extraction during the period of exile, or the return of prophecy in the case of Tetragrammaton. In other words, though major upheavals were expected with the advent of redemption, they are a matter of inner, noetic nature, rather than a disruption of the cosmic order. In fact redemption may be summarized as the revelation of ecstatic Kabbalah, a mystical lore based on letters and names. In addition to the revelation of God's name, Abulafia also mentions the change of the mystic's name during a divine experience. For example, he describes,

> it will appear to him as if his entire body, from head to foot, has been anointed with the oil of anointing, and he was "the anointed of the Lord"[78] and His emissary, and he will be called "the angel of the Lord"; his name will be similar to that of his Master, which is *Shaddai*, who is called *Metatron*, the prince [namely the angel] of the divine Face.[79]

---

[72] See above the quote from *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 79 where the opposition between this name and the Tetragrammaton is also obvious.

[73] Jeremiah 31:33.

[74] Esther 7:16.

[75] *Ibidem*: 17.

[76] Joel 3:1.

[77] *Sefer Sha'arei Tzedeq*, ed. J.E. Porush, (Jerusalem, 1989) p. 17. Significant parallels to some aspects of this passage can be found also *ibidem*, pp. 16, 20. See more about the background of this passage in M. Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 17–18.

[78] *Mashiah YHWH*.

[79] *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Paris BN 777, fol. 109. This passage has been printed already by Jellinek as an addenda to *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 84. For an analysis of the context of this passage see: Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah, idem*, pp. 15–16, "Enoch is Metatron" p. 236 and compare to our discussion of a passage from Nathan of Gaza, *Messianic Mystics*, ch. 6.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Another prophetic text, written in the same era, states:

> And the meaning of his saying: "Rise and lift up the head of my anointed one"[80]—refers to the life of the souls. "And on the New Year and in the Temple"—it is the power of the souls. And he says: "Anoint him as a king"—rejoice him like a king with the power of all the names. "For I have anointed him as a king over Israel"[81]—over the communities [of] Israel, that is the commandments. And his saying: "and his name I have called *Shadday*, like My Name"[82]—whose secret is *Shadday* like My Name, and understand all the intention. Likewise his saying, "He is I and I am He" and it cannot be revealed more explicitly than this. But the secret of the "corporeal name" is the "Messiah of God". Also "Moses will rejoice", which he has made known to us, and which is the five urges, and I called the corporeal name as well . . . now Raziel started to contemplate the essence of the Messiah and he found it and recognized it and its power and designated it as David, the son of David, whose secret is *Yimelokh*.[83]

The complex details of this very rich passage cannot be analyzed here, so we will only take up the topics relevant to our discussion.[84] First and foremost, Abulafia claims to have received this revelation while in Rome in 1280. The temple mentioned here refers to St. Peter's Cathedral where the Messiah will be installed according to Christian tradition. In his own words, the mythical elements stand for spiritual events.

Rosh Meshihi is equal in *gematria* to *uverosh ha-shanah* but also to *Hayyei ha-Nefashot*, the life of the souls. Clearly, this is a spiritualistic interpretation of Messianism. The messianic figure, chosen by God, is taught the secrets of the divine name. Upon gaining this knowledge, he is able to begin his task. Redemption is a consequence of

---

[80] *meshihi*.

[81] See Samuel II, 5:17.

[82] See *Sanhedrin* fol. 38a.

[83] *Commentary on Sefer ha-ʿEdut*, Ms. Rome-Angelica 38, fols. 14b–15a; Ms. Munich 285, fols. 39b–40a:

אמרו קום והקם ראש משיחי הוא חיי הנפשות ובראש השנה ובבית המקדש
הוא כח הנפשות ואמר תמשכהו במלך מכח כל השמות כי אני משחתיהו
למלך על ישראל ועל קהלות ישראל כלומר על המצות ומאמרו ושמו קראתי
שדי בשמי שסודו שדי נשמי חבין כל הכוונה וכן מאמרו והוא אנכי
ואנכי הוא ואי אפשר לנלות בזה מפורש יותר מזה אלא שסוד הש"ם הנשמ"י הוא
משי"ח (?) גם ישמ"ח מש"ה שהודיע לנו ושהוא חמשה יצרים ונקרא השם הנולמי גם
כן ואם תחבר חמשה יצרום ביחד תמצא שבעה יצרים גם בשחפך בחמשה היצרים שני
יצרים תמצא הסוד והנה זה הוא (?) נסתר עתה החל רזיאל לעיין במהות המשיח
ומצאו והכירו והכיר כתו וקראו דו"ד בן דו"ד סודו ימל"ך

[84] Compare also to Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 140, 382 and Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 126–127, where some other details of this passage have been analyzed.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the Messiah's use of the divine names, just as the installation of the Messiah is attained by the power of the divine names.[85]

The revelation of the divine names to a messianic figure is quite a rare topic, and as far as I know it has only been found in Abulafia's writings. For example,

> When I arrived at [the knowledge of] the Names, by my loosening of the bonds of the seals[86] "the Lord of All"[87] appeared to me and revealed to me His secret and informed me about the time of the end of the exile[88] and about the time of the beginning of redemption. He compelled me to prophesy.[89]

The nexus between the revelation of the divine name and messianism is both notable and central in ecstatic Kabbalah.[90] According to Abulafia, revealing the divine names is tantamount to revealing Kabbalah itself, which is quintessential for knowing the secret of the advent of the Messianic era. Indeed, in the same epistle, Abulafia quoted the same statement from *Sefer Yetzirah* to characterize that form of Kabbalah that he deemed as the highest, namely the prophetic Kabbalah, which teaches how to actualize the Kabbalists' intellects.[91]

Abulafia describes that his spiritual life—knowing the names and loosing the bonds—brought him to a subsequent revelation of the eschatological secrets. A spiritual life is conceived here to be a condition of redemption, not vice versa. However, the revelation of the

---

[85] See the expression "power of all the names".

[86] On this issue see Idel, *The Mystical Experience* pp. 124–125, 134–137.

[87] This phrase stems from *Sefer Yetzirah* VI:4, where it designates God as creator in the context of His revelation to Abraham. There can be no doubt that Abraham Abulafia uses here the first person because he perceived himself as a person of importance as great as that of the forefather. On "All" in Jewish thought see Elliot Wolfson, "God, the Demiurge and the Intellect: On the Usage of the Word Kol in Abraham ibn Ezra" *REJ*, vol. 149 (1990) pp. 77–111, and now Howard Kreisel, "On the Term 'All', in Abraham ibn Ezra: A Reappraisal" *Ibidem*, vol. 153 (1994) pp. 29–66 as well as the bibliography adduced by these two scholars. On the Messianic valence of the term *ha-kol*, as pointing to the date of redemption, see above the discussion of the passage from *Sefer ha-ʿEdut* and the further analysis of this phrase.

[88] *ʿet qetz ha-galut.*

[89] See Abulafia's epistle *Ve-Zot Li-Yhudah*, pp. 18–19, corrected according to Ms. New York, *JTS* 1887. On the messianic awareness of Abulafia in general see also the useful study of Berger, "The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia", pp. 55–61.

[90] Moshe Idel, "Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names", *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, & Typology*, ed. R.A. Herrera (New York, Peter Lang, 1993) pp. 97–122.

[91] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

divine name is only one aspect of the relationship between name and redemption. According to other sources, the redemptive experience of the Messiah is related to his becoming unified with God or the Agent Intellect, a state understood as a deep spiritual transformation, described also as the change of the Messiah's name to a theophoric one. God's theophany at the end of time, described both in terms of changing names and attributes, is related to the Messiah's apotheosis as part of his individual transformation. Provided that the process of apotheosis is triggered by a resort to the technical use of the divine name, we may understand the topic of the divine name as the mode of theophany, the goal of apotheosis and the means to attain it.

The revelation of the divine names, that is identical with the future reign of the attribute of mercy, is an objective state, namely theophany. This revelation is to be accompanied by personal redemptions, the apotheoses, which transform individuals into spiritual beings, designated by theophoric names, by means of reciting letters of the divine name. This median role of the knowledge of the divine name is well expressed in *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*. It states:

> The knowledge of the names is a supreme degree over all the human degrees, shared with the divine degrees, namely that they announce the way that unifies the soul to the Agent Intellect, in an eternal union, and there is no other way close to it, that may bring the soul to this wondrous degree.[92]

Divine names are modes of divine theophanies, techniques of reaching apotheotic states and designations for those who have reached them. Earlier in the same book, Abulafia speaks—in an ambiguous manner—about the passage of the name of humankind from potentia to actu, promoting their ascent by "two degrees".[93]

Mission and Propaganda

As seen above from some allusions, Abulafia's revelations do not deal solely with his own spiritual beliefs. *Zekhariahy*, the person who remembers and pronounces the divine name—which is a theophoric name

---

[92] Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 149b:
דע כי ידיעת השמות הוא המעלה העליונה על כל המעלות האנושיות המשותפות עם המעלות האלוהיות רל שהם מודיעות הדרך המדבקת הנפש עם השכל הפועל דבוק נצחי ואין שם דרך אחרת קרובה ממנה להביא הנפש אל זו המעלה המופלאה

[93] *Ibidem*, fol. 104b.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

for Abulafia in *Sefer ha-'Ot*—is repeatedly described as a messenger to the people of the "Isle of Power" or the "Isle of Mirror". In Abulafia's nomenclature, these terms are for Sicily, where this book was written.[94] I will not dwell here upon the missionary aspects of messianic and apocalyptic revelations, but draw attention to the propagandistic aspects of Abulafia's activity. Messianism and apocalypticism were not a matter of personal fate and individual achievement, but rather a message to stir Jews. For example, he indicates that God has sent him to tell "The words of the Living God, to the Jews, who are circumcised in their flesh but uncircumcised in their heart."[95] However, Abulafia claims that the poor to whom he was sent, and for whose sake he has been revealed, did not give him his due attention. They spoke about him, and his God, words that should not be said.[96] Then, he adds that

> God has commanded him[97] to speak to the gentiles, those of uncircumcised heart and uncircumcised flesh in His name. And he has done so and he spoke to them and they believed in the message of the Lord. But they did not return to God because they relied on their sword and bow, and God has hardened their uncircumcised and impure heart.[98]

This is a very precious testimony for the propagandistic activities of Abulafia. Indeed, even the dissemination of an eschatological-Kabbalistic message to Jews in general may be understood as part of turning of ecstatic Kabbalah also to external affairs, represents a change from Kabbalistic politics before Abulafia. More or less esoteric, this lore was not intended to be disseminated in larger audiences even by those Geronese Kabbalists who developed a more exoteric type of writing. However, none of them adopted the task of Abulafia. He perceived himself as a messenger to a nation[99]—and not to an elite—who travels from country to country in order to fulfill his "mission". A concise expression of this missionary revelation is found in a book written in 1280: "You should vivify the multitude by the means of the name *Yah*, and be as a lion who skips in every city and open

---

[94] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 68. The Hebrew terms for Power and the Mirror, respectively גבורה and הראי amount numerically to 216, the number that points to the name of 72 letters. Likewise סיציליאה amounts to the same numerical value of 216.

[95] *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 76.

[96] *Ibidem*, p. 76.

[97] Namely Abulafia.

[98] *Ibidem*, p. 76. For another instance of disclosing secrets of the Torah to a gentile see *Mafteah ha-Hokhmah*, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 29b.

[99] See *Sefer ha-'Ot*, pp. 75, 78.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

place".[100] It is interesing that Abulafia's disappointment in Jews led him to turn to Gentiles. Abulafia is well-known for his attempt, historically unsuccessful but cardinal to him, to meet the Pope. This meeting did not occur because of the Pope's initial refusal to see the Kabbalist and then by the former's sudden death.[101] It appears that Abulafia intended to discuss with the Pope matters of "Judaism", *Yahadut*, as revealed by the Kabbalah of names.[102]

The End and the Disclosure of the Secrets

The nexus between the disclosure of the secrets and the imminence of the end is obvious in a verse of Daniel that was repeatedly interpreted by Abulafia.[103] Indeed, he was not alone in resorting to this linkage, as we learn from his younger contemporary, the anonymous author of *Sefer Tiqqunei Zohar*.[104] Indeed, it should be pointed out that this linkage occurs time and again in the history of Jewish mysticism, and it may be considered a *leitmotif* in Jewish eschatology. In fact, when the following texts are compared to writings of other Kabbalists, they demonstrate that Abulafia places a strong emphasis on the nexus between the removal of secrecy and the feeling that the end is imminent.[105] We should see Abulafia's readiness to dis-

---

[100] The poetic epilogue to his book *Sefer Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, printed by Jellinek as an appendix to Abulafia's *Sefer ha-'Ot*, p. 87. For the propagandistic activity of Abulafia see also his Commentary on *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Ms. Roma-Casanatense 38, fol. 41a.

[101] Moshe Idel, "Abraham Abulafia and the Pope, The Meaning and the Metamorphosis of an Abortive Attempt", *AJS Review* vol. 7–8 (1982–1983) pp. 1–17; reprinted in *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, Akademon, 1990) pp. 51–74. (Hebrew).

[102] *Ibidem*, pp. 65–69.

[103] 12:9.

[104] On the eschatological views of this author see Isaiah Tishby, *Messianism in the Time of the Expulsion*, (Jerusalem, 1985) pp. 143–144, 147, 149. For more information on the messianic self-awareness of the anonymous Kabbalist who authored this layer of the *Zohar* see Amos Goldreich, "Clarifications on the Self-Consciousness of the Author of *Tiqqunei Zohar*", eds. Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich, *Massu'ot, Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* (Jerusalem, 1994) pp. 459–495. (Hebrew).

[105] The full significance of the fact that both Abulafia and the author of *Tiqqunei Zohar* were motivated by their feelings that they were living in the Messianic era to disclose Kabbalistic secrets for the development of 16th century Kabbalah, has not been recognized. It is not sufficient to write in a footnote that the 16th century Kabbalists were quoting earlier sources. We need to examine in greater detail whether the earlier occurrences were constitutive for the later eschatology.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

cuss matters of Kabbalah with the Pope in this context. In the introduction to his commentary on the *Guide of the Perplexed*, named *Sitrei Torah*, written a few months before he was to meet the Pope we read as follows:

> These secrets will be revealed during the advent of the Messianic era, by the Prophets who will arise, and by the Messiah himself, because through them[106] all of Israel and those who are drawn to them, will be strengthened.[107]

Later on in this introduction, Abulafia mentions two reasons for disclosing secrets: first, is the arrival of the end and the enhancing of the intellectual influx. Second is the need to arouse the 'hearts of the sleepers of the dust', an expression that is related to the verse in Daniel: "many of the sleepers of the earth of dust will awake".[108] Abulafia interprets bodily resurrection in the Bible as a spiritual experience; this is indicated from his use of the term "hearts of the sleepers of dust".[109] In other words, secrets do not revive dead persons, but rather people who are immersed in a life of spiritual ignorance. Interestingly, the revelation of wisdom is perceived as a sign of the advent of the end.[110] Abulafia describes eschatological judgement, distinguishing between the righteous and wicked, in terms of wisdom, and emphasizes that Daniel mentions the illuminati, *ha-maskkilim*.[111] The heart and wisdom may point to two different, though not diverging, moments that were considered to be salvific: inner illumination, tantamount to individual redemption, and the patrimony of the few who try to illuminate others. In other words, individual redemption does not preclude collective redemption. On the contrary, it is a condition for the latter. One cannot save others without saving himself or herself. In *Sefer 'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz* he refers to a secret:

---

[106] Namely the secrets of the Torah.

[107] Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 119a.

[108] 12:2.

[109] *Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 119b:
כי שני הכרחיים האחד מפני הימין והשפע. הביאונו לגלות מה שנגלה.
האחד מפני שנעורר ליבות הישנים. יתחזק ישוטטו רבים והרבה שהניע
קץ הדעת והשיניח הוא מפני בעפר ככתו' ורבים מישיני אדמת עפר יקיצו

[110] *Ibidem*,
ובהתנלות החכמה יודע כי הניע עת קץ כמו שכתו' כי סתומים וחתומים
עד עת קץ

[111] *Ibidem*.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> "the hand of favor" and "the hand of liability"[112] . . . stand together [numerically] for "time of end". And despite the fact that I know that there are many Kabbalists who are not perfect, thinking as they are that their perfection consists in not revealing a secret issue,[113] I shall care neither about their thought not about their blaming me because of the disclosure, since my view on this is very different from, and even opposite to theirs.[114]

This passage is based on a gematria of *'et qetz* as 660, which is the numerical value of the expression *kaf zekhut ve-kaf hovah* and *seter*.[115] The meaning of this equation is obvious: the end of time is also the time of judgement. However, this issue is understood by other Kabbalists as a secret and Abulafia states that he is willing to reveal it despite the protests of others. This rather exceptional confession, in an eschatological context denotes that the end of time is a "secret" until it comes, and then it stops being a secret.

For example, this is the gist of an interesting statement in *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*.[116] Abulafia notes that the end, *qetz*, is numerically identical to the words *ne'elam*, "hidden", and *penimi*, "inner," a word that means spiritual in medieval philosophical and Kabbalistic literature along with the connotation of "hidden."[117] In other words, the end,

---

[112] This phrase stems from *Sefer Yetzirah* ed. I. Gruenwald, par. 36, *Israel Oriental Studies*, vol. 1 (1971) p. 156.

[113] *Seter*, secret, too has the numerical value of 660.

[114] Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 55a:

כף זכות וכף חובה והנם יחד עת קץ ועם היותי יודע שיש מן המקובלים רבים שלא נשלמו וחשבו שנשלמו בהיותם בלתי מגלים דבר סת"ר לא אחוש אני למחשבתם ואפי בגנותם אותי על הגלוי כי דעתי בזה רחוקה מדעתם או הפכית

See also *'Otzar 'Eden Ganuz*, Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 40ab and compare also to the anonymous ecstatic treatise found in Ms. Firenze-Laurenziana II.48, fol. 21a:

והנה נתן לו סימן עד עת קץ וסודו כף זכות וכף חובה

See also *ibidem*, fol. 7b, where the author hints at the existence of a great secret in the *gematria* of *kaf zekhut ve-kaf hovah*. The same *gematria* occurs, already in 1280, in *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 119b.

[115] Compare also to Abulafia's *Gan Na'ul*, Ms. München 316, fol. 328b:

סוד פלאו חכמה הוא סוד קץ שהוא סת"ר

The consonants of the phrase *sod pel'aot hokhmah* are numerically identical to 660. It should be mentioned that the term *seter*, like *qetz* was interpreted by Abulafia in various ways; see e.g. Alexander Altmann, "Maimonides' Attitude toward Jewish Mysticism", *Studies in Jewish Thought* ed., A. Jospe (Detroit, 1981) p. 2! note 20.

[116] Ms. Oxford 1580, fol. 40ab:

ואמנם הנני מגלה לך זה וממנו תביך השאר וראוי לך להסתיר זה הסוד מאד לולי דעתי שרצון השם הקדמון יתי הוא שיתגלה מפני וסוף סדור הכוכבים . . . שהניע קץ חלוף הזמנים

[117] See *Sefer Sitrei Torah*, Ms. Paris BN 774, fol. 153b; *Sefer Gan Na'ul*, Ms. München 316, fol. 338b.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

implicitly hidden, deals with spiritual matters. In his introduction of the *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, composed in 1289, one year before the expected redemption, Abulafia claims that his revelation of the secrets of the Torah was due to the immediacy of redemption, and the nation of God spiritually moving from darkness to light.[118] Disclosing secrets of the divine names appears to be part of a program to improve the spiritual situation of the Jewish people and humanity in general. In another passage, he writes that such an improvement means a return to the lost unified language:

> separation [from Him], and its dispersion, by means of the attribute of judgement, that judges them according to other deeds and their clinging to their thought. This brought about the breakup of it from the tribes designated by the same name, and from the power of its ancestors. They exchanged their language for numerous foreign tongues, to the extent that one does not understand the other, [and are] almost like animals who do not understand one another and revert to the state of inability of verbal communication.[119]

The evolution described here exploits potential capacities inherent in the human spiritual constitution. Overall, this view is more consistent with descriptions of the end found in an ancient Jewish text. Talmon writes:

> The concrete fabric of the expectation of redemption places upon the People of the Bible a responsibility for forming the future which grows out of their responsibility for forming their present . . . Each person is called upon to help bring about the realization of the "time of redemption" in history. Human obedience to divine command is expected to lead to a transformation of the world, not to bring about a world revolution.[120]

In ancient times, Jews believed that political redemption was the restoration of a natural order and not an extraordinary upheaval.

---

[118] See *Mafteah ha-Hokhmah*, Ms. Parma 141, fol. 1a:

כי הדבר הזה אשר אני עושה לשלוח יד עם קצור שכלי לדבר בסתרי התורה
זה מרוע לב ולא לנלות פנים בתורה כמו שיחשבו בני אדם אשר אינם'
שלמי בשום שלמות מן שלמיות האמתיות ואינו נ"כ מפני היותי חכם בעיני
או מקובל יותר שלם ממי שקדמני מהחכמים המקובלים שלא נלו מה שאני מנלה
בסתרי התורה. ואינו נ"כ מפני חשבי שאם לא יתנלה זה על ידי לא היה
מתנלה על ידי זולתי ממי שהוא יותר שלם ממני. אבל הביאוני לזה שתי
סבות. האחת סבת אלקית והשנית סבת אינושית. ואמנם סבת האלקית היא קרבת
עת קץ כלומר קרבת זמן נאולת עם ה" וימי צאתם מאפלה לאורה . . .

[119] *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, Ms. München 408, fol. 46a.

[120] Shemaryahu Talmon, *King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1986) p. 162.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

In the eyes of Abulafia, spiritual and political redemptions are possible within a framework of the natural order, by means of natural changes, but not by a sudden, mysterious upheaval. Abulafia was deeply influenced by Neoaristotelian medieval anthropology and one of its main principles was that the *summum bonum* is intellection. Abulafia, and many other authors, understood this concept as an act of redemption.[121] Thus, the redemptive journey was integrated into cognitive processes, that may be accelerated, and improved, by means of mystical techniques that employ divine names.

Conclusions

A detailed analysis of Abulafia's treatment of apocalypticism uncovers some important Kabbalistic writings that reveal his spiritual interpretations of apocalypticism. Moreover, his efforts to publicly preach his eschatological visions, whether spiritualistic or apocalyptic, to both Christians and Jews, demonstrate a strong propagandistic tendency that was not matched by any earlier or later messianic figures. In fact, Abulafia is a fine example of a category of prophets described by Neher as *christique*—prophets who believe that they are contemporaries of the eschatology they are prophesizing.[122] However, while those figures described as *christique*, like Daniel, did not identify themselves with the Messianic figure as a harbinger of an imminent advent, Abulafia contended that one person represents both prophecy and actual messianism.

The coexistence of these two functions is reminiscent of the proclamation of the imminent eschaton in external reality and spiritual messianism. As seen above, these conceptual complexities are also buttressed by biblical verses, and Abulafia's "prophetic" revelations. The coexistence of different mehods of reasoning (semantic functions and numerical registers) is not only due to a variety of sources, but also to the Kabbalist's interest in spreading messianic messages in diverse types of Jewish and Christian audiences.

Messianism and apocalypticism are nebulous phenomena filled with ambiguities and complexities. For example, Gershom Scholem writes:

---

[121] See also the article of D. Schwartz mentioned below, note 134.

[122] André Neher, *Prophetes et propheties, L'essence du prophetisme* (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 1995) pp. 57–59.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> Jewish Messianism in its origins and by its nature—this cannot be sufficiently emphasized—is a theory of catastrophe. This theory stresses the revolutionary, cataclysmic element in the transition from every historical present to the Messianic future . . . The elements of the catastrophic and the vision of the doom are present in peculiar fashion in the Messianic vision.[123]

It seems that this catastrophic explanation is not relevant vis-à-vis the Abulafian, or the Zoharic, apocalypse. Just as many of his predecessors, Abulafia quotes different passages in the book of Daniel in order to calculate the end of time. However, very few kabbalists before Abulafia have discussed apocalyptic themes in conjunction with the book of Daniel. The title of the *Zohar*, is based on Daniel 12:3 which is found in the same chapter dealing with allusions to the time of the end.

These findings may provide a better understanding of the relationship between apocalypticism and Kabbalah: In his analysis of how Kabbalists perceived apocalyptic issues within a generation after the expulsion from Spain, Scholem claims:

> the teachings of the early Kabbalah continued without basic change;[124] the important thing now was propaganda, the dissemination of the apocalyptic message.[125]

Scholem's unified and rather monochromatic vision of the "early Kabbalah"—a domain of thought and literature covering three centuries and a broad diversity of Kabbalistic schools—has been characterized by an indifference to Messianism.[126] Y. Liebes has shown that there is no reason to hold such a view insofar as the book of the *Zohar* is concerned.[127] Although the Zohar may be exceptional, it nevertheless does not express an explicit messianic theory that was coupled by a messianic propaganda by historical Kabbalists who might have composed Zoharic literature.

---

[123] Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, pp. 7–8; See also *ibidem*, pp. 4, 12.

[124] Namely without any absorption of messianic or apocalyptic elements, that were described earlier by Scholem as absent in early Kabbalah.

[125] Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, Schocken Books, 1972) , p. 41. See also his *Sabbatai Sevi, the Mystical Messiah*, 18–20.

[126] See also Joseph Dan, The Hebrew Story in the Middle Ages, (Jerusalem, Keter, 1974) pp. 44–45 (Hebrew); "The Legend of Messiah in the Middle Ages", *ha-'Ummah* vol. 8 (1970) pp. 225–237. (Hebrew).

[127] Yehuda Liebes, "The Messiah of the Zohar" in *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought* (Jerusalem, The Israel Academy for Humanities and Science, 1982) pp. 87–234. (Hebrew).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Not only was the very powerful combination of Kabbala and apocalypticism incorporated into Abulafia's writings but it also influenced others centuries after his death. Unlike many of the Kabbalists before him, who were more concerned with questions related to the beginning, Abulafia was relatively indifferent to cosmogonical discussions. He was much more concerned with *Endzeit* rather than with *Urzeit.*

In fact, one of the few Kabbalistic Messiahs who wrote visions in Italy, immediately after the expulsion from Spain, Rabbi Asher Lemlein, has combined Messianism with Abulafian Kabbalah and propagandistic activities.[128] Some scholars have interpreted this activity as a new type of interaction between Kabbalah and Messianism in the aftermath of the Expulsion. A perusal of the extant writings of this author do not bring to light any specific reference to this historical event. However, it is rather easy to detect Abulafia's influence in his writings.

Abulafia's synthesis between Kabbalah and messianism, and in some cases even between Kabbalah and apocalypticism, as well as his sustained effort to disseminate this synthesis in the late 13th century, calls into question Scholem's assumptions. Therefore, it is worthwhile comparing the numerous discussions of the 13th century ecstatic Kabbalist, to those of later Kabbalists, such as R. Abraham ha-Levi. Scholem argued that the latter, who was "an untiring agitator and interpreter of events 'pregnant' with redemption, is typical of a generation of Kabbalists in which the apocalyptic abyss yawned."[129]

The two authors appear to represent different types of Kabbalistic eschatological propaganda. If someone expects, on the basis of Scholem's statement, to find a much greater propagandistic activity in ha-Levi's writings, written after the expulsion from Spain, in comparison to those of Abulafia, writing as he was in the relatively calm period of the end of the 13th century, I suspect that he will be in a great quandary.

It is well-known that 18th century Hasidism has been described by scholars as a spiritualistic movement that neutralized the messianism of Lurianism and Sabbateanism.[130] Scholem's famous thesis has been criticized in an article by Isaiah Tishby, who has claimed that Lurianic

---

[128] See Efrayim Kupfer, "The Visions of R. Asher ben Meir, named Lemlein Reutlingen" *Qovetz 'Al Yad,* (NS) vol. VIII (XVIII) (Jerusalem, 1976) pp. 387–423. (Hebrew).

[129] *Major Trends,* p. 247.

[130] Scholem, *The Messianic Idea,* pp. 176–202; *Major Trends,* p. 329.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

messianic themes—as well as Sabbatean elements—were more influential on nascent Hasidism than Scholem assumed.[131] In a debate over Tishby's articles, Scholem, Werblowsky and Schatz-Uffenheimer, contend that given the existence of spiritualistic understandings of salvation, the messianic elements have been attenuated.[132] The underlying assumption is that what has been described as a neutralization has taken place, more active messianism, as represented by Lurianic views of the subject are not formative for the Hasidic masters. Indeed, spiritualistic understanding of salvation indeed occur in Hasidism, as those scholars have duly shown, though I am reticent of describing their emergence as being the result of a neutralization.[133]

As we have seen above, spiritual visions of salvation are found long before Hasidism in the writings of Abulafia, who is only one, though a major, example of the emphasis on the inner redemption in Judaism. On the basis of a long series of texts and authors who agreed with Abulafia's views, or were eventually influenced by them,[134] it is plausible to assume that the emergence of Hasidic spiritual views on redemption is not necessarily the result of an attempt to attenuate what were considered to be the "pernicious" Kabbalistic messianic forms of activism, as represented in Lurianism and Sabbateanism. The coexistence of spiritual and apocalyptic messianism in the writings of Abulafia, who claimed to be the Messiah, may provide us with an understanding of other forms of Jewish mysticism, like Hasidism. The case of Abulafia shows that acute Messianism and spiritual redemption are not exclusive phenomena, and the preponderance of the latter does not automatically invalidate the importance of the former.

---

[131] Isaiah Tishby, "The Messianic Idea and Messianic Trends in the Growth of Hasidism", *Zion* vol. 32 (1967) pp. 1–45. (Hebrew).

[132] Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, pp. 176–202; Rivka Schatz, "The Messianic Element in Hasidic Thought", *Molad* (NS) vol. 1 (1967) pp. 105–111 (Hebrew); R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Mysticism and Messianism, the case of Hasidism", *Man and His Salvation, Essays in Memory of S.G.F. Brandon*, (Manchester, 1973) pp. 305–314.

[133] On my criticism of the neutralization theory, on the basis of a theory of models in Jewish mysticism see my *Messianic Mystics* (Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1998).

[134] Dov Schwartz, "The Neutralization of the Messianic Idea in Medieval Jewish Rationalism", *HUCA* vol. 64 (1993) pp. 37–58. (Hebrew).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES OF TIME AND SPACE IN KABBALISTIC APOCALYPTICISM

Rachel Elior

The Jewish expulsion from Spain in 1492 uprooted and dispersed large numbers of Jews and left traumatic impressions on the following generations of the Jewish people throughout the course of the sixteenth century. Similarly, the expulsion engendered many queries into the religious significance surrounding the tragic event.[1]

The banishment was perceived neither as a mere historical incident nor as an arbitrary political decision of the secular powers. In other words, these events could not be compensated or accounted for within the stipulations of realistic-historical circumstance. The catastrophe was interpreted in religious terms as part of an all encompassing and predetermined apocalyptic process signifying the End of Days. Therefore, the Expulsion was perceived as an initial manifestation of approaching events.[2]

Consequently, at the turn of the sixteenth century, many Jewish communities were living a twofold existence. The majority of exiles rehabilitated themselves by pursuing a normal life, conducted according to usual mundane considerations. However, there also lived certain mystically-orientated individuals and small groups of Kabbalists

---

[1] Yitzhak F. Baer, *Galut* (Berlin: Dvir, 1936) pp. 49–69; Hayim Hillel Ben Sasson, "Exile and Redemption Through the Eyes of the Spanish Exiles", in *Yitzhak Baer Festschrift* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1960) pp. 216–227; Joseph Hacker, "New Chronicles on the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain", in *Yitzhak F. Baer Memorial Volume, Zion* 44, 1–4, (1979) pp. 201–228; Gershom Scholem, *Shabbatai Zvi* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1967) I: pp. 9–18; Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1967) pp. 244–251.

[2] In 1495, Joseph, the son of Shaltiel HaCohen, wrote, "I suppose that the troubles that happened to the Jews in the Christian world from 1490 to 1495 are the premessianic tribulations" (Ms. Vatican 187, *Sefer Ha-Pliah*, last page); see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974) pp. 67–79; Joseph Hacker, "A New Letter on Messianic Resurgence in The Land of Israel in the Beginning of the 16th century", *Shalem* 2 (1976) pp. 355–360; Rivkah Schaz, "Kavim LeDmutah shel Hit'orerut Polit-Meshihit LeAhar Gerush Sefarad", *Daat* 11 (1983) pp. 53–66; Isaiah Tishby, *Messianism in the Time of the Expulsion from Spain and Portugal* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1985).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

who sought apocalyptic justification for their trauma, fashioning a mystical reconstruction to resolve the dire consequences. These mystical circles expressed various degrees of detachment from mundane life, but all were yearning for redemption while attempting to decipher the hidden meaning of a dramatic and divinely ordained end of all things.[3]

The traditional dialectic connection between catastrophe and redemption—encapsulated in a legend recalling the Messiah's birth on the day the Temple was destroyed—was applied time and again after the expulsion from Spain.[4] It was generally accepted that the widespread hardship and the great tribulations suffered by Jews—should be interpreted as messianic birthpangs which would culminate alternatively in the birth of the Messiah, his revelation within history, or in the coming of imminent redemption and the end of all things. Various signs and omens of the end were enumerated by the apocalyptic circles (*mehashvey kitzin*), such as, omens in the heavens, signs upon the earth, portentous events in surrounding society, and in the contemporary world. In their view, these phenomena all pointed toward imminent redemption.[5] Repentance, ecstatic devotion, self-mortification, mystical intention in contemplative prayer, and intensive messianic expectation were coupled together in an effort to hasten the coming of the Messiah. His imminent appearance and intervention in history were irrefutable in the consciousness of many members of the exilic and post-exilic generations. When the apocalyptic visions for immediate messianic redemption *did not* materialize, and the severe constraints of reality became apparent, the acute messianic-apocalyptic expectations were gradually transformed into long-term eschatological schemes. Broad cosmic mystical interpretations and apocalyptic metahistorical beliefs replaced all concern for earthly expectations for imminent redemption. This trans-

[3] See the introduction of Yehudah Hayat, *Minhat Yehudah, Ma'arechet haElohut* (Mantowa, 1558). One of the leading Kabbalists of the period stated, "Behold, scripture in its entirety is filled with covert allusion to the future redemption". See Abraham Ben Eliezer HaLevi, *Mishra Kitrin* (Constantinopole, 1510) p. 12; Gershom Scholem, "Ha-Mekubal R. Abraham Ben Eliezer HaLevi", *Kiriyat Sefer* 2 (1925) pp. 101–104, 119–124; 269–273; *Kiriyat Sefer* 7 (1930) pp. 149–165, 440–456; Shlomo Molcho, *Sefer HaMefoar* (Saloniki, 1529). *Idem, Hayat Kane,* (Amsterdam 1660?; Paris: 1938); Shimon Eben Lavi, *Ketem Paz* (Jerbah, 1940) f. 12a; Aharon Zeev Aescoly, *Jewish Messianic Movements* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1956) pp. 266–280.

[4] *Eichah Rabati* (Jerusalem, 1979) Section A, p. 51.

[5] See sources mentioned in note 3 above.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

formation took place in three independent mystical directions and in three separate historical stages.

In the first stage, beginning in the fourth decade of the sixteenth century, eschatological expectations became mystical and inverted in their focus. In the second stage, in the mid-sixteenth century, apocalyptic expectations became a predetermined nihilistic divine plan, transcending all borders of time and place, transforming history into metahistory. In the third stage, in the last third of that century, a comprehensive spiritual revolution was presented, replacing the traditional curriculum with a Kabbalistic alternative, generating a new mystical apocalyptic plan.

The first direction, that of *mystical inversion*, emerges within the consciousness and teachings of Joseph Karo (1488–1575) at the beginning of the fourth decade of the sixteenth century. In his autobiography, Karo wrote his mystical visions and angelical inspired teachings from 1532 onwards. His writings were collected posthumously and later published in the book entitled *Maggid Meisharim*.[6]

The second direction, that of *predetermined annihilation*, is expressed in the anonymously authored mystical book *Galia Raza*, written between 1552 and 1558. These mystical teachings were inspired by the dualistic tradition of the *Zohar* and the cosmic perceptions of *Sefer HaTemunah*. The author perceived the Spanish Expulsion as an apocalyptic turning point and focused on mystical transmigration occurring within seven cosmic cycles.[7] The third stage, that of the Kabbalistic alternative, introduced Kabbalah as the new messianic Torah of Redemption. This development took place in the later part of the sixteenth century and culminated with Hayim Vital's introduction to the Lurianic Magnum Opus *Etz Hayim*.[8]

---

[6] See Refael Jehudah Zvi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer and Mystic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). Joseph Karo, *Maggid Meishariem* (Lublin, 1648) and recent editions (Jerusalem: Orah Press, 1960) and ed. Yehiel Bar Lev (Petah Tikva, 1990).

[7] See my introduction to *Galia Raza: Critical Edition of Oxford Ms. Opp. 104*, (Research Projects of the Institute of Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Publication Series 1: Jerusalem, 1981). Rachel Elior, "The Doctrine of Transmigration in Galia-Raza", in ed. Lawrence Fine, *Essential Papers on Kabbalah* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995) pp. 243–269; Tishby, *Messianism in the Time*, pp. 150–153.

[8] Hayim Vital, *Etz-Hayyim* (Warsaw, 1890), Introduction to the Gate of Introductions, pp. 1–11. On *Etz Hayyim* see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 254, 409–414; Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, "Le Role de la Kabbale dans la Tradition Juive selon Hayyim Vital", *Revue de l'histoire des Religions*, 168 (1965) pp. 177–196; Rachel Elior, "Messianic Expectations and Spiritualization of Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century", *Revue des études Juives*, 145 (1986) pp. 1–2, 35–49.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

In order to elaborate on some of the diversified forms of apocalyptic time, we will introduce and discuss varieties of the innovative dialectical potential that apocalyptic perspective can provoke in regard to fundamental religious questions. In the following discussion we will focus on three mystical teachings relating to medieval Kabbalistic dualistic tradition, illustrating the above mentioned three directions.

The Kabbalistic tradition, as formulated by the author of the *Zohar* and his followers, proposed a dualistic perception of the universe in which good and evil, or holiness and defilement, were cosmic powers related to redemption and exile. The *Shekhinah* was the embodiment of holiness and the yearning for redemption, whereas the *Keliphah* represented defilement, evil, and the prevailing exile. The ongoing exile was delineated as the calamitous victory of the *Keliphah* (forces of evil and also known as *Sitra Ahra*) over holiness, the imprisonment of the *Skehkinah* by the *Keliphah*.[9]

Joseph Karo, the renowned Halakhic scholar, was a kabbalist who was profoundly influenced by Zoharic tradition vis-à-vis the *Shekhinah*. He was also greatly influenced by the martyrdom of Shlomo Molcho, a brave and tragic messianic figure, who was burned at the stake in Mantua in November 1532.[10] Following Molcho's death, Karo was possessed by divine revelation, a nocturnal visitation in which he heard the voice of the exiled *Shekhinah*.[11] In these visitations, the *Shekhinah* described her exile, humiliation and captivity. Through Karo's mouth, the *Shekhinah* was said to have proclaimed:

> My friends, my beloved, peace be with you, blessed are you . . . both in this world and blessed are you in the world to come, that *you* have undertaken to crown me tonight, for it is now several years since the crown fell from my head, I have no one to comfort me and I am cast into the dust, embracing dunghills. But now *you* have restored the crown to its former glory . . . therefore, my sons, be strong, resolute and joyful in my love, my Torah and my reverence; and if you could surmise the minutest part of the grief that is my lot . . . therefore, be strong and resolute and desist not from study . . . therefore, stand upon your feet and exalt me . . . and (s)he repeated, blessed are you, resume

---

[9] On dualism in the Zohar, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 235–243; Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, translated by David Goldstein, (Oxford: Littman Library, 1989) volume II.

[10] On Molkho's tragic death, see Aeskoly, *Jewish Messianic Movements*, pp. 266–280. On his imminent role in Karo's mystical life, see Rachel Elior, "R. Israel Baal Shem Tov and R. Yossef Karo", *Tarbiz* 65 (1996/7), pp. 671–709.

[11] See Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo Lawyer*.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> your studies and desist not for one instant . . . and through *you* I have been exalted tonight.[12]

This visitation, dated the eve of *Shavu'ot* in 1533, was witnessed by Karo's Kabbalist circle in Turkey. In this visitation, the *Shekhinah* is not depicted according to common Kabbalistic tradition, that is, as a glowing bride preparing for her wedding night on the night of *Shavu'ot*. Conversely, she is portrayed here as being in captivity, suffering in exile, and praying for redemption. Humankind, portrayed as her redeemer, must focus its thoughts on the upper worlds by means of ecstatic prayer, mystical intention, uplifting love, and persistent study. The *Shekhinah* will be rescued from captivity and restored to her accustomed place only if humankind wills her return.

The *Shekhinah*—who speaks through the words of the *Book of Lamentations* and epitomizes in this testimony the painful experience of exile and catastrophe—*is no longer the redeeming entity for the Jewish Nation.* Humankind is not the object of redemption, but rather the redeeming agent who responds to the pleading of the *Shekhinah* for *rescue* from captivity as well as to *her* yearning for *redemption.*[13]

Karo and the members of his mystical circle were driven by the divine voice to abandon passive expectation for salvation. They opted for active and passionate exertion in order to redeem the fallen *Shekhinah* from the captivity of the *Keliphah*, and thereby hasten the course of the heavenly scheme for exile and redemption. Further, the divine voice urged Karo and his circle to leave their residence in Turkey and move to the Land of Israel to hasten and bring about the salvation of the *Shekhinah.* Members of the Kabbalistic circles responded to the celestial decree by organizing their passage to *Eretz Israel* and avowing themselves to the mystical elevation of the *Shekhinah* within visionary reality. These people left behind their passive apocalyptic expectations in exchange for an active mystical way of life. They concentrated on the spiritual elevation of the *Shekhinah*, and in turn created the renowned mystical community of Safed.[14] Mystical

---

[12] See the introduction to *Maggid Meisharim* (Jerusalem: Ora, 1960). On *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot* in the Zohar, see Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, 3: 1318–1319.

[13] See Elior, "R. Israel Baal Shem Tov and R. Yossef Karo".

[14] On the mystical community of Safed, see Solomon Schechter, "Safed in the Sixteenth Century", *Studies in Judaism, Second Series* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1908) pp. 202–306; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 252–258; Lawrence Fine, *Safed Spirituality* (New York, 1984).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

redemption, in the eyes of Karo and his circle, no longer relates to the mundane world, but to divinity. The heavenly world is undergoing a process of eschatological restitution, entirely dependent upon human action. The transformation of the Jewish nation from passive exiles into active redeemers accompanied the transformation of the divine presence from a hoped-for redeemer into an entity which must be constantly redeemed. The traditional order is thereby reversed: No longer awaiting redemption from above, humankind not only becomes the redeemer of the divine presence, but rather constitutes an indispensable part of the mystical cycle of exile and redemption. The radical change in the order of the religious universe and the mystical implications of the teachings and actions of Karo, Shlomo Alkabetz, Moshe Kordovero and their disciples, accompanied by the detailed transformation of daily divine-worship, together had an immense effect on the new Jewish self-perception. The ongoing development of Safed Kabbalah and its widespread dissemination by means of manuscripts, books, rituals and mystical interpretation, later profoundly influenced Jewish thought from the early modern period until the beginning of this century.

Another innovative apocalyptic approach was expressed in the writings of the anonymous author of the book *Galia Raza*,[15] which appeared somewhat later towards the middle of the sixteenth century, after Karo's visionary revolution. The unknown author, who presumably lived in the Ottoman Empire, was influenced by the cyclic perception of time in Kabbalistic tradition, specifically the sevenfold cyclic system proposed in the fourteenth century mystical text known as *Sefer HaTmunah*.[16] This kabbalistic tradition viewed time as a predetermined process of change and offered a framework for the deterministic perception of a divinely inspired rhythm of history. This rhythm was constituted within seven *Shemitot*, that is, seven consecutive time cycles of seven thousand years, the elements forming the "divine week". This structure encompassed all time from the very beginning of the first millennium until the catastrophic end of the sixth millennium—the one in which contemporary history is taking place. The seven *Shemitot* represent seven *Sephirot*; each *Shemitah* is the

[15] See note 7 above.

[16] See Gershom Scholem, *Ha-Kabbalah Shel Sefer ha-Temunah ve-shel Abraham Abulafiah* (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1965).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

unfolding of a separate *Sephirah* within time. The author, writing in 1552, graphically describes the end of days based on the transition of righteous people from one cycle to the next, thus moving from history into metahistory. According to the author of *Galia Raza*, at the end of the Jewish year 5760, that is, after the fulfillment of six cycles of 960 years, some 240 years before the end of the present sixth cycle, the order of creation will change. This change is also marked by the successful culmination of the war between the powers of holiness and evil and the purification of souls through a process of ongoing transmigration. The world will be covered with water, and only the Land of Israel will remain, floating upon the water and passing into the seventh millennium through a river of fire known as *Nahar Dinur*. Those righteous individuals who have completed their religious obligations as spiritual soldiers in the cosmic dualistic war between the two eternal powers of holiness and evil will transcend the borders of time and space and will rise to the rank of angels, entering the Garden of Eden. The end of the process represents the end of history and the ultimate victory of holiness over the *Sitra Ahra*. This victory is expressed in the rescue and release of the Jewish people from the dominion of the *Keliphah* and signifies the transition from exile to eternity. This also denotes a transition from *Shemitat Din*, the six thousand year cycle of severe judgement and harsh exile on earth, to that of *Shemitat Hesed*—the seventh cycle of mercy, eternal redemptive metahistorical existence beyond time and place. The passage from the sixth millennium to the seventh millennium is the passage from history to metahistory, from human life in this world into an angelic existence within eternity, or from exile to redemption. In the eschatological vision of *Galia Raza*, (which refers to the liturgical Jewish years of 5760–6000; 1760–2000 C.E.), the righteous few were chosen to surpass historical reality, a reality which was approaching its destined end. These righteous persons were to enter into a metahistorical existence transcending both time and place:

> in those last two hundred forty years there is no being fruitful and multiplying, no plowing and harvesting and no one will be left except for absolutely righteous people . . . for in those 240 years the lower waters will rise and cover the whole mundane world and only the Land of Israel alone will remain, and its borders will be four hundred leagues by four hundred leagues, and it will float upon the water like Noah's Ark, and go close to the earthly Garden of Eden . . . and they, the righteous people, will plunge into the Dinur River and enter the

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> Seventh Millennium, which is the Great Sabbath and they rise up to the degree of Angels. And they are called the Hosts of the Lord and they stand in the earthly garden immersed in delights and pleasures within the earthly Garden of Eden, and they are not separated from the lower Shekhinah, which is the Lord, and they are Her hosts.[17]

An impaired sense of continuity, along with profound fears and acute anxieties about a total abolition of the Jewish nation, prevailed in broad circles after the expulsion.[18] In contrast, the author of *Galia Raza* reinforces a sense of immortality by abolishing death, constituting a 'leap' beyond time into a totally new world with the promise for a predestined alternative existence. In an effort to end the ongoing chaotic experience of exile, the despair and hopelessness generated by historical reality, the eschatological kabbalist engendered mythological determinism. He and his followers believed that this deterministic approach could nullify experience through an annihilation of history and exilic existence, replacing it with an eternal redemptive apocalyptic reality.

The third approach, the dissemination of Kabbalah as a vital precondition for the messianic era, was first presented in the fourteenth century. The underlying conception of the mystical-eschatological tradition was formulated in *Tikkunei Zohar*, a late-Medieval pseudepigraphic text written about 1300, though ascribed to Rabbi Simeon Bar Yohai, a sage living in the Late Mishnaic period.[19] The eschatological tone of the text is quite clear:

> Elijah of blessed memory said to Rabbi Simeon Bar Yohai, may he rest in peace, how privileged are you in that from this book of yours elevated people will be sustained, *until this book is revealed to those below in the last generation in the end of days*, and because of it you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants . . . each of you shall return to his dwelling and each of you shall return to his family (Lev. 25:10), and therefore it is explained that *through the book of the Zohar they will go out of exile.*[20]

---

[17] Elior, ed., *Galia Raza*, p. 56.

[18] See Joseph Hacker, "Pride and Despair—The Poles of Spiritual and Social Experience in the Life of the Spanish and Portuguese Exiles in the Ottoman Empire", in *Culture and Society in Jewish History in Medieval Time, Memorial Book for Hayim Hillel Ben Sasson*, (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1989) pp. 541–586.

[19] See Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, I: 5.

[20] *Tikkunie Zohar*, ed. Reuben Margaliot (Jerusalem: Mosad haRav Kook, 1978) pp. 23b–24a; *Raaya Mehemna, Zohar Vaykra* (Jerusalem: Mosad haRav Kook, 1978[2]) p. 124b.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

According to the *Zoharic* tradition, the secrets of the Kabbalah, presumably written by the *Tannaim* in the second century, were to be hidden for a thousand years and were destined to be revealed only at the End of Days. Their revelation at the end of the thirteenth century, and dissemination in the following period, signified the emergence of the messianic era. These ideas were echoed by many Kabbalistic writers in the generation of the expulsion and throughout the sixteenth century. Kabbalistic circles inferred from this assertion that by virtue of those who study the *Zohar*, redemption shall come in the near future. The direct connection between the *Zohar* and the hastening of redemption promoted the study of the *Zohar* as an eschatological text. Similarly, the coming of the Messiah was exclusively preconditioned by the dissemination of Kabbalah.

Thus, a twofold strategy was adopted: first the revelation of the *Zohar* attests that the End of Days is near. However, only by studying this book's mystical content and spreading its message will the fulfillment of the hidden eschatological plan for redemption be assured.[21] The beliefs of Yehuda Hayat, published in *Minhat Yehudah* in 1498 shortly after the expulsion, were well known:

> Hence it is explained that the *Zohar* was destined to be hidden until the last generation when it shall be revealed unto man; by virtue of its students the Messiah will come, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord and that will be the reason for his coming.[22]

The vital connection between the revelation of kabbalistic secrets through the propagation of the *Zohar* and the attempts to hasten the coming of the Messiah, was candidly argued by Hayim Vital, in his comprehensive introduction to *Etz Hayim*.[23] Vital not only described the mutual relations between messianic expectations and Kabbalah study, but also contended that the Kabbalah is the *Torat Etz Hayim*, the new Messianic *Torah* of redemption. Vital stated that *Halakhah*, the *Mishnah* and the *Peshat*, are *Torat Etz Ha-Da'at*, signifying the *Torah* of exile. He argued that the Kabbalah is the "Messianic *Torah* and the *Torah* of the world to come". Vital claimed that the prevailing

---

[21] See Isaiah Tishby, "The Controversy on the Printing of the Zohar in 16th Century Italy", in *idem, Studies in Kabbalah and its Branches* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1982) pp. 79–182; Rachel Elior, "The Dispute on the Position of the Kabbalah in the 16th Century", *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1, (1981) pp. 177–190.

[22] See Yehudah Hayat's introduction to *Minhat Yehudah*.

[23] See Elior, "Messianic Expectations and Spiritualism of Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century".

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Torah and *Halakhah*, as currently applied to in aspects of daily life, express the era of exile. Vital concluded that the Kabbalah is the expression of the new messianic era and argued forcefully that the coming of the redemption depends primarily on the study of Kabbalah and the acknowledgment of its overriding authority, validity and priority. He boldly stated,

> Regarding the *Torah* in its literal sense, which is the *Torah* of the mundane world, it is worthless when compared to the Messianic *Torah* and the *Torah* of the world to come . . . Regarding the *Mishnah*, there can be no doubt that the *Mishnah*'s literal aspects are but veils, shells and outer wrappings when compared to the hidden mysteries which are inherent and insinuated in its inner aspects (i.e. Kabbalah).[24]

Vital dismissed the relevance of a rational, legal interpretation of Scriptures, arguing for a concealed spiritual perception of the *Torah* and *Mishnah*. He contended that both of these texts were filled with hidden divine significance and messianic vocation, and that this inner meaning was to be found in the Kabbalah of the *Zohar* and in the mystical writings of its followers. Thus, the literal interpretation of the law, as a direct contradiction to the foundation of mysticism, was rejected and contested by Vital. The mystical interpretation of the law with its eschatological component was offered as a spiritual alternative to the prevailing *Halakhic* tradition and to its major proponents. In the introduction to *Etz Hayim* Vital argued:

> The major scholars of *Torah* have degenerated into the heresy of denying the validity of the truth while insisting that the only meaning of *Torah* is the *peshat* . . . the situation is desperate since it is only by means of the Kabbalah that redemption can be brought about while to refrain from it would delay the restoration of our Temple and our Glory.[25]

Vital's aggressive tone reflects the acute controversy which raged over the position of the Kabbalah between those who believed in its fundamental role in the eschatological process and those who held to the traditional order.[26] Clearly, the eschatological orientation of this generation brought about the daring criticism of the rabbinical

---

[24] See the introduction to *Etz Hayim*, p. 2.

[25] Ibid., p. 4.

[26] See note 21 above and Jacob Katz, "Halakha and Kabbalah as Competing Subjects of Study", *Da'at* 7, (1981) pp. 61–63.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

establishment as well as the literal legal system. Overall, Messianism changed the perception of spiritual priorities and religious hierarchy.

In the course of the sixteenth century Kabbalah, Messianism and Apocalypticism came together in an unprecedented manner. *Halakhah*, traditionally perceived as the ruling authority, gave way to a mystically orientated Apocalypticism, based on Kabbalah and Messianic Torah. The teachings of Karo, Vital, and the anonymous author of *Galia Raza* reflect the comprehensive breaking of constraints which was motivated by apocalyptic orientation: Karo broke the borders of divine-human relations, reversing the traditional order; "*Galia Raza*" transcended the borders of time and space, restructured both history and metahistory; and Vital broke the confines of tradition by favoring Messianic Torah and Kabbalah over *Halakhah*.

The Apocalyptic vision, which was drawn from Kabbalistic tradition and Messianic perspectives of history, was shaped by the profound experience of exile. This view created a fundamental change in religious norms which was characterized by the detachment from confinements of reality and traditional considerations. This messianic perspective of history formulated a new inner meaning for external events, thereby transforming the confinements of existence into mystical reality beyond time and place.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ABNORMAL AND NORMAL TIME: AFTER THE APOCALYPSE

Gabriel Motzkin

I

A time that is not normal time can mean different things. It can signify a historical period such as the historical period of the apocalypse, the historical period of the end of time. Here, however, I will first investigate abnormal time as a kind of *time* and not as a historical category. Namely, that kind of time which does not follow the rules of whatever is called "normal" time, to which it is then contrasted. I will then elicit the implications of the existence of an abnormal kind of time for cultural conceptions of the apocalypse. My implicit question is what kind of change in the underlying temporal structure is presupposed in different conceptions of the apocalypse.

There may not necessarily be only *one* kind of normal time, nor only one kind of abnormal time. Moreover, an abnormal time may refer to some time that has a non-time element within it. For Plato, Aristotle, or Kant, there is no abnormal *time*. For the Ancients, an abnormal "time" is the "time" of eternity, i.e. non-time, something quite other than time, of which time may or may not be a subspecies. If eternity is an abnormal time, then one type of abnormality occurs when eternity "*descends*" into normal time, for example, the sun stopping still, when the now of eternity creates a fissure dividing normal time.

A contrary relation between normal time and eternity as abnormal time is the loss of time in the *ascent* from time into eternity, in which certain moments of time-experience fall out, while others are intensified. If eternity can be lost in stages in the Neoplatonic downward procession of Being, so time may be lost in stages in the upward return to the One. Abnormal time is then a time that does not have the "plenitude" of normal time, but is rather emptier or fuller.

Such a loss of time-structure can be more easily conceived in terms of tense-time (past, present, future) than of linear time (linear succession), although the actual time-loss may indeed be one of succession

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

and not of tense. In a model of time as tense-time, time is experienced through tense. For a tense-time model of time-loss, that means that first one tense is lost, then another tense is lost, and finally only one tense or no tense remains. If only one tense remains, we may be in a situation of eternity even if the remaining tense is not the present (the tense-time usually associated with eternity). However, even the coexistence of two tenses may be compatible with the determination of a given situation as being one of eternity (if two tenses *can* exist simultaneously). The situation of three tenses is normally not conceived as being one of eternity, because it is usually assumed that the simultaneity of all three tenses is ruled out in a three-tense world: the existence of a third tense leads to the negation or annihilation of events taking place in one of the other tenses. Something about a three-tense situation must then be non-eternal. The two-tense situation poses a problem because it can be conceived either as eternally static or as requiring change or alternation between the two tenses.

In the ascent to eternity, both the past and the present, the *past* life of the individual together with the *present* state of the soul in heaven, are retained. The time that drops out is the future (hence there is no more change). Whether in heaven or hell, the soul can have no expectation, not even in relation to the events that have not yet happened but will happen on this earth, for then it would still be developing in relation to a future. This is true even if these events are *predetermined*: one can have an expectation not only of what is unknown, but also of what is inevitable and known as occurring at a particular moment, e.g. the expectation of an eclipse of the sun. The same must be true of the heavenly soul's foreknowledge of the Apocalypse. If the soul does not develop in relation to a future, then either it can have no knowledge of the impending Apocalypse, for it is blind to the future, or it already knows its outcome, for being united with God, it possesses the same foreknowledge as He does.

To the degree then that the human world is *contingent*, the soul after death can have no knowledge of events after its own life, although it has not lost all the characteristics of temporality, for its past has been preserved to the degree that it has a memory, i.e. individuality. (In the process of secularization, the transfer to earth of this heavenly model of the integration of pastness with presentness at the expense of knowledge of a teleological future can often be observed.) I tend to think that souls in heaven are ignorant of

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the future, for otherwise *all* souls would be in Hell: a soul in Heaven would know, for example, that its descendents or children would be gassed in the Holocaust. In that case, it would be in Hell and not in Heaven.

This argument may work only for the saved souls and not for the damned ones, since the damned ones could quite easily be damned and still know the future. It would be the damned souls who could prophesy the outcome of Armageddon, and not the saved ones. In that case, however, the future is not contingent, but predetermined. But then a model in which an individual soul survives death cannot really be a model based on a principle of radical contingency in human life, for that contingency could not extend after death: the doctrine of free will extends only to the portals of heaven and hell. The removal of free will, however, operates differently on the saved and the damned. Indeed, then, the above model may be one in which the saved souls would only know their pasts while the damned ones could not remember their pasts, for otherwise they could imagine the joy of their lives, a re-experience which may or may not be unendurable. However, the knowledge that they are burning at present and will burn for all eternity, with no capacity to imagine another future outcome, would be hellish. While the fantasy of a better past may be painful, there is no guarantee that it is so. It is then, for *both* the saved and the damned, the knowledge of the future that is unendurable, whereas in both cases the relation to the past is one of consolation: the past can always be endured . . . because it has always already been endured.

Must God then also be blind in order to be God? Or does His capacity for seeing in time make it impossible for Him to have our experience of time. For Kant, a God that possesses intellectual intuition does not need concepts. It is safe to assume that if He does not need concepts He does not have them. If God can *see* like a God, or *feel* like a God, He does not have to think. In the film *Wings of Desire*, Wim Wenders implies that God's motive for incarnation is His yearning for feeling like a man. Wenders assumes that it is death that is transcendent for God. The difference between God and man is not one between heaven and not-heaven, for the devil has also fled heaven into negative eternity, but between eternity and time. The devil will always be closer to God than to man. God's loss of eternity in becoming human must be compared to man's loss of temporality. Man's loss of tense must be compared to God's acquisition of it. An incarnated God is like Heidegger's limited God, for whom

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Nothingness is transcendent, and who is then inside time. A transcendent God can see the future because He has none; in order to get a future, He must blind Himself.

One does not have to conceive of a loss of normal time only in terms of tense-time. If time is conceived as being linear, i.e. as a set of points either extended to a limit or infinite in one or the other direction, then we obtain the following kinds of time-loss: we can lose either beginning or end, or we can lose the limit itself. Yet what we mean by time-loss in this case is the loss of some *characteristic* of time, since we conceive of the time-loss either as a cessation of time or as a loss of its character as time. In a linear conception, time is either a set of points or a flow. So then either we retain the flow without the points, unable to make any sense of discreteness, losing our sense of any alteration, but preserving the sense that time is passing without events (although there are all kinds of arguments why this may not be possible). Or we retain the points without the flow, in which case what remains is time as discontinuous points, so that the transition to eternity is marked by an experience of time as a set of discrete and unconnected now-points, and we are leaping from one to the other of these points. In that case our first experience of eternity is an experience of time's discontinuity in contrast to what we experienced before: our time is breaking up *before* we reach the shore of an infinitely extendible but singular now-point. In the transition, there is still more than one now-point, but there is no flow between them. Again, we could take the position that there are no leaps at the end of time, and therefore we are already marooned in eternity, which is simply the last now-point. In that case, however, we are frozen in the last now-point, which is our individual eternity. Unless we claim that all of us are converging to one last common now-point. Such a theory of convergence raises problems of personal identity. I prefer leaps to convergence. While convergence allows for continuity, it does not provide for a qualitative difference between time and eternity. That may be a matter of taste.

II

The above assumes that our experience of a non-normal time, of a time that is neither linear nor tense-time, is based on the intrusion or fantasy of eternity into our time-experience, i.e. that eternity and

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

time share common characteristics. I can take the position, however, that eternity is completely different from time. Or, if eternity and time share common characteristics, then maybe non-time is not the same as eternity.

Heidegger, for example, thought that non-time is nothingness or death. The gap between time and a non-eternal non-time is absolute. The relations between normal and abnormal time cannot then be those of two times that reflect two different worlds. For Heidegger, the defect of Platonic eternity and Platonic time is that they presuppose a common concept of worldhood. For *Husserl*, the gap between the phenomenal and the formal (mathematical) world is also absolute, but the formal world of non-time does not really exist, and therefore it is a kind of virtual reality: an Augustinian eternity cannot be predicated.

Heidegger's substitution of nothingness for eternity or eternal timelessness reinforces this difference, and has the further implication that meaning cannot be constructed according to an ideal model of another world, irrespective of the reality-status of that world. Therefore the relations between times are relations in this world, or perhaps between what is in this world and its limit. The experience of the world-limit may be "abnormal", but this "abnormal" limit-experience belongs to the world if the world has a limit, and it is then a presupposition of normal experience. Like many others, Heidegger views abnormal time as the more authentic and originary time. However abnormal time is so transcendent that it can only be experienced at those rare moments when the normal, everyday world loses its meaning. "Meaningful", normal, everyday time is then both necessary and inauthentic. Yet our notion of time in general is based in this normal, everyday experience. Heidegger, despite his intentions, thus creates a complete hiatus between (apparently meaningful but really meaningless) experience and (invisible) meaning: the ontic everyday is the basis for the quest for ontological significance, but the ontological, despite being only one possibility of this everydayness, is more primordial than the ontic.

Is there a similarity between the relation between the ontic and the ontological—experience and meaning—and the relation between this world and nothingness? Heidegger thinks that there is a strict homology between authenticity and the anticipation of death, between genuine meaning categories and true time categories. However, just as one cannot begin with the ontological, so too life does not begin

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

with death. Because life does not begin with death, we never experience death as something purely present. We rather anticipate death. If a Heideggerian apocalyptic time is the time of the life-limit, it is then a time that is poised between the inauthentic time of this world and nothingness. It is apocalyptic because it already includes nothingness. However the time of the life-limit cannot be experienced now since it is always future, and we cannot experience pure futurity as futurity. Heidegger resolves this problem by making anticipation the basic mode of our experience in this world, so that we experience the present as a mode of our future. However, the radical otherness of what lies beyond the limit means that the limit-time cannot integrate the two sides of the limit. What is on the other side of the limit cannot be experienced even in anticipation. As a time of the special moment, apocalyptic time cannot then signify the unexperienceable end, but rather that moment of anticipation of the end which pierces through normal, mendacious time.

The removal of eternity, or rather of eternity's identification with non-time, a removal that is a founding transition to modernity, recasts the question of which time is more essential, everyday time or special time, because the conception of special time has changed radically. If the Platonic sphere of forms is an illusion, does that make our everyday world *the* normal world? Removing eternity does not make lived time into world-time. The late Romantic surrealist Achim von Arnim thought that our normality is fantastic: the everyday world *is* the surreal world. Integrating a previously eternal and intelligible world into a temporal and sensible world can also suppress time as well as eternity. It can also bend eternity and time in such a way that both are distended.

The idea that the time of our everyday life is not normal because of cultural reasons is quite common. Because of civilization or industrialization, primitives or aborigines supposedly have a more normal experience of time than ours. Implicitly, civilized peoples are either living in two times or in an inauthentic, industrialized time. Such arguments assume an immanent apocalypse rather than a transcendent one: the end of days will not occur because of the intervention of a transcendent figure, nor even because of immutable structures of the universe that will bring an end to time, but rather because the way we live will produce a catastrophic end. This sentiment is somewhat similar to Heidegger's in that for both the immanence of

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the apocalypse means that we are already living in anticipation of the end. The apocalypse is not something in the future, but rather what we are experiencing here and now; we are living our everyday life as an experience of the end of days.

This fantasy was quite common in pre-Hitler Central Europe, and again amongst the defeated peoples at the end of World War II. However, there the idea was that abnormal times permit abnormal actions, whereas the anti-modern model sketched above suggests that normal actions are apocalyptic actions in a given context because of that context's nature: that is one of environmentalism's assumptions.

The intuition of apocalyptic time is not limited to esoteric sects struggling with cognitive dissonance at the Great Salt Lake.[1] As a category of Western historical experience, apocalyptic time has survived the demise of eternity as a focus for belief and action. However, without the reference to eternity, apocalyptic time becomes something quite different, for the end can no longer have anything positive about it.

The contrary notion that the end or the experience of abnormal time can be positive, an intuition that still informs Heidegger's notion of authentic Being, can only be assumed if the end has some non-temporal aspect, containing not only ultimate Nothingness but also ultimate Being. For a traditional conception, the apocalypse is the sign of greatest tension between Being and Nothingness.

In a temporal world that does *not* allow for eternity, time-travel, or eternal return, there can be no positive experience of the end. There is no way to die a dignified death in a world with only normal time. Is this impossibility a consequence of the alleged normality of normal time, or does it ensue from a confusion as to the nature of normal time, a confusion that is present in the notion of secular apocalypse?

The underlying question is whether what we experience in a secular world is normal time, i.e. a time such as linear succession, or rather a kind of special time, one that intensifies normal time to a point at which it is no longer normal. Or must a world which

---

[1] Leon Festinger, Henry W. Reichen and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956); Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1957); Leon Festinger, *Cognitive Dissonance* (San Francisco, W.H. Freeman, 1962).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

allows for only normal time also assume that normal time is really abnormal? How is that? Since normal time locates all events in time, it presupposes the finiteness, i.e. the death, of all events. Since a world with only normal time privileges no particular moment as a moment of time, therefore such a world can either reject the notion that positivity or negativity are characteristics of events in time, and then it also rejects any notion of apocalypse. Or it must locate positivity either before or after negativity, but never at the same time as negativity. In a world with only "normal time" a moment of negativity can never be balanced by some positive element in and at that very moment, as it was for Hegel. Rather the positivity of the next moment cannot be continuous with the negativity of a previous moment. The principle of the continuity of succession is independent of the positivity or the negativity of the events in that succession. Hence the positivity or the negativity of an event is not temporallly continuous with the positivity or the negativity of the moment that preceded it. Either another principle of continuity than that of temporal succession is at work, or the historical experience of events as positive or negative is discontinuous. In this way, the culture of normal time fosters a sense of the discontinuity of experience, a sense that either time or history is abnormal. The positivity of an event is experienced as discontinuous with what happened before, and hence can in no way compensate for it. There can be no triumph over negativity if time and history are severed, in which case death cannot be meaningful, even though it remains apocalyptic.

In our century, one such classical experience of historical discontinuity has been the putative return of the Germans to normal time after their apocalypse at the end of World War II. Many Germans did not feel that this was a return to normal time at all: their abnormal time was rather the time of troubles, the difficult years between 1945 and 1949. Were then the Nazi years their paradigm of normality? Which was the abnormal time? Living after the apocalypse, is the experience of time anti-apocalyptical, or pervaded by a post-apocalyptic sense of living after the twilight of the Gods? Does the return to normality involve casting down the idols or rather cherishing them?

Behind this phenomenon of living after an event that is grasped as apocalyptical, whether then or only later, is a sense of the loss of simultaneity. A sense of the discontinuity of time between past and present, or between present and future, reduces the sense of

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

sharing a collective present. Siegfried Kracauer initiated the idea that history is the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, by which he meant that we, unlike Hegel, do not live in one world with a spirit of the age, despite our simultaneity in time.[2]

The possibility that some simultaneous events are historically non-simultaneous is unstable, and can quickly engender the sense that nothing in our world is really simultaneous. Each temporal moment (e.g. June 4, 1999) then marks a very large set of historical moments (all the different historical events "taking place" on that day), each of which has only one value and none of which has two different values, since they are not connected to any other historical moment. The non-simultaneity of the simultaneous only makes sense as a metaphor for the idea of separate histories at the same moment. We saw, however, that a conception of the end of days as being balanced between time and eternity requires the sense of the simultaneity of two different values. Cognitive dissonance would then be the loss of harmony or balance between these two different values. It is inherent in the notion of the non-simultaneity of the simultaneous.

I believe that Kracauer correctly located this sense of non-simultaneity in history, but not in the kind of history that he meant, in the history that happens. The sense of non-simultaneity is a component of the historical interpretation of the life-world that became prevalent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This historical interpretation of the world seeks to overcome a sense of discontinuity from the past that is stimulated by the sense of having left the traditional world, perhaps because of the French Revolution. It makes us turn retrospectively to our origins in order to bridge this discontinuity. Because it assumes this rupture between the traditional and the modern, it presupposes that we are living in an abnormal time in comparison with previous times.

The modern sensibility assumes that the apocalypse has already occurred. It therefore replaces the space of the past with past time. This replacement of space by time is then extended universally. The world is no longer the world that extends in space but rather the events of history in time, of which no two can be quite simultaneous. Expectations are not defined in space, like a promised land, but

[2] Siegfried Kracauer, *History. The Last Things Before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

rather in time. Since we live after the apocalypse, a revolution of rising expectations take place: we expect the world to get better because it is necessary to assume that improvement has already occurred.

In that sense we are still in a Christian paradigm. For the Christians, the time between Christ's first and second comings is a quasi-apocalyptical time, and not a normal time. This quasi-apocalyptical time can be historicized because the experience of the world in a between-time is a spiritualized temporal experience. For the secular, the world after the Revolution is the same kind of quasi-apocalyptical abnormality, with the significant difference that the apocalypse cannot point to eternity. Thus the tension of quasi-apocalyptical time is heightened, for the transitional age is all the more fragile; nothingness has become a real burden.

While this is a historical experience, it is also an experience of time. McTaggart codified time as either tense-time or linear time.[3] Gell has undertaken to show that all people experience linear time, that the majority of the works written by cultural anthropologists are quite simply mistaken on this issue.[4] In Gell's conception, normal time is synthetic; it consists of the simultaneous experience of two very different kinds of: subjective tense-time and objective linear time. From subjective maps of the world in tense-time we create objective projections in linear time that are then reapplied to restructure subjective experience. In all societies, a process of harmonization goes on between subjective and objective time; in all societies, individual time is different (in contrast to Kant), but social time seeks to impose collective temporal criteria.

Abnormal time would then be a dissonance between these two times on either a personal or a collective level. Either one time would subvert the other, or the categories of one time would no longer meet their own inherent criteria: tense-time would then privilege one tense over another, which would then be an index of abnormality. Heidegger's time would be such an abnormal time. Linear time would be abnormal the moment it would fall prey to a disturbance such as a leap, a slowing-down or acceleration, or an intensification.

---

[3] John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, The Nature of Existence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927, 1968, 1988), V. II, pp. 10-11.

[4] Alfred Gell, *The Anthropology of Time. Cultural Constraints of Maps and Images* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1992).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Koselleck's sense of acceleration would then be another index of so-called abnormality.[5] (The distinction here between normality and abnormality is not one of content, but rather one of function. A function harmonizing two structures has been disturbed, and the consequent experience is one of dissonance or disharmony.) A return to the normal would then the reimposition of a harmony between tense-time and linear time. Heidegger would argue that such a harmony is always inauthentic, since these two types of time are inherently disjunctive and antagonistic. A return to normal time would then be *either* the return to the world or to the self: the Romantic apotheosis of return is replaced by the idea of return to everydayness, Hutchinson's "harsh, acceptable, exalting road" in *Johanna at Daybreak*.[6]

Three types of abnormality have been considered so far: a disturbance of subjective tense-time, of objective linear time, and of historical continuity. Each abnormality presupposes a different temporal relation to the apocalypse. The subjective abnormality of tense-time is the expectation of an apocalyptic future that is discontinuous with the present. The objective abnormality of linear time is the expectation of an apocalyptic future that is continuous with the present; and the abnormality of historical time is the notion that apocalypse has already been experienced. All three types foster attitudes with respect to an apocalypse because all three types must assume that some quality of time is finite. In the first two, however, an apocalyptic expectation is one which assumes not only that we are marching towards the future, but also that the future is reaching out to us in our anticipation of it. This is the normal abnormality of the experience of the future. The post-apocalyptic historical attitude, however, assumes that the pre-apocalyptic past is reaching out to us. Our experience of the pre-apocalyptic past is abnormal because of our post-apocalypticism. Traditional societies also thought that the past reaches out to us, but only within the framework of a continuous tradition. Our historical sense of the past is an abnormal sense of abnormal time. Moreover, historical time is a third type because historical time's resolution of the conundrum of continuity with respect

---

[5] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985).

[6] Hutchinson, *Johanna at Daybreak* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1969; Feltham, Middlesex: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1983), p. 314.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to a radically different past obscures the distinction between linear time and tense time.

III

The distinction between normal and abnormal time raises the question of the interaction between different kinds of time and memory. Is normal time remembered in abnormal time? Is the experience of the abnormal remembered in a reentry into the so-called normal world? If, for example, the moment of authenticity is the special moment, which dissolves immediately in a fall right back into inauthenticity, then there can be no memory of authenticity, no experience that enables us to experience the authenticity of the past, since we are mired in illusion. Plato saw this problem and hence postulated both forgetting, and a memory that is superior to forgetting just as eternity is superior to time. But if there is no eternity beyond time, then in a Platonic model there can be no memory that is prior to forgetting, for there will always be a moment of nothingness before being, and therefore there will always be a forgetting that has taken place before anything can be remembered. Accordingly, in *Being and Time*, forgetting is a central concept, but memory does not exist. Apparently, there can be no memory without a notion of permanent being. Hegel confronted this problem by splitting memory in such a way that there is one memory prior to imagination, a representational memory, and another memory that is subsequent to it, a sign-memory. Hegel sought to make memory part of a process of transformation. Heidegger was more penetrating: our concept of memory is tied to our concept of Being, of what is.

Our concept of memory depends on whether we conceive of the future as expectation, as anticipation, or as imagination. Anticipation, which is the way Cohen and Heidegger characterize the future, makes the future the most real: both these theories are theories of the primacy of the future, although very different ones, for Cohen's future is infinite and Heidegger's is finite. Neither has a theory of memory. Thus to the degree that the future is taken as being real time, in a secular philosophy the concept of memory drops out. If an anticipated real future is also apocalyptic because it is finite, then its correlative past (one of lesser reality) is one that is either forgotten or only real if repeated.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The future can be characterized in terms of expectation, i.e. the future is what we expect will happen which we do not already experience (in contrast to anticipation). In this situation, memory exists but it is not prior to our experience, because it is constantly being redefined in terms of our horizon of expectation, as for Gadamer and Koselleck. If, however, the future is conceived in terms of imagination, then memory is a central component of our experience of time, for either memory is constituted by the imagination, or the imagination is the consequence of the activity of memory.

These different conceptions of the relations between memory and time can be mixed up, so that we blend one conception of the future with another one of the past, with quite a different provenance. One cognitive dissonance in the postmodern situation is one in which the future is experienced as anticipated, but the concept of memory was originally tailored to the needs of the imagination: in this case the anticipated future is apocalyptic, but the concept of memory as being identical with the past is anti-apocalyptic. We assume that if we can remember the past, we can avoid the apocalypse that occurred in the past. Because we think that the past apocalypse and the future apocalypse are of the same order, we can balance the past apocalypse and the future one. All death, we think, is identical and not different. Heidegger thought that all death was different, but he could not specify how it is different. But there is no reason to think that apocalypses are of the same order. Moreover, by applying two different and disharmonious concepts of time derived from different systems, we are experiencing the conflict between memory and anticipation. In this case, the reentry into normality would be either to forget, thus like Heidegger validating anticipation, or to renounce anticipation, and thereby be able to remember, rejoining the tradition of Freud and Locke. If so, the abnormality that we are experiencing is one of different time-schemes in conflict, in which our experience of a past apocalypse makes it impossible for us to anticipate a future apocalypse, and our anticipation of the future apocalypse makes it impossible to remember the past one. Thus in the first part of the postwar age, the crowning metaphor was nuclear apocalypse, and all the past was viewed in terms of the possibility of total annihilation, the Holocaust being an example of this metaphor of total annihilation, whereas in the second, postmodern part of the postwar, the crowning metaphor is the Holocaust, the past apocalypse: we are enjoined more to remember than to anticipate. From the point of

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

view of memory and imagination, the injunction to remember the Holocaust may be the sign of the reentry into normality, with the provision that this normality is a negative, secular version of a quasi-apocalyptic Christian normality, in which a past Holocaust has already occurred, and a future one may also occur, but in which the future Holocaust does not define the past Holocaust, the future Second Coming does not define the Incarnation of Christ.

It would be easy to suggest that forgetting is like death and that memory is like life. Heidegger thought the opposite: that forgetting defines living and remembering must always imply a memory of ending, a memory of death. Memory is only like life if life is defined by death.

If, however, forgetting is an essential part of our experience of time, and we have seen that we cannot conceive of an experience of either eternity or time without a concept of forgetting, then the question arises of whether abnormal time, whether apocalyptic or not, whether including memory within it or not, must include the moment of forgetting: in other words, if knowledge is defined by a concept of memory that is tailored to the imagination, can there be a form of knowledge that would survive the apocalypse? Is it possible to carry the experience of the pre-apocalypse as knowledge or the experience of the apocalypse into the post-apocalypse. Can there be a memory not only *in* the apocalypse but *of* the apocalypse? Does the loss of time imply the loss of memory? Or can memory survive time, just as we assume the time can survive memory.

Plato believed that memory must be able to survive time, if memory, as both he and Goethe thought it to be, is not something imagined, but rather something real. Above, I argued for imagination as the most realistic concept of memory in contrast to concepts that accord less status to memory, but memory can also have a status that is more real than that of imagination. Such a status has usually been assigned to memory in philosophies that Kant termed transcendental realisms, such as Plato's and Goethe's as articulated in the *Elective Affinities*.

Such a high status for memory is well-suited to a concept of eternity as the other time of time. The modern problem of memory arises when the other time is no longer eternity, when the attempt is made to force all reality into one time, so that memory then appears as something broken and disjointed because it does not conform to the rules of linear time.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

However, the argument has also been made, most noticeably by Husserl, that memory is the foundation for tense-time. As the foundation for tense-time, it is the foundation for the possibility of the experience of time. Time is not an intuition, a form for looking at the world, as it is for Kant, but rather a retention, a holding-on to what has just been, so that meaning can be extracted from experience. As we have seen, however, it is possible, like Heidegger, to construct an argument for the primacy of tense-time over linear time without recourse to the figure of memory. But we have also seen that Heidegger too requires a privative kind of memory, a notion that time must be experienced in conjunction with the possibility of retention, even if that retention is transcendent or not given in the experience of time. It is this aporia that Heidegger resolves by arguing that forgetting rather than memory is essential to the tensed experience of time. That determination merely shows the degree to which memory/forgetting and tense-time are linked.

Since the experience of the Apocalypse is viewed in most post-religious philosophies as an experience of tense-time, as either future or past, and not merely as a termination in a linear and indifferent time, this question of the role of the memory of abnormal time is relevant for understanding the anticipation or memory of the Apocalypse. Following Gell, the anticipation or memory of the Apocalypse would be a kind of experience of tense-time without a simultaneous experience of linear time. Despite Heidegger, however, it is not clear that tense-time *can* be experienced without an experience of linear time. The suppression of the experience of linear time in the apocalyptic moment makes it possible for memory to survive into the apocalyptic moment, just as the past could survive into eternity, but that same past cannot emerge from the Apocalyptic moment. The possibility of the memory of the Apocalyptic moment surviving the Apocalyptic moment depends on the possibility of forgetting what has taken place before the Apocalyptic moment, just as a reincarnated soul cannot remember its previous lives in the experience of the one that it is presently living.

In conversations with Holocaust survivors, it has sometimes struck me that while some suppressed the experience of the Holocaust, and remembered well the life beforehand, others remembered the Holocaust all too well, but did not like to be reminded of their previous lives. It is as if the fissure in experienced time makes it impossible to experience both the pre-Apocalypse and the Apocalypse at the same time.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Why is that? One reason may be that the memory of the abnormal time is only possible to the degree that in the post-Apocalyptic context the abnormal time replaces the past. We *must* remember that this Apocalypse is not an imagined one, but has really been experienced: as such it has imposed a different structure of time on tense-time and not on linear time. It has done so because linear time as infinite time ceases to have any meaning in the Apocalypse, while tense-time in one form or another, even as two-tense, rather than as three-tense time, survives. However, the disharmony of the denial of linear time makes that tense-time into a transcendent time, because tense-time has become objective time instead of subjective time: it is no longer the time of individual memory, but rather the time of events. As such it cannot coexist with another tense-time that is in harmony with a linear time: one or the other must be suppressed. Therefore in the reentry into normal time, normal time is never normal because it begins with this memory of an objective tense-time rather than the experience of subjective tense-time with which memory begins in small children. In this reentry into an abnormal normality, it is rather linear time, succession, that is rendered provisional. In the reentry into normal time, the knowledge of the Apocalypse is conserved, but it cannot be translated: only in the future Apocalypse to come will it be understood. That is one implication of Abba Kovner's statement to the partisans in 1945 that we must prepare ourselves for future Holocausts. If we agree that the Holocaust cannot be imagined, just like any other Apocalypse cannot be imagined—and that does not mean that we do not try to do so—then we are left with either the reality of memory or the modes of anticipation or expectation. For anticipation and expectation, however, memory is impossible, and therefore we can only live as it were between a questionable known and a really existing unknown. Plato and Goethe argued for the reality of memory in part because they understood very well that memory has a consolatory function, that memory makes the abnormality of all time more endurable. In that sense the memory of the Holocaust has a consolatory function, because forgetting it in the Heideggerian sense would be too terrible, since that would mean that we have accepted the inevitability of another secular Apocalypse, another Holocaust.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

WHY LUBAVITCH WANTS THE MESSIAH NOW: RELIGIOUS IMMIGRATION AS A CAUSE OF MILLENARIANISM[1]

Adam Jacob Szubin

In the late 1980s the Habad, or Lubavitch, movement, a Jewish sect numbering over 100,000 members world-wide, declared that redemption was imminent and that their leader was the messiah. This article proposes a theory as to why, after 200 years of traditional, non-millenarian existence, the Habad movement embraced this radical theology. It is argued that a great influx of new members into the Habad movement during the 1970s and 1980s created enormous tension which found its release in the turn to millenarianism in the late 1980s.

In order to frame the problem, I first present a brief summary of Habad's history, placing special emphasis on two remarkable features of the contemporary Habad movement—its extremely successful missionary work and its abrupt transformation to millenarianism. In this paper, I outline two conventionally proposed explanations as to why Habad has embraced millenarianism, point out some of their shortcomings, and propose a third hypothesis focusing on the dynamics of religious immigration.[2] I suggest three independent

---

[1] This paper is based on research and field work conducted among the Habad Hasidim of Israel, from August 1995–July 1996. I would like to gratefully acknowledge the Fulbright Foundation for making this study possible. I would also like to thank my advisors, Professor William Fisher (Harvard University) and Professor Menachem Friedman (Bar-Ilan University). Finally, I would like to thank my father and teacher, Professor Henri Z. Szubin, and Beong-Soo Kim for their invaluable assistance. A partial list of works which have direct relevance to this paper: W. Shaffir, "Jewish Messianism Lubavitch-Style: An Interim Report," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 35(2), 1993, pp. 115–129; *Idem*, "Interpreting Adversity: Dynamics of Commitment in a Messianic Redemption Campaign," *Idem* 36(1), 1994, pp. 43–55; *Idem*, "When Prophecy is Not Validated: Explaining the Unexpected in a Messianic Campaign," *Idem* 37(2), 1997, pp. 119–137; M. Friedman, "Habad as Messianic Fundamentalism: From Local Particularism to Universal Jewish Mission," M.E. Marty and R.S. Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, Chicago, 1994, pp. 328–358 (Fund. Project Vol. 4).

[2] The term "religious immigration" is used broadly in this paper to refer to any influx of new members into a religious group. It encompasses both the influx of

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

and complementary theories as to why the millenarian world view holds such appeal for new immigrants in a highly differentiated religious movement like Habad. Finally, I outline possible applications of this thesis to other millenarian movements, briefly outlining how it might be productively applied to the Sabbatean movement, for example.

History

Hasidism, a branch of Judaism that stresses spiritual piety and ecstatic devotion, was developed by the Ba'al Shem Tov in the early 18th century. After his death, the tenets of Hasidism were codified and diffused by the Ba'al Shem Tov's chief disciple and heir, R. Dov Baer of Miedzyrzec, known as the *Maggid* (lit. "preacher"). When the *Maggid* died in 1797 without designating a successor, the Hasidic movement splintered into numerous courts, each headed by a different disciple of the *Maggid.* These disciples functioned as both political leaders and spiritual masters and were referred to by their respective followers as *Rebbe*, a reverential form of the title "rabbi." Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Lyadi, one of the favored disciples of the *Maggid*, established the Habad Hasidic court in White Russia. In contrast to other Hasidic sects, Habad differentiated itself by its focus on both intellectual study and spiritual meditation, deriving its name from the acronym of the Hebrew words, *hochmah, binah*, and *da'at* (wisdom, understanding, and knowledge).

Shortly after R. Schneur Zalman's death, his oldest son, R. Dov Baer, transported the group to the Russian city of Lubavitch, which has become an alternate name for the Habad movement. Over the next 120 years, the mantle of leadership passed from father to son or son-in-law. In 1940, the sixth Rebbe of Habad, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson and a small group of his Hasidim fled to America to escape the impending Nazi invasion of Russia, eventually settling in Crown Heights, Brooklyn in 1941. Ten years later R. Schneerson died, leaving behind two married daughters. A brief power struggle ensued between his two sons-in-law, from which Rabbi Menachem

converts and that of non-observant members of the faith who choose to become observant (often known in Christianity as "born again" Christians and in Judaism as *ba'alei teshuwah* (lit. "penitents")).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Mendel Schneerson emerged as victor to become the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe.

R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson was an enormously popular and successful leader. From the beginning, he made it clear that one of his central aims was to bring disaffected Jews "back into the fold" of observant Judaism, a task known in Habad as *kiruv* (lit. "bringing near"). To that end, he slowly built up a large and complex organization whose sole purpose was to spread the teachings of traditional Judaism, and Habad Hasidism in particular, to Jews around the world.

The missionary work performed by Habad sets it apart markedly from other Hasidic sects who look upon secular Jews with apathy, if not antipathy. While the Satmar Hasidic movement, another large Hasidic sect, strives to simulate the lifestyle of their grandparents in Eastern Europe, minimizing contact with outsiders to every extent possible, Schneerson's followers are prepared from a young age to play an active role in the "outside world." They are dispatched to busy commercial areas where they inevitably see clothing that they are not permitted to wear and to Israeli army bases where they hear language that they are not permitted to use. Habad families embark on *kiruv* missions to remote areas with no supportive Jewish communal life whatsoever, let alone a synagogue or school for their children.

Habad's commitment to the cause of *kiruv* is profound. The movement has sent out thousands of *shlichim* (emissaries) to spread its message around the world, targeting Jewish communities from Indiana to India. At last count, there are close to 1,000 missionary centers, or "Habad Houses," around the world, which may serve as synagogues and Jewish day schools, and provide their local populations with kosher food and ritual baths. Habad's outreach efforts are by no means limited to their *shlichim* and Habad Houses. Schneerson, known as the Rebbe, also initiated the practice of *mivtzoim* (operations; campaigns) wherein the Habad rank and file take to the streets on a part-time basis to encourage Jews to perform *mitzvoth* (commandments), such as putting on *tfillin* (phylacteries) or reciting daily prayers. Holiday-related *mivtzoim* are operated periodically to encourage non-observant Jews to perform time-specific commandments of lighting Sabbath candles, reading the Purim *megilla* scroll, or reciting a blessing over the four species on Succoth. In major metropolitan centers, vans or trailers nicknamed "mitzvah tanks" regularly

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

drive around seeking out Jewish pedestrians who might be receptive to Habad's *kiruv* efforts. Habad even maintains a world wide web site for Jews who may be searching for answers in cyberspace. All of these efforts fall under the general rubric of *kiruv*, through which Habad strives to educate other Jews and hopefully inspire them to join its ranks.

Kiruv is viewed by Habad not only as a critical social initiative, but as a divine commandment as well. According to R. Schneerson, the goal of *kiruv* is far more than saving individual souls:

> The obligation of *kiruv* is incumbent on everyone—men, women, and children—even to the point where it is the commandment of our generation. Every person is obliged to be a messenger devoted to spreading the word of God . . . and thereby will the messiah be brought, and the true and complete redemption, imminently.[3]

The fruits of Habad's prodigious labors have been remarkable. As the most prominent and active Jewish missionary movement, Habad has faced little competition for the allegiances of non-observant Jews seeking a newly religious life. By the 1980s, the influx of *ba'alei teshuvah* (lit. "penitents") into the Habad movement was significant. No statistics are kept by Habad and so the exact numbers are uncertain, but by tabulating the representation of *ba'alei teshuvah* in various Habad institutions in Israel such as synagogues, Habad offices, and schools, it can be estimated that *ba'alei teshuvah* currently compose roughly 50% of the Habad population in Israel. If such data approximates Habad's demographics across the globe, this suggests that nearly one half of the current members of Habad were born and raised in non-Habad homes, most of them having been raised in homes that were far removed from any kind of observant Judaism. No other Jewish movement has achieved anything close to this rate of immigration.

In the mid-1980s, R. Schneerson launched a *Moshiach* (messiah) campaign, urging his followers to yearn and pray for the ultimate redemption. Habad Hasidim were instructed to proclaim their messianic fervor publicly so that other Jews might join in and encourage the messiah's arrival. At first, Habad's messianic prayers took the form of wishes, such as "We want *Moshiach* now!" With time, though, the movement's expectations became more and more acute,

[3] Ha-agudah le-ma'an Ha-geulah Ha-amitit Ve-hashleimah, *Sichat Ha-geulah* 72 (8 December 1995) p. 2 (my translation).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

assuming the form of prophecies and predictions, such as "Presently, presently, *Moshiach* is coming!" By the early 1990s, Habad was proclaiming, "Welcome, King *Moshiach*," as if to say that the longed for messiah was already standing at the threshold of the world's door.

It is unclear exactly when in the course of this messianic escalation the Rebbe's adherents overtook their leader to become the vanguard of Habad's millenarian campaign. The first conspicuous indication that this had occurred was in the early 1990s, when the more fervent among Habad's messianists pinned their hopes on a concrete person, publicly declaring that the long-awaited messiah was none other than their Rebbe. New posters and stickers welcoming the "King *Moshiach*" were printed, prominently featuring the picture of Rabbi Schneerson. A petition addressed to Rabbi Schneerson was circulated among prominent rabbis, from both Habad and sympathetic non-Habad sects, entreating the Rebbe to publicly reveal himself as the messiah and initiate the redemption. While it is unknown (and fiercely disputed by Habad Hasidim) whether or not the Rebbe personally accepted this "coronation," it is clear that by this stage in Habad's millenarian ascent, the Rebbe's aspirational "We want *Moshiach* now!" campaign had been outstripped by his followers' desires for more and more concrete expressions of the redemption's imminence.

In 1992, with Habad's messianic fervor at its peak, the Rebbe suffered a stroke. Far from dampening Habad's hopes that their Rebbe was the messiah, however, the Rebbe's precarious medical condition only made their efforts more desperate. On June 12, 1994, R. Schneerson died, leaving his Hasidim in shock. No provisions had been made for a transfer of power, for it would have been thought inappropriate, if not heretical, to prepare for the messiah's death. Many Hasidim bitterly mourned the loss of their beloved leader, whereas others conceived of the Rebbe's death as the next stage in the redemptive process and celebrated in anticipation of an imminent global transformation. The anomalous funeral featured both torn garments and tambourines.

In the months following the funeral, Habad Hasidim aligned themselves with three different camps according to their respective belief of what had occurred on June 12. One camp claimed that while Schneerson had been a worthy and likely candidate to be the messiah, his death proved that he unfortunately was not the one. Another group countered that Schneerson was indeed the messiah whose death was a momentary, divinely preordained, interruption of the

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

redemptive process. Yet a third group contended that Schneerson did not, in fact, die on June 12, but merely "removed himself" from human view. Alive in all senses of the word, he was expected to again reveal himself to human eyes in the near future and to then proceed with his redemptive work. In the schism that has since developed, adherents of the latter two positions, both of whom expect Schneerson to imminently return and redeem the world, have aligned themselves against those of the first position, who deny that Schneerson is the messiah. Habad Hasidim employ a crude taxonomy to delineate these two camps, wherein those who still believe that Schneerson is the messiah are called *meshichistim* (messianists) and those who do not are called *non-meshichistim* (non-messianists) or *anti-meshichistim* (anti-messianists). This terminology is misleading since many of the *non-meshichistim* are still convinced that the redemption is coming imminently (albeit at the hands of a yet unknown messiah), and, as such, are far from being non- or anti-millenarian. However, I will use Habad's terminology in this paper for the purposes of convenience.

The Habad movement's diverse responses to the Rebbe's death are a fascinating topic for study, but lie outside the scope of this article. This article will rather consider the question: what prompted Habad to become acutely millenarian in the first place? Or, in other words, why did a 200 year-old religious movement like Habad suddenly decide that the end was nigh?

Accounting for Habad's Millenarianism

Scholars have proposed two explanations for the emergence of millenarianism in Habad. The first, primarily theological, explanation argues that the seeds of acute messianism were implanted in Hasidic teachings at its inception and lay dormant for generations, only to sprout in the last decade. Both the mystical texts of the kabbala, which served as the foundations of Hasidic theology, and the 18th century visions of the Ba'al Shem Tov are identified as the sources for this messianic strain. However, setting aside the virulent debate which still rages about the millenarian or anti-millenarian nature of early Hasidic theology,[4] it is still necessary to explain why such seeds

[4] See, for example, Rachel Elior, "Hasidism—Historical Continuity and Spiritual

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

only bore fruit in the Habad movement in the late 20th century. Admittedly, early mystical sources have served as proof texts and inspiration for the eschatological claims of contemporary Habad messianists, but they cannot alone account for the fierce millenarianism which has engulfed the Habad movement in the last decade.

The second explanation posits that the momentous and apocalyptic events that befell Jews in the last half century, specifically the emergence of Zionism, the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the establishment of the State of Israel, drove Habad to the ineluctable conclusion that the redemption was imminent.[5] There is certainly merit to this hypothesis. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson, reflecting on the horrors of the Holocaust, concluded that he had lived through the *chevlei moshiach* (pangs of the messiah), a time of terrible suffering which serves as a precursor to the redemption and the end of days. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson accepted this conclusion as well, and would often cite his father-in-law's reflections as proof that redemption was near. But, again, one has to question why Habad assumed its acute millenarian stance when it did, forty years after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. In the late 1980s, as Habad's millenarianism surged to the fore, the generation that witnessed those cataclysmic events was nearing its final years. And demographically, it has been Habad's youth who have been the most ardent millenialists while its more mature members looked on, at times impassively and at times with great concern. Thus, taken individually, this explanation is also unsatisfactory. It does, however, serve an important secondary function. The last two Rebbes' eschatological interpretations of 20th-century events introduced the terms and themes of millenarianism to the modern Habad movement which, consequently, was able to draw upon millenarianism as a ready and viable option when it hungered for radical change.

Against this background, I propose a third explanation that looks to Habad's unique demographic composition as a primary cause of

---

Change," in Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan, eds., *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993) p. 303.

[5] See, Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, trans. Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) pp. 193–203.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

its radical theological metamorphosis. Specifically, I believe that the enormous immigration of *ba'alei teshuvah* into the Habad movement in the 1970s and 1980s was a major contributor to the outbreak of millenarianism which erupted in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

At the most cursory glance, this approach answers a question that others do not—why the missionary Habad movement, as opposed to other Jewish religious groups, was affected, and why the transformation within Habad occurred when it did. To consider this theory in greater depth, it is necessary to explore how the two phenomena of religious immigration and millenarianism are related. In the next section I present three independent, mutually complementary explanations of the affinity between *ba'alei teshuvah* and millenarianism.

Seeking Transformation

The first explanation is the one most frequently voiced by Habad Hasidim themselves. In the current Habad schism, *ba'alei teshuvah* have identified themselves with the *meshichist* movement to such an overwhelming extent that it is hard for a Habad Hasid to escape from speculating about a connection between the two. While none of my subjects would have considered attributing a causal role to *ba'alei teshuvah* in initiating the movement's millenarian period, many did speculate *ex post facto* why *ba'alei teshuvah* were so drawn to the millenarian stance. One Habad *ba'al teshuvah*, who is a *meshichist*, explained: "Coming into religion is an eye-opening experience which contradicts everything that you previously know to be possible. So you are more open to a belief which also contradicts everything you know to be possible."[6] Habad Hasidim from the *non-meshichist* camp largely agreed. One *non-meshichist* who is not a *ba'al teshuvah* remarked, "It's like giving a child a candy. If you give a child one candy, he will want a second candy."[7] He proceeded to explain that the first candy of his metaphor represented the experience of becoming newly religious, which tends to be a very positive, transformative experience for a *ba'al teshuvah*. The second candy represents the millenar-

[6] Chava Marantz, interview by author, Kfar Habad, 4 November 1995.
[7] Zeev Bernshtik, interview by author, Safed, 3 December 1995.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ian belief that God will imminently put an end to all worldly travails which is likewise a powerful and attractive idea, sweet to the tongue of a religious believer. Accordingly, those *ba'alei teshuvah* who had tasted the power of one spiritual transformation in their lives would naturally crave a second such radical transformation.

This was, at least, the surface meaning of the "candy" metaphor. But the allusion to children and candies also carried with it the condescending implication that is often voiced by *non-meshichistim*—that the *meshichistim* are neglecting the traditional and often demanding rigors of orthodoxy in favor of a religious doctrine that is sweeter and easier to bear. In the eyes of many *non-meshichistim*, Habad millenarianism is motivated by the desire for a "quick fix," a naive hope that all will soon be better, when what is required is resolute patience. *Ba'alei teshuvah*, who attempt to assimilate in a year or two what others have cultivated over a lifetime, are thought by born-and-bred Hasidim to be more enamored of doctrines that promise overnight transformation.

This perception does present something of a caricature of *ba'alei teshuvah*. Their acculturation process is often arduous, and those who endure it cannot be easily categorized as seekers of a "quick fix." However, its premise is not entirely wrong. *Ba'alei teshuvah*, particularly recent immigrants, are more prone to see the world in extremes of right and wrong, especially in the spiritual sphere. They tend to be drawn towards activist ideologies which promise revolutionary upheavals rather than gradual evolutions. Thus, the doctrine of millenarianism, which predicts a sudden, if not violent, usurpation of human chaos by divine order, would particularly appeal to *ba'alei teshuvah*.

Focusing on the Present

A second explanation of why *ba'alei teshuvah* are drawn to millenarianism is that it is a world view that is entirely directed toward the present. *Ba'alei teshuvah* find this world view far more representative of their religious outlook than the traditional religious world view which emphasizes times past and future, with which they have little or no connection. The difference between these two alternative conceptions of time is profound and bears substantial ramifications.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Non-millenarian monotheists glorify the distant past as a time of closeness between God and humankind and rely upon the transmitted texts of such earlier times as the source for all religious authority. They walk forward in time with their eyes cast backwards to the time of prophets, revelation, and miracles. The present is seen as a pale reflection of days gone by, as a time of divine reserve, if not impassivity, and spiritual degradation. As for the future, it is hoped that it will again be an age of renewed intimacy between God and humankind, when the utopian prophecies of old will be realized. The task of the present generation, living in a time of modest spirituality, is to steadfastly endure by transmitting the teachings of the previous generation to the next one. In visual terms, the non-millenarian movement sits in a valley between two spiritual peaks of the distant past and future.

The millenarian movement, on the other hand, turns this picture on its head. While it acknowledges the past as a time of religious genesis, it asserts that time has borne spiritual ascendance rather than alienation. With each successive generation, humankind has come closer to apprehending the nature of the divine and realizing the ultimate goals of history.[8] The force of the millenarian outlook does not derive merely from a sense of spiritual progress. Its focus is an expectation of imminent spiritual climax. *Now* is the time foreseen in the end-time prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel—eschatology and reality will soon become one. It is a spiritually narcissistic world view, declaring that the present generation represents the realization of all history. The vivid power of this idea is evident in an advertisement placed by Habad in the *New York Times*: "We are now living on the threshold of the times predicted by our Prophets and Sages and prayed for by our ancestors over the course of two, tear-stained and blood-soaked millennia."[9]

---

[8] Incidentally, this conception of generational ascent may coexist with the notion that the present generation is a generation of sinners, less righteous than its predecessors. These seemingly contradictory notions are regularly explained by millenialists by employing the metaphor of dwarves standing on the shoulders of giants. Even though the members of the present generation are not as individually great as the generations of old, they nevertheless inherited the spiritual and intellectual achievements of their ancestors and are therefore cumulatively able to attain unprecedented glory.

[9] *Dvar HaMelech: From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach* (Kislev 5756 [December 1995]) 31, quoting *New York Times* advertisement [date not given in reprint].

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

When the present time is raised to the peak of the curve of spiritual history, the past is concurrently lowered and the future is truncated, leaving a curve that steadily climbs, attains its zenith, and proceeds no more. Thus, millenialists conceive of the future only in the short-term—as a glorious promise waiting to be realized by those currently alive and enjoyed by them forever after. If millenarian believers envision a distant future it is not a future destined for their descendants but for their own generation. "For our generation is the last generation of the exile and the first generation of the redemption. And, this, our generation, is entering the time of the redemption, into eternal life without interruption."[10] I have named this radical conception of time "present orientation," and refer to religious movements that manifest it as "present-oriented" movements.[11]

The appeal of the present-oriented world view for *ba'alei teshuvah* is that it accurately depicts religious reality as they experience it. *Ba'alei teshuvah* do not acquire religion through the mediums of tradition, transmission, and continuity—their entire exposure to religion is limited to the thoughts, emotions, and inspirations that they personally experienced within their own lifetimes. Thus, on the timeline of the *ba'al teshuvah*, religion is experienced as an isolated point, devoid of historical prologue. It is therefore quite natural for *ba'alei teshuvah* to be drawn to a present-oriented world view which complements this perception, depicting the present generation as the most spiritually significant generation in time, while downplaying the importance of days gone by.[12]

Conversely, a child raised in a religious environment will inherit a religious world view that is unavoidably historical, in which the current generation is perceived as being only evanescently positioned

---

[10] Ha-agudah le-ma'an Ha-geulah, *Sichat Ha-geulah* 77 (12 January 1996) p. 1 (my translation).

[11] For a fuller exposition of the theory of "present orientation," see Adam Szubin, "A Sociological Reexamination of the Branch Davidian Movement: A New Hypothesis" (Senior Honors Essay, Harvard University, 1995).

[12] Interestingly, this point was perceptively articulated by the prophet Isaiah, who, in Isaiah 54, singles out two unlikely groups, eunuchs and foreigners interested in Judaism, as deserving candidates for redemption. Neither of these groups seem inherently worthy of special divine regard. The common denominator that unites them, however, is precisely their truncated sense of time. It is the eunuchs with no generations ahead of them and the aliens with no generations behind them who are uniquely drawn to the present-oriented belief in an imminent redemption. Thus, appropriately, it is their messianic longings that Isaiah addresses and assuages. (I am grateful to Simi Chavel for directing me towards this reference.)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

at the tip of an ever-advancing time-line. Moreover, it is natural for believers with a religious upbringing to reflect this line of generations about themselves into the future; for, as surely as previous generations begot the present generation, the present generation will beget generations to come. This sense of history and continuity engenders a past- and future-oriented world view, compatible with an emphasis on recorded practices and traditional authority. In the shadow of majestic tradition any undue emphasis on the present age seems inappropriate, if not impertinent.[13] Thus, religious believers from a religious background are more apt to embrace a traditional temporal outlook while religious immigrants are likely to seek out an alternative, such as millenarianism, which subjugates past and future eras in favor of the all-important present.

Overcoming Marginalization

A third explanation of the affinity between *ba'alei teshuvah* and millenarianism is that disempowered members of a religious movement harness the potent forces of millenarianism and turn them against the traditions and religious hierarchies that tend to discriminate against religious immigrants and oppress them. *Ba'alei teshuvah* who join a movement like Habad make enormous sacrifices in order to gain admission. First and foremost there are the personal changes, ranging from newly proscribed activities to new patterns of thought and behavior. There are also the environmental and social changes, which may involve a physical relocation away from one's place of employment and social network. Even when an actual relocation is unnecessary, the process of entering a new religious community often alienates the *ba'al teshuvah*'s family and friends, and vice versa. The immersion into a strictly Orthodox religious community demands serious changes in almost every area of the *ba'al teshuvah*'s life.

All of these sacrifices are made in exchange for one good—spiritual fulfillment. *Ba'alei teshuvah* estimate that entrance into the religious community of their choice will grant them social approval and divine approbation. The problem arises when the *ba'alei teshuvah*, hav-

[13] See, for example, the Talmudic expression, "If the early [generations] were angels, we are men; and if early [generations] were men, we are like asses," Talmud, *b. Sabb. 112b.*

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ing finally gained admission, discover that they are still not completely inside. At the outset of the absorption process they may meet with nothing but encouragement from members of their target community; but once they become members, they discover that there are hierarchies within the faithful of the Lord and chosen people among the chosen people. In Habad, *ba'alei teshuvah* belong to a distinct and marginalized caste. They are not allowed to rise above certain positions within the community—they are encouraged to become teachers, but generally not permitted to become school directors or religious leaders of Habad communities. Most tellingly, *ba'alei teshuvah* are allowed by social convention to marry only other *ba'alei teshuvah.* Marriages between a Hasid raised in a religious home and a *ba'al teshuvah* are deemed harmful to both parties and are strongly discouraged. For all of his warmth and kindness towards *ba'alei teshuvah*, the Rebbe himself recognized their marginal status. In a 1981 lecture he sought to describe the wide range of people who were influenced by the first Habad Rebbe's teachings, and he indicated that *ba'alei teshuvah* were of the lowest status. "The influence of the *Alter* Rebbe has permeated all the various types of Jews, from the 'heads of the tribes' to the 'water drawers.' He has had an impact on the two categories of 1) 'Tzaddikim' (the righteous) and 2) Baalei Teshuva (the penitents)."[14] Habad Hasidim are acutely conscious of these caste divides and it is not uncommon to hear born-and-bred Hasidim identify *ba'alei teshuvah* as "new" members even five or ten years after their absorption. Upon discovering that they have given up their previous way of life and social ties only to be branded as members of a lower caste within their chosen community, *ba'alei teshuvah* are likely to experience great anxiety and distress.

The signs that mark *ba'alei teshuvah* as "new members" to other Habad Hasidim and keep them from a seamless acculturation are known in sociology as "markers." In an ultra-Orthodox community as differentiated as Habad there are numerous social markers which distinguish the outsider from the insider and keep the new *ba'al teshuvah* from his or her goal of complete communal acceptance. Once, sitting in a Habad synagogue behind a man who was clearly a recent *ba'al teshuvah*, I observed him nervously glancing to his left and right to make sure that he did not remain sitting should the congregation

[14] Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Sichos in English*, trans. Committee for Sichos in English, 8 (Brooklyn, NY: Committee for Sichos in English) p. 160.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

suddenly take to its feet, or commit some similarly obvious blunder. *Ba'alei teshuvah* pray differently, dress differently, and even stand differently. Gaining communal acceptance is an anxious process of observation and imitation.

Some markers are easier to assume than others. A female *ba'al teshuvah* will be shown what types of dresses to wear and what type of make-up is acceptably modest. A male *ba'al teshuvah* can instantly acquire a black hat and coat. Within a few months he may have a passable beard and sidelocks within a year. Then there is the unique language of Habad: a blend of local dialect, talmudic Aramaic, and idiomatic Yiddish. The more subtle markers, which are often invisible to outsiders but highly conspicuous to insiders, are far more difficult to assume. It will take months for a *ba'al teshuvah* to learn how to pray properly and it may well take years before he acquires the requisite familiarity to be able to publicly lead the congregation in prayers with the accent, speed, and accuracy of a Habad Hasid who has been praying in exactly the same way since he was a young child. In all of these areas, *ba'alei teshuvah* must struggle to overcome the markers that act as barriers to their inclusion.

The most significant marker within the Habad movement, though, is that of knowledge. In a community that venerates learning, knowledge is the key to distinguishing the insider from the outsider. One's education is tested constantly, whether in formal settings such as classes or lectures, or in informal settings, where a Habad Hasid is expected to know what prayers are said on special days, what actions are permitted and prohibited on the Sabbath and holidays, and how to prepare food according to strict dietary laws. Unfortunately for the new member, the corpus of works that a Habad Hasid is expected to learn is vast. First, there are the traditional Jewish texts such as the Torah, Mishnah, Talmud, midrash, and the exegetes on these works, plus the codifications of the law, or *halachah*. Additionally, the Hasid is expected to learn a wide range of "hidden" texts—the spiritual philosophies of the kabbalists, the tales of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and the more prominent speeches, letters, and responsa of seven generations of Habad Rebbes.

Not even Hasidim from eminent Habad families have mastered all of these works. Yet, having been immersed in these texts from childhood, a Habad child will eventually develop a substantial and functional knowledge base. The biblical portions are discussed weekly, and repeated annually. By the time a Habad Hasid is 17, he has

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

heard and studied each portion tens of times and has heard the same questions and exegetical solutions repeated time and again. A corpus of essential works, such as Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* and R. Schneur Zalman's *Tanya*, are also studied methodically, in annual or tri-annual cycles. Laws of Sabbath and holiday observance are inculcated by repeated practice, aside from the actual time spent studying the legal codes. Little by little, a Habad youth amasses a great deal of knowledge through near constant immersion and cyclical repetition. This upbringing may not result in expertise, but it does foster a familiarity with the sources—an intuitive sense of what sounds right and what does not—that allows the Hasid to function in a highly rigorous religious climate and to categorize and comprehend any new or unfamiliar information. To acquire such an intuitive sense, there is no substitute for a childhood spent in Habad homes and schools. Without it, the *ba'al teshuvah* remains apart, staring longingly at his or her chosen community across a sea of ignorance. For many, this sea is never bridged.

One response of *ba'alei teshuvah* facing the grave anxieties of communal exclusion is to return to the field of *kiruv*—as missionaries. *Ba'alei teshuvah* in Habad are disproportionately involved in *kiruv*, staffing Habad houses, performing "campaigns," and teaching classes to other, more recent, *ba'alei teshuvah*. Demographically, *ba'alei teshuvah* tend to live away from areas with large Habad populations, such as Kfar Habad, Israel's center of Habad life, and gravitate instead towards borderline communities where they will more readily contact outsiders. At first glance, this is surprising, since it would seem more logical to assume that *ba'alei teshuvah*, who could most benefit from a supportive Habad environment, would be the least eager to embark on remote outreach "campaigns." But this is a well-known phenomenon in the sociology of religion. The standard explanation given is that new converts seek affirmation. They desperately want to reassure themselves that they made the right decision—that the world they chose is preferable to the one they left behind. Convincing others from their former communities to follow in their footsteps provides the reassurance that anyone who could clearly see both options would choose as they did.[15]

[15] See, Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

I would propose an additional explanation. When the Habad *ba'al teshuvah* takes to the streets to proselytize in the traditional garb of black suit, black hat, beard, and sidelocks, he is identified by all onlookers as a Habad Hasid. The average person in the street does not pause to question whether he is a born-and-bred Hasid or a *ba'al teshuvah*, and would not be able to discern one from the other even if he or she wanted to. Thus, ironically, a *ba'al teshuvah* may feel more like a member of Habad when in the secular world than he would in a close-knit Habad community, where the prerequisite markers of identity are more complex and far more difficult to assimilate. More significantly, in the eyes of a *ba'al teshuva*, outreach work allows him to exchange his inferior status vis-à-vis Habad for a superior position relative to the uneducated outsider. When the *ba'al teshuvah* explains the rudiments of Hasidism to an outsider, the *ba'al teshuvah* is the knowledgeable one, no matter how superficial his knowledge or how recently he has joined the movement. If the *ba'al teshuvah* is gazing over a sea of ignorance while proselytizing, he is secure in his position on the shores of knowledge. Thus, in leaving the walls of the Habad community, the *ba'al teshuvah* finds himself relatively educated and, consequently, relatively secure in his attachment to a Habad identity.

While the escape to the fields of outreach may be an effective balm for the anxieties of the *ba'al teshuvah*, it is far from a cure. Not all *ba'alei teshuvah* are able to supervise the activities of a Habad house or staff a mitzvah tank, and those who do frequently find full-time missionary life too demanding and return to a more homogeneous Habad community. In the end, outreach work is at best a temporary evasion of the difficulties facing the *ba'al teshuvah.*

The only way for *ba'alei teshuvah* to truly eradicate the barriers to their full integration is not to step outside the movement but to transform the movement from within. It is in the pursuit of such transformation that *ba'alei teshuvah* turn to the millenarian ideology. The revolutionary character of millenarianism offers new religious immigrants the opportunity to dismantle the elitist hierarchy that marginalizes them and replace it with a messianic culture that is far more egalitarian. Practically, the shift to a millenarian world view lowers and often completely obliterates the traditional markers that alienate the *ba'al teshuvah* so painfully.

The shift to millenarianism reduces even the once-formidable barrier of knowledge to a manageable level. For example, in earlier

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

times, a learned Habad Hasid was expected to study the speeches and teachings of all of the Lubavitcher Rebbes, present and past. While there might have been a greater charismatic attachment to the then-present Rebbe, serious attention was always paid to the words of his predecessors as well. Traditionally, the most revered and most quoted Rebbes were the luminary founder of Habad, the *Alter* Rebbe, and the erudite *Tzemach Tzedek*, the third Habad Rebbe. However, in shifting to a millenarian world view, the messianists of today's Habad movement have turned their entire focus to the words of their most recent teacher. R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson is seen as the final and ultimate messenger in the series of seven, who distilled the most valuable messianic teachings and articulated them in the manner most appropriate for the contemporary pre-redemptive age. The previous six Rebbes have not been dismissed, but rather outdated and supplanted. When one Habad *yeshiva* student informed me that he was studying the Rebbe's *sichos* (lectures), I asked if he was studying the *sichos* of any of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbes, as would have been expected of him fifteen years ago. He responded: "No. The Rebbe's words are the most important. The Rebbe is speaking to me—to our generation. It's not something for other, earlier generations."[16] This is a common phenomenon in the Habad *yeshiva* today. The present-oriented follower is thus able to belittle his ignorance of all things old by heralding the paramount importance of the new.

The shift in emphasis from past to present confers enormous legitimacy on the *ba'al teshuvah*. When the Rebbe was still alive, the most important source of authority in the present-oriented Habad movement was the Rebbe's speech. When a recent *ba'al teshuvah* attended this speech, he was on equal footing with everyone else in the audience. It made no difference that the person sitting to his left descended from a long and noble Habad lineage, nor that his neighbor to the right was intimately familiar with the teachings of past Hasidic masters. The Rebbe's present teachings were of paramount importance and the most recent immigrant was as competent to absorb those teachings and translate them into practice as anyone else.

The shift to millenarianism has had a similar effect on the rest of Habad's corpus. Instead of studying Bible, Talmud, Kabbala, or

[16] David Eliyahu, interview by author, Jerusalem, 15 December 1995.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

codes of Jewish law, it is common nowadays to find the Habad *yeshiva* student studying *Inyanei De-geulah*, or "issues pertaining to redemption." This refers to a new line of books, published by Habad in the last ten years, which are compilations of Jewish texts on the eschaton and specific prescriptions for how to hasten its coming. These anthologies are incomparably easier to study and comprehend than traditional Jewish sources, for their contents have been carefully adapted and edited, and the texts are generally accompanied by clear explanations in modern-day Hebrew or English. Not only is the road easier, but it is also a great deal shorter. After reading four or five such books, a *ba'al teshuvah* will become familiar with the favored excerpts, since there are only a few elect sources which Habad editors find particularly suited to their millenarian claims and these same sources appear repeatedly under various book and pamphlet covers. In narrowing the focus of attention to one all-important issue, millenarianism provides *ba'alei teshuvah* with a considerably more manageable course of study.

The Habad Hasid's code of practice was similarly simplified by the shift to a present-oriented ideology. The Rebbe made it abundantly clear that the paramount task of the present generation was to hasten the coming of the messiah. He did not absolve his followers from performing the rest of the obligations of mainstream Orthodoxy; nevertheless, in a religious life filled with numerous prescribed activities, including earning a living, studying, teaching, or performing acts of social service, the elevation of one activity over all others means a great deal. The Rebbe explicitly taught that all of one's free energies should be devoted to hastening redemption. Specifically, the Hasid's duty is, "To learn and to teach issues concerning the Messiah and the redemption. To live the days of the Messiah, and to spread the news of the coming redemption across the entire world. It is simple to approach another Jew and to say to him, 'Jew, wake up! Presently the King *Moshiach* is coming.'"[17] It *is* simple, and it is a task that the most recent *ba'al teshuvah* can perform as ably as the most pious and learned Hasid.

Not only are these new requirements straightforward—they are also unimpeachable. It is important to emphasize that the revisions made to Habad's theology and praxis in recent years were not apolo-

[17] Ha-agudah le-ma'an Ha-geulah, *Sichat Ha-geulah* 97 (31 May 1996) p. 1 (my translation).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

getically introduced by abashed *ba'alei teshuvah* who were struggling with Habad's demanding traditional markers. These changes were made triumphantly in the name of the coming redemption. It was pronounced that a new age demands new (albeit less rigorous) commitments from its faithful. With the Rebbe himself supportive of messianic initiatives, a Habad Hasid could not be challenged for zealously taking up the messianic call to arms at the expense of more traditional and demanding pursuits, such as studying Torah.

Constraining the scope of required knowledge is only part of the way that the millenarian transformation eases the *ba'al teshuvah*'s acculturation. Even more important is millenarianism's power to utterly uproot traditional markers and replace them with new markers to suit the messianic age. Habad's traditional criteria of spiritual achievement have recently been fundamentally altered. A 1995 article in a Habad newsletter begins by citing an instruction booklet written by the previous Rebbe in 1943, which reads:

> He who asks what is his *hiskashrus* [bond] to me when he does not know me personally. . . . The true way of communing is through learning Torah, when he learns my Hasidic teachings and discussions, associates with the students . . . and fulfills my request to say Psalms and to observe the times of learning. This is the way to commune [with me].

The article continues in its own words with a large header, "An Entirely Different Type of Bond":

> This definition differs from the bond that is demanded of us, a definition that involves a more comprehensive and stronger claim that we find in the words of the Rebbe . . . in 1992, where the Rebbe says that the way of abnegation and communion with the prince of the generation is . . . by way of immersing one's self in fulfilling the prince of the generation's mission . . . whose central aim is to bring the days of the messiah, in actuality. . . .
>
> The practical definition of this "bond" is that, beyond his learning Torah, actively taking part in Hasidic celebrations, and behaving as a Hasid, the essential element is that one is entirely immersed in fulfilling [the Rebbe's] mission, which is—to spread the news of the redemption, whether to large communities or even to individual Jews one by one. And to proclaim with absolute faith that the Rebbe is the King *Moshiach* that will come and redeem us immediately.[18]

[18] Ha-agudah le-ma'an Ha-geulah, *Sichat Ha-geulah* 79 (26 January 1996) p. 1 (my translation).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Communion with one's Rebbe, a traditional aim of Hasidic life, has changed "entirely." Whereas its fundamental requirements were once study, prayer, and communal living, the new way of communing with one's Rebbe is to "spread the news of the redemption." What could be more welcome news to the *ba'al teshuvah* who is far from an authority on prayer and study, who has barely lived among Hasidim, than to hear that the central requirement of his faith is to publicize his belief in the Messiah's imminent coming? Here is a task that he can perform immediately, as ably and as zealously as the next person.

Recent Habad publications list various other activities that characterize the pious Hasid or the devoted follower of the Rebbe. The common denominator of all of these recommended activities is that they are easily, if not instantly, practicable by the new *ba'al teshuvah.* One representative listing enumerates the following:

1) Learning Torah, specifically issues pertaining to the *Moshiach* and the redemption.
2) Charity, about which it is said, "Great is charity, that hastens the redemption."
3) Love of Israel, baseless love, love without any reason, to love every Jew because he is a Jew.
4) Anticipation of the redemption and prayer to the Master of the Universe: "Until when? We want *Moshiach* now!"
5) Great joy, due to the fact that we are now standing on the brink of redemption!
6) The proclamation that reveals the realities of the King *Moshiach*, and activates the redemption: "Long live our Master, our Teacher, and our Rebbe, the King *Moshiach* forever and ever!"[19]

The arduous demands of penitence, prayer, and study have been replaced by charity, love, anticipation, joy, and proclamation. These are the new markers of the righteous Habad Hasid, and not one of them will stand in the way of a *ba'al teshuvah* seeking approbation. The transition to millenarianism facilitates the acculturation of new immigrants by shifting a movement's emphasis from praxis to belief.

[19] Agudat Besorat HaGeulah Mamash, *Why Do We So Desire the Moshiach?* (my translation).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Taken to its logical extreme, the millenarian rejection of traditional markers will eventually result in antinomianism, whereby observance of traditional law is not only superseded in importance but entirely jettisoned as inappropriate to the current messianic age. This stage was attained by the Sabbatean and Frankist movements, when their respective leaders declared that Torah law was no longer binding in the age of final redemption. The early founders of Christianity also rejected the observance of Torah laws, stating that the Mosaic law was "nailed to the cross." Habad has not yet taken any substantial steps in this direction, and therefore it remains under the umbrella of Jewish Orthodoxy. Some antinomian rhetoric has already begun to circulate, though. A recently published allegory, "To Jump on the Train of the Redemption," suggests possible future developments.

The story describes a group of Jewish refugees in wartime Russia who stood for days on a train platform hoping to catch a train traveling away from the war-zone. As days passed without a train in sight, the refugees began to unpack their suitcases and set up a few of their belongings on the platform. One day, without warning, the train pulled in. Some threw their belongings onto the train and quickly boarded, but others wanted to repack their suitcases neatly and properly. Before they knew it, the whistle sounded and the train pulled away, leaving them stranded with all of their suitcases. The moral of the story is then provided:

> Each one of us has many "packages" that we need: "packages" of Torah study, of the observance of commandments that are between man and God, and those that are interpersonal, of all sorts of good and true things that we truly cannot get along without, and that indeed work to bring the complete redemption; but sometimes it is possible to "get stuck" with all the "packages" and to be left outside "the train of the redemption.

The allegory concludes,

> "The only task that remains," says the Rebbe, King *Moshiach*, "is to welcome the face of our righteous Messiah," and all of the work in Torah and commandments needs to be oriented towards this goal. If people occupy themselves only with "the packages" (that are indeed essential and necessary) and "forget" about the need "to board the train of the redemption," they might, heaven forbid, "be left behind" and miss the "train."[20]

[20] Ha-agudah le-ma'an Ha-geulah, *Sichat Ha-geulah* 61 (15 September 1995) p. 3 (my translation).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Whether such rhetoric is a harbinger of antinomian action remains to be seen. The persistent use of quotation marks whenever the author treads close to the heretical suggestion that the observance of traditional commandments might interfere with one's being redeemed testifies to the extreme delicacy with which this subject is still treated—even in allegory.

In the years to come, antinomianism could bring about a war between the forces of tradition and millenarianism within Habad. Regardless of how this battle will be resolved, however, the boundaries have already been shifted. In blowing the trumpet of the redemption, Habad's *ba'alei teshuvah* have transformed the Habad movement from an elitist sect that emphasized the importance of erudition—wisdom, understanding, and knowledge—to a far more egalitarian movement which values millenarian zeal and public declarations that the Rebbe is the Messiah.

Looking Beyond Habad

Although this paper focuses exclusively on the Habad movement, its analysis is not contingent on the particular characteristics of Habad and is potentially applicable to other millenarian movements, as well. The proposed model would predict that a religious movement that saw a large influx of new members within a short time-span would be prone to a shift towards millenarianism. Indeed, I believe that this model can shed new light on the rise of the Sabbatean movement.[21]

While accounts of the rise of Sabbateanism had long been limited to Gershom Scholem's theory that Lurianic Kabbala paved the way for the millenarianism of Sabbatai Tzvi, other theories have begun to receive scholarly attention in recent years. The most prominent of these theories links the rise of Sabbateanism to the influence of the resettled Marranos. The Marranos were Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were forcibly converted to Christianity in the 14th and 15th centuries. Fleeing from persecution in the Iberian peninsula from the 15th through the early 17th centuries, the Marranos migrated

[21] I am extremely grateful to Professor Moshe Idel for suggesting this parallel line of inquiry.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to safer havens in Europe and the Ottoman Empire, where they joined extant Jewish communities.

In studying the demographics of Sabbteanism's sphere of influence, historians have observed that the communities in which the Marranos resettled, such as "Salonika, Leghorn, Amsterdam, Hamburg, to name only the most important"[22] were disproportionately active in Sabbatai Tzvi's messianic movement. Beyond the fact that the former Marranos seem to have been enamored of Sabbatai Tzvi, there is also evidence that they played a disproportionately significant role in the Sabbatean movement. The Ottoman city of Smyrna (Izmir), one of Sabbateanism's primary strongholds, was a major Marrano center. Sabbatai Tzvi selected 11 of his 25 disciples or "kings" from Smyrna and five of the 11 are documented Marranos.[23] Scholem himself acknowledges, "It is the Marranos who everywhere appear among the leading supporters of the movement."[24] While there are certainly exceptions to this scheme—Sabbatean communities that had little or no Marrano presence—the overall confluence between the Marranos and Sabbateanism is striking.

How can this confluence be understood? Scholem explains that Sabbateanism "struck a chord in the hearts of those who had themselves, or whose parents had, been through the misery of a life of forced hypocrisy and dissimulation in Spain and Portugal."[25] However, Scholem does not successfully account for the time lag between the exodus of the oppressed Marranos from the Iberian peninsula in the 15th–16th centuries and the rise of Sabbateanism, over a century later. Why would the grandchildren of Marranos, who contended with neither persecution nor dissimulation, find so much appeal in Sabbatai Tzvi's promises?

Another theory posits that the Marranos served as a cross-denominational bridge, importing the millenarianism of 17th century Christianity into Judaism.[26] I would suggest yet a third approach, focusing on the difficulties of the Marranos' re-assimilation into mainstream Jewish communities. Stephen Sharot, a sociologist of religion, has

---

[22] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah 1626–1676*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) p. 485.

[23] Jacob Barnai, "Christian Messianism and the Portuguese Marranos: The Emergence of Sabbateanism in Smyrna," *Jewish History*, 7 (1993) pp. 121–23.

[24] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 485.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Barnai, "Christian Messianism," pp. 119–23.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

well documented this phenomenon. He points out that the returning Marranos were almost entirely ignorant of the Jewish oral tradition and law. "They had been baptized and most had had a Catholic upbringing. . . . Most knew little of Hebrew, the Talmud, or the rabbinic traditions, and the limited knowledge that they did have was often distorted."[27] Moreover, the Marranos were, on the whole, the best secularly educated and most commercially advanced Jews in their new communities, which could have only compounded their frustration at finding themselves judged ignorant by a community far less literate than they.[28]

In addition to the Marranos' projected anxieties, they also encountered discrimination from traditional Jews who were not always eager to receive the "New Christians" into their midst.

> In a number of communities, such as Constantinople, where the Jewish community was substantial even before the marrano influx, Jews were suspicious and distrustful of the former marranos. They were offended by the ignorance of the former marranos regarding Jewish rites and customs, and they often treated them with sarcasm or pity.[29]

The picture that Sharot paints of the returning Marranos is strikingly similar to that of today's *ba'alei teshuvah* in Habad. Both Marranos and *ba'alei teshuvah* descended from traditional Jewish families who assimilated, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, into the larger Christian or secular society only to return to the Jewish fold, two or three generations later. In both cases, the generation that "returned" was largely ignorant of Jewish tradition and faced both perceived and actual prejudice from the mainstream Jewish community. In reading one historian's description of the returning Marranos' plight, one could just as easily be reading a present day portrayal of Habad's *ba'alei teshuvah.*

> If we recall their Peninsular background, we must recognize that the problem of adjusting to their new lives within the Jewish community was truly enormous. The Marrano who arrived as an adult had not only to undergo circumcision, but also to acquire rapidly a large fund of Jewish skills and knowledge without which even minimal participation in the life of the community would be impossible. The habits,

---

[27] Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic*, p. 106.

[28] Richard H. Popkin, "The Historical Significance of Sephardic Judaism in 17th Century Amsterdam," *The American Sephardi*, 5 (1971) p. 21.

[29] Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic*, p. 107.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> ideas, and attitudes which other Jews had inherited naturally, and in which they had been educated during their formative years, had now to be compressed and assimilated by mature men in a very short time.[30]

Sharot's interpretation of this evidence is that the Marranos' anxious position led them to embrace Sabbateanism as a means of displaying the sincerity of their Judaism to their chosen communities. "By their belief in Zvi the former Marranos declared their full commitment to Judaism and immediately put behind them the problems of adopting a complex system of religious rituals. The commitment to the Jewish messiah was the decisive test; their past was to be forgiven and forgotten, and they were now assured of redemption."[31] Here, I differ with Sharot's conclusions, since the millenarian zeal of Sabbateanism would have been far from reassuring to a traditional Jewish community. In fact, millenarianism is commonly, and correctly, perceived by mainstream religious leaders as posing an enormous threat to their authority. However, Sabbateanism would have eased the acculturation process of the returning Marranos in precisely the opposite way—by *dismantling* the religious hierarchies which marginalized them.

When Sabbateanism emerged in the mid-17th century, it would have found large numbers of Marranos who were dissatisfied with their re-acquired religion. As new immigrants they would have faced marginalization, enforced by prohibitive, exclusionary markers. In Sabbatai Tzvi, then, they would have seen a force of revolution, capable of supplanting exclusionary markers and dismantling traditional hierarchies. Tzvi's subsequent turn toward antinomianism might well have been prompted, and would certainly have been applauded, by the restless Marranos among his followers. Perhaps this is what Sabbatai Tzvi's millenarianism offered to the Marranos—not the vague promise of a coming redemption but an opportunity to radically transform their present religious world.

---

[30] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto—Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) p. 47.

[31] Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and Magic*, p. 109.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Conclusion

There are many areas of millennial studies in which the oft-neglected sociological approach could contribute innovative insights and enlightening perspectives. This paper, in proposing a connection between religious immigration and millenarianism, sketches out one possible route of inquiry. The proposed theory, and the larger field, will surely benefit from further study.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

THE MORAL APOCALYPSE IN BYZANTIUM[1]

Jane Baun

> "So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Have you understood all this?" They said to him, "Yes." (Mt. 13:49–51 RSV)

Toward the end of his life, Jacob Taubes had intended to organize a symposium on eschatology. Since one of the themes discussed in this volume is the notion of cyclical time, it is fitting to observe that Professor Taubes also *began* his career with eschatology, in a doctoral dissertation from the University of Zürich. In his *Abendländische Eschatologie* (Bern, 1947), Taubes established the Jewish and early Christian roots of Western Christian eschatology, and then traced its development in Western Europe, from Joachim of Fiore to figures such as Hegel, Kierkegaard and Marx. Fifty years later, it is noteworthy that there is no real counterpart to Professor Taubes' work for the Christian East, no monograph that undertakes a thorough treatment of the Eastern Orthodox apocalyptic tradition beyond Constantine and Eusebius, with whom Taubes left Byzantium. A "*Morgenländische Eschatologie*" has yet to appear.

The late Paul J. Alexander would have been the logical author of such a book, but died before it could be completed (in 1977). His essential *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, a collection of studies published posthumously in 1985, represents the groundwork for the comprehensive synthetic monograph that he had planned to write, rather than the monograph itself.[2] An overview of eschatological thought as it evolved within the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities of the medieval East is still sorely needed.[3]

---

[1] Only essential references are given in the notes that follow. Fuller documentation will be provided in my forthcoming study of the *Apocalypse of Anastasia.*

[2] Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[3] "The medieval East" is used here as shorthand for the one-time Byzantine territories in the present-day Balkans, Eastern Europe, and Near East.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Morgenländische Eschatologie, when it is written, should not be a book exclusively about Christianity. To present the three monotheist traditions in isolation from each other is to misrepresent the considerable cultural mixing characteristic of the medieval East. As has been documented by Alexander and others, strikingly similar terminology and themes pervade Jewish and Christian eschatological sources produced in the Eastern Roman and Persian empires from Late Antiquity. The field expands in the Middle Ages with the growth of Islam and the addition of new national groups to the Orthodox Christian fold. A common apocalyptic and eschatological vocabulary continued to develop throughout the period among Jews, Christians and Muslims living side-by-side in Byzantine, Slav, Ethiopian, Arab, and later, Turkish, domains. The stimulation of this common life, whether conducted peaceably or in conflict, was always richly productive of prophetic revelation.

A short paper must narrow its focus, however, and so here we shall concentrate on specifically Byzantine apocalyptic. Its foundation document is the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodios*, which seems to have originated among Syriac-speaking Christians sometime in the seventh century, probably in response to the initial waves of Arab invasions in the East.[4] Greek reworkings of the revelation were still being consulted in the fifteenth century by Byzantines trying to make sense of the Ottoman triumph.[5] Two centuries later, translated excerpts of the same text were passed from hand to hand among the defenders of yet another set of city walls under Ottoman siege, those of Vienna in 1683.[6] The Byzantine apocalyptic tradition's footprint can also be discerned in pamphlets that circulated in pre-revolutionary Russia, and in present-day attempts by Russia and her neighbors to come to terms with the fall of the Soviet empire and the lingering environmental and demographic horror of Chernobyl.

It is thus not for lack of material that *Morgenländische Eschatologie* remains unwritten. On the contrary: the very abundance of material may have contributed to its non-appearance. Western apocalyptic developed primarily on a stable base of canonical scripture,

---

[4] Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 13–60.

[5] Cyril Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome* (New York: Scribners, 1980) 213–14.

[6] Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

especially the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John, and in largely one language, Latin. In contrast, the Eastern tradition drew on a rich variety of pagan, Jewish, and Christian texts to create a number of distinct strands. Most strands comprise multiple text families preserved in numerous manuscripts, each manuscript its own peculiar adaptation. The range of languages involved is dauntingly broad: Greek, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic and Arabic are only the beginning. All these factors have complicated the creation of critical editions.

Perhaps in part because of such difficulties of interpretation, the corpus of Byzantine apocryphal and apocalyptic texts has only recently begun to be tapped by scholars as source material. Such attention as the texts attracted in the past was often unfavorable. Historians tended to dismiss them as religious babble, derivative in both content and composition. Theologians and historians of doctrine have frowned on the texts' often heterodox (though rarely heretical) assumptions and explanations. The medieval apocrypha typically play no role in standard church histories for the simple reason that they are para-canonical, situated on the margins, rather than in the mainstream, of the "historical road" of Eastern Orthodoxy (the phrase is Fr. Alexander Schmemann's). Yet, surely the voices and ideas that "lost the debate" on a given topic are just as significant for a full understanding of the formation of Orthodox doctrine and practice as are those that ultimately "won."[7]

Philologists have heaped the greatest scorn upon the corpus, text by text, as being irredeemably degenerate in language, style, and composition. M.R. James' characterization of the early medieval *Apocalypse of the Theotokos* furnishes a particularly spirited example: "I will concede to any critic that it is extremely monotonous, quite contemptible as literature, and even positively repulsive in parts."[8] James goes on to concede further:

---

[7] The role that para-canonical texts have played in the formation of religious consciousness has now begun to receive some attention in Orthodox church history. See especially Joseph A. Munitiz, "Catechetical Teaching-aids in Byzantium," in *Kathegetria* (Camberley, Surrey, 1988) 79–80.

[8] M.R. James, *Apocrypha Anecdota* (Texts and Studies: Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature II, 3; Cambridge, 1893) 111. A century later, the *Apocalypse of the Theotokos* has numerous champions. See Simon C. Mimouni, "Les *Apocalypses de la Vierge*, état de la question," *Apocrypha* 4 (1993) 101–112.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> But it is a member, and was a very popular member, of a most noteworthy class of books. The history of Apocalyptic literature cannot be written until all the available specimens of that literature have been made accessible. If nothing be gained by their publication save the knowledge that they are valueless, that gain is an appreciable one. . . .

Earlier in the same introduction, James admits that "hardly any collection of Greek MSS. is without one or more copies" of the apocalypse (109). Other texts that may be counted as part of the medieval Greek corpus of apocrypha also survive in a surprising number of manuscripts, versions, and languages. The *Letter of Our Lord that Fell from the Sky*, quite possibly the world's first "chain letter," may be traced in recognizable versions from possibly the fifth century to the nineteenth.[9] Maximilian Bittner's edition publishes multiple recensions of the main text families in Greek, Armenian, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic, but copies are also known in Slavic languages and in Georgian.[10] The Latin branch of the tradition spawned "innombrables mutations vernaculaires" in Europe, and even as far afield as Iceland.[11]

Here we have the paradox of a body of literature by all standard measures inferior, unoriginal and theologically dubious, yet in its time wildly popular, widely disseminated and stubbornly vigorous. Historians have finally begun to take a closer look. The pioneering work of Paul Alexander has already been mentioned. More recently, Evelyne Patlagean, Cyril Mango, Ihor Ševčenko and Paul Magdalino have all demonstrated how considerably our understanding of the history of Byzantium is enhanced when apocryphal and apocalyptic texts are taken into consideration.[12] Still lacking, nevertheless, is a

---

[9] Fifth-century origins: Michel van Esbroeck, "La Lettre sur le Dimanche, descendue du Ciel," in *Aux origines de la Dormition de la Vierge* (Aldershot, Hants.: Variorum, 1995), no. XIII; nineteenth-century circulation: Hippolyte Delehaye, "Note sur la légende de la Lettre du Christ tombée du Ciel," *Acad. Royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres* (Brussels, 1899) 171–213.

[10] Maximilian Bittner, "Der vom Himmel gefallene Brief Christi in seinem morgenländischen Versionen und Rezensionen," *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse* 51/1 (Vienna, 1906).

[11] The phrase is van Esbroeck's, "Lettre," 274; Icelandic and Slavic versions discussed in Delehaye, "Note sur la légende."

[12] Mango, *Byzantium*, especially ch. 11; Evelyne Patlagean, "Byzance et son Autre Monde. Observations sur Quelques Récits," in *Faire croire. Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XII^e au XV^e siècle* (Rome: École Française, 1981) 201–21; Paul Magdalino, "The History of the Future and its Uses: Prophecy, Policy,

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

comprehensive survey of the medieval apocrypha, a survey that would: (a) arrange the scattered works into a coherent corpus of inter-related texts; (b) analyze their sources, compositional principles and themes; (c) discuss interpretative problems; (d) consider issues of dissemination and reception; (e) establish their broader literary and historical context. The present paper focuses on a small part of this larger complex, the interpretative challenges. It will examine one medieval text, the *Apocalypse of Anastasia*, as a case study.

The Apocalypse of Anastasia

The anonymous medieval Greek vision known as the *Apocalypse of Anastasia* seems to have been compiled sometime during the late tenth or early eleventh century.[13] It purports to tell the story of what is now called a "near-death" experience: the humble and exemplary nun Anastasia suddenly falls ill and dies, but comes back to life three days later, telling of the marvelous and terrible wonders she has seen in the other world, in the company of the Archangel Michael. In basic outline, the apocalypse adheres to the genre of the "tour of hell." Anastasia thus follows in the well-worn footsteps of numerous Jewish and Christian heroes in the names of whom otherworldly "revelations" have survived: most notably, the prophets Enoch and Baruch, the apostles Peter and Paul, and Mary the Mother of God, all of whose journeys may have left traces in Anastasia's tale.

Let us immerse ourselves briefly in Anastasia's world, receiving it in our imaginations the way its medieval audiences probably did—hearing it read to them, perhaps in a church decorated with frescoes. Anastasia has just described the heavenly throne in traditional Biblical terms, but she then witnesses an exchange that would have Ezekiel scratching his head in genuine puzzlement.[14]

---

and Propaganda," in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, ed. R. Beaton and C. Roueché (London: Variorum, 1993) 3–34; Ihor Ševčenko, *Observations on the Study of Byzantine Hagiography in the Last Half-Century* . . . (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Balkan Studies, 1995).

[13] Rudolf Homburg, *Apocalypsis Anastasiae, ad trium codicum auctoritatem Panormitani Ambrosiani Parisini* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903). Specific references to this edition are hereafter cited as "Teubner"; the *Apocalypsis Anastasiae* is abbreviated "ApAnas."

[14] Adapted from the Teubner text, pp. 12–16 (lines 2–10 on p. 14 omitted) as corrected from the Milan manuscript, Ambros. A 56 sup. Translation is mine.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Then the angel, taking hold of my right hand, led me up to the throne, where the ranks of the angels stood by. And I saw again those same first women bringing suit to God. Holy Sunday, her countenance luminous, also was beseeching God, saying, "Master, wash the faithless and merciless ones into the sea, for I am not able to endure their shameful deeds. For behold: from the ninth hour of the Sabbath until the second drawing towards dawn, they work the works of their hands, not honoring the day of your Resurrection. They light their ovens and go away into their streets and work other works of their hands. So wash them into the sea, since their vices mount up to you, and my countenance is thoroughly disgraced, and I stand before you thoroughly disgraced." And there came a voice saying, "Cursed is that household, which from the ninth hour of the Sabbath until the second dawning of the sun engages in work, for the eternal fire awaits it, and I will not bless it upon the earth."

Holy Friday and holy Wednesday[15] are also present and they are saying to God: "On our days they eat meat and cheese, and copulate with their wives, and defile us." And there came a voice saying, "Cursed is that throat, the one that eats meat and cheese on Wednesdays and Fridays, save in the week of Pascha, the twelve days, and during Pentecost. Keep the remainder and abstain. Nor should you break your fast for the commemoration of the saints, O man, until you have participated in the liturgy and received communion. But if not, you shall inherit eternal fire."

But the Holy Theotokos, the hope of the Christians and the champion of those who have been wronged, the harbor of the tempest-tossed and the physician of the ill, the bread of the hungry and surety of sinners, she who alone has boldness before God, is present before the throne of God, interceding with many tears, saying, "Master, you should not hear the entreaty of holy Friday and holy Wednesday, and destroy the works of your hands, but you should send forth a sign, so that they might see and believe."

But the Holy Theotokos, the citadel of the Christians, the hope of the despairing, seeing that the Lord turned his countenance from the sons of men, cried out with loud voice, and said to all the saints, "Is there no one to help the sinners?" Then all fell on their faces before the throne of God: the angels and archangels, prophets and apostles and martyrs, crying out and saying, "Master, have mercy on the sinners, and do not destroy the works of your hands."

With this mass *proskynesis*, the curtain drops, and Anastasia goes on matter-of-factly to the next venue of her journey. Presumably, the

[15] "Holy Friday and holy Wednesday" could also be rendered "St. Friday and St. Wednesday," or "St. Paraskeve and St. Tetrade." These female "saints" represent the fast days of Wednesday and Friday generally, and are not to be confused with the Wednesday and Friday of Holy Week.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

plea for mercy was heard this time, but we are left with the distinct impression that the world and its sinners are not out of danger yet. Although the scene is narrated by Anastasia largely in the simple past tense (aorist), present tense verbs intrude in several places. That these may represent a more definite indication of time than merely the historical present is suggested by Anastasia's earlier vision of the scene, the action of which takes place entirely in the present tense, and seems to suggest that the intercession—and the threat it attempts to combat—is a never-ending process (Teubner, 5.10–6.6):

> And among the infants were standing four women. I asked the angel, and he said to me, The one is the Holy Theotokos, and the other, holy Sunday, and the others holy Wednesday and holy Friday, and they bring suit to God on account of the sins which people do upon the earth, defiling them. But the Holy Theotokos beseeches and entreats God, saying, "Master, have mercy on the creation of your hands, and on your world, and do not destroy them."

Clearly, the piece of celestial theatre that Anastasia witnessed toward the end of March in the year 6015 since the creation of the world was not just an isolated incident.[16] The compiler does not want anyone hearing ApAnas to rest easily. The fundamental moral of the *Apocalypse of Anastasia* is twofold and unmistakeable: (1) we are in deep trouble because of the way we behave; (2) all that stands between us and total devastation at any given moment are the prayers of the Mother of God and the saints.

Anastasia's basic message seems straightforward, but the revelation as a whole is anything but "straight." ApAnas and her sister texts, such as the *Apocalypse of the Theotokos* (ApTheot), defy simple, direct explication. Composed of multiple layers of borrowings and adaptations, they flout conventional narrative expectations. Hence, the scorn of a previous generation of scholars for medieval compilers who seemingly could not even write in a straight line, never mind in proper Greek. What, however, if ApAnas is not a failed linear narrative, but a different kind of narrative altogether, possibly a *cyclical* one, or not a narrative at all? What follows, then, are some initial explorations concerning the hermeneutics of the medieval Greek

[16] The date assigned to the vision by the prologue (probably a late addition to the text). 6015 anno mundi, according to the Byzantine reckoning, converts to 507 C.E.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

apocrypha. The discussion will be organized around three rubrics: transformation; taxonomy; time and space.

Transformation (metakharakterismos)

The period from the second half of the ninth century through the end of the tenth century in Byzantium can be characterized broadly as a period of renewal and rebuilding after the upheavals of iconoclasm and invasion. The best of the Classical Greek heritage in all spheres, from scholarship to law to politics, was being reclaimed and refashioned to suit new times. Campaigns were launched, mostly under imperial patronage, to survey and collect old manuscripts of ancient texts. Tattered manuscripts were recopied, sometimes with benefit of critical editing. A further goal was to distill the accumulated wisdom into encyclopedic reference works.[17]

In the process, many manuscripts were quite literally refashioned, transferred from the old uncial hand, which consisted of separate upper case characters, to a new, cursive, minuscule hand, which used letters in both upper and lower case, and numerous ligatures and abbreviations. The minuscule was more conservative both of the scribe's time and of expensive parchment and paper, and enabled large bodies of material to be copied and recopied more efficiently. The technical term for the phenomenon is *metakharakterismos*, literally, "transliteration".[18]

A kindred process of transformation of the old for the purposes of the new can be seen in the skin on the oldest of the apocalypse's manuscripts, Bodleian Selden Supra 9, dated 1340.[19] The Selden manuscript is a palimpsest, its folios culled from four different earlier manuscripts: two tenth-century liturgical books, an Old Testament lectionary from the turn of the eleventh century and a New Testament lectionary of the ninth century. ApAnas appears on top of the Old Testament lectionary. The fact that leaves from canonical Scripture and church service books were sacrificed to copy this miscellany of bits and pieces of legends, saints' lives, homilies and apocrypha of widely varying quality is food for thought. Whether the juxtaposi-

---

[17] Paul Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme Byzantin* (Paris, 1971) 267–300.

[18] Lemerle, *Humanisme*, 118–20.

[19] The presence of ApAnas. in the Selden ms. seems to have been discovered only after the publication of the Teubner edition of 1903. Full description in

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

tion speaks more of commonplace recycling of parchment or changing tastes in religious literature is probably impossible to determine. But even if the scribe's motivation was strictly economic, the leaves still embody the transformation of old texts into new, and represent a later generations's renewal of its inheritance.

Metakharakterismos is then in origin a technical term that denotes the recopying and transferring of an ancient text into a new format. But the term can also be used more broadly, even metaphorically, to characterize a certain cultural inclination at work in the period under consideration. Herbert Hunger defined *metakharakterismos* in this sense as the "special interpretation of an antique model and its 'reconstruction' by a combination of mimesis and innovation."[20] In just this way, the medieval Greek visionary journeys to the other world adhere to the ancient and Late Antique tradition of Jewish, Christian, and pagan "tours of hell," but reshape the genre with significant innovations.[21] The lowly ApAnas and her sister texts are thus conceptually and structurally as much partakers of the spirit of *metakharakterismos* as are the transliterated manuscripts of Classical Greek knowledge being created at the same time in Byzantium, albeit on a vastly different cultural level.

A comparison of the *Apocalypse of Anastasia* with its apparent Late Antique model, the third-century *Apocalypse of Paul* (ApPaul) demonstrates this antique to medieval transformation at work.[22] We need look no further than the complaint before the throne of God by the outraged fast and feast days, Saints Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, quoted above, for ample comparative material. The passage finds an analogue—if not its outright source—in the opening scenes of ApPaul,

---

Alexander Turyn, *Dated Greek Manuscripts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries in the Libraries of Great Britain* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1980) 106.

[20] Herbert Hunger, "The Reconstruction and Conception of the Past in Literature," *The 17th International Byzantine Congress. Major Papers* (New Rochelle, NY, 1986) 510.

[21] Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell. An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), discusses the families of texts established in Late Antiquity. Eileen Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), treats the diverse corpus of Western medieval visions.

[22] Greek text in C. Tischendorf, *Apocalypses Apocryphae* (Leipzig, 1866) 34–69; see Gardiner, *Medieval Visions*, 179–94 for full bibliography. ApPaul is not the unique source of ApAnas, which also contains many thematic and stylistic points of convergence with the pseudepigrapa of the Hebrew Bible (most notably, the apocalypses of Baruch and Enoch).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

in which the sun, moon, stars, sea, waters, and earth all complain to God about the defilement they suffer from the deeds of men.[23] Here are the complaints of the moon and stars, and of the sea:[24]

> Sometimes indeed the moon and the stars have protested to the Lord, saying: O Lord God Almighty, thou has given us power over the night; how long shall we watch the ungodliness and fornications and murders which the children of men commit? Permit us to deal with them according to our powers so that they may known that thou alone art God. And a voice came to them, saying: I know all these things and my eye sees and my ear hears, but my patience bears with them until they are converted and repent. But it they do not return to me, I will judge them.
>
> And the sea has frequently cried out, saying: O Lord God Almighty, men have defiled thy holy name in me; permit me to rise up and cover every wood and thicket and all the world that I may blot out all the children of men from before thy face, so that they may know that thou art God alone. And a voice came again and said: I know everything; for my eye sees everything and my ear hears, but my patience bears with them until they are converted and repent. But if they do not return, I will judge them.

The complaint (and the suggested remedy) are similar, but a number of significant changes have taken place between Paul's vision of the heavenly appeals court and Anastasia's, between the third century and the tenth.

From nature to icon

Both passages rely on the device of personification. In ApPaul, it is the natural elements themselves that cry out to heaven, seemingly from their accustomed places in the physical universe. These are not the stylized, symbolic medallions of the elements encountered in medieval and Renaissance fresco decoration and manuscript illumination, which fit neatly within the confines of their scenes. Indeed, it would be difficult to paint a contained picture of the scene as described by Paul. In contrast, Anastasia's scene before the throne is easily pictured, and completely containable, within an iconic frame. It may constitute a foretaste in prose of later Byzantine and Slavic

---

[23] The basic idea may hearken ultimately back to Psalm 50:4, in which God calls upon the heavens and the earth to witness in the judgment of his people.

[24] ApPaul §5, 6. As translated by H. Duensing in W. Schneemelcher, ed. *New Testament Apocrypha*, rev. ed.; Eng. trans., ed. R. Wilson, vol. II (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1991) 717–18.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

icons, in which Friday and Sunday are personified as women with specific attributes and cult functions.[25]

From mercy to severity

ApPaul and ApAnas both allude to the ancient Near Eastern idea of the deity cleansing the earth by deluge.[26] In ApPaul, the world and its sinners get a second chance; the passage emphasizes above all God's forbearance. Anastasia's divine voice, in marked contrast, is swift to judge and condemn. At the end of the episode, the Lord even turns his face from "the sons of men," triggering an impassioned act of *proskynesis* on the part of all the heavenly hosts. In addition to the provocative thematic contrast, the vignette also offers insight into the method of Anastasia's compiler. Though the tone has been altered considerably, the initial source for the scene is almost certainly ApPaul—chopped up and rearranged to suit the new moral recipe. The "patience" response of ApPaul's God, suppressed here in ApAnas, is sliced off and adapted for use later in ApAnas, for God's response to the reports given by angelic agents (Teubner ch. V). The threat of curses and eternal fire in ApAnas which takes the place of ApPaul's "patience" clause may in turn have been borrowed from a third medieval apocryphon, the *Letter of our Lord that Fell from the Sky* (EpKyr), which exhibits a number of striking verbal and thematic parallels with ApAnas.

From Divine Office to bureaucratic office

Paul, like Anastasia, also sees angels who report to God on the deeds of men, good and ill. In his vision their reports form part of the preparation for the daily celestial Vespers service before the throne of God (ApPaul §7–10). Anastasia sees these same angelic agents make their reports, not in ritual preparation for evening worship, but as cogs in a celestial intelligence-gathering operation (Teubner ch. V). The action takes place, not before the throne of God, but in an office, a place where angel clerks sit and record sins in "big books," continually writing, erasing and rewriting.[27] This "Celestial

[25] Patlagean, "Byzance et son autre monde," 212, 216.

[26] In ApPaul, the sea asks God to "blot out" all the children of men, using the verb *ex-aleípho*, "wash over, wipe out, obliterate" (Tischendorf 37.3). In ApAnas, St. Sunday uses the verb *kata-pontízo*, "plunge in the sea, drown, wipe out" (Teubner 12.5,11).

[27] Books of life, death, and judgement, as well as their angel guardians or scribes,

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Records Bureau" is the highest relative level that Anastasia attains in the other world. What does it say of the shift of imagination from the late third century (Paul) to the late tenth (Anastasia), that when one achieves the highest reaches of heaven, one ends up in a government office?

Intercession

In the same vein, it is surely significant that ApPaul portrays no intercessor, no intermediary, no need for superhuman efforts to save humankind. The third-century God is not capricious, and direct access is possible. But seven centuries or so later, it seems that God has become too remote to be approached directly. The tableau of accusation and intercession before the throne is one of the most striking and vivid passages in ApAnas, and its message is unambiguous. One's only hope in heaven is a powerful advocate—in this case, the Mother of God—who will plead one's case before the throne.

From Biblical hero to symbolic type

One of ApAnas's greatest innovations is Anastasia herself. Like "Saints" Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, the figure of Anastasia is in origin surely a personification, a typological figure. As her name, the feminine form of *anastasis*, "resurrection," implies, she is a woman who dies and rises again after three days. The compiler does not identify her with any one of a number of saints named Anastasia: she is described only as a modest, almost generic nun.

Taking a typological figure as protagonist is a significant departure on two counts. All previous "tours of hell" had been taken by prominent Biblical, rabbinic or ecclesiastical heroes, whose presence it was hoped would lend legitimacy and authority to the vision: men such as Ezra, Enoch, Moses, Peter and Paul, and later Mary, the Mother of God. ApAnas is the first (and seemingly the last) major

---

are common in apocryphal visions, often in conjunction with the judgement of a particular soul. Such books are a special interest in 3 Enoch, which identifies the particular angels who keep the books of the dead and living (Azbogah and Soperi'el, §18) and tend the heavenly archives (Radweri'el, §27). The awe-inspiring Azbogah and Soperi'el, who write with burning scrolls and pens of flame, command the very pinnacle of the angelic hierarchy; their fiercesomeness and exalted position are described at length. ApAnas seems unique, however, in describing an actual location, an office staffed by anonymous bureaucrat-angels, scribes who are kept busy with continual writing, erasing, and rewriting. (I am indebted to my Taubes Center colloquium colleagues for the reference to 3 Enoch.)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

text of this kind in the Eastern church that hazards the use of a fictitious, allegorical heroine.[28]

ApAnas is also the only major text in the genre whose hero enters the other world through actual physical death. As an ordinary person, a Byzantine monastic "everyman," her authority to tell the story could perhaps derive only from having been dead. In contrast, the visions of established Biblical or saintly figures derive their authority from the heroes themselves, who by virtue of their exalted rank could merit special access to things heavenly. The fifteen Greek, Ethiopic, Syriac, Coptic, Hebrew and Latin "tour of hell" traditions analyzed in Martha Himmelfarb's study provide a small but broad sample for an initial test of this hypothesis.[29] Of the fifteen, thirteen involve Biblical, monastic, or rabbinic heroes, all of whom seem to be granted their visions while living, although two die immediately afterwards (Ezra, Isaac). Only two "laypersons" figure in the group: a virtuous son-in-law granted a dream vision to console him during the mourning period for his father-in-law, and a young woman killed by her beloved (for refusing to embrace a life of chastity!), whom the apostle Thomas helps bring back to life (ActsThom 6). It is surely not coincidence that the only person of the fifteen who must die for the vision to take place is the only ordinary woman of the company.[30]

Seven centuries or so elapse before we have another "ordinary" woman's description of an otherworldly journey in the Eastern church, that of Theodora, the serving maid of the Constantinopolitan St. Basil the Younger. At the request of Basil's disciple Gregory, Theodora appears to him in a dream to explain the judgement that befell her

---

[28] The generic nature of the heroine may account for the text's lesser popularity. In contrast to ApPaul and ApTheot, which survive in numerous manuscripts in multiple languages, the Greek text of ApAnas survives in only four medieval manuscripts. ApAnas had a much more satisfactory *nachleben* in Old Church Slavonic and Serbian versions—in which she becomes a full-fledged saint—circulating into the early nineteenth century. Mikhail Speranskii, "Malo Izvestnoe Vizantiiskoe 'Videnie' i Ego Slavianskie Teksty," *Byzantinoslavica* 3 (1931) 110–33.

[29] Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 8–36. The apocalypses of Peter, Zephaniah, Paul, Mary (i.e., the Theotokos), Baruch, Ezra, and Gorgorios (a Falasha ascetic hero); the Acts of Thomas; the Testament of Isaac; the life of Pachomios; midrashim concerning a virtuous son-in-law, Isaiah, the rabbi Joshua ben Levi, Moses, and Elijah. Himmelfarb notes that the Apocalypse of Zephaniah seems to begin with a reference to a burial (p. 13), but there is nothing conclusive in the text of the apocalypse itself to dictate Zephaniah's death before the vision.

[30] Mary the Mother of God in this company being considered an "extraordinary" woman, an honorary man.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

after death.[31] Like that of the anonymous young woman in the *Acts of Thomas*, Theodora's vision is not self-standing, but appears as a vignette embedded in a much larger text celebrating the deeds of a male saint. (Note, too, that all three women's visions are recorded by male informants.) Despite (or maybe because of) its setting, Theodora's tale remains the most well-known Byzantine example of a visionary woman in the Eastern Orthodox churches.[32]

The normal pattern for male visionaries, then, is to be granted a vision while living, but ordinary women must die to be granted access to the other world. Unlike Theodora, however, Anastasia does not *stay* dead, for she has been chosen specially by God to undergo a temporary death, in order to impart the information he wishes to convey more effectively. But that she was not just "taken up," like Paul, Mary the Theotokos, and many of the prophets, suggests that the compiler thought the unknown Anastasia's credibility might need reinforcing.

This brief consideration of ApPaul, ApAnas, and their many cognate texts can only begin to hint at some of the ways that the Late Antique and medieval apocrypha developed over time. The study of that development is made more difficult by complicated textual histories. Possibly because the texts were considered para-canonical, compilers (or copyists) seem to have felt freer than usual to adapt, alter, and rework the basic document in hand. Apocryphal revelations as a genre are characterized by a continual process of reinvention and reincarnation, often combining texts of different species to produce awkward hybrids. ApAnas is one such medieval hybrid.

Taxonomy

The *Apocalypse of Anastasia* and kindred texts have been frustrating to philologists because they have been seen as undisciplined hodgepodges of genres, styles, language levels, metaphors and images. They

---

[31] Greek text of Theodora's journey: A.N. Veselovskii, "Khozhdenie Theodory po Mytarstvam i Neskol'ko Epizodov iz Zhitiia Vasiliia Novago" *Sbornik Otdeleniia Russkago Iazyka i Slovestnosti Imp. Ak. Nauk* 46 (1890), no. 6, pp. 3–50.

[32] In the late twentieth century, Theodora's tenth-century vision stands at the center of a sharp debate, among North American Orthodox Christians belonging to several different jurisdictions, concerning the proper understanding of the journey of the soul after death. Those who interpret her vision literally have been accused of gnosticism. See (Archbishop) Lazar Puhalo, *The Soul, the Body and Death*, 3rd ed. (Dewdney, British Columbia: Synaxis Press, 1994).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

do not conform to academic expectations or respect generic rules. ApAnas is an otherworldly vision, but it is not the complete narrative guide to the "real" sights of the other world that scholars have made of Dante. And while it is concerned with the end of the world, it does not supply the end-time events that one normally associates with apocalyptic revelations. The conventional elements of an apocalypse—as conflated with *the* Apocalypse, the Second Coming of the Lord in terrible majesty—are familiar. They include stars falling, wars, alarms, oracles, cataclysms, legendary emperors rising from sleep and reappearing, and powerful saviors who come from afar to rescue their subjects from the hands of the foreign peoples, culminating in the final triumph of Christ. But ApAnas has none of these: how then is the text an *apocalypse*, or *apocalyptic*, other than in the literal sense of its being a revelation?

Gerhardt Podskalsky (*Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*, 1972), Paul Alexander, Cyril Mango, and Paul Magdalino among others have treated the apocalyptic ideas at the heart of the Byzantine self-definition in detail.[33] As *Romaioi*, those who lived under the Roman emperor, guided by God, the Byzantines had from beginning to end a clear sense of being a people chosen for a special destiny in world history. This conviction would sustain them through wave upon wave of invasions and disasters, and is well-documented. None of the modern historians cited, however, includes "tour of hell" apocalypses into his consideration of the Byzantine apocalyptic consciousness. Their studies concentrate almost wholly on apocalypses with overt political implications, texts that concern *collective* eschatology. Texts that are formally works of *individual* eschatology may have been excluded on the assumption that such "inner" narratives concerned personal redemption only, and could therefore bear no meaningful relation to the "outer" narratives of the collective redemption of nations.

But the two eschatologies—collective and individual—*do* intersect, on a number of levels, and the study of one enriches the understanding of the other. First, as we have begun to see with ApPaul and ApAnas, even when the primary narrative concerns the soul's journey through the other world, that journey encompasses an outer purpose, a cosmic and collective significance. In his paper in this volume, Professor Agus writes of the intimate relationship between the "inner and outer axes" of redemption. ApPaul and ApAnas play

[33] See references given above, n. 12.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

on this relationship implicitly, contrasting the inner movement of the soul toward redemption with the outer movement of the world—usually away from redemption.

This crucial intertwining of individual and collective redemption may be a familiar concept in theological and Biblical studies, but Byzantine historiography has not yet made the connection. Byzantine apocrypha such as the apocalypses of Anastasia and the Theotokos, and the *Letter of Our Lord that Fell from the Sky* (EpKyr) are put to one side when "proper" apocalypses, such as those of Pseudo-Methodios or Daniel, are being discussed. The two kinds of text have not seemed to fit together. Suspecting that the problem is partly one of terminology, I propose that a new *taxonomy* of the apocalyptic is needed, more precise and therefore more inclusive, to help clarify relationships within the genre.

The first group of texts, those with which we are primarily concerned here, I would like to call examples of the "moral apocalypse," as opposed to the more obvious and familiar "political apocalypse." In the political apocalypse, redemption is triggered by the arrival of an external savior, usually a legendary emperor. His advent, and therefore ultimate redemption, is out of our hands, although we can try to predict it according to signs and seasons, days and years.[34] The texts most often consist of extended predictions based on reading the signs of the times.

The moral apocalypse may take a number of forms, with the otherworldly journey and the celestial letter the two most prominent medieval variants. In contrast to the political apocalypse, it teaches that redemption is directly in our hands, or rather, directly between us and God. We bear immediate potential responsibility for the end of the world, which may happen at any moment without warning, in the twinkling of an eye. There can be no calculation or certainty. We only know that we hasten the possibility of God's wanting to end the world by our actions, which pollute and defile God's creation.

Accordingly, the "moral apocalypse," at least for ApPaul and ApAnas, is also an "environmental" apocalypse. It teaches that responsibility for our evil ways goes far beyond our own narrow personal sphere. Human actions cause the sun, moon, stars, earth and ocean to suffer. The very fasts and feasts of the Church, as personified by

[34] As such, the "political apocalypse" as defined here would not include Jewish messianism, within which personal moral agency plays a crucial role in the coming of the Messiah.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

their days, defiled before the face of God, long for God to wash them clean from human impurities.

ApPaul's compiler emphasizes the forbearance of God, but the God of the medieval texts, of ApAnas and of EpKyr, has lost all patience. One has the sense that any day now the Almighty will so tire of the whole business that he may finally heed the metaphorical pleadings of the natural and ritual worlds and end it all by a second flood, in spite of the promise to Noah. What saves humankind from destruction at the hands of an apparently capricious and impatient God? The Noachian covenant is never mentioned in ApAnas.[35] One's hope is founded, not on a covenant, but on the intercession of the Mother of God. It is no wonder that the Theotokos is depicted as larger than life-sized, often larger than Christ himself, in many donor portraits in Byzantine churches.[36]

Conceptually we have come a long way from the third century. While much of the content of ApAnas, ApTheot, and EpKyr is timeless, derived from the prophets, Psalms, and Gospels, the theological and social assumptions that underlie the world view of the medieval texts represents a radical departure from the early patristic authors.

The social environment of the texts is anxious and difficult. The compiler portrays a world in which at any moment God or the local government official may pull the rug out from under you (especially if you are a penniless widow.) It is surely not just a generic *topos* that civil and ecclesiastical authorities figure prominently in the punishment zones of both ApAnas and ApTheot. Through the symbolic inversions of the other world—in which the mighty are removed from their seat, and humble and meek are exalted—the compilers attempt to substantiate the Biblical promises of justice. But their frustration with the enigma that God's promises only seem to come true in the other world, not this world, is evident. The tension of being expected to live both in this world and the next, in the Kingdom of God already come, but yet not quite here in all its fullness, pervades the medieval moral apocalypse.

---

[35] Noah does appear in ApPaul, as a model of chastity and asceticism (§50).

[36] For example, the donor portrait on the south wall of the nave of the Church of the Panagia Phorbiotissa at Asinou on Cyprus (1106), in which the interceding Mother of God stands between the two very small donor figures and her Son, seated in judgement surrounded by angels. She towers over Christ, her head twice the size of his. The inscription reads: "Nikephoros dedicates the church to the Virgin in exchange for protection on Judgement Day." Marina Sacopoulo, *Asinou en 1106 et sa contribution à l'iconographie* (Brussels, 1966), p. 11 and plate 2.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The tension is grammatical as well as theological. ApAnas's compiler is working very hard to resolve many such contradictions—hence the text's stylistic awkwardness, and also its historical interest. Hence too, I propose, the apparent confusion over verbal tenses, from which nineteenth-century commentators concluded that the compiler was incompetent, a poorly-educated medieval Greek who could not write to the standard of Plato or even manage to harmonize the tenses of his various borrowings of different texts. In ApAnas the time shifts disquietingly between past, present, and future. Some of the sinners whom Anastasia sees seem to *have* sinned, in the past, and are now *burning* and *will burn* forever, as one might expect. Most, however, are described in the present continuous, as people who are in the process of sinning even as Anastasia sees them. These sinners are not yet submerged in the flames, but sit on the banks of the various punishment pools and rivers.

Could this apparent temporal confusion result from an attempt to experience time as does God, in whose mind past, present and future are all simultaneously present? In the eternal present, both the actual commission of a sin and its consequence would exist, and could be seen, synchronously. Maybe our compiler is not semi-literate, but struggling to find a language to express the tension of trying to live—and write—simultaneously in two time-frames, one of which, eternity, has no borders. We see the compiler wrestle with the same problem in space as well as time: how does one describe landscapes and states of being that are infinite and boundless?

Time and Space

"Apocalyptic time," taken most literally, refers to the time within an apocalypse, as the visionary, reader or hearer—medieval or modern—experiences it. In closing I would like to explore apocalyptic time and space in this most literal sense: time and space as experienced within the text of the revelation itself.

I tried to chart Anastasia's path through the other world systematically from beginning to end, just as neat, methodical diagrams can be made of Dante's progress through *inferno*, *purgatorio*, and *paradiso*. Figure 1 is the result.[37]

[37] The idea of plotting the progress of an otherworld journey graphically comes

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

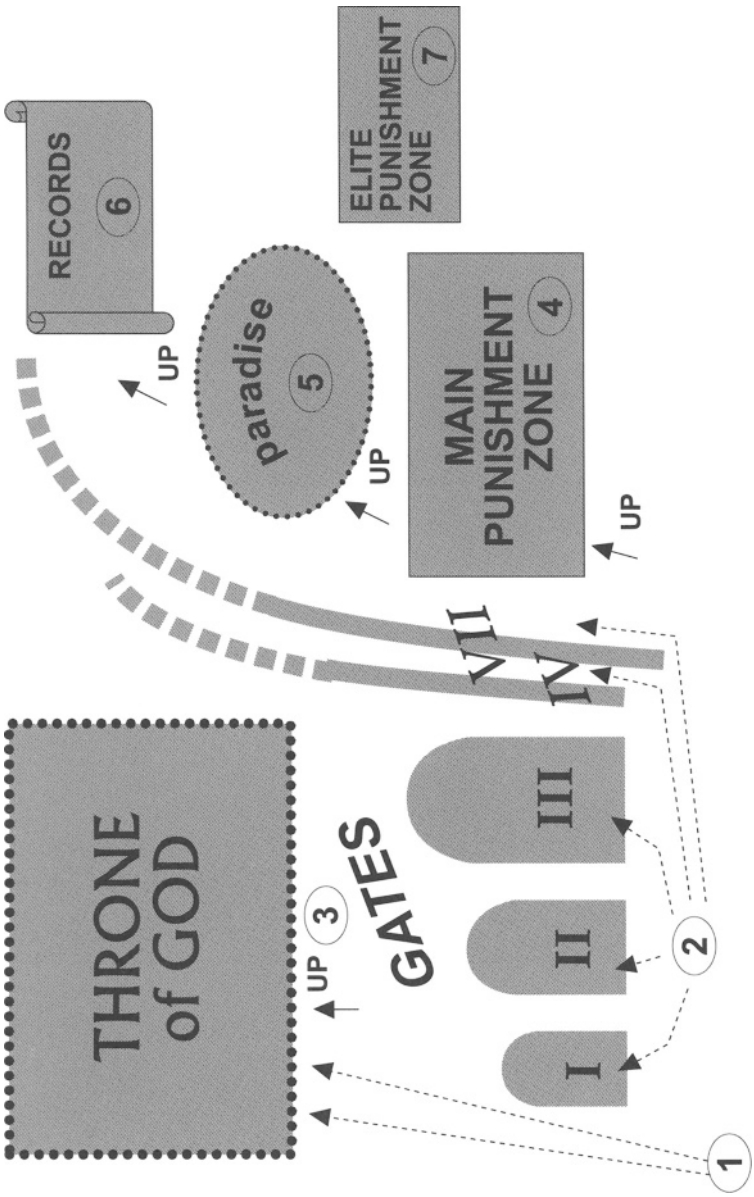


Figure 1 Chart of the other world

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Taken up by the Archangel Michael, Anastasia enters the heavens. Her vision encompasses seven major images, corresponding to the encircled Arabic numerals of the chart.[38] Her first impression, described as if from afar, is of a blinding light, through which she begins to make out the throne of God, surrounded by many of the usual Biblical features and figures (1). Anastasia then sees, apparently from the same vantage point, "the seven gates of heaven" (2). All is described as if from outside the frame; Anastasia does not walk *into* each scene or even from gate to gate, but seems to see what lies beyond the gate from one unchanging vantage point.

The first four gates all have to do with water: behind them lie immense pools which serve as the sources of hail (I), bitter rain (II), the River Jordan (III), and salvation (IV). The fourth gate is the major source of weather phenomena, with the prophet Elijah commanding immense birds that filter the waters of the firmament and the rays of the sun to varying degrees, creating either normal rain and sunshine, or flood and drought. There is a sense of increasing spaciousness: the breadth of gate I is described as "three days"; of gate II, seven days; gate III, twelve days, until gate IV has "limitless breadth" (which the vanishing line on the chart attempts to convey). Gates five and six are not depicted. The seventh gate, of breadth "limitless and unsearchable", is noted as the passageway to the places of punishment and a "valley of weeping."

After viewing the gates, Anastasia is led "up" by the angel back to the throne of God, where she witnesses the dramatic scene of accusation and intercession quoted earlier in this paper. Since her journey also begins with a throne vision, her return at this point completes the first of two conceptual cycles in the text, a cycle characterized mostly by light and water.

Anastasia is then brought by the angel into the main punishment zone, a vast area of numerous foaming, fiery rivers, wells, and ovens (4). According to the topography described earlier, she would presumably reach the punishment zone by returning to the gates and

---

from Claude Carozzi, *Le Voyage de l'Âme dans l'Au-Delà d'apres la Littérature Latine (V^e–XIII^e siècle)* (Rome: École Française, 1994). Carozzi's Latin texts respond more successfully to the method than ApAnas, however.

[38] The seven areas also correspond roughly to the divisions of the Teubner text. The throne (1) and gates (2) = Teubner, section I; throne (3) = II; mass punishments (4) = III; paradise (5) = IV; celestial records (6) = V; elite punishments (7) = VI.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

going through the seventh gate, but the text does not mention such a progression. The manuscripts of ApAnas disagree among themselves as to the relative elevation of the punishment zone. One version has the angel lift Anastasia up "to the heavenly places . . . where the sinners are punished"; in another, the angel merely takes her "away" to reach the zone.[39]

All the versions agree that Anastasia must be raised up to go into Paradise, presented as a lovely walled garden of trees laden with fruit, complete with a banquet table and an immense chamber of hanging lamps (5). On an even higher elevation, the summit of Anastasia's journey, stands the celestial records bureau, where angel scribes record the sins and good deeds of humankind in large books, and where angelic agents converse with the voice of God. She is then shown, without any indication given of relative elevation, an "elite" punishment zone, for bishops, priests, emperors and high officials (7).

The tour ends with the elite punishment zone. Anastasia has completed the second cycle of the vision, beginning with punishment and fire, relieved by the visions of paradise and angelic scribes, and then returning to punishment and fire. We are not told how she comes back to this world, but are left dangling somewhere mid-heaven. The text closes with moral exhortations and a doxology.

Perhaps the most "graphic" impression with which we are left is of the limitations of such an exercise . . .! Though it is crude, the diagram does help to clarify certain interpretative points, and to suggest patterns underneath the surface of the text which may have shaped its composition. The most basic patterns are the two broad conceptual cycles of the journey, from throne to throne and from punishment to punishment. In addition, water, clouds and light predominate in the first half; fire and darkness in the second.

Some further observations, based on the diagram:

(1) Heaven and hell are not two different places: paradise, the heavenly throne, and the punishments all occupy the same region. Moreover, hell is not underground and heaven is not overhead: blessedness and punishment are part of the same realm, and that realm is "above." Anastasia's journey is not a *katabasis*, the otherworldly descent

[39] The former is the Palermo version; the latter, the Paris-Milan text type. Teubner, p. 16.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

of pagan Greek and earliest Christian tradition, but an *anabasis* of mystical ascent.

(2) Although the basic inclination is upwards, the movement within the vision is actually more horizontal than vertical: her progress involves a series of planes, the relative position of which is not explicitly defined. The overall effect is more two-dimensional (like an icon) than three-dimensional (the virtual reality of Dante).

(3) Anastasia's movement through the other world does not yield to the stopwatch. One cannot draw a horizontal time axis from left to right through the diagram. In his paper on Martyrial Time, Professor Agus recognizes that when one moves through *inner* time and space, no actual physical distance is covered, and no actual time may elapse. Though Anastasia sees enough to occupy many weeks, within the vision there is no conscious reference to the passage of time or explicit marking of time passed. Anastasia has passed out of earthly time into the eternal present, as experienced in the mind of God. The eternal present may be fine for the heavens, but the compiler recognizes that this world needs a time referent: it is recorded almost *pro forma* in the prologue that Anastasia returns to life after an archetypical three days had passed.

(4) Finally, Anastasia's movement through the scenes is not linear; the text resists all straightforward narrative expectations. The components of her vision appear almost unrelated one to another; their placement, random. They resist being read as a single narrative sequence with tidy transitions and well-articulated interstices.

The explanation of an earlier generation of scholarship for most of the phenomena described above was carelessness on the part of an incompetent compiler. In politically-correct terms, we might call the compiler "compositionally-challenged." This is more than just a euphemism: the compiler *is* challenged by the material, by the complexity of the ideas he or she is trying to convey, and by the inadequacy of normal narrative conventions to convey them. The reader is still left, however, with the problem of how to read a text in which the successive scenes do not form a succession. ApAnas is not a congruous narrative picture that begins at the left hand corner and proceeds in an orderly fashion across to the right. Earlier commentators thereby considered it incoherent; might we need to look instead for a different kind of coherence?

One interpretative solution may lie in an *architectural* model of time as an approximation to the experience of time within the apoca-

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

lypse. One might think of the vision as a series of images on the walls of a building, and construct an architectural metaphor for moving through them, in which there is a multiplicity of ways that the same images can be experienced.

This is not to suggest that the vision is as rationally knowable as a building; the compiler is not interested in building a static three-dimensional model of the other world, nor in writing a travelogue in time of a particular woman's particular journey through it. I would submit instead that the compiler's goal is less narrative and more interactive, more akin to a modern multi-media artist's idea of how "viewers" should experience their installations. The reader or hearer is invited to move with Anastasia through a series of evocative images, images designed precisely to *evoke* scenes conceivably already resident in their memories, not to provide a definitive description of things heretofore unknown.

Such memory pictures could derive from a number of sources. Church wall paintings and icons, and the vivid thought world of Holy Scripture, especially the Psalms, are two obvious places to start. The visionary journey describes what Professor Agus calls the *inner landscape of repentance*, characterized by the experience of turning around (hence the cycles in Anastasia's journey?) and going through the gates of repentance (Psalm 118:19). It may be pertinent in this context that the most prominent structural feature of ApAnas's other world is not seven heavens, seven spheres, or seven circles, as in many other tours of hell, but seven *gates*.[40]

One moves through these images the way one might move through a building, the interior spaces of which can be experienced in as many ways as there are persons within. In this paper I am not proposing to match the text with any particular medieval monument or specific set of pictures, although the nature of the descriptive prose suggests that the compiler may well owe many of his or her ideas more to frescoes seen than to Biblical texts read. Here I would, rather, like to highlight an apparent structural similarity between the progress of the text and the process of reading images. Instead of

[40] Many heavenly tours, such as ApPaul, feature gates, often made of brass, gold, or precious stones, but these are usually an explicitly urban metaphor, the city gates of the New Jerusalem, and not gates of heaven which serve as entrances to, or frames for, vast and complex landscapes. Anastasia's gates are closest in spirit and content to the pseudepigrapha of the Hebrew Bible, especially 2 Enoch (§12–15), where the "days" and cycles described have solar significance.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

walking into and within a three-dimensional scene, as we do in the company of Paul and Dante, with Anastasia we stand in front of each word-picture and experience it *iconically*.

What are the characteristics of experiencing an image iconically? One is drawn first into the central focus of the scene, and then gradually begins to take in scenes on the periphery, in one's own particular order, independent of their spatial or temporal arrangement.[41] Anastasia's first vision of the throne is described in just these terms:

> And gazing intently, I saw a great light, which I had not seen while living, and a throne, held up by angels. But upon it was something like a circle of shining light. In the middle of the circle stood a flaming sword, and above the sword stood a cloud. In the middle of the cloud stood a person, and with its wings it covered up its body. Above it I saw a human hand (Teubner 4.12–5.2).

Byzantine "story" icons are read in a similar fashion. In a fully-fledged Nativity icon, for example, one is drawn first into the central focus of the Mother and child in the cave, and then the eye begins to travel round to the secondary episodes, each set apart by itself in a niche in the rocky landscape: the Christ child being given a bath, the bemused Joseph sitting by himself, the Magi approaching and Shepherds in their fields, the angels above. Set next to a Renaissance painting of the Nativity, in which every figure belongs to the same virtual space and time, the different aesthetic of the icon, and the need for a different mode of interpretation, are immediately apparent. That the Nativity icon's scenes, while all occupying the same plane, are not meant to be read all at once is made obvious by the simultaneous presence of the Christ child both in the manger and having a bath. No art historian would describe the abstract, two-dimensional Byzantine icon as a "failed" naturalistic, three-dimensional painting—yet it is just this mentality that has yet to be overcome with respect to literary interpretation of the Byzantine apocalypses. I hope by now you will agree that ApAnas is not a failed linear narrative, but instead a non-linear evocation, a series of mystical images painted in words, painted in the mind instead of on walls—or perhaps on the walls of the mind.

---

[41] Annabel Wharton describes this phenomenon of the "iconization" of originally narrative, didactic scenes in the composition and reception of tenth-century Cappadocian frescoes in her *Art of Empire: Painting and Architecture of the Byzantine Periphery* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1988), especially 30.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Walls bring us back to architecture, and to what it finally means to experience a text "architecturally." I suggested earlier that the compiler wishes us to wander through the text as we might a building, in our own time, on our own terms. In closing let us test the method, using a structure roughly contemporary with ApAnas: the Panagia ton Khalkeon Church (Our Lady of the Bronzesmiths) in Thessaloniki, the narthex of which preserves the earliest complete Byzantine Last Judgement fresco programme we have (Figure 2).[42]

The Last Judgement as painted in a narthex, rather than as one composition on a single wall, is a particularly apt model for understanding ApAnas precisely because the architectural framework makes each scene discrete. One experiences each by itself in exactly the iconic and episodic mode that characterizes Anastasia's experience of the other world.

One's first experience of the iconographic program varies greatly according to the door through which one enters. Coming from the nave, one enters the paradise of the blessed; entering from outside, one encounters Judgement. From that initial impression, one continues in one's own narrative sequence, following the logic of that particular moment. The order in which the viewer takes the images, and what he or she perceives within them, will differ according to the circumstances of each passage through the narthex. Accordingly, the same basic paintings may be experienced in a multiplicity of ways by different viewers, and even by the same viewer.

Nor are the scenes in the Panagia ton Khalkeon narthex arranged in chronological order like the images on a strip of film, based on a particular narrative sequence. Which of the scenes "happens" first is impossible to determine, and any attempt to impose narrative order on the scenes results in awkward crossings to and fro. Logically, for instance, the allegory of the sea and earth yielding up their dead should precede in time the gathering of the sinners to judgement, but they are not arranged in this sequence in the program. In the microcosm of the narthex, all the "events" of the end-time are available to the viewer simultaneously—can it be that one has ventured into the eternal present?

[42] Figure 2 depends on the schematic floor plan in Karoline Papadopoulos, *Die Wandmalereien des XI. Jahrhunderts in der Kirche ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΧΑΛΚΕΩΝ in Thessaloniki* (Graz-Köln: Verlag H. Böhlaus, 1966), 14.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

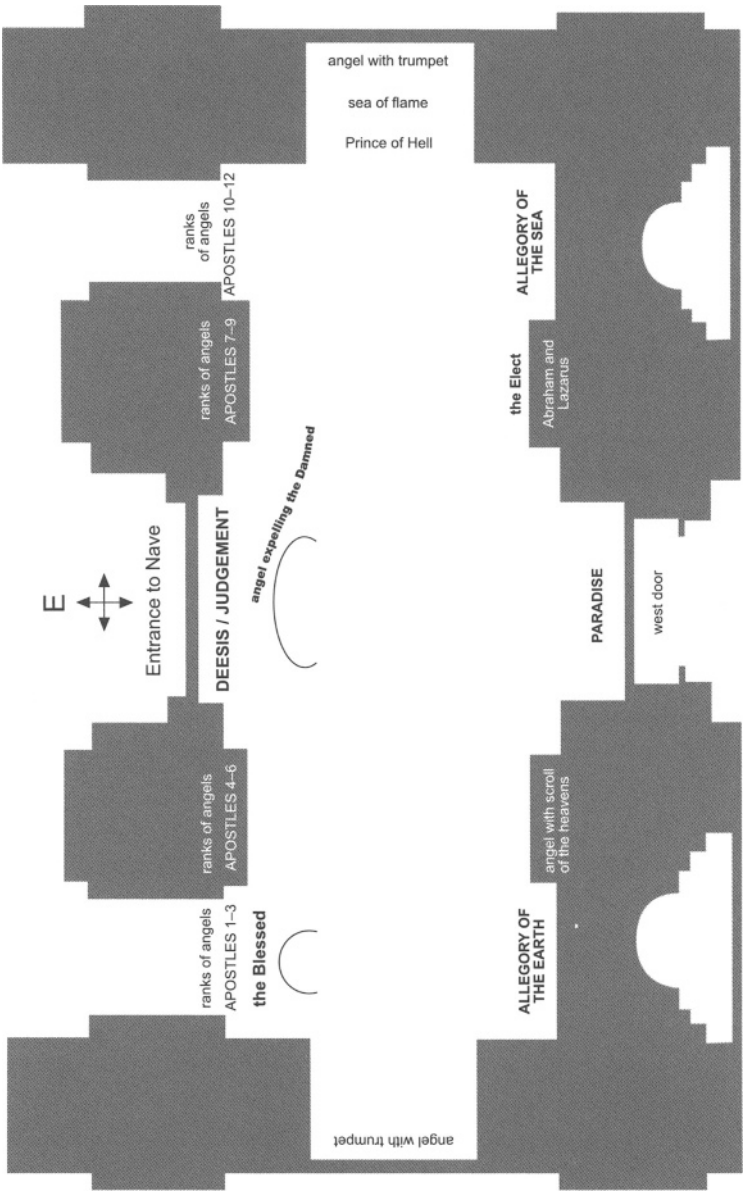


Figure 2 Nathex, Panagia tōn Khalkeōn (AD 1028)

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The architectural and iconic modes of interpreting ApAnas also resonate from a psychological point of view. Modern testimonies of "near-death" experiences always list the person's first impression as of a brilliant light and a long corridor.[43] Remember that Anastasia's initial impression of the other world is of a circle of shining light such as she never saw when living, after which she gradually becomes aware of a long series of "gates," each one wider than the last, with the final one stretching off into infinity, almost like the arches of a very long church aisle, or cloister, or market arcade.

Conclusion

In this short space, I have set out to present some *prolegomena* to the study of the *Apocalypse of Anastasia* and related medieval Greek apocrypha. The elementary state of study on this one text, and the complexities involved in its interpretation, suggest just how far we remain from achieving the "history of Apocalyptic literature" that M.R. James mentioned as a desideratum more than one hundred years ago. Since 1893, however, scholars have come a long way in their appreciation of the purpose, methods, and value of religious literature produced on the fringes of Orthodoxy. When *Morgenländische Eschatologie* is finally be written, it will be a very different book from the one that M.R. James—or even Jacob Taubes—might have envisioned.

[43] Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys. Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), compares medieval (mostly Western) and modern narratives in detail.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AND PROSELYTISM: AN APPLICATION OF FESTINGER'S MODEL TO THIRTEENTH-CENTURY JOACHITES

Emmanuel Wardi

In the Middle Ages, Christian theology of history was dominated by the Augustinian doctrine of two dispensations. Time was conceived as divided into two intervals, or, in theological terms, two dispensations: that of the Old Testament, extending from Creation to the birth of Christ, followed by that of the New Testament, due to last until the Second Coming, at the End of Days. By the end of the twelfth century, however, a new conception started to emerge in Italy, due to the mystical writings of Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135–1202).

Dissatisfied with monastic observance in his Cistercian house, this Calabrian abbot founded first a new monastery and then a whole new order, known as the order of Fiore. At its height, this movement comprised more than sixty houses, mostly located in southern Italy, but partly also in the north, even beyond the Alps. It is, however, not as a monastic reformer that he won his renown, but rather as the founder of a curiously fruitful school of Christian mysticism. In fact the millenarian doctrine which he expounded in detail in half a dozen books was to exert a powerful influence on mystics long after his order was dispersed and forgotten.

Without altogether relinquishing the binary Augustinian doctrine, Joachim elaborated his own mystical trinitarian conception of history. Just as the unitary Godhead is conceived as comprising three distinct Persons, he argued, so history, as a reflection of the trinitarian mystery in the dimension of time, must be divided in three ages (*status*, as he calls them), each reflecting, *proprietate mysterii*, one of the three divine Persons. While his first two ages are essentially equivalent to the two Augustinian dispensations, the third one, still lying in the future, is to be an era of celestial beatitude, dominated by an order of *viri spirituales*, under the aegis of an Eternal Evangel.[1]

---

[1] For Joachim's doctrine of the three ages see e.g. Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence*

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Joachim's third status may be understood as a re-birth of early Christian Millenarism, but while the Millennium of post-Augustinian times was to occur after the Second Advent, and was thus essentially a-historical, Joachim's Age of the Holy Spirit is to *precede* the End of Days, and is consequently an historical era within time. Accordingly, the cataclysms of the End of Days, so vividly depicted in the Book of Revelation, including the advent of the Antichrist, become violent episodes due to shake the universe in the period of transition from the second to the third *status*. The Apocalypse is then no longer an eschatological prediction symbolizing Doomsday, but a chiliastic prophecy relating to a concrete moment in the sequence of time.[2] In place of the essentially pessimistic Augustinian conception, seeing in life upon earth, the *saeculum*, nothing but an insignificant transitory peregrination on the way to the a-historic celestial city, Joachim introduces a new, optimistic idea. According to his doctrine, beyond the apocalyptical transition crisis separating the Second Age from the Third, we are due for one more temporal period upon earth, an era of joy, bliss and love of God.

Although this is undoubtedly Joachim's most fertile contribution to historical thought, it is not what chiefly captivated his thirteenth-century disciples. In fact, what often appealed to them more was his exegetical method for predicting the future. The scrutiny of the Holy Scripture, in search of allegorical implications predicting the End of Days, was rife in Christianity from its earliest days. *Scripturae scrutandae sunt, nec earum superficie debemus esse contenti*, writes

---

of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969) pp. 17–27; Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) pp. 6–10; or, more briefly, Antonio Crocco, *Gioachino da Fiore e il gioachimismo* (Naples: Liguri Editore, 1976) 77; or Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) p. 10. In Joachim's books the doctrine is presented mostly in the *Liber Concordiae* and the *Expositio in Apocalypsim*. It should, however, be noted that the ternary doctrine is not Joachim's exclusive historical conception. Parallel to this, we also find in his teaching that conventional Augustinian binary doctrine (see e.g. Reeves, *Joachim*, p. 7). Concerning apocalyptic prophesying (see below) there is no fundamental difference between the two.

[2] For an appraisal of Joachim's interpretation of the Apocalypse, see e.g. Reeves, *Influence*, p. 296; *eadem, Joachim*, p. 1; and West and Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore*, pp. 11–13. For the distinction between eschatological visions and chiliastic prophecies, see Eugenio Duprè-Theseider, "L'attesa escatologica durante il periodo Avignonese," in *L'attesa dell'età nuova nella spiritualità della fine del medioevo. Convegni del centro di studi sulla spiritualità medievale* 3 (Todi: Accademia Tuderina, 1962) pp. 69–75.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Augustine.[3] Moreover, since the second dispensation was regarded as a mirror reflection of the first, it had long become a custom to detect in the Old Testament so-called "prefigurations" of New Testament episodes.[4]

Joachim systematized and historicized this typological exegesis and employed it as a means to predict the future. In his doctrine of "concordance" between the two Testaments (*concordia*, in his Latin), he claims that through "spiritual understanding" one can discover occult clues of events to come in the Holy Scripture, especially of the cataclysms due to precede the transition to the third *status*. It is therefore not surprising that many of his latter day disciples tended to consider him a kind of soothsayer, a *vir spiritualis*, endowed, as Dante says, with "prophetic spirit" (Paradise, 12, 141).

His reckoning of the time divinely appointed for this transition is based upon evangelic genealogy (e.g. Matt. 1:17). Since the number of generations from Abraham to Jesus is 42, and since he considered a generation to be 30 years, like the life of Christ, he predicted that the end of the second *status* would occur 1260 years after the Nativity.[5] Whoever is familiar with the Book of Revelation will surely recognize this number. In an enigmatic passage in Chapter 11 the Lord says: "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days . . ." (Rev. 11:3).

Joachim does not fully commit himself to 1260, or to any other year. In his first book he only insists that "the time when these things will occur . . . is near but the day and hour are known only to God himself."[6] In later works he repeats the same idea in similar language. In fact, his whole treatment of reality is quite vague and evasive, and as a rule he refrains from any allusions to explicit political events or to specific persons. However, this number does appear in his writings more than once, and he seems to have truly believed that it will represent a sort of apocalyptical *terminus ante quem*.

---

[3] *Epist. 199 ad Hesychium, PL* 33, 42, cited in Duprè-Theseider, "L'attesa escatologica," p. 72, n. 5.

[4] Typical expressions are *prefigurationes, umbrae, signa, typi.*

[5] For Joachim's computation method see e.g. Crocco, *Gioachino da Fiore*, p. 81 and nn. 8–10 citing from Joachim's *Liber Concordiae.*

[6] *Tempus autem quando hec erunt dico manifeste quia prope est: diem autem et horam Dominus ipse novit* (Reeves, *Influence*, p. 48; quoting *Liber Concordiae*, 41v).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

His thirteenth-century disciples did not adopt this approach. Fascinated by the temporal element in their teacher's prophecies, they usually imparted to his words a far more worldly significance than he may ever have meant. Thus, in the spurious *Super Hieremiam*, probably composed around 1240, Joachim is credited with several allusions which render his predictions far more concrete. The wars of the Apocalypse are clearly implied to be identical with the conflict between Church and Empire, and the Antichrist with the godless Hohenstaufen emperor, Frederick II.[7] Thus, eschatological tension gradually increased in Joachite circles, and by the middle of the century Frederick was expected to set off all the awesome cataclysms predicted in the Book of Revelation. Yet, by the end of 1250 *stupor mundi* passed away in his imperial bed; the fateful year of 1260 passed without bringing about any universal upheaval. Clearly, the Joachites' prophecy had failed.

Nevertheless, Joachim's ideas did not die. In fact they can be clearly detected in European writings as late as the seventeenth century, and probably even later.[8] However, the heydey of Joachimism occurred some twenty to thirty years after the failure of the prophecy, that is, a whole generation later. Joachims' doctrines survive the failure of the End of Days prophecy. In this paper I will attempt to address this question.

In a forty-year-old book entitled *When Prophecy Fails*, Leon Festinger, H.W. Recken and S. Shachter proposed a model which claims to characterize the behavior of ardent believers when a prediction they fervently maintain is unequivocally disconfirmed.[9] According to these scholars, the incompatibility of the treasured prophecy with perceptible reality induces in passionate believers the inescapable exigency

---

[7] *Abbatis Ioachim divina prorsus in Ieremiam prophetam interpretatio* (Cologne: APFVD Lodovicum Alectorium & Heredes Jacobi Soteris, 1577) pp. 142–144; pp. 294–303. Although in this edition the book is named *In Ieremiam*, it is commonly referred to as *Super Hieremiam* (Reeves, *Influence*, p. 518). For historical and legendary relationships between Joachim and Frederick II see H. Grundmann, "Federico II e Gioachino da Fiore," in Delno C. West, ed., *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought* (New York: Burt Franklin & Co., 1975) 2: 293–299; *Cronica Fratris Salimbene de Adam ordinis nimorum*, ed. by O. Holder-Egger (*MGH* 32, 1963) pp. 19, 360.

[8] For Joachimist influence on Renaissance and later thought see in particular H. de Lubac, *La posterité spirituelle de Joachim de Fiore* (Paris: Editions Lethielleux, 1979); but also Reeves, *Influences*, pp. 96–125; West and Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore*, pp. 107–110; Eugenio Garin, "L'attesa dell'età nuova e la renovatio" in *L'Attesa dell'età nuova nella spiritualità della fine del medioevo*, pp. 22–26.

[9] Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken and Stanley Shachter, *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to sustain two mutually contradictory truths, and this results in a painful cognitive dissonance. In order to overcome the strain caused by this conflict, they face opposed courses: either to yield to disillusionment and to admit the falsehood of the prediction hitherto maintained as incontrovertible, or to defend the old conviction and demonstrate its soundness, despite apparent evidence to the contrary. Strongly committed to their faith, believers obviously prefer the second course. They then adduce a whole range of arguments to evade the prophecy's failure. These range from a simple admission of a flaw in the date, requiring a mere deferment of the prophecy's fulfillment to some later time; to adoption of a spiritual interpretation of the prophecy's significance, which renders it more consistent with observed reality; down to an outright denial of the sense of reality as experienced by the rest of humanity, and its representation in a manner more or less congruent with the predicted event.[10]

When the disproof is so decisive as to leave no room for doubt, even the sturdiest champions of faith find it hard to adhere to their convictions. What do they do? They then try to persuade others to support their beliefs. The rationalization process, according to Festinger and his colleagues, is very simple: "if more and more people can be persuaded that the system of belief is correct, then clearly it must, after all, be correct."[11] And thus, paradoxical as it may seem, disconfirmation of a cherished prediction often leads to proselytism.

Was then proselytism also characteristic of the Joachites who outlived the failure of their End of Days prophecy? In other words, can we observe among later Joachites a detectable increase in the performance of acts intended to induce others to adopt their beliefs?

From a purely quantitative view, we encounter many more Joachites in the second half of the thirteenth century than in the first. The earliest Joachites were probably concentrated in Southern Italy, mostly among Florensian and Cistercian direct disciples of the late Calabrian abbot.[12] By the 1240s, however, the leading Joachimist circle was undoubtedly situated within the Franciscan order. One of the

---

[10] Festinger, pp. 25–28.

[11] Festinger, p. 28.

[12] For early Joachism see in particular E.R. Daniel, A Re-Examination of the Origins of Franciscan Joachism," *Speculum* 42 (1968) pp. 671–676, reprinted in West, *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought*, pp. 143–148 and sources and modern works cited; but also M.W. Bloomfield and M. Reeves, "The Penetration of Joachism into Northern Europe," *Speculum* 29 (1954) p. 733; and Reeves, *Influence*, pp. 37–58.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

principal reasons for the penetration of Joachimism among the Minorites is probably to be sought in a *vaticinium post eventum* appearing in the *Super Hieremiam*, claiming to predict the institution of two new monastic orders—taken as alluding to the Friars Minor and the Friars Preachers, destined to become the *viri spirituales* of the third *status*.[13]

Our only source regarding these early Joachites is the contemporary chronicler Salimbene de Adam of Parma, who, although himself a Joachite, does not cite more than half a dozen Franciscan disciples of the Calabrian abbot. The most conspicuous among them is probably Hugh of Digne (who died in 1255–6), a saintly Provençal friar whose reputation must have reached far beyond his convent at Hyères, for Saint Louis is reported to have paid him a visit.[14] This charismatic brother is generally recognized as the founder of the sect of the so-called Spiritual Franciscans, who embraced Joachimism. Following Hugh's teaching, these dissident brethren believed that by insisting on strict corporate poverty within their order, as allegedly ordained by St. Francis both in his first Rule and in his Testament, they were defending the spiritual values of the imminent Third Age. No less eminent, however, is brother John of Parma, who after having first served as *lector* at the Franciscan *studium* at Paris University, was appointed in 1249 Minister General. Since he had previously embraced the Spirituals' ideals, he strove as General to restore his order to strict evangelical poverty. Yet, as we shall shortly see, a theological scandal soon put an untimely end to both his office and his spirit-ual aspirations. Two other Joachite members of his order were met by Salimbene in late 1247 on their way to study in Paris,[15] one of whom, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, was soon to succeed John of Parma at the university. Finally, on a visit to Hugh of Digne in 1248, the chronicler also came across two Neapolitan Friars Minor, who had presumably come to Hyères in order to attend the master's Joachimist teachings. These may perhaps point to the existence of an early Franciscan Joachimist circle in Naples, which may, indeed, have been the cradle of all subsequent Franciscan Joachimism. A Dominican friar, who was converted to Joachimism at the hands of Hugh was also witnessed by the chronicler, on that same occasion.[16]

---

[13] E.g., pp. 165, 167, 174, 319–320.

[14] For Hugh of Digne see *Cronica Fratris Salimbene de Adam ordinis minorum*, ed. by Giuseppe Scalia (Bari: Laterza, 1966) pp. 324–339; Reeves, *Influence*, pp. 184–185.

[15] For John of Parma see Salimbene, ed. Scalia, *passim*; esp. pp. 433–443; 449–455.

[16] Salimbene, ed. Scalia, pp. 343–345.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

It may be argued that Salimbene names only leading figures, or persons he happened to encounter. Nevertheless, although there may have been several other Joachimist Spirituals among the Franciscans, before 1260 their numbers can hardly have exceeded a few dozen.

In contrast, by the end of the century we come across three fairly large groups of Joachites: the so-called Apostolic Brethren in Northern Italy, the Spiritual Franciscans, and the Provençal and Catalan Beguins, all of which were eventually charged with heresy.

The largest group, the Apostolic Brethren, first appeared in Parma in 1260 as a small band of enthusiasts gathered around an illiterate eccentric named Gerard Segarelli (or Segaleili), who had assimilated a few Joachimist ideas from Spiritual Franciscans. After initially dwindling, almost to the point of extinction, the Apostolics gradually began to gain followers, owing to the confluence of various local citizens; first mostly paupers and vagabonds, but later on some well-to-do educated merchants as well. Then, soon after their proscription by the 1274 papal ban on all unauthorized religious sects, they started to proliferate, and soon expanded to numerous other cities in Emilia and Romagna. About a decade later, in 1284, we even find bands of pilgrims flocking to Parma from all Northern Italy to worship Segarelli.[17] This absurd situation was, however, cut short at the beginning of the following century: the heresiarch of Parma was finally arrested and shortly afterwards put to death.

However, Segarelli's demise did not mark the extinction of his sect. On the contrary. Led by an obscure north Italian heretic, Fra Dolcino (c. 1250–1307) to the secluded valleys of the Alps, their number is said to have reached a few thousand, including many wealthy burghers and perhaps even some noblemen.[18] After suffering from persecution, protracted famine, and finally a veritable crusade

---

[17] Salimbene (ed. Scalia, p. 819) mentions 72 pilgrims, but this should not be taken too literally, as it is a typically Joachimist number (Reeves, *Influence*, p. 191). For the spread of the *Apostolici* in Northern and Central Italy see Grado G. Mereo, *Eretici ed eresie Medievali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989) pp. 99–105; and, less learned but more accurately documented, Elena Rotelli, *Fra Dolcino e gli apostolici nella storia e nella tradizione* (Turin: Claudiana, 1972) pp. 25–36; as well as Gioachino Volpe, *Movimenti religiosi e sette ereticali nella società medievale italiana, secoli XI–XIV* (Florance Sansoni, 1972) p. 120. A more conservative opinion may be found in Cinzio Violante, *Studi sulla cristianità medievale* (Milan: Vita a Presiero, 1972) p. 375. For the modest number of the *Apostolici* in Segarelli's first phase see Salimbene, p. 373.

[18] According to one of Fra Dolcino's letters (Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, ed. G. Mollat, Paris: Librarie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927) 2:92 there were no less than 4,000, while Benvenuto da Imola (Benvenutus de Rambaldis de Imola, *Commentum super Dantis Aldicherij comoediam*, ed. by Jacobus Philippus Lacaita (Florence:

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

decreed against them in 1307 by Clement V, their remnants were violently exterminated and the leaders publicly tortured and executed.

The Spirituals never came close to such numbers, but they too must have increased substantially, as under Celestine V (1294) they were permitted to set up friaries of their own. Closely connected with them were the Provençal and Catalan Beguins, whose ranks were swelled by male and female Tertiary Franciscans. After first appearing in Southern France by the end of the thirteenth century, their numbers peaked shortly after 1300, when they gained a solid foothold in the three provinces of Toulouse, Narbonne and Barcelona. As one indication of their numbers, in 1312 no less than 300 followers were arrested on the pope's order.[19]

I suggest that the peak of Joachite activity came about 30 to 50 years after Joachim's appointed Doomsday had passed. It is difficult to account for this phenomenon without positing a fair amount of persuasive endeavor. Otherwise, these sects could never have reached such numbers. Therefore, how do we explain the substantial increase in Joachimist proselytism following the failure of their prophecy?

After their establishment in Parma, Segarelli's Apostolic brethren did not engage in public preaching, but rather gathered on street corners and exhorted passers by to atonement, or mumbles ecstatically to their revered master.[20] The first concrete evidence of intentional proselytism is found only somewhat later. About 1264[21] the Apostolics were joined by a rhetorically gifted youngster who, having been edu-cated by the Franciscans, knew a few sermons by heart. Capitalizing on his preaching ability, they collected audiences in the cathedrals of Emilian cities, which were soon spilling over with attendants. Once, when the famous preacher Bonaventure of Iseo, who had been minister of many provinces, delivered a sermon at Ferrara, it suddenly became known that the boy was preaching in a nearby church. Upon hearing this rumor, the prelate's audience gradually began to flock to hear the young man's oration.[22]

Barbera, 1887) 2:360 relates that when Dolcino reached Piedmont he was joined by 3,000 followers. For these numbers as well as for the social composition of the Dolcinians, see Rotelli, *Fra Dolcino*, pp. 43–45; Violante, p. 377; Mereo, *Eretici ed eresie Medievali*, pp. 124–125.

[19] Gordon Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967) p. 203.

[20] Salimbene (editio Scalia), pp. 369, 372 and 382.

[21] During Salimbene's sojourn at Ravenna, for the dating of which see Holder-Egger's notes in Salimbene, *MGH* (p. 166, n. 4; p. 267, n. 1; and p. 428, n. 1).

[22] Salimbene, p. 384.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Not much later the Provençal Minorite Petrus Johannis Olivi (c. 1248–1298) was spreading Joachimism to both Franciscans and Beguins.[23] In 1282, at the General Chapter of the order held in Strasbourg, this brilliant scholar was already censured for sowing heterodox ideas among his disciples.[24] But to no avail. His widely circulated treatises—more than sixty of them survived—as well as massively attended public lectures greatly publicized his radical doctrines. His *Postilla super Apocalypsim* must have reached such a large audience that the famous Toulousian inquisitor Bernard Gui blamed its Provençal translation as the principal source of all the Beguin's heresies.[25]

Between 1287 and 1289 Olivi lectured at the oratory of Santa Croce in Florence, and later at the Franciscan friary of Montpellier. His lectures in Florence, apparently open also to the lay public, were so imbued with Joachimist ideas that Santa Croce became a platform for the diffusion of the Calabrian abbot's doctrines. In fact, the numerous Joachimist motifs encountered in Dante's *Divine Comedy* may have been absorbed by the poet in his youth while attending these lectures.[26] In later years, Olivi also enjoyed the sympathy of the Houses of Aragon and Naples. During the captivity of Charles II's sons at the Aragonese court, after the Angevin defeat in the Sicilian Vespers, he virtually converted the three princes to Beguinism.[27]

Another contemporary Joachite worth mention is the influential Aragonese court physician and diplomat, Arnold of Vilanova (c. 1230–1311). During his long life, this lay intellectual, who knew Arabic and Hebrew and was a confidant of four kings and physician of three popes, produced a multitude of religious treatises, both in Latin and Catalan.[28] The Joachimist flavor of these tracts is clearly apparent in recurrent predictions of imminent apocalyptical events, to be followed by a spiritual renovation of the Church. It is not surprising that his writings were eagerly seized by both Beguins and First Order Spiritual Franciscans, and that, after his death, Church

---

[23] For a recent survey of Olivi's life and work see Harold Lee, Marjorie Reeves and Giulio Silano, *Western Mediterranean Prophecy: The School of Joachim of Fiore and the Fourteenth-Century 'Breviloquium'* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1989) pp. 17–26.

[24] Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 104.

[25] Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, pp. 1 and 111–114.

[26] Crocco, *Gioachino da Fiore*, p. 149 and pp. 188–189.

[27] Lee, Reeves and Silano, *Western Mediterranean Prophecy*, pp. 53–54.

[28] For a recent survey of Arnold's life and work, as well as for up-to-date bibliographical notes, see ibid., pp. 27–46.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

authorities prohibited their circulation in vernacular. His passionately polemical style, which caused foreign authorities to detain him twice, shows an obvious and unswerving proselytizing fervor. The discovery among his properties in Barcelona of a *scriptorium* dedicated to the reproduction of his writings is additional proof for this contention.

Joachimist proselytism is thus well attested after 1260, but was this an innovation? Did it flourish only after the failure of prophecy? Joachimist proselytism occurred before 1260 as well. If early Franciscan Joachites were exposed to Joachimism in the Florensian circle, which apparently flourished in Naples before 1240, then the Calabrian abbot's disciples must have been preaching their teacher's doctrines. Moreover, Hugh of Digne's circle in the 1240s was a bastion of Joachimism. It was also presumably in order to expound these ideas that this friar corresponded with famous scholars such as Robert Grosseteste and Adam of March;[29] as was, indeed, also the circulation of works falsely attributed to Joachim. Finally, we even possess two first-hand testimonies of direct proselytism. Salimbene relates that when he met Gerard of Borgo San Donnino on the way to Paris, this ardent Joachite won him over to his belief.[30] Hugh of Digne as noted above also converted his Dominican visitor a few months later.

In 1254, before the final disproof of the End of Days prophecy, a clamorous theological scandal broke out in Paris. It was set off by the circulation of a radical Joachimist tract by Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, then *lector* at the university, provocatively entitled *Introductorius in Evangelium Aeternum*, and probably verging on outright heresy.[31] After a turbulent controversy which eventually reached the pope, Gerard was dismissed and confined to a secluded convent, and John of Parma lost his office as Minister General. As Gerard was accused by the masters of Paris of "spreading his folly and publicizing his book among ignorant brothers,"[32] he probably disseminated Joachimist ideas among his students. He may even have started before Frederick

---

[29] Salimbene, p. 335.

[30] Ibid., pp. 335, 340 and 344.

[31] For a recent discussion of this scandal, see Lee, Reeves, and Silano, *Western Mediterranean Prophecy*, pp. 12–13; but cf. also West and Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore*, pp. 102–103; and particularly Henry Mottu, *La manifestation de l'Esprit selon Joachim de Fiore* (Neuchatel/Paris: Delachaux & Nestlé, 1977) pp. 27–32.

[32] Salimbene, p. 341; and see also Roberto Parrini, "I maestri di Parigi contro i mendicanti," in Domenico Maselli, ed., *Eretici e ribelli del XIII e XIV secolo* (Pistoia: Tellini, 1974) p. 130. Of his studies under Gerard in Paris Angelo Clareno says: *cum multos docuerim in divinis* (Angelo Clareno, *Historia septem tribulationum fratrum mino-*

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

II's death, because Gerard was already on his way to Paris in late 1247. Yet, it stands to reason that before he was allowed to act as *lector*, or at least before he became bold enough to expound his heterodox ideas in public, he must have spent a few years at the *studium*. Therefore, it seems that he began proselytizing around the time the first Joachimist Antichrist disappeared.

In sum, this evidence does not amount to more than a sporadic missionary endeavor, hardly comparable with the profusion of preaching and publishing encountered in later years. Thus, our sources do, in fact, reveal a substantial increase in Joachimist proselytism after 1260, or, at the earliest, after the first disenchantment provoked by Frederick's death.

In 1922 the Italian scholar Gioachino Volpe called attention to the proliferation of spurious Joachimist writings after Frederick II's death.[33] An ascription of newly composed works to venerable earlier authorities naturally discloses a deliberate cajoling endeavor,[34] and thus bears witness to intentional proselytism. However, Volpe's statement does not reflect much more than an impressionistic intuition and before it can be accepted as conclusive evidence quantitative data must be obtained.

In 1969 Marjorie Reeves published a list of spurious works ascribed to Joachim of Fiore, complemented by a catalogue of short prophecies, either directly attributed to the calabrian abbot or otherwise associated with Joachimist circles.[35] In an attempt to employ these lists to test the validity of Volpe's impression, we have divided the items on Reeve's list into four time periods according to the presumed year of their first appearance: the years preceding Frederick's death; the years between this event and 1260; the first decade after 1260; and later years. Since the first appearance of many of these writings can be traced only to roughly delimited periods, in the case of the works, no more than minimum and maximum quantities could actually be calculated. See Table 1.

---

rum, ed. F. Ehrle, *Archiv für Litterature und Kirchengeschichte*, ed. P. Heinrich Denifle O.P. and Franz Ehrle S.J., 2 (1886) p. 284).

[33] Volpe, *Movimenti religiosi*, p. 117.

[34] For this argument see e.g. Giles Constable, "Forgery and Plagiarism in the Middle Ages," *Archiv für Diplomatic Schriftgeschichte Siegel- und Wappenkunde* 29 (1983) p. 30; quoting Abelard's prologue to *Sic et Non*.

[35] Reeves, *Influence*, pp. 518–533. For a survey of some of these texts see Lee, Reeves and Silano, *Western Mediterranean Prophecy*, pp. 5–16.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Table 1
Frequency of Appearance of New Apocryphal Joachite Work

Time Interval	Years in Time Interval	Books				Prophecies	
		Number		Rate		Number	Rate
		min	max	min	max		
1202–1250	49	2	5	4	10	3	6
1251–1260	10	5	8	50	80	4	40
1261–1270	10	5	6	50	60	2	20
1271–1305	35	3	4	9	11	3	9

The results are quite clear.[36] Before 1251 and following 1270 the appearance rate of both new books and new prophecies hardly exceeds an order of 10 per 100 years. Between 1251 and 1270, however, the same rate reaches 20 to 40 for the prophecies, and for the books no less than 50 to 80—at least one new work every two years.[37] It seems that the publication of this kind of literature increased after Frederick's death, and maintained a relatively high level after the conclusive failure of the End of Days prophecy. Despite the inherent inaccuracy of statistics based on such a small sample, the more so as Reeves' study is by no means exhaustive,[38] a general trend is unequivocal.

Combined with the above finding, this calculation denotes a significant increase in proselytizing zeal among Joachites who survived the failure of their prophecy. Consequently, Festinger's model seems to be a more reliable device for predicting the future than that of Joachim of Fiore.

Before concluding, I wish to cast a doubt regarding the essential validity of any study of the Joachites' reaction to the failure of prophecy. We assume that such a failure was bound to cause them

[36] Columns marked "Number" diplay the number of writings which first appeared in each of the time intervals. Those marked "Rate" show a calculated per-year publication rate multiplied by 100, in order to eliminate leading zeroes.

$$\text{Rate} = \frac{\text{Number}}{\text{Years in Time Interval}} \times 100$$

[37] The recent attribution of the first appearance of the *Vaticinium Sibiliae Erithrae* to 1249 (Paul Alexander, "The Diffusion of Byzantine Apocalypses in the Medieval West and the Beginning of Joachimism," in *Prophecy and Millenarism*, ed. Ann Williams (London, 1980) pp. 76–79; cited in Lee, Reeves, and Silano, *Western Mediterranean Prophecy*, p. 7, n. 25) slightly modifies the figures, but not the essential trend.

[38] Reeves, *Influence*, pp. 511–512.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

disappointment, but what do we really know of their intellectual or emotional attitude towards prophecy? Did they truly expect their absurd predictions to be fulfilled? To be sure, the more naive and Salimbene among them, obviously did. Others, more sceptical perhaps, and more sophisticated may have considered prophecy to be no more than a medium for the propagation of unpopular ideas, a mere literary genre, not altogether unlike modern journalism?[39] After all, their real desire was for a moral and religious reform. The results of this study buttress the assumption that Joachimist prophecies were strong beliefs and not just religious propaganda.

Prof. Landes has suggested that proselytizing might have been a reaction to a charge of heresy cast against Joachite sects, rather than to the cognitive dissonance caused by failed prophecy. However, it should be noted that only one provincial synod in Arles in 1363 officially condemned Joachim's doctrines on prophecy.[40] This decree never received the sanction of Rome or Avignon, and Olivi's subsequent career clearly demonstrates that it failed to take root even in Provence. The 1215 condemnation of Lateran IV concerns only one early treatise on Trinity, and not his later works on prophecy,[41] whereas the *Evangelium Aeternum* scandal did not set off a public denunciation of Joachite doctrines. Persecution of the Apostolic Brethren as heretics started only in 1286—more than twenty-five years after Segarelli's first appearance in Parma.[42] In addition, Pope John XXII's persecution of Provençal Joachite sects began only in 1317 and was principally aimed against the doctrine of evangelical poverty.[43] Thus, even if the charge of heresy did in some way influence Joachite proselytizing, its effect could hardly have been felt before the third decade after 1250 and this was somewhat after the heyday of spurious Joachite works.

---

[39] The first to compare medieval prophecy with modern journalism was probably V. Cian in 1902. See A. Messini, "Profetismo e profezie ritmiche italiane d'ispirazione gioachimito-francescana nei secoli XIII, XIV e XV," in West, *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought*, 1: 186. This article was first published in *Miscellanea Francescana* 37 (1937) pp. 39–54 and 39 (1939) pp. 109–130.

[40] Johannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Graz: Akademisce Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1961) 23, pp. 1001–1004.

[41] Reeves, *Influence*, pp. 28–36.

[42] Rotelli, pp. 29–31, and the sources quoted there.

[43] Lee, Reeves, and Silano, *Western Mediterranean Prophecy*, p. 59; and cf. Reeves, *Influence*, pp. 126–132.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

One way or the other, Joachites evidently continued to preach their doctrines long after their initial prediction had been disproved. New dates had naturally to be advanced, usually a few decades ahead, but occasionally also quite near at hand. Fra Dolcino was so bold as to postpone the realization of his prophecy by no more than a single year three times in a row. But it was not so much the accurate date of the advent of the Third Age which interested later Joachites, as the notion of its imminence. Consequently, their proselytising consisted mainly of preaching the urgent exigency of making penance—*penitentiagite* in the Apostolics corrupt Latin. Among the Franciscan Spirituals and their Third Order and lay adherents, who had now become the principal conveyors of Joachimist doctrines, this exigency took the form of a desperate struggle for the adoption of corporate poverty. The identification of the Friar Orders, and particularly the Franciscans, with Joachim's Third Age *viri spirituales* made this requirement an imperative. For voluntary poverty, as emphatically exhorted in St. Francis's testament, was considered in these circles as the essence of the saint's teaching. And thus, for more than two generations Abbot Joachim's eschatological teaching became the mainspring behind a drive for the adoption of apostolic life.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

AWAITING THE LAST DAYS . . . MYTH AND DISENCHANTMENT

Johannes Fried

"Rise, rise, Sir, the Last Day has come. The world is full of locusts."[1] A swarm of locusts had crossed the Hungarian plains at that time, and the first reaction to such an extraordinary, dismal event was an actualization of apocalyptic fears. Apocalyptic interpretations of natural phenomena, originating at the very beginning of Christianity, were common in the western Latin Middle Ages.

Throughout the middle ages the apocalyptic preaching of Jesus, his Apostles, or the saint Fathers of the Church was the fundamental element of Christianity. It is important to note that the Christian creed was never understood as the sectarian legacy of older Jewish apocalypticism.[2] Jesus of Nazareth had actually taught, the Last Judgment became the conclusive—and highly effective—act of redemption. It was widely believed that the Lord would soon come again to judge all mankind. The debate vis-à-vis the return of Jesus began after his death and the first preaching of his ascension, and over time it underwent many changes.

The medieval derivatives of this eschatology were sharply distinguished from their biblical and early Christian origins. The older texts, the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse of John, were *vaticinia ex eventu*, reflecting the actual history of the Jewish people or the rising Christian community. The anonymous authors of these early texts interpreted the present as an imminent fulfilment of previous revelations mediated by supranatural powers.[3] In contrast, Medieval

---

[1] *Karoli IV imp. Rom. Vita ab eo ipso conscripta*, c. X (ed. Kurt Pfisterer and Walther Bulst, *Editiones Heidelbergenses* 16; Heidelberg 1950) 36: "*Domine surgatis, dies novissimus adest, quia totus mundus plenus est locustis*". See *Vita Caroli Quarti. Die Autobiographie Karls IV.* (Translation, Introduction and Commentary by Eugen Hillenbrand, Stuttgart: Fleischhauer & Spohn, 1979) 142.

[2] Amos Funkenstein, *Jüdische Geschichte und ihre Deutungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag [Suhrkamp] 1995) 82s.

[3] Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist. Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascinating with Evil* (San Francisco: 1994) 11.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

apocalypticism became a battlefield for theologians and intellectuals. These scholars used and interpreted traditional texts according to the fourfold sense of scripture they had learned with Aristotelian and Arabic scientific ideas they had encountered since the twelfth century. The *vaticinia* were perceived as unfulfilled, undoubted predictions of what will happen. As a result, current events in the "real", material world were considered to be prophecies of the future. Apocalypticism and eschatology were transformed into a type of trained scholarship which had a strong influence on popular belief, religious practice, and science. Medieval intellectuals, with few exceptions,[4] usually did not create *vaticinia*, myths, or legends but rather compiled learned tracts from other sources. Instead of recognizing the fulfilment of previous revelations as their predecessors had done, medieval theologians expected such realizations and watched for their signs. These intellectual expectations evolved into a distinctive signature of Christian piety, theology, and world conception. "As the holy Fathers awaited the first advent, so do we await the second", Thomas Aquinas stated.[5] Both Christian history and the history of Christianity, became the history of the continuous expectation of Christ's second coming and the events preceding and accompanying it. "We never know the arrival of the judge. Therefore we have to live, as if we will stand in court the next day."[6] In the Middle Ages, apocalyptic predictions and knowledge about this world were often one and the same.

The fear and expectation of the Last Day and the imminent Verdict were awesome. It was believed that on this terrible day, not a single soul could escape the almighty judge who took only two decisions: either "to the right hand" or "to the left hand", "sheep" or "goat", *benedictus* or *maledictus, adeptio regni* or *exclusio a regno*.[7] The

---

[4] E.g., Hildegard of Bingen or the Joachimites. See Robert Lerner, "Ecstatic Dissent," *Speculum* 67 (1992) 33–57.—For the situation in the Greek Church cf. Paul J. Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources," in *Religious and Political History and Thought in the Byzantine Empire* (Collected Studies, no. XIII; London: Variorum 1978).

[5] Summa theologica suppl. q. 88 art. 3,1.

[6] The *Glossa ordinaria* to Matthew 24:36. Semper simus incerti de adventu iudicis, ut sic vivamus quasi in alia die iudicandi simus (ed. Strassburg 1489/81 tom.4) 75a.

[7] Matthew 25:34 and 24:41. Cf. the anonymous continuator of Bernard of Angers, *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis* III,7 ed. Auguste Bouillet, (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1897) 138ss. I have used the English translation: *The Book of Sainte Foy* (Translation with an introduction and notes by Pamela Sheingorn; Philadelphia 1995) 152. Magistri

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

urgent severity of the Last Day was dramatically imagined. Early in the Middle Ages, at least in the times of Charlemagne, songs in the vernacular like the Old High German *Muspilli*[8] or a series of Latin or vernacular sermons[9] began to popularize both the painful relentlessness and the terrifying circumstances of the judgment.[10] Later on, miniatures and wall paintings depicted its terrors. The ornate Books of Hours of the later Middle Ages, used for personal prayers, contained horrifying images. Death and Last Judgment threatened the living. For example, one such ninth century preacher, Sedulius Scottus, proclaimed, "Think always about your death, and do not forget the eternal Judgment". He continued, "Look at the order of human misery, of earth, on earth, to earth; from earth into fire, from fire into judgment, from judgment into hell or into life".[11] In the early eleventh century, Bernard of Angers warned: "Hear, you plunderers and ravagers of Christian property, how inevitable are the scourges and just judgments of God. His vengeance yields to no power, and if it spares for the present it will strike more heavily in the future. If it forbears to punish in this world, a harsher and more effective punishment awaits you in the eternal fires".[12] In the following century the Abbey Church of Ste-Foy depicted the Last Judgment in the tympanon of its main entrance, and later nearly every church had its Judgment tympanon or fresco, each with a Hell more unpleasant than the other.

Christian preachers strongly emphasized the omnipresent terrors of the Judgment to create an atmosphere of religious dread, whose

---

Petri Lombardi, *Sententiae in IV Libris distinctae* IV, 47,1,1 (ed. tertia; Spicilegium Bonaventurianum 5; tom. 2, Grottaferrata 1981) 537. *Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis Chronica sive Historia de Duabus Civitatibus* VIII, 17 (ed. altera rec. Adolfus Hofmeister; *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, SS rer. Germ. in usu scholarum* 13; Hannover, Lipsia: Hahn 1912) 415,28 and 416,5. or Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica* suppl. q. 88 art. 1,2.

[8] *Muspilli* (ed. W. Braune, E.A. Ebbinghaus: *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch*, 16 Tübingen 1979, Nr. 30). For the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons cf. Graham D. Caie, *The Judgment Day Theme in Old English Poetry* (Copenhagen, 1976).

[9] E.g. Milton McC. Gatch, "Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies," *Traditio* 21 (1965) 117–65.

[10] Peter Comestor, e.g., usually finished his sermons with a final appeal . . . *Jesus Christus, Dominus noster, judex noster, qui venturus est judicare vivos, et mortuos, et saeculum per ignem.* PL 198, 1721–1844.

[11] *Sedulii Scotti Collectaneum Miscellaneum* XVIII,1 and 7, (ed. Dean Simpson; *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 67; Turnhout: Brepols 1988) 135 (citing Vitae patrum and Columban or Ps.-Bede).

[12] Bernard of Angers, *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis* I,11, (ed. Bouillet) 38s. (transl. Sheingorn) 72–3.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

creative and cultural function can hardly be overestimated. Salvation, redemption and the stirring horrors of Hell are recurring themes in texts like the apocryphal "*Visio s.Pauli*," disseminated in many Latin and vernacular versions throughout the Middle Ages.[13] The story of Antichrist, a product of early Christian theology since the second Thessalonian letter (of doubted Pauline origin) which corresponded to the moulding of the messianic christology itself,[14] brought this theme to the fore. The Middle Ages witnessed the stimulating letter of Adso of Montierender "*De ortu et tempore Antichristi.*"[15] The Antichrist was described as the younger brother of Christ who dominated history through his precedents just as the Lord dominated the same history through his saints. Eschatology and apocalypticism offered the methods for self-assessment in this doubly dominated history.

After life, the dead were not absolutely dead. In a waiting period between corporal death and Verdict, they suffered fire and other corporal pains or enjoyed better conditions, expecting the resurrection of their flesh.[16] Yet, this was not enough. Since the twelfth century the idea of purgatory[17] was two-fold: a personal one immediately after death, *singulare iudicium*, and a general one for humankind, *universale iudicium*.[18] These theological constructs intensified the need for interventions by saints in medieval Latin Christianity. The combining of the Last Judgment with apocalyptic eschatology laid the foun-

---

[13] Montague Rhodes James, *Apocrypha Anecdota. A Collection of Thirteen Apocryphal Books and Fragments* (Cambridge, 1893) 11–42. Théodore Silverstein, "The Vision of Saint Paul: New Links and Paterns in the Western Tradition," *Archives d' histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 26 (1959; ed. 1960) pp. 199–248, text: 226–48. Peter Dinzelbacher, "Die Verbreitung der apokryphen 'Visio S. Pauli' im mittelalterlichen Europa," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 27 (1992; ed. 1993) 77–90.

[14] 2. Thess. 2,1–12. Cf. Horst Dieter Rauh, *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter: Von Tyconius zum Deutschen Symbolismus* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters NF 9; Münster: Aschendorf 1973). Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981). McGinn, *Antichrist*, 33ss.

[15] *Adso Dervensis De ortu et tempore Antichristi* (ed. Daniel Verhelst; Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 45; Turnhout: Brepols 1976).

[16] Cf. e.g. Peter Lombard, *Sententiae* lib. 4 dist.45 c. 1–2 523–5.

[17] Jacques LeGoff, *La Naissance du Purgatoire*, (Paris, 1981).

[18] This distinction of judgments was first elaborated by Richard of St. Victor, *Tractatus de judiciaria potestate in finali et universali judicio*. PL 196, 1177–1186. *singulare* and *universale*: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica* suppl. q. 88 art. 1. Cf. Samuel G.F. Brandon, *Judgement of the Dead: An Historical and Comparative Study of the Idea of a Post-mortem Judgement in the Major Religions* (London, 1967) 118–31.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

dation for religious life and thought throughout the Middle Ages. Medieval Christians always lived in the last times, awaiting Antichrist, Judgment, Paradise, Fire, or Hell—or repressing their knowledge of them.

Medieval apocalyticism was an appeal to human behavior, reason, common sense, and powers of judgment. "It will always be my desire", an anonymous monk of Ste-Foy admitted continuing Bernard's *Book of Ste Foy's Miracles*, "to praise Ste Foy, because I believe that through her intercession I can be moved from the flock of goats on the left hand of the Judge to the sheep shining with white fleeces on the right hand. Since I am motivated first and foremost by the prospect of this heavenly reward, I have banished all my idleness".[19] Faith pertained to heaven and earth, and the Last Days will change everything. Apocalypticism reflected an understanding of the whole cosmos, human order and individual self-conceptions. It penetrated the practice of religion, memory of the dead, and promoted the cult of saints.[20] It dominated imagination, affected sexuality[21] and influenced philosophy, art,[22] theology, and science. The Judgment theme ran through the sacramental doctrine;[23] through confession and repentance;[24] through moral instructions;[25] through understanding of humankind, its history and social life. "The uncertainty of the Last Judgment brings twofold usefulness for vigilance", Thomas Aquinas claimed, "First, because Judgment might happen within one's life . . . Second: because one does not only care for his own, but for his

[19] *Liber miraculorum* III,7 (ed. Bouillet) 138–9. transl. Sheingorn, 152. cf. ib. IV, 24 (ed. Bouillet) 219ss. (221). The author of the second passage was presumably not the same as the author of the first one.

[20] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981).

[21] Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York, 1995).

[22] Beat Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christlichen Kunst des 1. Jahrtausends. Studien zur Geschichte des Weltgerichtsbildes* (Wien, 1966).

[23] C.F.D. Moule, "The Judgment Theme in the Sacraments," in W.A. Davies and D. Daube, eds., *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* (Cambridge, 1956) 464–481.

[24] Cf. e.g. Regino of Prüm, *Libri duo de synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis* I,292 (ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Hermann Wasserschleben, Leipzig, 1840) 135. Burchard of Worms, *Decretum* 19,4 (*Corrector*) PL 140, 950–1.

[25] Adso's tract on Antichrist is more often delivered in the revised version that Alboin made for the archbishop Heribert of Cologne than in its original one; but Alboin put it together with moral instructions "on virtues and vices", cf. *Adso Dervensis* (ed. Verhelst) 86–7. Johannes Fried, "Endzeiterwartung um die Jahrtausendwende," *Deutsches Archiv* 45 (1989) 381–473, esp. 430, n. 204 and 458.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

family, city, realm, or the whole church . . . and has to administer all of them in such a way, that the Day of the Lord may find them prepared".[26]

Apocalyptic texts and visions—not always actualized, but always present—hide as much as they seem to reveal, leaving human beings with deep uncertainty, doubt, and fear. Consequently, men and women thirst for deliverance, enlightenment, knowledge, and certainty. Apocalyptic revelations of the future demand a clearer analysis and understanding of present society; they require intensive research, moral assistance, realistic fact-finding and discovery of the concealed to surmount uncertainties and silence current anxieties. This situation endured as long as eschatology was at the core of religion and it partially continues until today.[27]

A well-known postmedieval example is Isaac Newton, whose religion and faith stimulated his investigations. This genius mathematician and physicist believed in the imminent coming of the Antichrist and seriously calculated the time of his revelation. He urgently warned not to omit the study of the book of Daniel and of the Apocalypse of John, stating that God would be angry about such actions.[28] The discoveries of the astrologer Johannes Kepler were rooted in faith as well.[29] So was Copernicus's theory on the revolutions of the stars (*De revolutionibus caelestibus*). Their research promoted strong religious, nonenlightened presentiments. Faith and science, apocalypticism and research, never contradict each other, but rather mutually stimulate and instigate one another. However, in the process they change one

---

[26] *Dupliciter ad vigilantiam valet incertitudo judicii. Primo: ad hoc quod ignoratur utrum etiam tantum differatur quantum est hominis vita . . . Secundo: quantum ad hoc quod homo non gerit solum sollicitudinem de persona sua, sed de familia, vel civitate, vel regno, aut tota Ecclesia . . . et tamen oportet unumquodque horum hoc modo disponi, ut dies Domini inveniat paratos.* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica* suppl. q. 88 art. 3 *ad quartum*. For the *semper paratus* theme cf. also Otto of Freising, *Chronica* VIII,7 (ed. Hofmeister) 400,8ss.

[27] On modern apocalypticism cf. e.g. John Leddy Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1970). "*Astrologi hallucinati*": *Stars and the End of the World in Luther's Time* (ed. Paola Zambelli, Berlin, New York, 1986). Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., London, 1992).

[28] *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (ed. Frank E. Manuel, Oxford, 1974) 109. cit. after McGinn, *Antichrist*, 1. Deborah M. Valenge, "Prophecy and Popular Literature in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 29 (1978) 75–92.

[29] Edward Rosen, "Kepler's Attitude toward Astrology and Mysticism," *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (ed. Brian Vickers, Cambridge: CUP, 1984) 253–72. J.V. Field, "Astrology in Kepler's Cosmology," *Astrology, Science, and Society: Historical Essays* (ed. Patrick Curry, Bury St Edmunds, 1987) 143–70.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

another, and thus unintentionally destroy religious legends and demystify the myths and mysteries of faith. Therefore, in effect, historizing and analyzing was contrary to what Newton intended. I wonder whether eschatology and an always persisting apocalypticism were, in a dialectic sense, most important factors in the growing rationalism of the western world. The dialectic structure of this omni-present apocalypticism—concealed and revealed, necessarily dark and crying for enlightenment—adapted itself to the dialectic structure of western cognition.

Some modern historians try to minimalize the influence of eschatological and apocalyptic thinking on actual behavior and decisions. Beginning with Tyconius, Jerome, and Augustine, many Christian theologians warned their audiences to adhere to determining calculations of the End and argued against any form of millenarism.[30] By interpreting apocalyptic data in a moral and symbolic way rather than in a historical and literal fashion, they did not abuse eschatology, and many of their medieval students followed them.[31] They heeded 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3, one of the main apocalyptic authorities of Christiandom: "We beg you not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either in spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition . . . proclaming himself to be God."

Even the most ardent anti-apocalyptic thinkers of late antiquity or medieval Christianity considered the relevant texts to be true predictions of future events. They tried to find ways to comprehend them, and to view apocalypticism in a manner that favoured God. They all knew the passages of the same (Ps.-) Pauline letter, denouncing the coming End and doomsday (2:8–12): "And then the lawless one [whom the middle ages understood as Antichrist] will be revealed . . . The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended, deceiving signs and wonders and with all wicked deceptions for those who are to perish . . . Therefore God sends to them a strong delusion, to make them believe

[30] The subject is often treated, cf. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 74–7.

[31] Cf. the articles in *Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (ed. Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, Andries Welkenhuysen; Mediaevalia Lovanensia, series I Studia 15; Leuven, 1988).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth". By warning the faithful not to abuse eschatology, they tried to save them from false signs and delusions, and from following the Antichrist. The need to distinguish between deception and truth in eschatological and apocalyptic terms was supported by the highest authority of the Christian fathers, the apostle Paul. "If any one refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:14). Living in the endtime required strict attention, careful observation of the signs, differentiation between true and delusive people, and inexcitability when strange things happen.[32] Clearly, warning and educating credulous people was an integral part of daily life in the "final hour."

Jerome, for example, was highly dissatisfied with the millenaristic tendencies of his own days. He rejected the calculations of the historian Eusebius of Caesarea and calculated the age of the world in a different way, so that the end could be postponed. From then on, computism, the art of calculating the time, became one of the strongest weapons against the Antichrist and his horrific arrival in the Last Days as well as a scientific instrument to keep apocalyptic expectations alive. Abbo of Fleury, for instance, used the computus against the millenarists at the ending of the first millennium. Tyconius, too, strictly argued against millenarism and any calculations of the End. In contrast, he believed in the continuous accumulation of evil in human society, and within the church creating the *corpus Antichristi* until the great Antichrist will reveal himself.

However, the question remained: When will this completion be fulfilled? Augustine had appealed for self-examination, stating that "Everyone must question his own conscience" whether s/he will bring about this completion. Tyconius and Augustine, stressed moral rather than historical implications of the eschatological predictions and provoked discussions about visions, truth, and eschatological-related topics. In one of the oldest manuscripts from the tenth century, Jerome is said to have composed a list of fifteen signs which precede the End.[33] Herrad of Landsberg, among many others, copied it without

[32] For further discussion see McGinn, *Antichrist*, 74–7.

[33] Hans Eggers, "Fünfzehn Vorzeichen des Jüngsten Gerichts," in Wolfgang

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

commentary.[34] Thomas Aquinas, without recognizing that the text was fictitious, questioned the reliability of the signs because of their non-biblical Jewish origin "of very low probability", as he said, "*valde parum verisimilitudinis*".[35] Overall, both respected Christian authorities and "anti-millennarists" devoted their time to apocalyptic analysis.

The intellectual levels of such analyses and inquiries were a function of the signs that apocalypcists enumerated. In general, signs could be divided into four groups: signs in the heavens and sky; on earth; in society or history; in morality and immorality. Signs in the heavens included the darkening of the sun and moon, comets, new or falling stars, horrifying images like beasts or dragons in the air or the clouds.[36] Signs on earth were catastrophes of every kind, disastrous earthquakes, plagues,[37] crop failures, swarms of locusts,[38] bloody rain,[39] deformed children or animals with two heads or other irregularities. Signs in human society and history comprised of endless wars, the defection of peoples from the Roman Empire, the last emperor, the invasion of Gog and Magog, the conversion of Jews, heresies, religious apostasies, hypocrisies, and the coming of Antichrist. Signs in morality included the immense growth of evil, the increase of evildoers and of the many antichrists, who build the corpse of the great apocalyptical Antichrist himself. In reaction to these conceptions disciplines such as theology, philosophy, natural and social sciences, ethics, and historiography[40] were created and they may be

---

Stammler, Karl Langosch, eds., 2d ed. Kurt Ruh, *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon* (vol. 2; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980) 1013–21.

[34] Rosalie Green, *et al.*, eds., *Herrad of Hohenbourg, Hortus Deliciarum.* vol. I: *Reconstruction*, vol. II: *Commentary* (*Studies of the Warburg Institute* 36; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1979; hereafter cit.: *Hortus Deliciarum*), n. 831 p. 412 after Peter Damian; to Damian's use of the list cf. Christian Lohmer, "Endzeiterwartung bei Petrus Damiani: Überlegungen zu seinen Briefen Nr. 92 und 93," in Lothar Kolmer, Peter Segl, eds., *Regensburg, Bayern und Europa. Festschrift für Kurt Reindel zu seinem 70. Geburtstag.* (Regensburg, 1995) 175–187, here 183–6 (with further readings). Thomas Aquinas (cf. the following note) cited the same type of the "Fifteen Signs". Petrus Comestor, *Historia scholastica* 141. *PL* 198, 1611 (cf. n. 10 above) has another version of this widespread text.

[35] *Summa theologica* suppl. q. 75 art. 1 *resp.; in annalibus Hebreorum se* (sc. Hieronymus) *ea scripta reperisse dicit*, ib.

[36] Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 158–64.

[37] Cf. e.g. Robert E. Lerner, "The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities," *AHR* 86 (1981) 533–52.

[38] Cf. n. 1.

[39] Cf. Fried, "Endzeiterwartung," 381–5.

[40] Martin Hausler, Das Ende der Geschichte in der mittelalterlichen Weltchronistik (Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 13; Köln/Wien: Böhlau, 1980).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

considered the fruits of apocalypticism. Religion, social behavior and politics were all affected.

According to Luke 21:25, "signs in sun and moon and stars" will precede the Last Day. Consequently, astronomy, computistical calculations, and—since the thirteenth century—astrology were disciplines fostered by eschatology and apocalypticism.[41] Due to Arabic influence, astronomy became the science of star movement (*scientia motus*) and astrology of the affiliated judgments (*scientia iudiciorum*).[42] Astrology, though contrary to the Christian faith and condemned by the fathers, fostered new calculations of the endtime[43] based on the motions of stars and planets. As a result, the development of astronomy became more important. People watched the heavens, and carefully followed the signs for the hints they provided about the future and hastening its end. Early medieval annals and chronicles recorded these observations and suggestions for future generations. Nevertheless, precise evidence is extremely rare and errors were usually not recorded. Overall, all apocalyptic predictions failed. One of the rare exceptions is the great concentration of all the planets in Libra in 1186. For about two years astrologers in England, Spain, and in other countries predicted catastrophes (and even worse) and not only frightened themselves but also clerics, scholars and laypeople. In the end, they were soothed by a Spanish Muslim whose calculations and astrological skill surpassed that of the Christians.[44] Anxiety was generated by science, yet science became the only cure against the dangers science had created.

In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas confirmed the usefulness and necessity of heavenly signs. They appear, he taught, "so that man will be led by the signs to submission to the coming judge, and will be warned and prepared for the Judgment". Preparation

---

[41] John David North, "Astrology and the Fortunes of Churches, *Centaurus* 24 (1980) 181–211, repr. in ibid., *Stars, Mind, and Fate: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Cosmology* (London/Ronceverte, 1989) 59–89. Laura Ackermann Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350–1420* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Cf. Valerie I.J. Flint, "The Transmission of Astrology in the Early Middle Ages," *Viator* 21 (1990) 1–27.

[42] Richard Lemay, "The Teaching of Astrology in Medieval Universities, Principally at Paris in the Fourteenth Century," *Manuscripta* 20 (1976) 197–217, at 198.

[43] S. Jim Tester, *A History of Western Astrology*, (Bury St. Edmunds, 1987), 123–4 and 148–9.

[44] *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Hovedene* (ed. by William Stubbs, vol. 2; Rolls Series 51; London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1869) 290–98. cf. Tester, *Astrology*, 148–9.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

for the Judgement required watching the signs. Thomas continued, "what they do mean is not easy to recognize"[45] Thomas argued with Augustine that biblical signs related to Christ's advent as well as to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, "or the advent, by which Christ continuously visits his church". Although these signs would increase with the coming of the endtime, nobody knew the Last Day, and thus it remains a mystery. In contrast, Roger Bacon maintained that, "if the Church would go through all the holy text, the holy prophecies, the prophecies of the Sibyll and of Merlin, of Joachim and of many other authors, the histories and the books of the philosophers, and would give orders to study the ways of astronomy, she would have suspicions or even certainty about the time of the Antichrist".[46] Acceptance or rejection of astrology by late medieval literati goes beyond the topic of this paper, however; cosmology and apocalypticism not only coexisted but also furthered scientific research. The famous tympanon of St. Magdalen in Vézélay, for example, represents the Last Judgment amidst the Zodiac.

According to Medieval teachings, astronomy belonged to the seven liberal arts. On clear nights Gerbert of Aurillac, as well as other educators[47] gathered their students together to observe the stars, planets or solar/lunar ecliptic, and explain the Zodiac and other constellations.[48] Learned scholars understood the natural causes of the solar or lunar eclipses of the sun or the moon and what Macrobius, Calcidius, or Pliny had written about them. Since the tenth[49] and the twelfth centuries, the Latin West became more and

---

[45] *Summa theologica* suppl. q. 75 art. 1 Resp.: "*ut corda hominum in subjectionem venturi Judicis adducantur et ad judicium preparentur huiusmodi signis premoniti. Que autem sint ista signa, de facili sciri non potest*".

[46] *Scio quod si ecclesia vellet revolvere textum sacrum et prophetias sacras atque prophetias Sibille et Merlini aquile et Joachim et multorum aliorum, insuper historias et libros philosophorum atque iuberet considerari vias Astronomie, inveniretur sufficiens suspicio vel magis certitudo de tempore antichristi*: Roger Bacon, *Opus Maius* (ed. John Henry Bridges; 2 vols.; Oxford, 1897; vol. 1 para. 4) 269. The passage was cited by Pierre d'Ailly, cf. Smoller, *History*, p. 192 n. 3.

[47] E.g. *magister* Odo of Cambrais, *Herimanni Liber de Restauratione Monasterii Sancti Martini Tornacensis* c. 1 (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores 14; Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1925), 275, 1f.

[48] Richer of St. Remy *Historiarum Libri IV*, III,50 (ed. Georg Waitz; Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum 51; Hannover: Hahn 1877), 102–3.

[49] Arno Borst, *Astrolab und Klostereform an der Jahrtausendwende* (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-Hist. Klasse 1989, 1; Heidelberg: C.F. Winter, 1989).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

more familiar with Arabic astronomy. They learned, for example, that solar and lunar eclipses could not happen at the same time. "But, it is said, when the Lord is coming, sun and moon will obscure simultaneously. Thus their darkening is, indeed, Thomas Aquinas deduced, "no natural eclipse".[50] It was a quietistic argument, creating more distance between expectation and perception. As long as eclipses were caused by natural phenomena, the predicted signs of the coming Last Day were not fulfilled. The learned would therefore laugh at simple minded people, afraid when the sun or moon darkened.

Apocalyptic signs on earth were manifold. Christ, for instance, will return again "amidst the clouds", as Matthew taught. Filled with fear, people watched clouds carefully. Bloody rain, which figured in some early medieval lists as an apocalyptic sign, also tested their reactions. For example, King Robert II of France gave orders to carefully search in annals and histories upon hearing that such rain had fallen in Aquitaine.[51] Historical records made signs analyzable and a variety of materials previously unused were introduced into discussions.

In the midst of the twelfth century, Peter Lombard spoke of the fire that will destroy the earth, which the Song of *Muspilli* or Sedulius Scottus had dreadfully described.[52] Younger theologians such as Alexander of Hales, followed him. He discussed the quality of the *ignis conflagrationis*, fire of the Last Day, pondering whether or not it was related to the four elements; had some additions ("*Nihil habet mundus de sua natura ut seipsum consumat*"); material or spiritual; or was it different from the fire of the purgatory.[53] The specific quality of apocalyptic fire became a favorite theme among scholars, including Thomas Aquinas.[54]

Over centuries, Medieval Apocalypticism had its ups and downs, periods of intensified eschatological study and expectation and times

---

[50] Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologica* suppl. q. 75 art. 2 sed contra: *Sed contra est, quod secundum astrologos sol et luna simul eclipsim pati non possunt. Sed illa obscuratio solis et lune simul esse dicitur, Domino ad iudicium veniente. Ergo non erit obscuratio secundum rei veritatem per modum eclipsis naturalis.*

[51] Fried, "Endzeiterwartung," 381–5.

[52] Sedulius, *Collectaneum* XVIII (ed. Simpson) 137–42.

[53] F.M. Henquinet O.F.M., "Les questions inédites d'Alexander de Halès sur les fins dernières," *Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale* 10 (1938) 56–278. Here 154, 156–7, 166.

[54] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica* suppl. q. 76.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

of indifference. The ebb and flow of apocalyptic materials throughout the Middle Ages reflects how eschatology corresponded with political and social crises—from Carolingian times through the later Middle Ages. The Muslim conquest of Spain, for instance, caused apocalyptic reactions, such as Beatus of Liébana in the later eighth century or the martyrs of Cordoba in the following century. The fall of the Merovingians and the triumph of the Carolingians pushed the precarolingian aristocracy into a series of political crises. The amalgamation of the aristocracies and the ethnic entities of independent peoples like the Alemannics, Bavarians, Thuringians, Lombards, or Saxons into the one Carolingian Empire created new conflicts—some families were eliminated, others deprived of power, or forcibly re-educated by the Carolingian conquerors. These acts prepared a fertile ground for apocalyptic presentiments. The following centuries were burdened with ongoing political, social, religious, and psychological changes. However, beginning in the eleventh century, other uncertainties were related to the emergence of a money-oriented, profit-seeking culture.[55]

In previous and later transformations of society, apocalypticism was a possible (though not the only) means to establish social order in times of confusion. An early attempt to understand the present in light of the endtime was the Roman Empire in which the apocalyptic figure of the Last Emperor was created.[56] This was the work of the oldest, now lost redaction of the Tiburtine Sybill or of Pseudo-Methodius in the fourth or in the late seventh century respectively. Contemporary history, confronted with older apocalyptic prophecies mystically revealed the meaning of actual events.

The Christian encounter with the rise of Islam also led to influential developments in the story of the endtime. At first, Islam was perceived as a heretical movement. Later, after the Muslims conquered more and more provinces of the Roman Empire, Greek and Latin Christian thinkers recognized Muhammad as a forerunner of Antichrist. The first to do so was Pseudo-Methodius, a Syriac (or Greek?) author at the end of the seventh century—when the Dome of the

---

[55] Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978).

[56] Paul J. Alexander, "Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last Roman Emperor," *Mediaevalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 2 (1971) 47–68. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 88–92.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Rock in Jerusalem was built. From the second half of the eighth century, western Latin Spain was the first center to combine Islam with eschatology. In the middle of the ninth century, Paulus Alvarus, the propagandist of the Cordoba martyrs compared Muhammad with Antiochus IV, Nero and Domitian, the worst forerunners of the Antichrist in the entire Christian tradition. In 854, he calculated that Muslim rule would not last more than sixteen years. At the beginning of the second millennium eastern and western Christian authors denounced the Caliph al-Hakim as being the Antichrist. However, in the twelfth century Muhammad was seen as a Christian priest, who did not succeed in his ecclesiastical career and renounced his religion to become the leader of a new heresy. In the thirteenth century the *Liber Nicholai* made him a Roman cardinal who in vain had tried to become pope.[57] In the meantime more and more Latin Christian scholars received accurate information about Islam and Muhammad via Spain, Sicily and the Near East. Gradually, the depiction of Muhammed as a type of Antichrist waned and Islam was subjected less and less to apocalyptic pressure. Clearly, the process of enlightenment vis-à-vis Islam did not occur overnight and was no sudden event; it lasted for approximately four hundred years.

However, not only natural, religious or political catastrophes demanded apocalyptic explanations. Charlemagne set up his liberal arts program (which included rhetoric, dialectic, and European history) because he wanted his clergy and peoples to be prepared for the "false teachers" (pseudodoctores) of the endtime.[58] Eschatology and apocalypticism were the religious counterpart of the renewal of Aristotelian dialectic since Carolingian times. Indeed, the great Alcuin wrote his works with the expectation that the end of the world was approaching.[59] Another contemporary thinker, Beatus of Liébana,

---

[57] Alessandro D'Ancona, "La leggenda di Maometto in Occidente," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 13 (1889) 199–281, here 245ss. Marie Therèse D'Alverny, "Deux traductions latins du Coran au Moyen Age," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 16 (1947/48) 69–131, here 75 (with further readings). Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West. The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1966) 83, 113s. James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964) 17s., 124.

[58] Admonitio generalis at the end: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Capitularia vol. 1 p. 62: *Et hoc ideo diligentius iniungimus vestrae caritati, quia scimus temporibus novissimis pseudodoctores esse venturos, . . . Ideo, dilectissimi, toto corde praeparemus nos in scinetia veritatis, ut possimus contradicentibus veritati resistere.*

[59] Wolfram Brandes, "*tempora periculosa sunt.*" *Endzeitvorstellungen im ausgehenden 8. Jahrhundert* (unpublished book manuscript).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

calculated the year 800 as the apocalyptic end of the sixth millennium. According to this calculation, Charlemagne was crowned emperor in Rome on the first day of the new millennium, the Sabbath of the World Week.[60]

The monastic reform of Cluny in the tenth and early eleventh centuries was closely connected to apocalyptics.[61] Apocalyptic ideas were also present in the ecclesiastical reform movement of the eleventh century.[62] The twelfth century saw an increase of scholars interested in eschatological and apocalyptic salvation-history ("Heilsgeschichte").[63] Some famous authors, especially but not exclusively in Germany, began to construct history, even the history of their own days, using apocalyptic patterns. For example, Honorius Augustodunensis, Rupert of Deutz, Anselm of Havelberg, Hildegard of Bingen, or Herrad of Landsberg and, above all, Otto of Freising). Gerhoch of Reichersberg's whole work is an examination of the Antichrist among his own contemporaries.[64] The *Glossa ordinaria* of the Old and New Testaments, a standard reference book of scholastic theology, had a collection of traditional material but Peter Lombard refrained from discussing the Antichrist. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the struggle of the Papacy against Fredrick II and his family actualized apocalypticism, and some Franciscan friars considered themselves to be members of the third apocalyptic order that Joachim of Fiore had predicted. The Great Schism of the Latin church led Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly, one of the outstanding figures of the church at that time, to apocalyptic interpretations and calculations of history based on astrology. He made his calculations in an effort to quell apocalyptic anxieties

---

[60] Cf. Brandes, *op. cit.*

[61] Fried, "Endzeiterwartung," 413–6, 471. Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034*, (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[62] Carl Erdmann, "Endkaiserglaube und Kreuzzugsgedanke im 11. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 51 (1932) 384–414. Lohmer, "Endzeiterwartung bei Petrus Damiani," (cf. n. 34).

[63] On the authors of the twelfth century cf. Amos Funkenstein, *Heilsplan und natürliche Entwicklung. Formen der Gegenwartsbestimmung im Geschichtsdenken des hohen Mittelalters* (München: Nymphenburger, 1965). McGinn, *Antichrist*, 114ss.

[64] Erich Meuthen, *Kirche und Heilsgeschehen bei Gerhoh von Reichersberg* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 135ss. Peter Classen, *Gerhoch von Reichersberg. Eine Biographie* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1960) 193–314. Karl F. Morrison, "The Exercise of Thoughtful Minds: The Apocalypse in Some German Historical Writings," in Richard K. Emmerson, Bernhard McGinn, eds., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press) 352–73. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 122–6.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

that disturbed him and his contemporaries. According to his data, the world would exist for hundreds of years, and then the Antichrist would come in 1789.[65] Obviously, apocalyptic peaks coincided with political and social disaster.

The mode of interpretation the aforementioned authors followed, used a fourfold sense of scripture, that early medieval teachers like Hrabanus Maurus had employed. This method gave a fair impression of reality and historicity—even to such an highly abstract symbol as the moralised Antichrist. Early medieval scholars disregarded or disagreed with older interpretations of apocalyptic texts and they labelled their opponents as heretics. These methods make it highly difficult for modern historians to uncover the reasons why medieval authors disagreed with their predecessors. The effect of this mode of discourse was always the same: it entailed an explicit or implicit critique of the eschatological prejudices under discussion, even if eschatological presumptions were to be refuted by arguments of the same quality. The growth of scholasticism enabled this criticism to gain more legitimacy. Otto of Freising belittled pilgrims who left little stones as their personal markings in the Jehoshaphat Valley, where they—and even Otto himself—believed, that the Last Judgment[66] would take place. They hoped that these stones might help them find where the trumpets of Resurrection will sound.[67] Others, like Peter Lombard, rejected the idea of a corporal judgment in this valley, whereas Peter Comestor argued that there will be no valley anymore, "because—according to the fifteen signs of Jerome—the 14th day will level earth".[68]

During the twelfth century apocalyptic discussions became more frequent. The Bavarian bishop of Freising, for example, discussed whether the Judgment will take place "in the air" or "on earth".[69] He believed that the earth will serve as the Court's Place, whereas Peter Lombard, Otto's Frencg contemporary, had similar questions but arrived at a different conclusion. Both scholars used the *Glossa ordinaria* of the Bible as their main source.[70] According to Otto: human

---

[65] Smoller, *History*, 4 and 102ss.

[66] *eo quod Iosaphat Hebraice Latine iudicium sonet*: Otto of Freising, *Chronica* VIII,18 (ed. Hofmeister), 417,11f. Otto follows the Glossa ordinaria to Ioel 3,2, cf. (ed. Hofmeister) 417 n. 1 the *Glossa* cited Jerome.

[67] Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis, *Chronica* VIII,18 (ed. Hofmeister) 417,5f.

[68] *Historia Scholasica.* in evang. c. 141. *PL* 198, 1611C.

[69] Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis, *Chronica* VIII,18 (ed. Hofmeister) 417,13f.

[70] *Sententiae* IV,48,4,2 (545).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

bodies are made of dust from the ground, weighty, and less convenient to be raised in the subtle element of air.[71] In contrast, Peter allegorically interpreted his sources and thereby liberated the earth from being the stage of the last events, which now took place *in spatio huius aeris*, somewhere in the firmament.[72] Peter's interpretation became more accepted in scholastic theology, but a century later Thomas Aquinas seemed to defend the bishop of Freising, using biblical and patristic arguments. Nevertheless, Thomas contended that God's Judgment will take place on earth, and the resurrected shall be crowded together in the valley of Jehoshaphat to stand trial in front of the heavenly judge and his saintly assistants.[73] It should be noted that late medieval scholars usually followed Lombard.

Bernard of Clairvaux debated Norbert of Xanten, the founder of the Premonstratensian order, about eschatological issues with a touch of scepticism on his lips: "When I asked him what he thought about the Antichrist, he declared himself quite certain that it would be during this present generation that he would be revealed. But upon my asking, when he wished to explain to me the source of this same certainty, I did not think after I had heard his response that I ought to take it for certain. He concluded by saying that he would live to see a general persecution of the Church".[74] In an effort to dismiss the beliefs of Joachim of Fiore and his followers who taught that the AntiChrist had already been born, Gebeno of Eberbach in the Rheingau compiled a collection of apocalyptical excerpts from Hildegard of Bingen's Antichrist texts.[75] The work, nascent anti-mendicant propaganda, regarded mendicants as the false brethren of the endtime. Engelbert of Berg, Archbishop of Cologne at that time,

---

[71] *Chronica* VIII,18 (ed. Hofmeister), 417, 18f. *Corpora quippe de terra facta nec ad incorruptionem utpote malorum immutata verisimilius est in terra ad iudicium collocari quam ad subtilius elementum sua cum ponderositate, qua potius ea ad ima vergere oportet, sursum transvehi.*

[72] Marcia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard* (*Brill's Studies in Intellectual History* 41/42; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1994), vol. 2, 713.

[73] *Summa Theologica*, Suppl. q. 88 art. 4.

[74] Ep. 56 (ed. Jean Leclercq O.S.B., *S. Bernardi Opera*, vol. 7, Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1974) 148. cit. after Bernard McGinn, "St. Bernard and Eschatology," in *Bernard of Clairvaux: Studies Presented to Dom Jean Leclercq*, (Washington D.C., 1973), 161–85, here 169–70. ibid., *Antichrist*, 126.

[75] Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, "Hildegard of Bingen and Anti-Mendicant Propaganda," *Traditio* 43 (1987) 386–99. *Eadem, Reformist Apocalypticism and 'Piers Plowman'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 28–31. cf. McGinn, *Antichrist*, 132.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

argued against this propaganda and gave a rather sceptical opinion: "If this is divine prophecy, it is necessary that it be fulfilled." He called for the mendicants to come to Cologne.[76] Fulfilment, in the case of the mendicants, was unsuccessful and the apocalyptic anti-mendicantalism of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries became satirical anti-clericalism and thus an expression of disenchantment.[77] Just as the mendicant movement succeeded, apocalyptic eschatology partially weakened and became mere rhetoric.[78]

In contrast, Joachim of Fiore tried to convince Pope Lucius III, King Richard the Lionhearted and the Cistercian Abbot Adam of Perseigne that the (first) great Antichrist, the Antichrist of Joachim's second world *status* or *status* of the Son, had recently come into the world.[79] Joachim of Fiore failed to gain the support of the Pope, King, and the Cistercian Abbot. According to an anonymous text, the latter condemned ". . . the writing of Abbot Joachim which contradicts Master Peter Lombard."[80] Lombard's "Sentences" embodied

---

[76] Alfons Hilka, ed., *Die Wundergeschichten des Caesarius von Heisterbach*, vol. I, (Bonn: Peter Hanstein 1933), 147–9. cit. after Kerby-Fulton, "Hildegard," 389.

[77] Penn R. Szittya, "The Antifraternal Tradition in Middle English Literature," *Speculum* 52 (1977) 287–313. *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986). James Doyne Dawson, "William of St. Amour and the Apostolic Tradition," *Mediaeval Studies* 40 (1978) 223–38.

[78] The anti-mendicantalist par excellence was William of St. Amour, the Parisian master of theology about the middle of the thirteenth century. When his "*Libellus de periculis novissimorum temporum, que ventura sunt*", an anti-mendicant pamphlet using apocalyptic arguments, was banished by the Pope, he referred to Augustine and his "Retractations" to claim the right of unpunishable self-corrections. Cognition by mistakes, even in apocalyptic context: cf. E. Faral, "Le 'Responsiones' de Guillaume de Saint Amour," *Archives d'histoire doctrinal et littéraire du moyen âge* 18/19 (1950/51) 337–94, 360.

[79] On Joachim see Morton W. Bloomfield, Marjorie E. Reeves, "The Penetration of Joachism into Northern Europe," *Speculum* 29 (1954) 772–93. Phelan, Millennial Kingdom, 17–28. Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London, 1976). Morton W. Bloomfield, "Recent Scholarship on Joachim of Fiore and His Influence," in Ann Williams, ed., *Prophecy and Millennarism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves* (Essex, 1980) 21–52. Robert E. Lerner, "Antichrists and Antichrist in Joachim of Fiore," *Speculum* 60 (1985) 553–70. Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (New York, 1985). Christoph Anz, "Ein Rebell wider Willen? Joachim von Fiore und das Fortwirken seiner Geschichtstheologie bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts," in Marie Theres Fögen, ed., *Ordnung und Aufruhr im Mittelalter. Historische und juristische Studien zur Rebellion* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995) 163–83. Cf. Valeria DeFraja, "Gioacchino da Fiore: bibliografia 1969–88," *Florensia* 2 (1988) 7–59.

[80] Cf. the anonymous text, ed. Bloomfield, Reeves, "Penetration," 784. The text can only aproximately be dated "to the twenties or thirties of the thirteenth century": ibid. 785.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

rational theology at that time. It was only a matter of time, before the argumentation went even further. There were ample oportunities for this. A well known case in point is the Antichrist career of Frederick II in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. After his death, a small, but radical group of spiritualistic Franciscan friars believed he was the Antichrist who would come back to purify the church. Their unfulfilled prophecy further weakened the Antichrist myth.

The first reaction against the Mongol onslaught on Latin Christianity in 1241 manifested itself in apocalyptic terms. Gog and Magog, nations of the endtime, seemed active. Fear arose but enlightenment was not far off. Pope Innocent IV sent five delegations to explore the Mongol world. Two reports, those of John of Pian del Carpine and Simon of St. Quentin, survived.[81] In a couple of years the image of the Mongols changed from being apocalyptic to ordinary. Western Christianity learned that the earth was populated by more nations than before. The demystification of a supposed apocalyptic sign led to a more realistic cognition of the world. However, in an era of ineffective communication it was difficult, if not impossible, for a semi-literate society to faithfully transmit findings of one generation or region to another. Regression occured nearly as often as progress. In 1270, Ricold of Montecroce, a Dominican missionary in Mongol Mesopotamia was ill-treated by some savage Mongols who did not accept his preaching. Traumatized by their hellish furor, Ricold returned to apocalyptic patterns of explanation. He concluded that the true identity of the apocalyptic Mongols was *Magogoli*, the Magog and Gog of the Last Days.[82]

Some 250 years after the Mongols' appearance, analogous events happened in the West albeit with reversed circumstances. Once again knowledge about the world was expanded by operating within apocalytic parameters. In his "*Libro de las profecias*", dedicated in honor of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, Christopher Columbus put his

---

[81] Johannes Fried, "Auf der Suche nach der Wirklichkeit. Die Mongolen und die europäische Erfahrungswissenschaft im 13. Jahrhundert," in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 243 (1986) 287–332. Felicitas Schmieder, *Europa und die Fremden. Die Mongolen im Urteil des Abendlandes vom 13. bis in das 15. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1994).

[82] Fried, "Auf der Suche," 331–2.—Other perspectives are presented by Charles Burnett, Patrick Gautier Dalchå, "Attitudes towards the Mongols in Medieval Literature: The XXII Kings of Gog and Mogog from the Court of Frederick II to Jean de Mandeville," *Viator* 22 (1991) 153–67.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

travels to "India" in an apocalyptic context. He had intensively studied d'Ailly's *Tractatus de imagine mundi* and the Cardinal's controversy with Jean Gerson over endtime calculations,[83] and had calculated the coming of the Antichrist.[84] The seafarer predicted that the world would end in 1646/48, and that all humankind would then be baptized. It was this enterprise of eschatological universal baptism that the Genoese had explicitly begun. Apocalypticism and exploration of the earth went hand in hand and did not exclude each other. "God made me", Columbus was convinced, "the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth of which he spoke in the Apocalypse of St. John . . . and he showed me the spot where to find it".[85]

Over time people learned how to distinguish between distant predictions and actual reality, i.e., present and future. In the early fourteenth century, at the time when Cardinal d'Ailly calculated the arrival of the Antichrist, Henry of Harclay, chancellor of Oxford, rejected any attempt to predict endtime. In his *Quaestio*, Harclay declared "Whether Astrologers or Any Calculators Can Prove Christ's Second Coming". "All investigators of the end of the world, even if they were saints, were mistaken in their conjectures".[86] Nicolas Oresme went even a step further by rejecting pseudo-visions which composed past events in future terms. Such stories, Oresme demanded, had to be proved, or else be considered fictitious.[87] On the basis of his geometrical figuration doctrine Oresme discussed perception and imagination—configuration within the human mind and the visionary power of the soul.[88] It was, to be sure, not a definite or absolute breakthrough; d'Ailly and his followers proved the contrary. However,

---

[83] *Imago Mundi* by Petrus de Aliaco (Pierre d'Ailly) with Annotations by Christopher Columbus. Facsimile edition (Boston 1927). Columbus excerpted from d'Ailly the very passage of Roger of Bacon, that is cited above in n. 46. Pauline Moffit Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus's 'Enterprise of the Indias'," *American Historical Review* 90 (1985) 73–102, here 89.

[84] Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery", Smoller, *History*, 3–4.

[85] Cit. after Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery," 102.

[86] Cit. after McGinn, *Antichrist*, 167.

[87] Nicole Oresme and the Medieval Geometry of Qualities and Motions: A Treatise on the Uniformity and Difformity of Intensities Known as *Tractatus de configurationibus qualitatum et motuum* (ed. with an Introduction, English Translation, and Commentary Marshall Clagett, Madison, 1968) I, 39 (266s.) On Porphyry cf. Peter Comestor, *Historia ecclesiastica*, Lib. Danielis c. XII. *PL* 198, 1464D–5A: *(Porphyrius) exposuit enim Danielem, ut infamaret eum. Nos autem mistim exposuimus de Antiocho et Antichristo, quaedam tamen specialiter de Antiocho, et quaedam de Antichristo.*

[88] Ib. I,33–40 (ed. Clagett) 252–270.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

it was a landmark in myth destruction and in the ever growing disenchantment of history.

The union of apocalypticism and scholastic theology, traditional elements and modern scholarship, sheds light on how Western Christianity became more confident in the present, from myth to science. "Apocalyptic", it has been said, "was the mother of all Christian theology".[89] This was the case, at least as long as faith dominated the Christian world. The Last Judgment, its awaiting, the *semper paratus* theme, the always possible actualization of the instant coming of Antichrist, and of the almighty Judge himself[90] fostered Christian culture as a whole. Theological and scholastic discussions, again and again, decade after decade, discouraged rational criticism, logical arguments, verifications, and rejections. A dialectical tension between European eschatology and apocalypticism, based on an unrecognizably distant end continued to exist for centuries. The temptation to reject eschatological myths in general remained though a step by step demystification process based on knowledge, reason, and moral integrity gained strength over time. Clearly, the dialectic became the western method of enlightening the dark, hidden, and unknown.[91]

---

[89] Ernst Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," in Robert W. Funk, ed., *Apocalyticism* (New York, 1969) 17–69. Comp. Gerhard Ebeling, "The Ground of Christian Theology: On Ernst Käsemann's Essay, 'The Beginnings of Christian Theology'," ib. cit. after McGinn, *Antichrist*, 37.

[90] Cf. Otto of Freising, *Chronica* VIII, 7 (ed. Hofmeister) 400,8ss.

[91] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973). I intend to explore these issues in a monograph entitled *Wissenschaft und Apokalyptik*, to be published in 2001.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

APOCALYPTIC SPACE

Moshe Barasch

Early Christian belief and early Christian thought, it has been said, took their point of departure from the distinction in time between Once (in the past), Now (in the present), and Then (in the future) rather than from the distinction in space between Here and Beyond.[1] Time is the means God employs to reveal the working of his Grace. This approach is characteristic not only of early Christian thought and belief, but of the whole Christian concept of salvation. Perhaps in no other field is the crucial significance of time more clearly revealed than in the reflections and the imagery of the Apocalypse. Whenever we refer to an apocalypse, the aspect of time is built-in. Revelation, the very essence of any apocalypse, is either the uncovering of events that happened in the past and have since been hidden, or a prediction of events that will come to pass in "the fullness of time." In any case, both the apocalyptic secret and its revelation force us to be conscious of time.

An apocalyptic event, whether past or future, takes place *somewhere*, in some surroundings or environment, however vaguely this environment may be conceived. Therefore, it follows that in imagining any apocalyptic event there is by implication some reference to space, to a non-temporal framework. To be sure, in the apocalyptic imagination as a whole, the significance of spatial conditions cannot compare with the significance and importance of time. The memory of the past and the expectation of the future will always be of primary importance. Yet in every generation the spatial conditions of an apocalyptic event are present in the minds of the people who long for or fear the "final hour," however confused and chaotic these images may be. We are therefore justified in asking the following questions: what is the nature of the space in which apocalyptic events are believed to take place, and what, if anything, do the physical surroundings contribute to our understanding of the eschatological event in general?

---

[1] Oscar Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit*, 3rd ed. (Zurich, 1962) p. 49.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

In attempting to answer these questions we shall rely on two major sources: the scattered allusions to spatial conditions in apocalyptic texts of all different periods, and pictorial renderings of apocalyptic visions. Painters and carvers, regardless of whether they were modest craftsmen or accomplished virtuosos in their art, could not help but present their visions in a spatial context. The visual medium made some reference to space and spatial conditions mandatory. Even literary descriptions, which are rooted in a temporal sequence of events, could not be free from spatial allusions. In some of the texts, references to physical conditions in which the great event takes place become more distinct and explicit. Both sources, the literary and the pictorial, provide us with enough images to reach some conclusions as to the nature and function of space in apocalyptic tradition in general, and in its illustrated versions, in particular.

An analysis of what space means in apocalyptic imagination, particularly if that analysis is based, at least in part, on the testimony of the visual arts, will need to concentrate on two major subjects. On the one hand, it will have to consider specific natural conditions, such as features of landscape, that is, of the "nature" that fills the space. On the other hand, it will have to explore the structure of space as such, of the extension per se, and the character of the different parts of space. The division between these two aspects is in itself an interesting problem, to which we shall return at the end of this paper.

Landscape Features

In apocalyptic visions, as recorded both in words and in pictures, many features appear that would normally be classified as parts of a landscape. However, they do not appear as surrounding the figures, neither as an encompassing, and perhaps protective, environment, nor as a distant, and more or less neutral, background. Not conforming with our usual notion of landscape, they are treated as "actors," as if they were individuals. No less than personages, the landscape features occupy the foreground and do not combine with any other elements to form an overall surrounding. Drawing upon a few examples of literary and pictorial formulations, I shall try to examine landscape features taken from both literary texts and works of the visual arts. There is, of course, an obvious danger in attempt-

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ing to reach conclusions concerning a broad and complex phenomenon from a few select and isolated examples. However, since to the best of my knowledge no systematic treatment of the landscape backgrounds in apocalyptic imagination has been undertaken, some examples may shed light on an interesting and difficult subject. It goes without saying that the following observations can only be the opening remarks of a discussion; my examples will have to be supplemented by explorations based on a larger corpus of material. In this paper, I shall discuss a single motif, the river in apocalyptic visions.

Throughout the ages the river plays a major role in the fantasy of apocalyptic visionaries. From early times to the modern era, visionaries conjured up images of the river. However, the river, as seen in apocalyptic visions, is not part of a background. It does not join together with other elements, such as trees, fields, mountains in forming a whole landscape and environment. Wherever the river appears in eschatological visions, it is detached from any other features, and plays an active role. It is either a river of living waters, performing the deed of salvation, or it is a river of fire, acting as the agent of punishment. For example, the author of Revelation (22:1) is shown "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding of the throne of God and of the Lamb." In the midst of this scene is the tree of life, though it is not part of a natural environment. The river is not part of the background, but rather the main "hero." In the course of late Antiquity and the Middle Ages a continuous tradition of the river as the water of life runs through apocalyptic literature. In the influential text, the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the origins of which go back to the third century A.D., the river becomes "a river flowing with milk and honey," again flanked by the trees of bounty.[2] Over the centuries this mythical river assumed different forms. Unfortunately, we cannot elaborate here on the paths of these transformations. Despite the metamorphoses of the apocalyptic river, it always remained an isolated feature in the visions, never combining with other environmental elements.

In another example from the *Apocalypse of Paul*, an angel leads the author to the river, or ocean, that "encompasseth the whole earth." It is interesting to note what the visionary records: "And I saw there a river of fire burning with heat, and in it was a great multitude of

[2] Chapter 22. See *The Apocryphal New Testament*, translated by M.R. James (Oxford, 1926) p. 537.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

men sunk up to the knees, and other men up to their navel; others up to their lips and others up to the hair." The sinners are punished according to their sins. The only other description of this scene reads: "there was no light in this place, but darkness and sorrow and sadness."[3]

The reference to the rivers in Revelation and the *Apocalypse of Paul* denote two characteristics that throughout history have remained distinctive hallmarks of the relationship between apocalyptic descriptions and landscape features. First, is the isolation of a specific feature or element (such as a river, a mountain, etc.) from the rest of nature. Second, is that the detached feature performs an emotionally-charged action or becomes the central catalyst of the story. This action is in fact the main reason for the very inclusion of the specific feature in the Apocalypse.

Before exploring how the theme of apocalyptic "landscape" is reflected in the visual arts, we must address the following question: if the characteristics we have outlined (the isolation of a single element, and its transformation from a background motif into an active agent) are indeed typical of the apocalyptic attitude, how should the appearance of the individual feature in the apocalyptic genre be distinguished from its appearance in other, but comparable, kinds of landscape descriptions? Although in some cases no clear cut answer can be given to this question, we know that the main age of apocalyptic visions (late Antiquity and the Middle Ages) differs in many respects from other, particularly earlier, periods, and that this difference is also reflected in the perception and representation of landscape. These questions indicate the difficulties in trying to understand this phenomenon. Although these difficulties call into question the conclusions of this research, they cannot efface the significance of the question. Below I shall argue that the isolation of a single element, and its treatment as a "person," is indeed specific to the apocalyptic genre, and, in a broader, and necessarily much vaguer, sense, of the age and culture that produced apocalyptic visions, and granted the eschatological experience a central place.

The apocalyptic treatment of landscape features in later Antiquity differs from the description of landscapes in ancient literature and

---

[3] Chapter 31. See James, p. 542. For a concise outline of the impact of the Apocalypse of Paul had on medieval culture, see Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du Purgatoire* (Paris, 1981) pp. 56ff.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

imagination. A famous and typical landscape topos in the classical world, the *locus amoenus*, clearly illustrates this point. From the Roman Empire to the sixteenth century, the *locus amoenus* forms the principal motif of all nature descriptions.[4] Since it is also a topic in descriptions of the other world,[5] it is a particularly appropriate example for comparison with apocalyptic visions. Upon examining descriptions of the legendary idyllic place, we notice that the *locus amoenus* is always composed of several different elements that interact among themselves. The "minimum ingredients" of the *locus amoenus*, says Ernst Robert Curtius, "comprise a tree (or several trees), a meadow, and a spring or brook."[6] As a rule, however, its components are usually far more complex. We should recall that in the fourth century A.D., that is, shortly before the original core of the *Apocalypse of Paul* was composed, both rhetorical descriptions of, and theoretical speculations about, the *locus amoenus* reached a climax. A comparison of these descriptions and speculations with what we know from the apocalypses, sharply illustrates the difference between them. The fourth century rhetorician Libanius claims that "causes of delight are springs and plantations and gardens and soft breezes and flowers and bird voices."[7] A roughly contemporary poem by the rather mediocre poet Tiberianus, formerly the governor of Gaul, gives a detailed rhetorical description of the *locus amoenus*, thereby providing an excellent example of the intensive interaction and abundance of components that were imagined to make up the "lovely place."[8] In contrast to what we have found in apocalyptic descriptions, here the *locus amoenus* is not an actor, it is an environment.

The emotional tone, and the passionate intensity assigned to these natural elements, should be considered when comparing descriptions of the *locus amoenus* in the rhetorical tradition and descriptions of

---

[4] Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York and Evanston, 1963) pp. 192ff., 195ff.

[5] Perhaps the best known description of the *locus amoenus* in the other world is found in Virgil's record of Aeneas's impressions of Elysium. See *Aeneid*, VI, 638ff. For ambiguities in the meaning of the *locus amoenus* in Greek poetry, see Charles Segal, "Death by Water: A Narrative Pattern in Theocrytus" (*Idylls* 1, 13, 22, 23) reprinted in Charles Segal, *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral: Essays on Theocrytus and Virgil* (Princeton, 1981) pp. 47–65.

[6] Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 195.

[7] Quoted after Curtius, p. 197.

[8] The original text is found in the *Anthologia latina*, I, 2, Nr. 809. For an English translation, see Curtius, pp. 196f.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

natural features in apocalypses. This aspect is more difficult to grasp, but on the whole it emerges quite clearly. As a rule, the scene that is called "the lovely place" (a literal translation of *locus amoenus*), is characterized by a certain reserve or reticence. Not only physically, but also emotionally it is part of the background. The background character of the scene is well stated in a poem by Petronius. After describing the shadows cast by various trees on a summer day, the "foamy brook" that flows through the piece of land, and the sounds of the different birds, the poet tells his readers that "the place is fit for love" (*dignus amore locus*).[9] The environment of this poem lacks emotional intensity, whereas the rivers described in the apocalypses are either flowing with milk and honey, the embodiment of what they promise, or else actively punishing sinners, as we have seen in an earlier description of the "river of fire." Clearly, the nature of rivers described in apocalyptic literature is based upon a high emotional intensity.

In medieval literature the *locus amoenus* is listed as a rhetorical requisite, to quote Curtius.[10] While medieval description may lack the poetic quality and accomplishment of classical authors, they always depict that "place of pleasure" in a mild, moderate tone, as composed of several elements. Alan of Lille describes the dwelling place of Natura as a towering castle surrounded by a grove,[11] the prototype of a surrounding environment. By the end of the twelfth century the *locus amoenus* is made the subject matter of an entire poem, a careful systematic analysis of different elements appealing to the different senses.[12] Although it is unclear whether the medieval authors were closely following classical models, they preserved the essential approach of classical literature to the description of a mythical place.

The attitude we have observed in the literary descriptions of apocalyptic events, as they are formulated in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, can also be seen in the early pictorial renderings of

---

[9] Petronius, *Carm.*, p. 131.

[10] Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 197.

[11] "At the grove's center a mountain, topped with high plateau, rises to the sky and kisses the clouds. Here the home of Nature rises on . . ." I, 100. See Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, translated by James J. Sheridan (Toronto, 1973) p. 48. It is interesting that the walls of the castle that is Nature's home are covered with murals.

[12] The poem, *De ornatu mundi*, is printed among Hildebert's works, but it was written by Peter Riga. See Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 171, cols. 1235ff. And cf. Curtius, p. 198.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

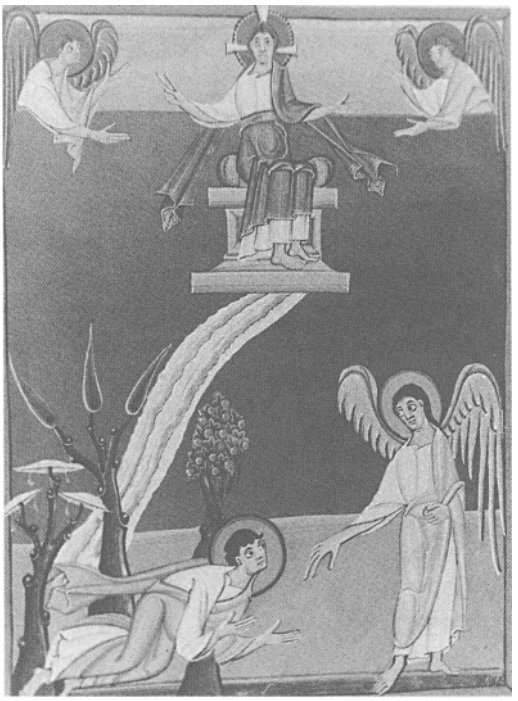
the subject produced at the same time or slightly later. In the artistic representations the characteristics outlined above may become even more tangible than in the literary formulations. Apocalyptic subject matter became central in the visual arts later than in literature. Illustrating an apocalyptic vision presents the painter or sculptor with a very difficult task.[13] He or she has to show in direct, visual form (appropriate for the depiction of material objects), something that is conceived as a vision, an immaterial appearance. One could imagine that artists who were trained in styles and artistic traditions, influenced by the desire to imitate nature and to produce a convincing illusion of material reality, naturally had great difficulties in finding specific forms appropriate to the representation of apocalyptic visions. It could perhaps be maintained that, as a result of this inherent difficulty, the fully developed artistic articulations of apocalyptic scenes are found in somewhat later cultural traditions that differ in many respects from that of the *Apocalypse of Paul.* It was mainly in some regions in the Alps and in Spain, approximately or immediately after the year 1000, that the first great and articulate cycles of apocalyptic visions were produced in the visual arts.

For example, the magnificent illumination in the Bamberg Apocalypse, representing the River of the Water of Life (Figure 1), is probably one of the final formulations of apocalyptic imagery in the early Middle Ages.[14] In its attempt at literal, direct illustration, so characteristic of the art of the early Middle Ages, at the bottom of the page the illumination depicts the angel showing the evangelist, who has fallen to the ground, the vision of the river of the water of life. At the top of the page Chirst, seated on the throne, is flanked by two angels. Between the upper and lower layers of space, there flows the River of the Water of Life, issuing from the Throne of God and reaching the visionary's figure. The river, completely isolated from its surroundings, is no less a "figure" than the angel or God on his throne. In this illumination the river illustrates the thesis suggested by W. Kohler concerning the "link of action" (*Handlungszusammenhang*) in Carolingian art and in the art of the schools influenced by Carolingian models. Kohler noted that a close psychic

[13] See the brief remarks by Hans Jantzen, *Ottonische Kunst* (Hamburg, 1957) pp. 79ff.

[14] Ernst Harnischfeger, *Die Bamberger Apokalypse* (Stuttgart, 1981) fig. 49. For the style of the illuminations, see H. Woelfflin, *Die Bamberger Apokalypse* (Berlin, 1921).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access



and spiritual connection is established between the figures by means of physical action and actual bodily touch.[15] In our illumination the river is such a "figure": it highlights the "plot" of the apocalyptic vision and establishes the connection between the upper and the lower world by bringing the two poles (the visionary with the angel in the lower level, and the Throne of God in the upper one) into direct physical contact. It can fulfil this function precisely because it is itself a "figure," an isolated, independent being.

Such medieval rendering of the apocalyptic river can easily be juxtaposed with ancient representations of a similar scene. It is sufficient to recall one of the best known classical paintings, one of the so-called Odysseus-landscapes (Figure 2), showing the sea or a mighty river flowing between rocks. Though the river, or the "water way," as it has frequently been called, occupies a prominent place,

[15] See Werner Weisbach, *Ausdrucksgestaltung in mittelalterlicher Kunst* (Zurich, 1948) pp. 19ff.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the whole scene remains something of an environment. The sense of spatial surroundings is conveyed to the spectator even when figures do not appear *in* the space. The tiny figures of Odysseus and Circe, if present, only emphasize this character. In any case, it is altogether inconceivable that this river be shown as an independent subject, without the rocks on its banks.

It would be fascinating to follow the history of the apocalyptic river in early medieval imagination, but an attempt to trace its roots would go far beyond the scope of this essay. However, an examination of the illumination of an old Spanish manuscript, done about the middle of the tenth century, and now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, may be useful. It shows Christ seated on the throne, and the river of life issuing from it (Figure 3).[16] The river, serpent-like in shape, crosses the stratified space, reaching from the celestial level to the bottom of space. Both in formal distinctiveness and in its twisted, expressive movement it stands out from the rest of the composition, and overshadows the figures of the angels and of the evangelist who sees the vision.

Let us consider only one further pictorial representation of an apocalyptic river. It is an illumination in the Beatus manuscript ascribed to Facundus from San Isidore in Leon, now in the National Library in Madrid. Done in the mid-eleventh century, the illumination shows Daniel's vision (Daniel, 10–12) of the four angels at the Euphrates river (figure 4).[17] On the plane surface of the page, without any indication of space, the river winds and twists from one margin of the page to the other, like a heavy, material object. It does not in any way suggest an environment for the four angels; it is the primary "figure" of the scene.

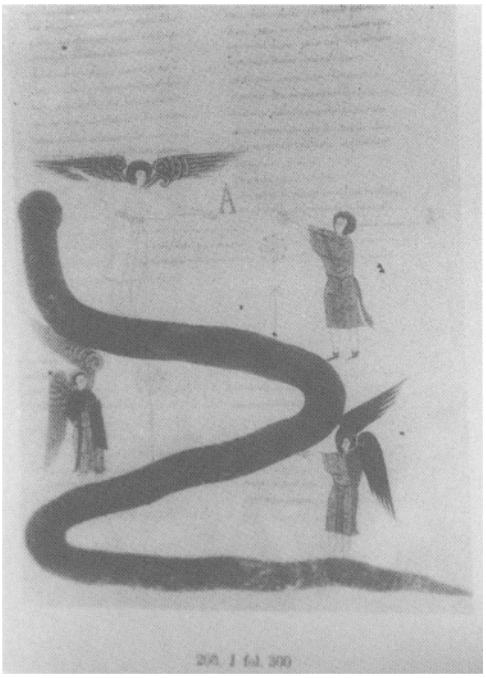
Upon looking at these images, the historian will always ask whether the characteristic features we have mentioned (isolating the landscape element and making it an autonomous agent instead of conceiving it as environment) are part of a broad period style or are rather typical of the Apocalypse genre. Obviously, no clear cut dividing line can be drawn between these two domains, the general period and the specific genre. Some stages or trends in medieval culture were

---

[16] Manuscript No. 644 of the Pierpont Morgan Library, fol. 223. See Wilhelm Neuss, *Die Apokalypse des Hl. Johannes in der altspanischen und altchristlichen Bibel-Illustration*, Bilderband (Munster, 1988) figure 194.

[17] Neuss, *Die Apokalypse*, figure 208.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access



profoundly attracted to the eschatological vision and had an intrinsic affinity to apocalyptic atmosphere and imagery. This is probably particularly true for those groups from which we have taken our pictorial examples, such as the old Spanish ("Mozarabic") culture, and transalpine Ottonian society in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The great impact of apocalyptic fear and vague messianic expectations, and the concern with apocalyptic visions and images that are reflected in the Beatus commentary to Revelations, should be kept in mind. In the eighth century, the northern Spanish monk who composed the commentary that became so popular, fused the general culture of his area and time with the particular characteristics of an apocalyptic genre. It is from the orbit of the Beatus imagery that we have taken our examples (Figures 2, 3, 4). The illumination from the Bamberg Apocalypse (Figure 1), was shaped by the atmosphere, anxiety and hope that we consider characteristic of the year 1000 in the Ottonian culture. Here too, though possibly to a somewhat lesser extent than in Mozarabic Spain, we can point to an imagination on which apocalyptic trends had made a deep impression.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Without attempting to separate the style of a period from that of a genre, we can state that the characteristics discussed are indeed found, and are prominent, in the apocalyptic imagination.

"Places." The Structure of Space

Until now, we have concentrated on actual landscape features, on parts of nature (to which one should add human artifacts like the city), that make up our surroundings. It seems that the apocalyptic imagination actually had no use for the landscape as such. The apocalyptic visionary transforms an aspect of nature or material reality (a river, mountain, or city) into an active agent with a distinct character of its own, what we have called a "figure" or a "person," or disregards it entirely as though it does not exist. Landscape as part of an environment does not appear in the apocalyptic world. This, however, is only half the story. Disregarding landscape does not mean neglecting space altogether. Together with the visionary's inability to perceive landscape as a natural surrounding is a tendency to comprehend the structuring and interpretation of space as a whole, and to discovering the character and meaning of its layers and directions. Below is an attempt to outline this attitude to space.

It would be incorrect to state that the apocalyptic imagination created its own vision of space. All the concepts, structures, and motifs that we shall briefly discuss are known from all stages of culture, including the earliest ones that are somehow accessible to study. They are probably rooted in human nature, and psychologists may well be better equipped to analyze them than historians. Apocalyptic imagination took over these ancient (or timeless) categories and images. However, in European culture it was the apocalyptic tradition that brought some of these motifs, particularly in combination, into full relief, and thereby profoundly influenced the spatial imagery of the Middle Ages as a whole.

Let us begin from the end. The Last Judgment is one of the most common and best known images in European culture. In a medieval city it is almost impossible not to see it depicted on the entrance wall of a cathedral. Representing what will happen at the end of time, or when time is "full," the image of the Last Judgment is a natural and direct product of the apocalyptic imagination. In different forms and stages, that will not be elaborated on here, it has appeared

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

in western Europe since the eighth century though in the east, only in a rudimentary form, since the sixth.[18]

Many studies have been devoted to the Last Judgment, its history in form as well as in iconography. We shall abstain from commenting on the problems this subject raises in the minds of art historians. It seems that the Last Judgment, this final statement of the medieval apocalyptic imagination, contains a comprehensive system of space. This system was consistently applied in the various representations of the subject. Though the spatial system is *one*, its components shall be examined separately. Overall, three foci have been identified: the concept and pattern of sacred space; the hierarchic structuring of space (in upper and lower levels); and the religious significance of right and left.

Sacred space

The concept of sacred space has been explored by students of religion rather than by art historians. Consequently, the awareness of an existence and psychological nature of a sacred space, distinct from a "profane" one, has been more profoundly analyzed than its formal structure.

In religious texts, space is not homogeneous; some aspects are different in quality and character from others.[19] As he approached the burning bush, Moses was told, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). This passage denotes the awareness of a holy space dating back to early times. But while students of religion convincingly show that a sacred space exists, and that it is different from the non-sacred space, they tell us little about its structure and extension.[20] The obvious question that arises here is whether a sacred space exists in visual experience and in the arts based on

[18] I shall not attempt a discussion of the Last Judgment here.

[19] Mircea Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane: Vom Wesen des Religiosen* (Hamburg, 1957) and see also Eliade's other writings.

[20] This is made worse by a certain confusion (which to some extent is probably only a matter of formulation) between sacred space and a sacred object. See, for instance, Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York, 1958) pp. 371ff. A sacred altar is, of course, not a sacred space, though it may be the cause and the center of one.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

visual experience. If it does exist, what is its structure and how can it be distinguished from the other kinds of space?

The decisive characteristic of sacred space seems to lie in its orientation or direction. In modern thought, space is perceived as evenly distributed, flowing in all directions. Another type of space, as we shall see, is hierarchic, built layer above layer. Sacred space differs from both of these categories. Upon looking at artists' records of their visual experience of the divine, we notice that sacred space, when detached from the holy figure or object, has no structure of its own. It clusters around the sacred center; it is its aura.

The most obvious manifestation of this kind of space, particularly as recorded in art, is the halo. To be sure, the halo goes beyond the creation of a space; it probably is first of all a means of distinction.[21] But whatever the main motive of the halo may have been, in fact it creates a kind of space. This space-creating function of the halo may be perceived to some extent in the common usage, where the halo surrounds the head of a saint; it becomes even more manifest in the case of the "mandorla," when the halo surrounds the whole figure.

What precisely is meant by describing the halo as a space-creating device? Simple intuitive perception has it that space, however sophisticated or symbolic, is perceived as a kind of container; the figure is *in* the space. Is the saint's head in the halo? Is the figure of Christ or the Virgin in the mandorla? These questions are not easily answered. It is obvious that we cannot apply to the halo-space the same categories of observation and analysis as to a landscape or an interior. It is difficult to imagine a perspectival construction, or analysis, of the space inside the halo.[22] Nevertheless, it appears that at least two characteristics of the halo-space can be observed. First, the halo sets off what is framed by it from the general space of the scene in which the nimbed figure appears, and thus suggests a distinction in space. We do not know whether or not some medieval

---

[21] Adolf Krucke, *Der Nimbus und verwandte Attribute in der frühchristlichen Kunst* (Strassburg, 1905) especially pp. 101ff.

[22] There are, of course, the well known perspectival haloes in High Renaissance art. We should keep in mind, however, that the perspective approach that dominates the shapes (not the space within) of the halo is the same as that dominating the scene as a whole. These haloes are perspectival precisely because they are treated as objects, equal to any other object in the scene. In medieval art, needless to say, such perspectival haloes do not appear.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

artists consciously considered the inside of the halo as a particular kind of space. But whatever they may have thought, they treated this area as if it were a space in its own right. It should be noted that in medieval imagery no figure belonging to the space outside the halo ever penetrates it. The Ascension scene in the Rabula Gospel (Figure 5), is a good example of this type of medieval art. Christ, fully enclosed in the mandorla, is adored by angels who offer crowns with their hands covered. Note that the angels, though performing the ritual of adoration, never intrude into the area of the oval halo surrounding Christ's figure.

The holy figure, surrounded by the halo, also does not break through its magic circle—even when the story or meaning would permit or even require it. For example, in the Ascension of Christ in the Codex Egberti (Figure 6), the hand of God the Father touches the outstretched hand of the ascending Christ precisely at the border of the mandorla. The interior of the halo, which encompasses the whole figure, remains undisturbed. The halo here functions as a separate spatial entity: it is an embodiment of sacred space, and its autonomy is not upset.

Symbolic topoplogy

Perhaps less tangible, but not less important, is the structuring of the whole space of the image. One principle underlies the overall organization of space in the religious view in general, and in the apocalyptic tradition in particular. Once again it should be stressed that this principle is not an invention of the apocalyptic mind or of a particular cultural or religious tradition. It is a common characteristic of humankind which appears in various cultures and religions. The apocalyptic imagination, however, shows these general traits with particular clarity.

The underlying principle can be formulated quite simply: each major area and principal direction of space has its own specific character, and hence meanings can be derived from areas. This idea is, of course, ubiquitous, and it influences not only the thought of primitive cultures, but also that of modern society. In the present context we should note that at the period in which our European apocalyptic tradition crystallized, the theory of space as a system of "places" with their own distinct character was dominant. Approximately 530 A.D., Simplicius traced the conceptual development of the notion

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

of space from Aristotle to his own days, and his record denotes how deeply rooted the belief in the distinct character of the "places" (*topoi*) was throughout the ages.[23] Iamblichus (about 300 A.D.), the founder of the Syrian school of Neoplatonism, occupies an important place in that development. He articulated a great deal of traditional reflection by emphasizing the link between body and place. The "place" has a crucial constitutive effect on the body; a body becomes defined by its placement.[24]

We know of two major systems of symbolic topology: one is the grouping of places in a hierarchical, vertical order in which "higher" and "lower" become the central distinction. The other is a horizontal disposition, in which the two sides, right and left, are the central principle of differentiation. Both distinctions are, of course, universal, and found in all periods. In the apocalyptic imagination, however, they are the very basic compositional principles of the apocalyptic image *par excellence*, the Last Judgment.

The vertical axis

The divine being whom the prophet Isaiah saw in a vision, is described as "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up" (6:1). He is "the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (57:15). God and the higher places in space are intimately connected. The well known discussion of the Sky-God in modern studies of religion showed that even those periods and cultures that believed God to be present everywhere thought that height, the upper level of space, was his proper dwelling place. If one wished to say that God was transcendent, it was said that he was "superior."[25]

Without going further into this inexhaustible, but well known, truism, we should recall the obvious complement, viz. that hell and the devil are "inferior." Quite literally this means that hell is situated at the bottom of space. Sheol, Hades, and all the other "underworlds"

---

[23] S. Sambursky, *Das physikalische Weltbild der Antike* (Zurich and Stuttgart, 1965) pp. 380ff. It was Sambursky who impressed upon me the significance of Simplicius for an understanding of some aspects of the late antique world.

[24] Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physica commentaria*, ed. H. Diels (Berlin, 1882–1895) 639, 24.

[25] Any attempt to give a bibliographical survey of the subject, however sketchy, cannot but cause embarrassment. One literally does not know where to start. See the interesting observations by Edwyn Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief* (Boston, 1937) especially chapters II and III, pp. 28–81, with some good bibliographical references.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

are placed deep down, under the crust of the earth. While usually no details are given as to the structure of Hades, except that darkness prevails in it, it is taken for granted, and repeated many times, that it is located straight down under the earth. Here death and evil dwell. Once again, although the devil can be everywhere, his proper place is the lowest layer of space.

Let us take one further step and ask where and when the whole system of "places" was condensed into a single image. We are not concerned with cosmological theories, the scientific mapping of global structure, but rather with a single image that in its suggestive power is known to large masses of people and can be considered a factor in shaping emotional attitudes to space. The fact that such an image was also frequently recorded in ecclesiastical art only shows its vivid grasp on the religious imagination. Clearly, however, this image is not as common as is the association of God with height and of evil with the abyss.

In apocalyptic tradition, the image of the Last Judgment in a certain sense is the final articulation, a concluding formulation of this tradition. Its emergence was preceded by an intensive concern for the connotations of the vertical dimensions, for the movements up and down. Two of the most typical and original visual motifs of eschatological fantasy, motifs that perhaps more than any other suggest the great creativity of the apocalyptic imagination, are the Ascent to Heaven and the Descent to Hell.

A great deal of attention has been devoted to the origins of beliefs and images of the soul's ascension to heaven,[26] although we cannot elaborate on this subject here. On the one hand, we recall that the ascension to heaven is the manifestation of celestial origin ("And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, . . ." John 3:13). On the other hand, it definitely carries soteriological connotations. The ascension to heaven is a formula for salvation. The sojourn of the soul in the region of stars assures, and is a form of, immortality.[27]

---

[26] See the survey of the debate, one of the most celebrated scholarly disputes in the field of religious studies, in Ioan Petru Culianu, *Psychanodia I: A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Ascension of the Soul and Its Relevance* (Leiden, 1983) second chapter. From the older literature I shall only mention W. Bousset, *Die Himmelsreise der Seele*, reprinted Darmstadt, 1971.

[27] Franz Cumont, *Lvx Perpetva* (Paris, 1949) pp. 142–188.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The Descent to Hell, even more than the Ascension to Heaven, is a typical product of the apocalyptic imagination. This becomes particularly obvious in that great theme of the so-called Anastasis, that is, Christ's descent to hell in order to save the souls of the patriarchs and of many of the sinners. The Christian version of the Anastasis, a motif that had a profound and far-reaching influence on the medieval mind, was inspired by Roman political iconography, especially by the allegorical imagery of victory.[28] The Harrowing of Hell becomes Christ's victory over Hades, the prince of the underworld, and the descent, the moving downwards to lift the saved upwards, is a crucial feature of the image. The narration of a dramatic descent into hell leading to a struggle between the "superior" and the "inferior" forces, and ending with the victory of salvation, is of course a typical apocalyptic motif.[29]

In the theme and image of the Last Judgment the tension between the two extreme levels of space (highest and lowest) and the movements in space (upwards and downwards) become the subject of a single, though complex scene. The early history of the Last Judgment as a subject of pictorial representation has given rise to much debate as to when the subject crystallized as a full theme. Scholarly opinion differs widely. Whereas some features of the Last Judgment appear as early as the fifth or sixth century, an explicit and full pattern of the scene does not precede the eleventh or twelfth century.[30] For our present study these questions are not of great importance. The organization of space into upper and lower levels, or at least the suggestion of such levels (even if they are not actually shown) is present in all stages of the history of the scene. Therefore, it appears that the significance of spatial layers is an essential component of the theme.

---

[28] Summarized by Andre Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins* (Princeton, 1968) pp. 125ff.

[29] As is well known, the first significant formulation of the motif is found in the Gospel of Nicodemus. See James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, pp. 94ff. The motif was popular at least since the second century A.D.

[30] Still useful is the old study by Georg Voss, *Das Jungste Gericht in der bildenden Kunst des frühen Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1884). And see also the pertinent observations by Andre Grabar, *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin* (Strasbourg, 1936; reprint London, 1971) especially pp. 250ff.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The horizontal axis

In the image of the Last Judgment the opposition between the left and the right side, what we call the "horizontal axis," is probably less prominent than the distinction between high and low, though it is carried out consistently. Once again the opposition between left and right as a moral distinction is known from time immemorial. Right and left were also connected with judgment. Thus Plato evokes a scene of judgment in which the just "ascend by the way up through the heaven in the right hand," and the unjust "descend by the lower way on the left hand." In addition, Virgil tells that the right hand way "is our way to Elysium," and "the left-hand takes the wicked to Tartarus."[31]

Christianity was, of course, from its earliest beginnings intimately familiar with the opposition of right and left. The sheep are on Christ's right hand, the goats on his left (Matthew 25:33). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the distinction between right and left also appears in ritual. For example, in the very period in which the Last Judgment received its final form, the ceremony of ritual was interpreted in great detail. During Mass the sub-deacon carries the chalice in his left hand and the paten in his right hand. The two configurations are symbolic: the left hand is the symbol of transient, the right hand of eternal life; the chalice recalls Christ's suffering, the paten the redeeming death.[32]

It is, of course, not surprising that in the theme that is eschatological beyond all others, the Last Judgment, the opposition of right and left is strictly observed, no less than the opposition of high and low. As was well known to any medieval observer, the damned always occupied the lowest area at Christ's left side. As a rule, the figures of the damned are characterized by their appearance and gestures. However, before even noticing their distorted faces and wild movements, we recognize them as sinners because their place is reserved for the damned. Every medieval spectator would have known that they are the damned because they are to Christ's left, at the bottom of the space.

---

[31] See Plato, *The Republic* 614c; Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 540ff.

[32] Thus Sicardus, in his *Mitrale seu de officiis ecclesiasticis summa* 3, 6. See Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 213, col. 119C.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

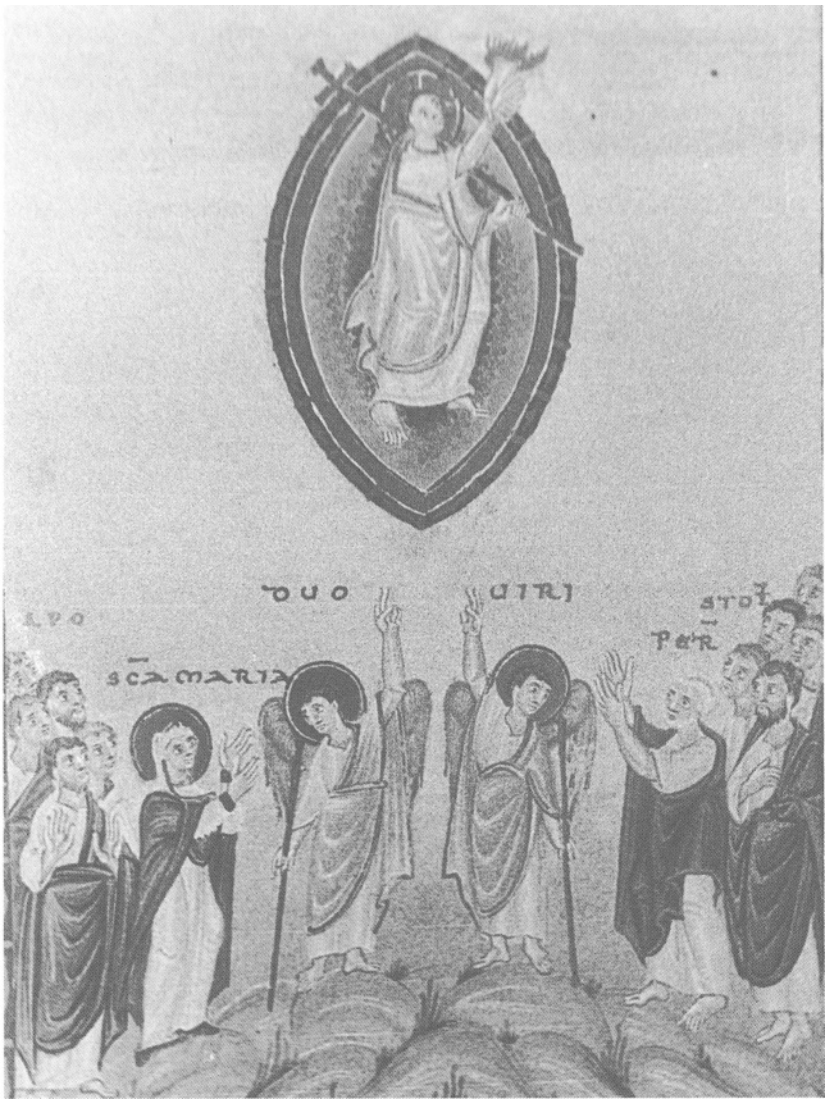
Concluding Remarks

On the basis of our examples, we conclude that in the apocalyptic imagination a profound tension prevails in the relation to space. On the one hand, the natural surrounding of the figure or the object imagined, or actually represented, seems to be altogether disregarded, its very existence outrightly denied. The visionary does not seem to notice that the object, whether a part of nature or a feature in a vision, is placed within an environment. An element of landscape, such as the river, becomes detached from its surroundings, natural or not, and transformed into an independent "figure" that is again without any encompassing space. On the other hand, the same visionary, and the artist recording what the visionary sees, perceives in abstract space, and brings out for the spectator, some inherent qualities or characters that, though hidden and invisible in themselves, determine the shape and composition of the beings seen. In addition to creating an independent and sacred space, the hidden nature of the layers of space (high and low) as well as that of the areas and directions of space (left and right) are also present. All these qualities and characteristics are discovered, or sensed, in abstract space and not in an environmental one.

The apocalyptic attitude toward landscape and space is, then, characterized by a profound tension. This tension raises fundamental questions vis-à-vis the apocalyptic imagination as a religious phenomenon and as a source of forms and compositions in art. These questions require separate analysis with a focus on the reasons for the tension, and what it tells us about the nature of the apocalyptic experience. Such a discussion may also well show that it is precisely this tension that endows apocalyptic images with their great power of attraction.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access



Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS MESSIANIC BIRTH PANGS

Hans G. Kippenberg

A Protestant Manifesto in Favor of a Return of Jews to Palestine

In the nineteenth century, countless Russian Jews were persecuted and expelled from their country. On March 5, 1891, the following petition was presented to the President of the United States.

> "What shall be done with the Russian Jews?" the petitioner asked. "Where shall 2,000,000 of such poor people go? Europe is crowded and has no room for more peasant population. Shall they come to America? This will be a tremendous expense and require years. Why not give Palestine back to them? According to God's distribution of nations it is their home, an inalienable possession from which they were expelled by force. Under their cultivation it was a remarkably fruitful land, sustaining millions of Israelites who industriously tilled its hillsides and valleys. . . . Why shall not the powers which under the treaty of Berlin in 1878 gave Bulgaria to the Bulgarians and Serbia to the Serbians, now give Palestine back to the Jews? . . . Does not Palestine as rightfully belong to the Jews? It is said that rains are increasing and there are many evidences that the land is recovering its ancient fertility. If they could have autonomy in government the Jews of the world would rally to transport and establish their suffering brethren in their time-honored habitation. For over seventeen centuries they have patiently waited for such a privileged opportunity. They have not become agriculturists elsewhere because they believed they were mere sojourners in the various nations, and were yet to return to Palestine and till their own land . . . We believe this is an appropriate time for all nations, and especially the Christian nations of Europe, to show kindness to Israel. A million of exiles, by their terrible suffering, are piteously appealing to our sympathy, justice and humanity. Let us now restore them to the land of which they were so cruelly despoiled by our Roman ancestors".[1]

William E. Blackstone, the petitioner, asked the President and the Secretary of the State to use their influence with other governments

---

[1] Yaacov Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel. American Fundamentalist Attitudes towards Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, 1865–1945* (New York: Carlson, 1991) pp. 70–72.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

to achieve a restoration of Israel in Palestine. The petition was drafted in humanitarian, political, legal, and economic terms, and no less than 413 eminent Protestant Americans signed it. 'The Blackstone Memorial' was submitted six years prior to the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. In 1916, Blackstone was again the main initiator behind another memorandum, now to President Woodrow Wilson. This time he coordinated his efforts with the leaders of the Jewish Zionist movement. In the twenty years that had passed, American Zionism had developed from an insignificant group into an organization of many thousands of members.[2]

It is curious, that a Protestant conceived the first petition and also was the driving force behind the second. In 1878, William E. Blackstone, a devoted Christian Evangelical, wrote a widely read book *Jesus Is Coming*. In 1908 the book was reissued and several hundred thousand copies were distributed among religious leaders in the country.[3] *Jesus Is Coming* summarized ideas of the dispensationalist movement led by John Nelson Darby, spiritual leader of the Plymouth Brethren (1800–1882).

According to Darby, God deals with mankind in a series of epochs, called "dispensations". One cycle of events ended with Jesus' crucifixion, and the next one will begin shortly. All biblical prophecies, not yet fulfilled in Jesus Christ, refer to a new cycle of events starting in the near future. This cycle of events will culminate in the coming of Jesus Christ.

Premillennialism and the Role of the Jews

Darby's conception of history was quintessentially derived from biblical sources; such as statements by the apostle Paul, the 'Synoptic Apocalypse' and the Revelation of John. Christians in Thessalonike grieved because some of their brothers had died before the Lord had come, and Paul consoled them by telling them that the *rapture*—the moment when all believers will rise to meet Christ in the air—will occur shortly.

---

[2] Ibid., pp. 85–91.

[3] Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More. Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) p. 91.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

> For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4, 16–17).

Darby connected that event with the *Great Tribulation*, found in the synoptic apocalypse. Once the apocalyptic clock starts ticking again, a final sequence of events will unfold:

> For in those days there will be suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, no, and never will be (Mark 13, 19; cp. Dan 9, 24–27; 12,1; Rev. 7, 14)

Antichrist will then appear and become the ruler of the Jewish state. The horror terminates in a battle at Armageddon, in the Megiddo region in Palestine (Rev. 16, 16). Here the forces of evil will be destroyed completely and the millennium will begin. An Angel coming down from Heaven

> seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, and bound him for a thousand years. . . . I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. . . . They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. . . . When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from Heaven and consumed them (Revelation 20).

On the basis of these biblical sources Darby forged a specific apocalyptic scenario called premillennialism. The Millennium had not yet begun, but the events of the end of time will unfold in the near future. Since 1859 Darby toured the USA, winning many evangelical believers with his message, particularly Baptists and Presbyterians. One of them was William Blackstone.[4]

Events concerning the Jewish people were central to Darby's premillenial preaching. Darby's idea was not self-evident in the history of Christianity. In the fifth century, Augustine transferred biblical

[4] Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, pp. 1–23; Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, pp. 86–90.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

prophecies to the Christians. In his *De Civitae Dei* he argued that they did not refer to the Jews, but solely to the Christians. He contended that the final rule of the Lord had already started in the Christian Church, and biblical prophecies were no longer relevant. The kingdom of God will only reveal that secret at the end of time to the entire world.

Looking back from Augustine to Paul, we recognize a deep change of view. In contrast to Augustine the apostle Paul wrote about an eschatological role of the Jews. In Romans he noted:

> I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins' (Isa 59, 20–21) (Romans 11, 25–27).

In the fourth century, the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl advocated a similar view. After the reign of the Final Emperor

> the Jews will be converted to the Lord, and 'his sepulcher will be glorified by all'. In those days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell with confidence. At that time the Prince of Iniquity who will be called Antichrist will arise from the tribe of Dan. He will be the Son of Perdition, the head of pride, the master of error, the fullness of malice who will overturn the world and do wonders and great signs through dissimulation. He will delude many by magic art so that fire will seem to come down from heaven. The years will be shortened like months, the months like weeks, the weeks like days, the days like hours, and the hour like a moment. Unclean nations will arise from the North, but the king of the Romans will wage war against them and win. When the Roman empire shall have ceased, the Antichrist will be openly revealed and sit in the House of the Lord in Jerusalem. At the end he will be slain by God through Michael, the Archangel on the Mount of Olives.[5]

The Jews were regarded as the chosen people who had rejected God. The strong anti-Jewish reference in these Christian texts remained part and parcel of the premillennial tradition. Although Augustine's view clearly prevailed, the idea of a Jewish restoration in Palestine did not vanish from Christianity. Lutherans and Calvinists like Augustine related biblical prophecies to Christians, not to Jews. In

---

[5] Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) pp. 49f.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

contrast, English Puritans, followed by American ones, expected a restoration of Jews in Palestine and their conversion to Jesus Christ at the end of time. Therefore, it was not unique in Christian history when John Nelson Darby attributed to Jews a role in the eschatological scenario. In the U.S., from 1875 on, a series of "Prophecy Conferences" elaborated upon the American Pre-Millennial Creed. A network of bible schools spread the millennial creed far and wide throughout the country. One of the protagonists of this premillennial belief was William E. Blackstone. A close reading of his manifesto reveals that he believed that God had a plan for Jews. It is not by accident that the author points to the miracle that the land is recovering its ancient fertility. In his opinion, a new dispensation was at hand.

The US government occupied a special role in Blackstone's understanding of future events. Blackstone based his belief on the prophecy of Isaiah 18, specifically the first and seventh verses. "Ah, land shadowing with wings beyond the rivers of Ethopia." "At that time gifts will be brought to the Lord of hosts from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the Lord of hosts" (Is. 18, 1,7). In his letter to President Wilson, dated November 4, 1914, Blackstone explained that these passages refer to US involvement. He notes. "If our country is the prophecy's 'Land shadowing with Wings', then the seventh verse indicates that we shall be specially used in the coming restoration of Israel to their God-given home in Palestine".[6] According to Blackstone, no nation fitted the prophecy better, than the United States, the country which God wonderfully raised up, just before the harvest. Blackstone contended that God assigned the USA a role that he once had given the Persian king Cyrus: assisting Jews in their restoration of Israel. So a closer look at the Blackstone memorandum supplies an unexpected context of American politics. An allegedly out-dated apocalyptic understanding of history has reentered the public arena vigorously.

Blackstone was part of a current in the history of American Christian religion, called Fundamentalism, a term coined in 1919 alluding to the practice of defining true Christianity by doctrines and creed. In 1910 the General Assembly of Presbyterians adopted a

[6] Ariel, *On Behalf of Israel*, p. 93.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

five-point declaration, placing a strong emphasis on the following doctrine: "the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the resurrection of Christ and the miracle-working power of Christ".[7] There were other declarations, however we cannot describe the issue of Fundamentalism only in terms of essential doctrines.[8] Fundamentalism was the outcome of an alliance between two nineteenth-century theologies: the dispensationalism of Darby and the Princeton Theology, between premillennialism and a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible.

The fundamentalists' view of history was part of a surprising renewal of millennialism in the nineteenth century.[9] It was surprising because millennialism lost public support after the civil wars that had ravaged Germany, France and England in the name of the kingdom of God during the seveneenth century. Millennialism had inspired people to commit the most savage cruelties, but one century-and-a-half later the attitude toward millennialism changed. In addition to the French Revolution, the destruction of papal power in France, the confiscation of church property, and the establishment of a cult of reason were interpreted by Christians as evidence of a wicked human arrogance. The French Revolution ending in brute terror was a popular topic at Prophecy conferences in England and the USA. A seemingly insignificant event, the new calendar instituted by the revolution, convinced many participants that the fulfillment of Daniel was at hand: "He shall speak words against the Most High, . . . and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law" (Daniel 7, 25). Fundamentalism was part of a renewal of millennialism, that gave life and shape to the Fundamentalist movement.[10]

This view is confirmed by its Christian opponents who attacked Fundamentalists on the ground of its millennialism. For example, an article by D. Holmes appeared in 1921 attacking *The Threat of Millennialism.* Holmes argued that the very notion of fundamentalism pretends a false claim of orthodoxy. In fact Fundamentalism spreads the furor of millennialism—a fatalistic tenet, preaching a world without hope and for that reason abominable. "It asserts that there is

---

[7] Ernes R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism. British and American Millenarism 1800–1930* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970) pp. 250–251.

[8] Ibid.

[9] David S. Katz und Richard H. Popkin, *Messianic Revolution. Radical Religious Politics to the Ende of the Second Millenium.* New York: Hill and Wang, 1999, pp. 142–148.

[10] Ibid., p. xv.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

no hope for the world for the present age is dominated by the devil. . . . It asserts that some will be saved at the visible bodily appearance of Jesus at the head of an armed force assuming his rightful place as ruler of the world. . . . It asserts that Jesus will establish himself in his capitol [*sic*!] at Jerusalem as the head of a Jewish world empire for one thousand years. Rehabilitated Israel, the restored Jewish nation, will be supreme in all the earth. Sacrifices will be begun and all the world will go up every year, for a week, to the feast of tabernacles. All prophecy will be fulfilled and also the imprecatory Psalms". With utter disgust the author quotes a book depicting the coming Christ as a great military leader (as "Kaiser Jesus"), "striking down his enemies and killing them with the sword as men of war always have done". This gospel of militaristic "fundamentalism" is against the gospel of grace. "It has surrendered all hope that the world may be saved by love and grace and truth. Its sole appeal is to brute force. Its War Lord cometh to destroy".[11]

If we accept that Fundamentalism was a belief in imminent apocalyptic drama, we immediately grasp why its adherents so carefully watched the international developments concerning Israel.

Prophecy Belief

International political decisions regarding Israel scored high in modern prophecy belief, as shown by Paul Boyer. Fundamentalists welcomed the World Zionist Congress 1897 in Basel as a step toward prophetic fulfillment.[12] They greeted the Balfour Declaration of 1917, endorsing the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, "as the long-anticipated Jewish restoration to Palestine". After Allenby entered Jerusalem, General Cyrus Scofield wrote to a friend in 1917: "Now for the first time we have a real prophetic sign".[13] After the Jewish National Council declared Israel a state on May 14, 1948, prophecy believers again responded with intense emotion. In Alabama a mother exhorted her young children to remember the date as the most significant event since Jesus Christ was

[11] O. Holmes, "The Threat of Millennialism," *The Christian Century*, April 28, 1921, pp. 10–18; quotations from pp. 12f.
[12] Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, p. 186.
[13] Ibid., p. 102.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

born. "With Israel again a nation, Jesus could come at any moment". "God's clock has struck again", Jesus could come at any moment, the rapture could occur at any instant, we are told.[14] The reunification of Jerusalem on June 8, 1967 was seen as "one of the most remarkable fulfillments of biblical prophecy since the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 70".[15] The occupation of the West Bank in 1967 was enthusiastically acknowledged by Fundamentalists. One of the next issues expected on the agenda will be the restoration of the Jewish Temple. By earthquake or bombing the Islamic Dome of the Rock, the Mosque of Omar, will be destroyed.

In the United States the popularity of premillennialism goes far beyond Fundamentalist circles. A book published in 1970 by Hal Lindsey and C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, points to military and ecological threats of today as fulfillment of biblical prophecies. The apocalyptic clock is ticking again, and a final battle at Armageddon in Palestine is at hand. Until 1990 no less than twenty-eight million copies of Lindsey and Carlson's book have been sold. This publication has had a tremendous impact in spreading the conception that a terrifying disaster is at hand, preceding final redemption.[16] Are we able to grasp US policies toward Iraq without taking it into account? After the great tribulation the Antichrist will arise, and in the eyes of many American Fundamentalists he is Iraq's Saddam Hussein. The Persian Gulf War in 1991 triggered a wave of prophecy belief focusing on Saddam Hussein's plan for rebuilding ancient Babylon. The Book of Revelation, Chapter 18, notes that Babylon first must be rebuilt before its final destruction can occur.[17] Is it too far-fetched to assume that US foreign policy resounds popular apocalyptic assumptions? How to explain, that the greatest Protestant military power ever supports the Jewish claim to the land of Palestine nearly unconditionally?

Protestant voices present a remarkable paradox. Whereas most Jews resisted a religious interpretation of Zionism, Protestants greeted it as part of an eschatological scenario. Protestants spread a religious

---

[14] Ibid., p. 187.

[15] Ibid., p. 188.

[16] German translation of Hal Lindsay and C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1978).

[17] Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, pp. 326–331; Rober Fuller, *Naming the Antichrist. The History of an American Obsession* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 160.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

interpretation of secular Zionism, while until the 1970s most Jews emphasized a clear distinction between Zionistic activities and Messianic redemption. Liberal Jews were in favor of Zionism whereas Haredi Jews rejected it as an abominable attempt to force the end of time.[18] In the 1970s, Gush Emunim, the Bloc of the Faithful in Israel adopted a different world view. One of the spiritual leaders of the movement, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, introduced a religious interpretation of the Six-Day War in 1967.[19] Rabbi Kook perceived the events as a "War of Redemption" in which God had returned the sacred land to his people Israel. Since most Jews did not recognize that fact, according to the members of Gush Emunim, Israel was punished in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and forced to withdraw from territories belonging to Eretz Israel. Israel has been chastised for not acknowledging the biblical status of the occupied territories. The forced withdrawal, "pangs of the Messiah," belongs to the trials and tribulations that emerge before the redemption happens.[20]

A similar somber view of Israeli history has been part of Protestant interpretations. American Fundamentalists explained events of modern Jewish history as fulfillments of biblical prophecies, but they also regarded the prospects for the Jews as somber. One of the early American prophecy conferences in 1878 featured discussions on the return of Jews to Palestine. In their opinion, "The object of their gathering is ultimately their conversion, but primarily their chastisement and suffering".[21] The anti-Judaism of ancient Christian sources was still a part of the premillennial scenario.

Apocalypticism in Philosophical Discourses

British historian Peter Burke once quoted with approval the statement: "Only when intelligent and educated men ceased to take

---

[18] See Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996) especially Chapter 2, "'Forcing the End': Radical Anti-Zionism."

[19] Ibid., Chapter 3, "'The Revealed End': Messianic Religious Zionism."

[20] Gideon Aran, "Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful in Israel (Gush Emunim)," in Martin E, Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed* [The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 1] (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991) p. 277.

[21] Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, p. 209.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

prophecy seriously were the Middle Ages truly at an end".[22] The case of Protestant premillennialism and religious Zionism contradicts Burke's statement. Intellectuals and educated men—as well as the uneducated—seriously believe that prophecy makes sense of present history.

In his stimulating *Meaning in History*, Karl Löwith traces the belief in progress to biblical eschatology. A modern philosophy of history replaced a belief in the coming of the Lord and the Last Judgment,[23] according to the author. For instance, he pointed to the Communist Manifesto, predicting a final liberation of oppressed mankind by a universal war between classes. In his opinion, it alludes to a traditional apocalyptic scenario. Marx and other intellectuals hailed the rise of modern society as a liberation from the chains of tradition, but does this imply a secularization of biblical belief? Has belief in progress fully absorbed biblical eschatology?

Hans Blumenberg did not accept this assumption. Eschatology and the belief in progress, Blumenberg argued, have different roots and functions. Eschatology, assuming a sudden end of history, answers questions regarding the meaning of history in general. Belief in progress was buttressed by the rise of science and technology. Science and technology inspired people believing in prevision and planning future developments, but the experience of unpredictable events remained valid. However, belief in progress cannot fully explain suffering, injustice and ignorance. As a historian aptly wrote: the notion of future times became twofold. This situation is reflected in modern cultural history. While enlightened thinkers trusted in objective laws governing the course of history, Protestant sects propagated an imminent Last Judgment. In England and Germany both world views flourished together in the modern period.[24] Both concepts coexisted parallel to each other and could not, and did not, eliminate each other.[25]

---

[22] Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981) p. 273.

[23] Karl Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen. Zur Kritik der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1967) pp. 11f.

[24] Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 1959) pp. 74–134.

[25] Lucian Hölscher, *Weltgericht oder Revolution. Protestantische und Sozialistische Zukunftsrostellungen im deutschen Kaissereich* (Stuttgart: Kett-Cotta, 1989) pp. 27–38; Lucian Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

According to Blumenberg, the "legitimacy of the modern age"—the title of his book on this topic—can only be maintained and preserved when pressing eschatological expectations are postponed.[26] Apocalypticism has had an important task in this regard. In his *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit*, Blumenberg points to two different conceptions of time in apocalypticism: the lifetime of the individual and the time of the entire world.[27] Apocalypticism addresses the antagonism between an individual search for meaning and the irrational dynamics of the world. Apocalypticism establishes the legitimacy of the present world, even though it is filled with suffering, injustice and ignorance.

Apocalypticism, an ambivalent phenomenon, contributed to the modern world by establishing an awareness of the fundamental split between a world of norms and a world of facts. The modern world of facts has a legitimacy of its own, independent of all normative expectations. Apocalypticism in contrast, attacks the world of norms. By declaring the end of time to be close a hand, it can foster expectations of an imminent radical change. As a result, apocalypticism again and again had to struggle with a peculiar temptation, namely to accelerate the coming of the end of the world. Blumenberg called that attempt *satanic*, referring to the Book of Revelation: "Woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short" (12,12). The devil tries to hasten the end of time and abate the tension between the shortness of individual life and the consummation of the entire world. Apocalyptic tradition does not merely create an antagonism between the present world and the world to come, but rather opens ways of overcoming it.

Blumenberg's analysis was not accepted without objections. In a review, Löwith questioned Blumenberg's description of the idea of progress.[28] Is it probable, he asked, that the idea of progress has only such a limited meaning, referring to nothing more than the experience of scientific and technological progress?[29] Decades later Malcolm Bull made a similar remark in his summary of the debate. "His [Blumenberg's] conclusion that there can not have been

---

[26] H. Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966).

[27] *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit* (Frankurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), pp. 71–79.

[28] See K. Löwith, Review of Blumenberg, *Philosophische Rundschau* 15 (1968) pp. 195–201.

[29] Löwith, Review of Blumenberg, p. 197.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

transformation of substance in the shift from Christian eschatology to secular teleology depends, in part, upon the exclusion of both Christian teleology and secular eschatology from the equation".[30] It is noteworthy that during the 1870s and 1880s socialist leaders preached an imminent end of the present age like Christian sects. Blumenberg's interpretation of apocalypticism has a crucial advantage because it explains the coexistence of both religious apocalypticism and secular progress in the same age. In addition, it explores the impact of apocalypticism on the legitimacy of the modern world.

Apocalypticism in Public Discourses

Apocalyptic rhetoric permeates the public discourses of modern culture. Stephen O'Leary's study is particularly valuable in this regard.[31] Rather than explaining apocalypticism by sociological or psychological theories he studied it as part of public discourse and analyzed its rhetorical strategies. Rhetoric means the public, persuasive, constitutive and social dimension of speech. Apocalyptic speech is based on eschatological doctrines, applying them to the experience of evil. 'Time must have a stop'. By applying Kenneth Burke's psychology of form, which explains the response of audiences as a function of expectations created by and embodied in discourse, O'Leary analyzes shifts in apocalyptic discourses. Whenever the question of chronology is moot, audiences move from eschatology to apocalypse. O'Leary demonstrates the merits of that kind of approach by citing two American cases: the Millerite movement in the nineteenth century and Hal Lindsey's book *The Late Great Planet Earth.* In both cases a pessimistic vision of present society exists. Failure of social reform in the US in the nineteenth century, and life in the shadow of nuclear threat, prepared the ground for the acceptance of a wider audience to be receptive to an apocalyptic view of history.

Apocalypticism is an established tradition explaining and arguing in public unavoidable conflicts between accepted norms and the exist-

---

[30] Malcolm Bull (ed.) *Apocalypse Theory and the End of the World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995) pp. 1–17; quotation from p. 11.

[31] S. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

ing world. This discourse, originating in theology and religious communities, has become secularized. Sometimes we can suspect a hidden apocalyptic agenda behind subjects of modern public discourses. Nuclear threats, ecological disaster, the downfall of family, spread of abortion, increase of crime and violence, and Middle East wars are perceived as life or death threats to mankind. Don't all these point to a possible imminent breakdown of the present world of 'progress'? The experience of modernity was as ambivalent as the apocalyptic conception of time is. Emancipation from tradition hailed as freedom and the downfall of established social cohesion deplored as a severe loss of social solidarity—both were part of that experience.[32] Again and again the same temptation is lurking, which Blumenberg called *satanic*: violence as a means of forcing the end.[33]

The Notion of Time

Long ago, Henri Bergson and other philosophers of the vitalist camp began a philosophical discussion about that issue.[34] Bergson complained about the use of spatial metaphors in referring to time. These metaphors treat the sequence of events according to a spatial model. The view that time resembles an empty space, filled with discrete events, connected by causality, is misleading according to Bergson. The characteristics of time should be conceived as distinct from those of space. The approaching of future times is not like screening a movie, but rather like a creative evolution, *l'évolution creatrice*. Time is not experienced as an iron law executing consequences of past events; it is more like a process of creating new possibilities and options.

---

[32] Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (New York: Anchor Press, 1979) Chapter 1.

[33] See Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (eds.) *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem. Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* (New York, 1997), especially the sections "Secularizing the Millenium" and "Violence and Confrontation" which address American militias, Earth First movements, the Waco incident, Solar Templars and Aum Shinrikyo.

[34] Walter C. Zimmerli and Mike Sandbothe, *Klassiker der modernen Zeitphilosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Students of religious history increasingly contend that modern history contradicts the assumption of a disappearance of religiosity from the public arena of modern societies. This conclusion is confirmed by an analysis of apocalypticism which does not belong to a bygone past, but rather is part of modern culture and resonates the experience of time within it.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

WHEN PROPHECY FAILS AND WHEN IT SUCCEEDS: APOCALYPTIC PREDICTION AND THE RE-ENTRY INTO ORDINARY TIME

Stephen D. O'Leary

Cognitive Dissonance and Scholarly Models of Apocalyptic Movements

Since the 1956 publication of the classic *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World*, Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance has become a standard part of the description of the dynamics of apocalyptic sects and movements, regularly employed by scholars to explain why religious groups may prosper despite what would seem to be a direct refutation of deeply held beliefs.[1] Festinger and his colleagues argue that under certain circumstances (when predictions are specific enough, when believers have sufficiently committed themselves, and when the proper forms of social support are present), the disconfirmation of a deeply held belief may result in increased proselytizing and a strengthening, rather than abandonment, of the belief system. In such a situation, there is a way to reduce "cognitive dissonance"—the mental discomfort that ensues when one is confronted with evidence that a deeply held belief appears to be false—created by predictive failure.

We focus on this study for two reasons: First, *When Prophecy Fails* is a widely known and influential work, which may provide some

---

[1] Leon Festinger, Henry W. Riecken, and Stanley Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964 [1956]). For examples of studies employing (and sometimes criticizing) the cognitive dissonance model, see: Jane Allyn Hardyck and Marcia Braden, "Prophecy Fails Again: A Report of a Failure to Replicate," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 65 (1962), pp. 136–141; Robert W. Balch, Gwen Farnsworth, and Sue Wilkins, "When the Bombs Drop: Reactions to Disconfirmed Prophecy in a Millennial Sect," *Sociological Perspectives* 26 (1983), pp. 137–158; J. Gordon Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails," *American Studies* 26 (Fall 1985), pp. 17–29; J.F. Zygmunt, "Prophetic Failure and Chiliastic Identity: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses," *American Journal of Sociology* 75 (1970), pp. 926–948.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

familiar common ground for scholars who employ disciplinary approaches very different from our own. Second, those readers not familiar with the study, or without a background in the social sciences, can still gain a useful perspective on millennial and apocalyptic movements by examining Festinger's theory and assessing its limitations. Although Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance does provide a helpful way to explain certain dynamics of apocalyptic sects and movements, there are important aspects of these movements that have either been obscured or ignored by researchers, beginning with Festinger himself. These aspects may be illuminated by questioning the title: "When Prophecy *Fails*" (italics added). My question is, fails at what? or on whose terms?

Festinger and his colleagues, talented social scientists, were accustomed to understanding prediction in scientific terms. In the traditional paradigm of scientific rationality, predictions function as tests of theory, and hence are subject to rigorous standards of proof; when they are falsified, the "rational" cognitive response is to abandon the theory. When people irrationally cling to theories after they have been falsified, it is perfectly natural to view this response as illogical, and explain it in terms of "dissonance reduction." The modernist conception of scientific rationality as objective was dominant in the 1950s when Festinger and his colleagues were performing their study. However, recent scholarship has called this judgment into question. Robert F. Goodman notes that "scientific research is a social process in which competing values and interests have a crucial role to play."[2] With this insight in mind, the particular value that modernist science ascribes to the act of prediction—as a test of theory within an epistemology that valorizes falsifiability as the ultimate test of knowledge—needs a closer examination. We argue that Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter's study is grounded in implicit

[2] Robert F. Goodman, *Rethinking Knowledge: Reflections Across the Disciplines*, ed. Robert F. Goodman and Walter R. Fisher (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. xix. This volume is only one of a flood of recent publications that further the landmark work of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Another work that goes beyond naive modernist views of scientific rationalism is David L. Hull, *Science as a Process: An Evolutionary Account of the Social and Conceptual Development of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). For a valuable collection of essays that investigates the rhetoric of the sciences across a variety of disciplines, see John S. Nelson, Alan Megill, and Donald N. McCloskey, eds., *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

value assumptions and that the group whom they studied (and apocalyptic groups in general) did not and do not share these assumptions. We contend that any attempt to explain the behavior of such groups must begin with a reconstruction of the group's logic and assumptions—otherwise it will be misguided. In order to understand the growth and continued vitality of millennial and apocalyptic groups, even in the aftermath of failed predictions, we must recognize that such groups generally do not operate from the same premises or worldviews as those of the scientists who study them.

The functional significance of a prediction in an apocalyptic movement cannot be scientific: prediction in these groups serves both constitutive and normative functions, and these functions are more important to these groups than the scientific function of validating theory. This approach assumes that we should pay attention not only to attempts at dissonance reduction that occur in the aftermath of failed predictions, but also to the *whole* process of apocalyptic conversion and organizational development as a communicative, and specifically an argumentative, process. Social consequences of apocalyptic beliefs—the specific actions that are taken by believers both before and after the date predicted for prophetic fulfillment—may be better understood through a more nuanced study of the possible variations and permutations in the discourses of apocalyptic preachers and audiences.

Why do some groups respond to a prediction of catastrophe, or to the falsification of such predictions, by mass suicide or violence, whereas others simply disband or form churches which often survive and prosper for hundreds of years? Why are some apocalyptic movements fatalistic, to the point of passive withdrawal from the world, while others are inspired by prophecies to proselytize or to work for the election of Ronald Reagan or Pat Robertson? Why do some groups, such as the Shakers, respond to apocalyptic prophecies by adopting a strict sexual ethic of celibacy, while others, such as the Branch Davidians and the Children of God, react with extremes of sexual experimentation including polygamy, group marriage, or promiscuity? The theory of cognitive dissonance, at least as it has been applied to date, does not provide us with answers to these questions.

If we assume that the function of apocalyptic predictions in these groups is not to test theory, but to provide the seed crystal of a new social organization, a unique means of group identification, then we will be better equipped to understand the different forms which these

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

organizations can assume, and the different social and ethical responses to catastrophic predictions that they may offer. Seen in this light, prophecies can be said to "fail" in the scientific sense when they are disconfirmed, and simultaneously succeed from the point of view of the prophet and his or her successors, who may gain a wide array of benefits—economic, sexual, and psychological—in the new social structure created by the prediction and its aftermath. Once apocalyptic predictions are seen as constitutive of group identity, and as providing a basis for a variety of normative ethical and social standards within different groups, we are well on our way to moving beyond a relatively simple cognitive model—of persuasion leading to belief and committment, followed by falsification, leading in turn to dissonance reduction—toward a more complex one which accounts for the survival and flourishing of these groups.

The function of the original prediction is a kind of mold or pattern which shapes the group and provides its structural coherence during the formative period, but which can be discarded at a later date. One such example of this process can be found in the Millerite movement of the 1830s and 1840s. William Miller attracted upwards of 50,000 followers in the United States through his prediction that Jesus Christ would return in 1843, and inaugurate the reign of God through the destruction of all earthly governments. The group, which acquired the nickname of "1843ers" from unbelievers, was perhaps the largest and most successful apocalyptic movement in American history. Curiously, Festinger and his colleagues seem to be oblivious to the most basic facts of this group's history in the aftermath of the prediction's "failure." After a number of attempts to recalculate the prediction, the final disconfirmation "brought about the collapse of Millerism. . . . In spite of their overwhelming commitments, Miller's followers gave up their beliefs and the movement quickly disintegrated in dissension, controversy, and discord. By late spring 1845, it had virtually disappeared."[3] This is, to put it mildly, inaccurate. The movement did not disappear; in fact, the final falsification of the Millerite predictions, which took place on October 22, 1844, and which came to be called the "Great Disappointment," led to the creation of a church which survives and prospers today as one of the fastest-growing denominations in Christendom, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Festinger's error is all the more curious because

[3] Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails*, pp. 22–23.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

the history of this movement may be seen as a validation of his theory: the SDA church is among the most elaborate examples of "dissonance reduction" in the entire history of apocalyptic movements.

A closer examination of this example reveals that dissonance reduction, in itself, is as an insufficient explanation for the survival of apocalyptic movements beyond their predictive failures. We will not begin with a logical model based on a scientific conception of prediction and proof, but rather with the assumption that human beings are social animals, primarily motivated to form group attachments around a wide variety of identifications from the tribal to the doctrinal. We observe that apocalyptic predictions offer one possible basis for such identifications, see the dissonance reduction that follows disconfirmation as an expression of social motives as well as cognitive ones, and note that dissonance reduction and socialization can be accomplished by means other than proselytizing. Apocalypticism is a form—or rather, it is an umbrella term for a variety of forms—of social organization. Like individuals, organizations and collectivities are motivated to reproduce and replicate themselves. In *Arguing the Apocalypse* we developed a theory of apocalyptic discourse as persuasive rhetoric;[4] focusing on *argument* and *persuasion* as the primary means by which a group attains its goals of reproduction, survival, and stability. In this essay, we attempt to account for the discourses that bring about the formation of a new community in the wake of predictive failure. The discursive strategies employed by the Millerites to ensure their survival encourage us to question whether Festinger et al's model requires reappraisal and readjustment before it can be applied to this or any other modern apocalyptic movement. We will also show how a focus on rhetoric and argumentation helps us understand the social dynamics of apocalyptic discourses and movements. In addition, a brief summary of the events and arguments that preceded and followed the Millerite's last major apocalyptic deadline will be provided. Finally, we will analyze the discursive resources and argumentative strategies employed by the Millerites to negotiate their way beyond cognitive dissonance to survival and prosperity, and gradually adopt stable temporal rhythms of everyday life.

---

[4] Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The Rationality of Apocalyptic Argument

A persistent tendency in the scholarly literature on apocalypticism is to view the discourses and histories of these movements as an expression of a deeply irrational—even hysterical—human impulse. However, Professor Johannes Fried has shown in his essay in this volume (283–303), that the relationship of apocalyptic thought to the development of scientific and historiographic rationality is considerably more complex than conventional accounts have suggested. Any adequate history of apocalyptic tradition must account not only for outbreaks of charismatic and visionary behavior (sometimes resulting in bizarre outcomes such as flagellant movements, pogroms, or mass suicides), but also for the works of key Enlightenment figures such as Isaac Newton and Joseph Priestly, sober scientists who devoted their energies to interpreting the Apocalypse and understanding their position in the end times. Upon examining the history of apocalyptic interpretation in its dominant contemporary strain, the cultures of late Protestant fundamentalism, we observe a serious concern with rationality, and a tendency to build tightly constructed sequences of logical argument.

The significance of apocalypticism in Western culture, using a loose Weberian framework, accounts for the charismatic roots of apocalyptic revelation and the routinization of that charisma as it is adapted and adopted by traditional authorities. Overall, it is subject to a rationalistic scrutiny of believers who want to understand their scriptural heritage. Apocalyptic thought operates according to a coherent, internal logic—a rational logic that has contributed in no small measure to the development of philosophic, scientific, and historical conceptions of rationality. How can we begin to define the elements of this logic?

For our purposes, it is most useful to consider this discourse as *argument*—a social and dialectical practice in which claims are advanced, supported, refuted, and revised. We should keep in mind the ways in which both arguers and audiences are predisposed to propose or accept the claims of apocalyptic argument by their exposure to conditions of economic, social, or "relative" deprivation and oppression,[5]

[5] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1959); Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968); David F. Aberle,"A Note on Relative

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

or by psychological conditions of delusion, paranoia, and anomie in the wake of disaster or catastrophe whether real or perceived.[6] These conditions and experiences are either impossible to define and measure in any useful, operational fashion, or cannot be shown to be present in all instances of apocalyptic expectation. Therefore, we need an explanation of this discourse that does not depend on intangible and immeasurable variables, or on conditions that are not always present during the formative period. We must examine the discourse itself, not as an isolated text, but as a discourse of meaning produced in the context of the speaker (or writer) and his/her audience.

Before turning to a specific case study, we will consider the dialectics of apocalyptic argument in a "pure" or hypothetical form. Our thesis is neither original nor complex: the apocalyptic is a symbolic theodicy, a mythological solution to the problem of evil. In monotheistic traditions the apocalyptic enables us to explain our experience of evil or suffering in light of a belief in a deity who is both omnipotent and benevolent. Evil can only appear as a mystery to believers in a God who is all-powerful and wholly good; thus, a central topos or recurring theme of controversy in monotheistic faith is the recurrent and troublesome question, "How shall we account for our present ills?" We may see the essential *claim* of apocalyptic argument as one possible response to this omnipresent question: "The End is near (in which the mystery will be revealed)," or in a variant form: "The [or a] world is soon coming to its end." What happens once this claim is advanced? How does the dialectic of apocalypse unfold from this point?

How does a person respond to the claim that the end of the world is near? A likely response would be, "Who says so?" or, "How do

---

Deprivation Theory as Applied to Millenarian and Other Cult Movements," in *Millennial Dreams in Action: Studies in Revolutionary Religious Movements*, ed. Sylvia Thrupp (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), pp. 209–214; Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, trans. Lisa Sergio (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

[6] Richard Hofstader, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 1st ed., (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957); Robert Jay Lifton, "The Image of the End of the World: A Psychohistorical View," in *Visions of Apocalypse: End or Rebirth*, eds. Saul Friedlander, Gerald Horton, Leo Marx and Eugene Skolnikoff (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), pp. 151–170; Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

you know?" This brings the dialectic to what we call the topos of authority. The claim of impending apocalyptic fulfillment will attract followers if an authoritative figure supports it. We rely on Weber's typology of legitimation, considering charisma, rationality, and tradition as rhetorical strategies by which the authority of rhetorical claims may be upheld. It seems that various versions of the claim "The End is near" do not cancel out the crucial difference between the possible answers to the responsive query, "How do you know?": "God revealed it to me in a vision"/"Ecological science predicts . . ."/"The Mormon Elders tell us . . ."

As Weber notes, charisma, rationality and tradition are ideal types that rarely appear in pure form. The charismatic proof of visionary experience is not necessarily accepted at face value, but is often mediated by structures of traditional authority. In other words, not all visions are accepted as prophecy, and the mantle of prophecy may be inherited or passed on by traditional succession. Even the authority of a scientist is never purely rational, but is buttressed by the traditional authority of institutions such as prestigious universities and academic journals. The appeal to rationality is a standard feature of modern fundamentalist discourse, which, taking for granted the charismatic authority of scripture and revelation, applies itself to the task of its rational interpretation. It should be noted that the bestselling apocalyptic author of all time, Hal Lindsey, developed many of the themes of his books in his days on the evangelical lecture circuit, where his nickname was "Mr. Logic."

If an authority accepts the claim (even provisionally) then the dialectical interchange created by the original prediction proceeds to the next level of response, i.e., to the question, "When?" We designate this theme as the topos of time. By advancing a prediction in argument, the speaker or writer uncovers knowledge not previously available regarding the proximity of catastrophe. Audiences contemplating whether to accept the claim will typically demand some evidence of this proximity; furnishing such evidence requires a specific date, or at least a bounded time zone, which is necessary to create the sense of urgency and saliency. Temporal considerations thus give rise to a discourse of calculation attempting to prove the validity of the temporal structure. Such calculations often reach a high degree of chronological and mathematical complexity. The proposed date must be relatively immediate if audience members are to believe that the claim will concern them directly. If the claim lacks saliency, the

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

audience will lose interest. One would be hard pressed to find an apocalyptic movement that predicted global catastrophe hundreds or thousands of years in the future; such predictions only attract attention and become controversial when they address present concerns. The proposed date or schedule for the end cannot be too immediate because external events may disconfirm the prediction before the necessary solidification of social structure in the group can be accomplished. Hence, we argue that predictions of the end of the world (and by extension, of any massive catastrophe) are subject to boundary conditions arising from the need to "buy time" to build an audience committed to the message (and willing to rationalize this commitment after the original prediction fails), on the one hand, and from the attentions and assumed life span of the immediate audiences on the other. Temporal predictions that fall within this fluid time zone meet the conditions for what we shall call "apocalyptic time"—the sense of imminence and urgency necessary for the generation of an apocalyptic movement.

Although we have detailed elsewhere the rhetorical choices and inventional possibilities that enable and constrain arguers operating between these temporal boundaries,[7] here we will only note that the prediction's degree of proximity and specificity evoke varying degrees of publicity and attention as well as further variations in audience response. For example, a schedule for the end that allows the widest possible latitude for fulfillment of predictions (e.g., "anytime within the next few decades") maximizes the rhetorical options of the speaker or writer while minimizing the risk of prophetic failure. However, this tactic may arouse the audience's curiosity without satisfying it fully. In these circumstances, the natural response of audiences entertaining or accepting the claim is to "complete" the argument by supplying more specific dates even over the objections of those advancing the original claim.[8] Thus, date specificity represents the natural culmination of apocalyptic argument with respect to the topos of time. If the claim of impending global catastrophe and redemption is accepted, whether dogmatically or provisionally, the audience's ordinary curiosity will find formal completion and satisfaction in a prediction with a high degree of specificity and saliency.

---

[7] O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, pp. 91, 204–05.
[8] Ibid., p. 104.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Apocalyptic date-setting is an expression of the quasi-logical impulse toward formal completion, but this formal tendency in the discourse is only one aspect of an elaborate social process. Orators and audiences are engaged in a complex social dynamic: discourse creates expectations which may to some extent be modified by further discourse, but which ultimately must be either fulfilled or reexamined in the context of world events. Disconfirmation does pose a risk for the prophet. However, the fact that audiences continue to turn to their leaders even after their predictions have been falsified shows that prophetic authority and predictive accuracy are not identical and may even (in extreme cases) be inversely proportional. In rhetorical terms, the risk assumed by prophets—not only of disappointment but also of public ridicule, personal attacks, and of accusations of fraud—may actually enhance persuasive ethos both before and after the failure of prophecy. For the prophet as well as the community of followers, outside opposition may serve both as proof of personal sanctity and as an incentive to strengthen group solidarity. I the remainder of this essay, we will demonstrate how such considerations played a large role in the aftermath of the Millerite debacle, and ultimately helped this group survive and prosper.

Millerite Expectation and Disappointment

A fairly detailed history of Miller's movement can be found in *Arguing the Apocalypse*, so we will only provide an overview of the developments which relate to this essay. Concerning chronology, Miller and his followers arrived at 1843/44 as their calculation of the end. They arrived at this conclusion, which placed them in the optimum degree of proximity to the cosmic upheaval and renewal, from their harmonization of Biblical chronologies with both prophecies and contemporary events. Great weight was placed on a prophetic statement from the Book of Daniel: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (8:14). At that time Protestant biblical hermeneutics identified the biblical "day" with a year in ordinary time. The cleansing of the sanctuary signified the advent of the messianic kingdom and it only remained to identify the point at which the 2300–year cycle had commenced. This calculation, based on the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem in 457 B.C.E., predicted that the world would end in 1843.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

The most important discourse in this context was the deployment of the chronologies of Bishop Ussher in conjunction with the theory of the "Great Sabbath." This ancient notion, which has taken on various forms throughout the ages, comes from the application of the dictum in II Peter that "the day of the Lord is as a thousand years" to the seven days of creation in Genesis. Thus, the allotted time span of the material universe is divided into seven periods of a thousand years, with the seventh millennium equivalent to the millennial kingdom, the Sabbath day of rest. Though Miller and his followers had to readjust Ussher's dates to enlist him in support of their own apocalyptic prediction, they were firmly convinced that the year 1843/1844 represented the completion of six thousand years since the first day of creation and that the millennial kingdom was imminent. According to Miller, his predictions were based on "very clear evidence of every period of time given from the creation to Christ, which makes our present year, from the creation of Adam, 5997. If this should be the true era of the world, then we live within three or four years of the great sabbath of rest."[9]

With regard to the question of authority, it is important to note that Miller never claimed to be a prophet, but perceived himself as an interpreter of prophecy. He maintained that his conclusions could be drawn by anyone who accepted his premises and methods of interpretation and argument. Historical sources indicate that Miller had a reputation for sobriety and logical exposition that eschewed any overt manifestations of apocalyptic excitement. In the period up to the passage of the first predicted date, some members of the movement claimed to be possessed with "gifts of the spirit" (private revelations, dreams, miracles, and spirit visions). However, these manifestations were forcefully rejected by movement leaders throughout its early period, gaining a wider following only after the Great Disappointment, when rational arguments could no longer provide sustenance.

In 1831, Miller began to preach and to publish his arguments about the world's end in 1843. Over time, he slowly acquired followers, but until 1839–1840, one can hardly speak of a Millerite "movement" at all. Miller collaborated with Joshua Himes, a minister, able publicist, and prominent preacher of the abolitionist cause.

---

[9] William Miller, "The Great Sabbath," *Signs of the Times*, 15 January 1842, p. 156.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Himes invested his considerable talents and resources into proselytizing Miller's views, and began to attract significant numbers of followers. The increase in Millerite ranks may be attributed to Himes' publishing and missionary efforts; but it is noteworthy that this expansion was coterminous with the movement's entry into the "hot zone" of apocalyptic time (three to four years). In October 1840, the first Adventist General Conference was held, and a series of local newspapers were founded in urban centers of the American northeast. As the predicted date grew closer, the movement greatly expanded organizing conferences and camp-meeting revivals to broadcast the apocalyptic message.

The rapid growth created tensions, between the movement and other established churches as well as within the movement itself. In January 1843, under pressure from followers, Miller specified the time frame of his prediction according to the Jewish calendar, claiming that the world would end "betweeen March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844." Despite the objections of Miller and other movement leaders, numerous followers insisted on fixing various specific dates. Official newspapers of the movement condemned charismatic excitement, such as speaking in tongues and purported miracles. In September–October 1843, at about the midpoint of the time span that Miller had allowed for prophetic fulfillment, opposition to the movement increased. Many members were cast out of their home churches, and the first steps toward independent association were taken with Millerite preacher Charles Fitch's widely-reprinted call to "Come Out of Babylon," in which "Babylon" was identified with all churches oppposed to the Adventist message. Thus, as the sense of apocalyptic time reached its peak, the millennial excitement became intolerable to established denominations, and the Millerites became pariahs, ironically transformed into a quasi-denominational affiliation that they had at first rejected.

From late March to early August of 1844, the movement passed through its first period of disappointment. Although Miller's explicit prediction failed, the evidence of radical dissonance in this period is equivocal. The movement carried on without an apparent crisis, tinkering with its calculations and devising provisional explanations in which the failure of prophecy was interpreted as the "tarrying time" in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25:5), or in which believers were told that the delay was a test of faith. During this period, missionary activity continued, but at a subdued pace.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

On August 12, 1844, a previously obscure Millerite preacher, Samuel Snow, pronounced "the true Midnight Cry" at a rally in New Hampshire. He proclaimed "the tenth day of the seventh month [in the Jewish calendar]," October 22, as the final deadline. The date rapidly spread through the movement as a new focus of expectation. Interestingly, Miller, Himes, and the other leaders resisted endorsing this prediction until early October 1844. With Millerite leaders and presses firmly behind the October 22 prediction, the first three weeks of October saw the highest pitch of apocalyptic excitement and urgency.

In the aftermath of the Great Disappointment, Himes and other leaders did their best to develop support networks, trying in vain to keep the movement from splintering. In the first few months of 1845, new interpretations of the "Midnight Cry" appeared in newspapers that Himes did not control, claiming that the prophecy had been fulfilled in an invisible fashion: the bridegroom had come, and the "door of mercy" (Matthew 25:10) was now closed. To the extent that this interpretation was accepted, it rendered further missionary activity useless by denying that conversion was possible. The idea precipitated a storm of controversy among Adventists, and William Miller at first lent his tentative support. As the adherents of the "shut-door" position began to exhibit more charismatic behavior—claiming visions and other "gifts of the spirit," and engaging in practices symbolic of millennial perfection such as "promiscuous feet-washing"—[10] Himes persuaded Miller to reject the shut-door theory and all its associated aberrations.

In April 1845, Himes, Miller, and other moderate leaders of the movement organized the first post-Disappointment conference of Adventist believers in Albany, New York. The purpose of the Albany conference was to solidify the moderates' position and isolate them from their shut-door counterparts; all specific chronologies and predictions were abandoned, and claims to spiritual gifts were decisively rejected. Ultimately, the Albany conference formalized a split between the two main branches of the Millerite movement in the aftermath of the Disappointment. Those who rejected the shut-door theory claimed to uphold what they called the "Original Advent faith," and ultimately established the Advent Christian denomination. A minority

[10] George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World* (Boise: Pacific Press, 1993), pp. 251–252.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

faction of Miller's followers—those who persisted in believing that the movement should propagate the October 22, 1844 prediction, which had been divinely inspired, and that the prophecy had been fulfilled in some fashion—took an alternative path, and ultimately came to be known as the Sabbatarian or Seventh-Day Adventists.

From 1845 on, many of the radical elements isolated by the Albany conference believers took up other millennial doctrines, affiliating with Shaker communities or John Humphrey Noyes' Oneida commune. A few remained, and in time developed their own leadership. In December 1844, Ellen Harmon, an Adventist convert who became a visionary leader of the Sabbatarian faction, experienced her first vision in which she viewed "the travels of the Advent people on their way to the City of God." Accepted as a prophet by a small group of followers, her influence in the movement gradually increased. After her marriage to a prominent leader of the movement, James White, she joined with Joseph Bates, one of the original Millerite leaders, in adopting and promoting observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Though this group was later successful in establishing the stable organization of Seventh-Day Adventism, its success was by no means assured. The adherents of this doctrine had to contend with the fanatical extremes of millennial belief and behavior and struggle for self-definition against the stigmatization of secular society as well as other Adventists.

An example of these fanatical extremes, and of the alternative paths taken in the evolution and mutation of apocalyptic beliefs, is Samuel Snow, originator of the October 22 "midnight cry." Due to his close identification with this particular Millerite prediction, it is understandable that, at some point in the aftermath of the Disappontment, Snow became mentally unstable. Believing that he was the incarnation of the prophet Elijah, Snow for a time published a newspaper in which he hurled imprecations not only at unbelievers but also at those Adventist leaders who failed to recognize his prophetic role. In 1848 he issued "A Proclamation to all Nations, Peoples, Tongues, and Kings," in which he claimed that

> By the special favor of God, through Jesus Christ my Father, I have been called and commissioned to go before the face of the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way for his descent from heaven. And as his Prime Minister, I demand of all Kings, Presidents, Magistrates, and Rulers, civil or ecclesiastical, full surrender of all power and authority, into my hands, on behalf of King Jesus the Coming One.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

This proclamation, which was to be enforced under pain of "WAR, FAMINE, PESTILENCE, AND DESTRUCTION," was signed "SAMUEL SHEFFIELD SNOW, PREMIER OF KING JESUS."[11]

Snow's fantasy of world rule as the prime minister of King Jesus exemplifies the delusional extremes to which the apocalyptic mentality is prone. Yet the ravings of this one person were hardly typical of the Adventist movement as a whole, and should not color our interpretation of all millennial discourse. Other followers of Miller took different paths, and achieved a resolution of their apocalyptic hopes which allowed them to channel their efforts outward to the world instead of inward into solipsistic delusion.

If the advent of the year 2000 will indeed bring other movements to the fore that will be forced to negotiate their own crisis of faith in the wake of unfulfilled prophecy, then an understanding of previous cases such as the Millerite Adventists may actually assist in efforts to channel apocalyptic disappointment into more reasonable and acceptable paths. Contemporary parallels to Samuel Snow's proclamation can be found in the discourses of the militia movement, which are prone to paranoid ramblings about the illegitimacy of the present government. In addition, religious groups such as the Montana Freemen often display a marked tendency to use legal and diplomatic terminology in styling themselves as a legitimate government with the power to issue financial instruments, summonses, and quasi-governmental proclamations. The frequency of such cases should lead us to consider the possible reasons why one individual or group goes to extremes (with possibly severe consequences for civil order), whereas another settles comfortably into a more reasonable truce with the status quo. Hence, a closer look at the arguments and symbolic negotations that led one faction of Adventist believers to a stable and creative period of denominational growth holds promise for those who seek to both understand and influence the current generation of millennial enthusiasts.

[11] See Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*, p. 256.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Re-Entry into Ordinary Time

Examining Millerite accounts of the Great Disappointment, it is clear that Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance is relevant to the experience of this apocalyptic movement. An undated memoir of one movement leader, Hiram Edson, summarizes the anguish felt by many of Miller's followers in 1844. On October 22, Edson spent the day in prayer and fellowship with other Adventists. In his moving account, he writes about the disappointment and doubt caused by the apparent failure of prophecy:

> Our expectations were raised high, and thus we looked for the coming of the Lord till the clock tolled 12 at midnight. The day had then passed and our disappointment became a certainty. Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn.
>
> I mused in my own heart, saying, My advent experience has been the richest and brightest of all my Christian experience. If this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my Christian experience worth? Has the Bible proved a failure? Is there no God—no heaven—no golden home city—no paradise? Is this all but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hopes and expectation of these things?[12]

If we consider this account to be paradigmatic of Adventist experiences, an examination of the reflections of this disappointed saint may shed light on the symbolic resources available in the aftermath of prophetic failure. Clearly, Adventist believers experienced a state of severe cognitive dissonance resulting in radical doubt and questioning of deeply-held beliefs. However, this case denotes a powerful group experience of shared emotion and an appreciation of friendship and strong social bonds.

Examining editions of the movement's newspapers published in the immediate aftermath of the October 22 disaster, one finds little evidence of the anguish and radical doubt displayed in Hiram Edson's account. A cursory look at the October 30 issue of the flagship paper *Advent Herald*, edited by Himes and his associates, reveals no prominent acknowledgment of the Great Disappointment. The front page is devoted to a standard Adventist argument that could have appeared

[12] Ibid., p. 218.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

at any time in the previous years of the movement. On the second page we find a letter from a believer who claims, "I have never been more fully convinced of the immediate coming of the Lord, than I am at the present time . . ." (90). The third page features an article entitled "The Hour of His Judgement is Come," concluding with a final appeal and warning to the unconverted: "The next time you sleep, you may be awaked by the trump of God" (92). Only at the bottom of the fourth page do we find any acknowledgment of the passing of the predicted date. In an effort to justify their previous actions and statements, the editors provide a brief outline of the movement, focusing on the promulgation and acceptance of the October 22 date. Far from admitting error, they claim that the hand of God was present in the rapid progress and widespread acceptance of the specific date by the various Adventist believers, in the opposition aroused by the teaching in the quarters of the ungodly, and in the personal holiness that it inspired in those convinced by the prediction. The essay concludes with the optimistic assessment that "A little delay is . . . no cause for discouragement, but shows how exact God is in the fulfillment of his word" (93).

This attempt to turn disconfirmation into yet another proof of the imminent fulfillment of prophecy clearly was not a sustainable position; it was not credible to outsiders, nor could it offer comfort to those who shared Hiram Edson's doubt and anguish. The personal pain and keen disappointment that surely must have been felt by the *Advent Herald* editors are not reflected here; the newspaper seems to have been produced almost automatically, out of a stoic impulse to minimize trauma and proceed with business as usual. This reading is confirmed by an editorial note tucked inconspicuously on the final page: "The matter for this paper was principally prepared several weeks since, and some of it in type.—To give our readers a paper this week, we were obliged to issue it as it is" (96). Yet in the midst of what otherwise may be seen as a massive exercise in denial, there is also evidence of concern for the hardships suffered by those who, in anticipation of the imminent millennial banquet, had failed to sow or to reap their harvests and thus provide for the cold winter that lay ahead. The editors urge Adventist believers to take care of their own: "If there are any destitute persons among us who are in present need, let their wants be supplied promptly. Let none go to the world or to the scorners of our hope, for help. We can take care of our own poor; *we ask no aid of them.* A judicious committee

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

should be appointed to see to all such cases, and to receive funds in aid of the needy . . ." (96). In the immediate aftermath of prophetic failure, social bonds were of such strength and significance as to outweigh purely material considerations. If adherents to the Adventist faith could support each other in their time of need, they minimized the risk of exposing themselves to ridicule which would reinforce internal doubts. More importantly, in the safety of their own groups they could commiserate with those who knew best what they had endured, pondering and speculating until they were able to jointly interpret events and prior beliefs that would validate their experience.

The *Advent Herald* of November 16 featured an "Address to the Public" that is clearly intended as an apologia. Here movement leaders vindicated their position, reiterating the idea that the apparent failure of prophecy was a test of faith. In support of this idea, they cite scriptural parallels to the prophecy of Jonah and the Lord's testing of Abraham. This document shows little movement from earlier beliefs, and closes with a reaffirmation of millennial faith.

In the *Advent Herald* of January 15, 1845, new doctrinal developments appeared in an article entitled "The Safe Position." Here the movement leaders grudgingly admit that they had been wrong not only about the date, but about the entire issue of people's ability to calculate dates of prophetic fulfillment. Abandoning the claim of "definite time" which they had been defending for years, they conceded that ". . . for wise reasons, the divine mind has forever concealed the precise rise of those periods, at the end of which his Son shall be revealed from heaven. So that we believe it above the power of man, to demonstrate either the year, the month, or the day, of their consummation."[13] However, the adoption of the "safe position" was hardly a full-scale reversal. The ground of "definite time" was ceded in order to make their position defensible. The main innovation of this essay is to be found in its proposal of a functional justification for the prediction: "Time wrought a great work in our own sanctification and consecration to God."

This solution, which was ultimately adopted as part of the moderate position of Adventists who sought to define orthodox doctrine at the Albany conference, was unacceptable to many in the movement. Those who sought to reaffirm their experience by denying what was seemingly obvious to everyone (the failed attempt to pre-

[13] F.G. Brown, "The Safe Position," *Advent Herald*, 15 January 1845, p. 177.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

dict the end of time) had few rhetorical options. Ultimately, the successful strategy adopted by those who did not follow the path of Albany was a "spiritualization" of prophecy, allowing believers to argue that it had indeed been fulfilled in an unexpected fashion. Hiram Edson, whose account of the Disappointment was cited above, was one of the leaders in this movement. His reinterpretation of the "cleansing of the sanctuary" prophecy of Daniel 8:14 proved to be instrumental in the transition from Millerism to Seventh-Day Adventism. Edson writes,

> I said to one of my brethren, "Let us go and see, and encourage some of our br[ethre]n." We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed to open to my view, and I saw distinctly, and clearly, that instead of our High Priest [Jesus] coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, that he for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth.

After pondering this vision and consulting with close associates, Edson notes, "We decided it was just what the scattered remnant needed; for it would explain our disappointment, and set us on the right track."[14] This new interpretation was published in the *Day-Dawn*, and ultimately was confirmed and approved in a vision of Ellen White in 1848.

By evaluating the transition from Millerism to Seventh-Day Adventism in terms of sociological theories of millennialism, we notice several features that have not been sufficiently researched by historians. First, there is the remarkable turn from a purely rational interpretation of scripture to the visionary authority of Ellen G. White, a prophet who did not predict but instead offered visions and revelations, with a strong focus on health issues. This is surely a rare case of the routinization of charisma, in which millennial excitement, based on rational interpretation of scriptures, gives way to denomination-building based on the insights of a visionary prophet. The importance of Ellen White's role here cannot be overestimated. Her articulation of a coherent interpretation of both scriptural prophecies

[14] Memoir of Hiram Edson, reprinted in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 215–216.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

and the experience of movement members was clearly the most important of the symbolic means by which the transition to ordinary time was accomplished. At the same time, there were other doctrinal developments and trends which provided White a strong basis for her creative innovation.

For example, a change in emphasis from collective to personal eschatology has been observed from 1844 onward. Adventist believers in the years after the Disappointment spent much time arguing, not about the date for the Second Coming, but about the fate of the soul after death. The controversy over the doctrines of "annihilationism" and "conditional immortality" focused on these questions when some preachers, notably George Storrs (who had been closely identified with the October 22 prediction) began to argue that the souls of the wicked do not survive eternally in hell, but are "annihilated" or destroyed after death. The relationship between annihilationist teaching and apocalyptic prophecy is not immediately obvious, but appears to make more sense when seen in the light of the experience of the Great Disappointment. Apocalyptic urgency may be viewed on one level as a displacement of anxieties about death and the post-mortem fate of the soul. Clearly, those who had invested their hopes in the cosmic ending predicted for 1844 were in a sense forced to contemplate their own ends again while they awaited the final judgment. The vigorous debate on the subject of personal death must inevitably have deflected their attention from considerations of collective eschatology and its outplay in history.

Another feature that must be noted in the discourses of the transitional period is the direct use of temporal symbolism in the titles of movement periodicals. The parable of the Midnight Cry, which had inspired Millerites and entitled many of their publications, denotes a perception of the community. Approaching their moment of maximum urgency, the believers passed through their darkest hours of disappointment. Following the lead of Hiram Edson and others, some members of the movement came to believe that October 22 had indeed been the "true midnight cry." This perception is evident in the titles given to periodicals in the years following the supposed failure or invisible fulfillment of their prophecy. For example, the New York "Midnight Cry" in early 1845 changed its title to the "Morning Watch"; the Cincinatti paper "Western Midnight Cry" became the "Day-Star;" a small New York paper called the "Watchman's Last Warning" became the "True Day Star"; the Massachusetts "True

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Midnight Cry" became the "Jubilee Standard." These changes seem to indicate that followers were convinced time would cease and believed in a dawn of new truth created by the Lord. The temporal symbolism of "midnight to morning" continues to be a standard topos of Adventist apologetic history.[15]

Attention to time symbolism also requires us to note that the Great Sabbath, or the ordering of time in seven millennial epochs which parallel the seven days of creation, was replaced by an emphasis on the seventh-day sabbath. Seventh-Day Adventism no longer was committed to an apocalyptic date, but rather to a practice of regular weekly worship dissimilar to the rest of the Christian community. In the eyes of Adventists, observance of the seventh-day Sabbath was not merely a question of the proper day for worship, but was connected to eschatology—a sign of renewed observance of God's law by the saints of the latter days.[16] Hence, the adoption of Sabbatarian doctrine and practices did not represent an abandonment of apocalyptic eschatology so much as an attenuation of its force, a shift in the emphasis of their temporal symbolism. The eschatological significance of Sabbatarian doctrine was most likely not recognized by outsiders who saw a movement away from the kinds of charismatic excitement fostered by specific prediction and toward a more stable rhythm rooted in the routines of daily life and worship.

Although it was later abandoned by Sabbatarian Adventists who formed the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the prevalence of the shut door theory among large numbers of Miller's followers in the years after the Disappointment suggests that Festinger's thesis needs to be revised, at least insofar as it leads us to expect proselytizing as a typical or necessary strategy for overcoming dissonance. The shut-door doctrine had the advantage of discouraging contact with non-believers and encouraging members to seek mutual support. However, the survival of the Sabbatarian Advent faction depended on the flexibility of its leadership and the willingness to amend or abandon the doctrine that had sustained them in the formative years after the prophecy's failure. The point may be minor, but it bears repeating: there are many ways to overcome dissonance, and

---

[15] Clyde E. Hewitt, *Midnight and Morning* (Charlotte: Venture Books, 1983); Frances D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945).

[16] Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World*, pp. 310–313.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

insulation from contact with non-believers is an effective means. In the long run, however, such insulation could breed a sort of radical fanaticism with a short shelf-life. Samuel Snow's followers decreased as he drifted off into insanity, whereas Ellen White's followers adapted their practice and accepted their role as witnesses to a new and more stable millennial faith.

Apocalyptic groups like the Shakers and the shut-door Millerites guaranteed their own disappearance by refusing to reproduce themselves sexually or doctrinally, embracing instead a sense of imminence and urgency characteristic of life in apocalyptic time. An adherence to this sense of apocalyptic excitement in the wake of the Great Disappointment testifies to the remarkable elasticity of human rationalization. Such elasticity, which we refer to as dissonance reduction, is a necessary feature of an apocalyptic group's survival, but it is not sufficient to ensure success over time. A successful transition from apocalyptic time into ordinary time seems to require extended social support and the development of a temporal symbolism resilient enough to both account for disappointment and lead people forward into the future. Only a new conception of time could enable a band of discouraged believers to transform their failure into a "prophetically ordained" story of unparalleled success. In the words of the great Adventist historian and apologist Leroy Edwin Froom: "So it was that what had seemed like the greatest *disappointment* of all time was now seen as indeed one of the most remarkable fulfillments of all prophetic history—a movement of God's own *appointment*, despite its human limitations and misconceptions."[17]

[17] Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Press, 1954), p. 895.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

MEMORY AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF APOCALYPTIC TIME IN AN ITALIAN MILLENARIAN MOVEMENT: THE CASE OF DAVIDE LAZZARETTI AND HIS FOLLOWERS

Giovanni Filoramo

Introduction

The millenarian movement founded by the Italian prophet Davide Lazzaretti (1834–1878).[1] in the 1870s is an important episode in Italian religious history.[2] The movement started in 1868, after Lazzaretti claimed to have had a vision of the Virgin Mary.[3] At the beginning, the movement seemed to be a Catholic revival aimed at the defense of the Roman Catholic Church and its spiritual head. At the time the Pope was threatened by secularism, liberalism and the new Italian State which made Rome capital of Italy in 1870.

The civil authorities began to suspect the movement's efforts to establish communities in Tuscany, the region of Lazzaretti's birthplace.[4] In addition, the ecclesiastical authorities, who in the beginning viewed Lazzaretti's position on moral reform in a positive light,

---

[1] Some biographies have been written about Lazzaretti but they are of little or no value from a scientific point of view. See A. Moscato, *Davide Lazzaretti: il messia dell'Amiata* (Roma: Samonà e Savelli, 1978) pp. 43f.; L. Graziani, *Studio bibliografico su Davide Lazzaretti* (Roma: La Torre Davidica, 1964); and E. Tedeschi, *Per una sociologia del millennio. Davide Lazzaretti: carisma e mutamento sociale* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1989).

[2] For the neo-Hebraic movement of S. Nicandro, see A. Moscato and M.N. Pierini, *Rivolta religiosa nelle campagne* (Roma: Samonà e Savelli, 1965) pp. 143–234. The Lazzaretti movement is indeed one of the few original phenomena of the contemporary Italian religious history outside the Catholic area.

[3] On the presence of the Virgin Mary in the Lazzaretti movement and its connection with the Marian cult fostered by the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century, see C. Prandi, "Le catholicisme italien à l'heure de l'unité: apocalypse et compromis," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 58/1(1984), pp. 67–83; Tedeschi, *Per una sociologia*, pp. 125f.

[4] For more information about the social aspects of these movements, see F. Bardelli, "Rinnovamento religioso e aspirazioni di riforma sociale nell'organizzazione comunitaria di Monte Labbro (1871–1873)," in C. Pazzagli (ed.), *Davide Lazzaretti e il Monte Amiata. Protesta sociale e rinnovamento religioso*. Atti del Convegno di Siena e Arcidosso, 11–13 maggio 1979 (Firenze: Guaraldi, 1981) pp. 215–228.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

changed their opinion due to an unstable political situation and the prophet's "heretical" actions. In 1878 the Tuscan prophet proclaimed that he was the Christ of the second advent, who was ushering in the third era, the age of the Spirit. Investigated and condemned by the Holy Office, and at the same time viewed as a subversive by the local and civil authorities, Lazzaretti was killed by a soldier on 18 August 1878 in his village, Arcidosso, during a spectacular procession of 3000 followers. Thus he inaugurated the beginnings of the new era of the Holy Spirit and of the divine right of the new monarch, Davide.

After Lazzaretti's death, his followers soon dispersed. Some were tried and condemned for subversive activities, whereas others, mostly artisans and peasants,[5] returned to their previous lives. Overall, only a small group of followers kept the prophet's memory alive.

Notwithstanding, Lazzarettism did not disappear. In order to understand how the movement reacted to the failure of its founder, it is necessary to examine this phenomenon in its correct religious-historical context.

From this point of view, Lazzarettism can be seen as an important expression of a phenomenon which has been relatively overlooked by scholars. In periods of crisis, prophetic, apocalyptic and millenarian tendencies characterised the history of Catholicism after the Council of Trento. These tendencies, which may be seen as a renewal of Joachitic heredity,[6] were sharpened during the French Revolution[7] and renewed in the 1870s.[8] Millenarianism was one of the ways some believers attempted to face, in terms of *historia salutis* and religious certitude, the different revolutions and wars which culminated in the loss of the temporal power and the city of Rome, the seat of the Pope. In this sense, putting aside the social aspect of the movement, Lazzarettism can be seen as a radicalization of these

---

[5] On the social composition of the movement, see Tedeschi, *Per una sociologia*, pp. 49–50, n. 44. One can also see the Marxist interpretation of E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959) chapter 4.

[6] On the contemporary period, see M. Reeves and W. Gould, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

[7] See M. Cafero, *La nuova era. Miti e profezie dell'Italia in rivoluzione* (Genova: Marietti, 1991).

[8] See J. Séguy, "Sur l'apocalyptique catholique," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 41/1 (1976), pp. 165–172; F. Pitocco, "Utopia sociale e rivolta religiosa nel movimento lazzarettista," in Moscato, *Davide Lazzaretti*, pp. 158f.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

apocalyptic tendencies which characterised the history of the Catholic Church in the crucial period between 1861 and 1878, the year in which Pope Pius IX died.[9]

In other words, Lazzarettism for a long time advocated moral reform similar to other legitimist Catholic movements of the period and favored the restoration of the Christian regime.[10] Only in the last phase of his prophetic activity was Lazzaretti condemned as a heretic, as a result of his messianic self-proclamation. These dynamics, which regulated the history of the movement after the death of its founder and the failure of his prophecy, should be kept in mind. Thus, it is not a coincidence that the most important witnesses of this story were two priests, Gian Battista Polverini and Filippo Imperiuzzi. They were allowed by the Catholic authorities to participate in the initial stages of the movement for pastoral and liturgical reasons. Fascinated by the charismatic personality of Lazzaretti, they both recognized him as the Messiah, following him until his tragic death.

On the basis of this historical background, we must now ask the question: how did the movement confront the failure of the prophecy and the death of its founder? From a comparative point of view, we know the types of answers a millenarian movement gives "when the prophecy fails," ranging from collective suicide to the complete dismissal of hope.

In this sense, Lazzarettism offers more than one answer. Perhaps the most original is inscribed in Lazzaretti's particular messianic consciousness, as it crystallized in the last phase of his life. However, this peculiar dynamic, inherent to the messianic system elaborated by Lazzaretti, does not cover all the answers the movement created. We will identify two other ways Lazzarettism survived the crisis: one, official and typical, we will call "the way of memory", a means by which the movement has survived until today. The other, more specific, we will call "the impossibility of passing unharmed through the mourning process". We will illustrate the latter method with an

---

[9] See P. Stella, "Per una storia del profetismo apocalittico cattolico ottocentesco. Da Don Bosco a Pio IX (1870–1873)," *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura religiosa* 4 (1968) pp. 448–469.

[10] This has been correctly underlined by J. Séguy, "Davide Lazzaretti et la secte apocalyptique des Giurisdavidici," *Archives de Sociologie des Religions* 5 (1958), pp. 71–87. One can also see S. Pezzella, "Cultura religiosa e bibbia in David Lazzaretti," in Pazzagli (ed.), *Davide Lazzaretti e il Monte Amiata*, pp. 229–240.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

interesting and previously unpublished document, a biography of Lazzaretti written by Polverini, the Catholic priest who was close to Lazzaretti until his death.[11] After the prophet's death Polverini returned to the Church. Thirty-five years later, however, he decided to search for an answer to a dramatic, troubling question. Was Lazzaretti really an impostor? On the basis of this individual case, it may be possible to shed some light on individual cognitive dissonance which characterises the failure of a prophecy.

Lazzaretti's Struggle with God

Lazzaretti's prophetic message may be found in a series of books, the most important of which was written in France in the spring of 1876: *My Struggle with God or the Book of the Seven Seals.*[12] As the title suggests, the book is divided into two parts. In the same way as Jacob struggled with the angel of God, the first part describes the prophet's struggle with the Lord. Following some visions on earth, and after a celestial journey to the throne of God, Lazzaretti receives the revelation that he is the Christ of the second coming. In his eyes, he represents the human dimension of a God of righteousness, who would destroy mankind but for the merciful intervention of his Son.

The central theme of the first part of the book is God's revelation to Lazzaretti: "I am He who works in you, and you see in me that which is in you [. . .] You are human, but with me your human nature is superhuman in you."[13] Propelled by the divine spirit within him, Lazzaretti is now prepared to reveal himself to humankind.

---

[11] See G.B. Polverini, *Io e Montelabaro: ossia la storia del Misterioso David Lazzaretti sorto nel 1868, scomparso tragicamente dalla scena nel 1878.* This unpublished manuscript is kept in the Italian Institute for the History of the Risorgimento, in Rome. For more information about its discovery, see V.E. Giuntella, "Una fonte importante per la storia di David Lazzaretti e del suo movimento," in *Studi in onore di A. Pincherle*, "Studi e materiali di Storia delle religioni" 38 (1967), pp. 232–244. Dr. Enrica Tedeschi has kindly supplied me with a transcription of the manuscript.

[12] *La mia lotta con Dio ossia il Libro dei Sette Sigilli.* The first edition was published in Arcidosso in 1877; I quote from a reprinted edition by the Giurisdavidic Church, Rome 1955.

[13] "Io sono che opero in te, e tu in me vedi quello che in te non vedi umanamente. Tu umano sei, ma sovrumana è in te con me la tua natura umana" (II, p. 47).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

After another ecstatic experience, which reminds us of Jesus Christ,[14] the new messiah decides to sacrifice himself to succeed in his mission of salvation.[15] Davide then receives a new name for his movement from God: "Giurisdavidici", the right of Davide. Transformed into the New Israel, Lazzaretti becomes the heir of David, the royal messiah of the new age. A journey to the divine throne follows where the apocalyptic Book of the Seven Seals is open, revealing the particular way Lazzaretti is rewriting his *historia salutis*.[16]

Two elements stand out in Davide's description: the revelation of his divine nature and, in turn, the revelation of God's human nature. The book focuses only on one subject: a God who is deeply united with his creature. By means of Davide and his human nature, in a certain sense this God does realise Himself. However, to succeed in this aim, a particular sacrifice is requested: the sacrifice of the new messiah. Thus, already in this book, two years before his tragic death, Lazzaretti is surrounded by a messianic consciousness which presupposes his sacrificial death. In other words, we can assume this type of self-awareness as a key to interpreting the tragic epilogue of Lazzaretti's messianic career. All the feverish events of the last month of his life, which we cannot elaborate on here, suggest that the messiah sacrificed his life, and thereby inaugurated the new era, with a perfectly clear consciousness. Seen in this context, the seeming failure of his death had become "proven proof" that the time of the end had already begun.[17] In this way, the prophet was offering his followers a possible answer to overcome the crisis which followed his death.

In some ways, we can see this messianic pattern as a renewal of the New Testament as an imitation of the life of Jesus Christ (*sequela Christi*). Nevertheless, we must also reinterpret this messianic scenario in the context of Lazzaretti's particular conception of God, emerging from his "struggle with God". The particular conception of a

---

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.
[17] According to the biography of his disciple F. Imperiuzzi, *Storia di David Lazzaretti—Profeta di Arcidosso*, Siena 1905, pp. 451f., when Lazzaretti met the official of Public Security who ordered him to disperse the procession, he turned towards the flag of Christ Prophet, showed it to the official and said with a loud voice: "I go on in the name of Christ Judge and Leader; if you want peace I bring you peace, if you want mercy I bring you mercy, if you want blood, see my breast, I am the victim".

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

God who is realising Himself by the messianic mission of Lazzaretti is typical of nineteenth century religious thought.[18] In this way two premises were laid which allowed for the reinterpretation of the period following his death: a theosophical one, and a progressivist one, which corresponded with the type of Christian socialism that flourished in Italy in the last decades of the century.

The Gnostic-Theosophical Way

Shortly after his death, the destiny of humankind in the final epoch of the seventh seal was interpreted in a positivistic way. In 1881 an anonymous book, *Lazzaro's Revelations*,[19] was published. This text is presented to the reader as a revelation made by the spirit of Lazzaretti[20] to one of the leaders of an American spiritic movement. In a typical syncretistic fashion, we meet spiritism, religion of humankind, and theosophical conceptions. In this post-Christian text, Lazzaretti, viewed as a new Lazarus, continuously involves himself in the history of humankind to facilitate its progress.[21] In a characteristic way, the physical, moral and spiritual world constitute a *unus mundus*, a single world, held up by the same law of gravity. The book describes a program of moral and social reform by which humankind will come to its center, a God who, following the laws of the genre, had been transformed into a divine cosmic Energy.[22]

This reinterpretation of the failed prophecy was not immediately successful. The text assumed a certain level of culture that was prevalent among some of the middle class of the period. However, most of the peasants, who remained the social basis of Lazzarettism, lacked this kind of background. This claim is buttressed by briefly examining the recent history of the movement.[23] In 1953, following some

---

[18] See, for example, G.M. Regozzini, *Auguste Comtes "Religion der Menschheit" und ihre Ausprägung in Brasilien* (Frankfurt an Main: Peter Lang, 1977), also for the spiritual transformation that the positivistic "religion" of Comte has experienced in Brasil.

[19] *Rivelazioni di Lazzaro*. I am quoting from a reprinted edition by the Giurisdavidic Church, Rome, 1961.

[20] On the mediumistic powers of Lazzaretti, see Polverini, *Io e Montelabaro*, pp. 492–493.

[21] See *Rivelazioni di Lazzaro*, pp. 7–8.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[23] See A. Moscato, "Trasformazione e declino del lazzarettismo," in Pazzagli (ed.), *Davide Lazzaretti e il Monte Amiata*, pp. 250–269.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

theosophical-gnostic prophecies of two women, the Lazzarettist church was refounded and eventually recognized by the Italian state. The promoters of this attempt resided in Rome, following the Theosophical society which among other things published a new edition of *Lazzaretti's Revelations*. In the revelations of Elvira Giro, the founder and spiritual leader of this revival, Lazzaretti has been transformed into a forerunner, a John the Baptist who announced a new messiah.

The Way of Memory

The second way attempted by the movement was more traditional.[24] After the founder's death, some Lazzarettists began to record their experiences in a series of autobiographies. Their aims were twofold: first, by imitating the model of their founder, a self-taught man who intensively loved writing, these followers viewed writing as a means of "cultural conquest" and historical documentation. Second, this type of literature, which was mostly destined to remain unpublished, was meant to sustain the faith of the believers.

The memoirs of Filippo Imperiuzzi,[25] a Catholic priest who continued to believe in Lazzaretti even after his tragic death, were different. Unfortunately, we do not know anything about his life from 1878 to the end of the century. In 1904 Imperiuzzi visited the Lazzarettist community of Arcidosso, comprised of the more faithful believers who had left the Catholic Church altogether. In Arcidosso, Imperiuzzi discovered a memorial cult, based on the recital of poems and hymns written by Lazzaretti himself and on a ritual rooted in the memory of his sacrifice, and meditation based on his moral principles.

Not only did Imperiuzzi write an important biography of Lazzaretti with the aid of the disciples, but he also tried to institutionalize the group, following an ecclesiastical model. He established seven "cult rituals": adoration and honor of the unity and trinity of God; adoration of the cross; confession of purification (which replaced the auricular confession); participation at the eucharistic sacrament; honor and praise of the Virgin Mary; and, finally, new praises and songs. In addition, he published a jurisdavidic cathechism,[26] in which he

---

[24] See Tedeschi, *Per una sociologia*, pp. 168f.
[25] See note 16.
[26] *Catechismo giurisdavidico*, 1907.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

established the foundations of the Jurisdavidic faith. Notwithstanding these efforts, the attempt of Imperiuzzi to institutionalize the movement failed.

How Difficult it is to Pass through Mourning Unharmed

The case of Polverini, another Catholic priest who followed the prophet until his tragic death, is different. Compelled by the Holy Office to disavow his faith in Lazzaretti as the Messiah, Polverini began to write his version of the story after the prophet's demise. He attempted to complete his manuscript fifteen or twenty times, and only after his rival, Imperiuzzi, published his book in 1907 did he finally finish his autobiography.[27] His manuscript remained unpublished: at first sight a singular destiny, which can be explained if we think that it is the witness of an unsolved conflict or, better, of the impossibility of elaborating the mourning provoked by the death of the messiah definitively.

Throughout the years, Polverini was preoccupied by the following questions: "Is Davide false? No. Is he true? No. What is he? What solution is there to this dilemma?"[28] Polverini refused to accept the ecclesiastical version of the story that described Lazzaretti as an impostor or an agent of the Devil.

Upon examining Polverini's prophetic experiences before he met Lazzaretti, we find that he had prophetic and visionary experiences which were typical, as we have seen, of the apocalyptic and eschatological climate of those years. Like other Catholics, Polverini also perceived the events of 1870, such as the taking of Rome by the Italian army, as a signal of the advent of the Antichrist—a sign marking the coming of the Messiah. He was furthermore convinced by the visions of one of his penitents, a girl with prophetic gifts. All these signals pointed to Polverini as a man of Providence, chosen to make a fundamental contribution to the liberation of the Church from the yoke of the Antichrist. Thus, when he met Lazzaretti, Polverini was prepared to recognize that this prophetic mission had

---

[27] The final edition began on 18 January 1913 and was finished, with some interruptions on 21 February 1915. See Giuntella, "Cultura religiosa e bibbia in David Lazzaretti," p. 233.

[28] Polverini, *Io e Montelabaro*, p. 323.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

been assigned to Davide. Assigned the task of *unus pastor* (single pastor), Polverini would accompany the monarch of the new age.[29] In this perspective, the failure of Lazzaretti was linked to that of Polverini.

This autobiography reveals the impossible situation of one individual to find a convincing and final answer to a difficult dilemma and to an anguished situation. By deconstructing the story of Lazzaretti and, at the same time, his own story, Polverini tries to rationally explain the extraordinary events in which he had a leading role. In his assessment he does not discuss his own view on whether Lazzaretti was an impostor. Polverini's text seems to be full of ambivalence. Every page denotes the conflict between Polverini as a follower of the Church and Polverini as a believer in the prophetic mission of Lazzaretti.

At the end of his autobiography, in an attempt to conciliate the incompatible, Polverini turns to a typical Catholic category, the mystery of the providential plan of God. "I believe," he writes, "that this mission, which was conducted for ten years in such terrible ways, following the will of God, would finish following at the same time mysterious and interpretable ends. The end of the world was coming."[30] In this eschatological tone, Polverini could explain the Christ-like action of Lazzaretti. Notwithstanding, he acted in conformity with the providential plan of God.

Conclusion

The case of Polverini is a typical example of cognitive dissonance, used by Festinger in his cognitivist theory.[31] The failure of the prophecy and the return of Polverini to the Catholic Church, did not resolve the conflict between his ecclesiastical identity and his faith in the prophetic mission of Lazzaretti as well as his prophetic role. Eliminating this dissonance by trying to abate his prophetic belief was destined to failure. As Polverini himself recognises, it was necessary to find a middle way; as Festinger establishes, in this case

---

[29] On this topic see J. Delumeau, *Mille ans de bonheur* (Paris: Fayard, 1995) pp. 73f.

[30] Polverini, *Io e Montelabaro*, p. 681.

[31] See L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

it was necessary to live in the dissonance, adapting it to the specific context.[32] How? In this perspective, the resort to the mystery, at first sight a banal expedient, reveals its importance. It constitutes that new cognitive element, joined together with the consonant elements, which is capable of modifying the dissonant elements in an acceptable way. Davide presented himself as a man of mystery, that of the unfathomable plan of God. Polverini continued to believe in the reality, if not in the truth, of Lazzaretti's messianic mission without abandoning his traditional faith.

Festinger correctly observes that "it is unlikely that one isolated believer could withstand the kind of disconfirming evidence we have specified."[33] The case of Polverini supports Festinger's argument. At the same time, his autobiography is an attempt to keep two irreconcilable phases of his life together. This attempt is reminiscent of similar attempts by other authors to face their "millenarian" past, characteristic of post-revolutionary autobiographical literature. However, this topic is worthy of additional research and a separate article.

[32] Ibid., p. 17.

[33] L. Festinger, H.W. Riecken and S. Schachter, *When Prophecy Fails. A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) p. 4.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

INDEX OF SUBJECTS AND NAMES[1]

Abba Kolon 136–137 n. 67
Abbasids/Abbasid Dynasty 41–43, 46–48, 50 n. 34, 51 n. 39, 52–66, 69
  Revolts Against 56–58
Abbo of Fleury 300
Abd al-iIah 55
Abdallah b. al-Lahi'a 56
Abdallahi 69
Abraham ha-Levi 184
Abraham, Patriarch 127, 132 n. 55, 162, 271, 358
Abu al-Saraya 57
Abu Bakr 60–61
Abu Muslim al-Khurasani 61
Abu Sufyan 49–51
Abulafia, Abraham 158–185
  Commentary on the Pentateuch 181
  Concept of the End of the World 163–168
  Disclosure of Secrets 178–182, 195
  End Calculations 160–163
  Messianic Mission 176–178
Achim von Arnim 204
Acts of Thomas 253, 254 n. 29
Adam 128, 132 n. 55, 351
Adam of March 278
Adam of Perseigne, Cistercian Abbot 300
Adamawa, Region 75, 77–78
Adso of Montierender, 286, 287 n. 25
  De Ortu et Tempore Antichristi 286
Adventists 352–363, See also:
  Seventh Day Adventists
  Albany Conference 352–354, 358–359
  Survival After the Great Disappointment 206–207, 208, 213–214
Aggression 24–28, 31–32
Aggression-Victim Double 24–26
Agus, A. 262–263
Ahmad b. Hanbal 61
Alabama 333
Alan of Lille 310
Albany Conference, See: Adventists—Albany Conference
Alboin 287 n. 25
Alcuin 297
Alexander Jannaeus 124
Alexander of Hales 294
Alexander, Paul J. 241–242, 244, 255
Alexandria 137 n. 68
Algeria 70
Ali 51, 63
Ali al-Rida 41–42, 50 n. 36, 54 n. 56, 61–67
Alid Groups 51, 57, 59 n. 83, 62 n. 93
Alkabetz, S. 192
Allenby, General 333
Amagushees 152
American Militias 339 n. 33
R. Ami 138
Al-Amin 41, 48, 52–53, 65
Amsterdam 237
An Jun, See: Lord of Darkness
Anabaptists of Münster 75
Angels 193–194, 244–246, 251, 260–261, 329–330
  Archangel Michael 245–247, 260, 330, 366
  Azbogah 252 n. 27
  Metatron 173
  Raziel 174
  Soperi'el 252 n. 27
Anonymous Gallic Chronicle of 452 149–150 n. 50
Anselm of Havelberg 297
Anthropomorphism 93
Antichrist 26, 28, 49, 121 n. 19, 124, 131 n. 52, 142, 144, 151, 270, 272, 286, 288–291, 293, 295–303, 329–330, 334, 370, See also: Christ and Antichrist
Antiochus IV 296
Apocalypse, Definition 156–157, 177
Apocalypse, Moral 256–257
Apocalypse of Anastasia 241 n. 1, 245–267

[1] This index was prepared by Mr. Nittai Shinan of Jerusalem.

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Comparison with *Apocalypse of Paul* 249–254
Concept of Time and Space 258–267
Style of Composition 258–267
Apocalypse of Bahira 59 n. 83
Apocalypse of Baruch 119, 130, 249 n. 22, 253 n. 29, See also: Baruch
Apocalypse of Elijah 137 n. 68, See also: Elijah, Prophet
Apocalypse of Fourth Ezra *119, 130 n. 46, 253 n. 29, See also: Ezra*
Apocalypse of Gorgorios 253 n. 29
Apocalypse of John, See: Revelation
Apocalypse of Mary, See: *Apocalypse of the Theotokos*
Apocalypse of Paul 249–252, 253 n. 29, 254–257, 263 n. 40, 307–309, 311
Apocalypse of Peter 46, 123 n. 22, 253 n. 29
Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius 242, 256, 295–296
Apocalypse of the Theotokos 243, 247, 253, 253 n. 28, 252 n. 29, 256–257
Apocalypse of Zephania 253 n. 29
Apocalypse, Political 256–257
Apocalyptic Discourse 343–350
Apocalyptic Landscape 305–316
River 307, 311–314
Apocalyptic Place, See: Apocalyptic Space
Apocalyptic Prophesies, See: Apocalyptic Visions
Apocalyptic Revolts 3, 14, 42–43, 56–58, 141–142
Apocalyptic Signs 281, 290–294
Apocalyptic Space 188, 193–194, 197, 257–266, 305–328 See also: Apocalyptic Landscape
Hierarchical 318, 320
Horizontal 323–324
Apocalyptic Thought and Eastern Orthodoxy 241–243
Apocalyptic Thought and Logic 348, 351
Apocalyptic Thought and Modernity/ Modern world 336–338
Apocalyptic Thought and Mythology 31–35
Apocalyptic Thought and Nuclear Threats 338–339
Apocalyptic Thought and Paranoia 29–38
Apocalyptic Thought and Science 288–289
Apocalyptic Thought as Answer to Symbolic Breakdown 16, 23, 25–26, 28–40
Apocalyptic Thought in Buddhism 4, 7–14
Apocalyptic Thought in Islam 41–86
Sunni 42, 45, 49–51, 53
Shi'i 42, 45, 47–48, 50–51, 53–54, 56, 60
Apocalyptic Visions 3–5, 6–11, 43–44, 46–48, 51–56, 58, 61–62, 67, 71–74, 85–86, 155–156, 162–163, 169–170, 172–173, 193–194, 218, 246–247, 250–251, 253–254, 283, 306–307, 311, 329–330, 339, 359, 366
Criticism 109–111
Apollinarius of Laodicea 128, 144
Apostolic Brethren 275
Aquinas, Thomas, See: Thomas Aquinas
Aquitiaine, Region 294
Aragon, House of 277
Arcidosso, Village 364, 369
Arees, Synod 281
Arendt, H. 19
Aristobolus II 116 n. 7, 134 n. 60
Aristotle 199, 320
Armenia 44
Arnold of Vilanova 277–278
Ascension or Descension of Christ 149, 319, 321–322
R. Ashi 148
Asian Spirituality 21–22 n. 26, 22 n. 32
Asinou, Village 257 n. 36
Assimilation 23
Assumption Of Moses 130 n. 50
Astrology 44, 292–293
Astronomy 44, 292–293
Augustine 289–300, 293, 330
De Civitate Dei 330
Doctrine of Time 203, 269–271
Augustus 117 n. 11
Aum Shinrikyo, Sect 339 n. 33
Aurelian 136 n. 65
Auschwitz 19
Avignon 281

Ba'al Shem Tov 216, 220, 228
Ba'alei Teshuvah 110, 216 n. 2, 218, 222–236, 238
Babylonian Jews 152–153
Bacon, R. 293

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Baghdad 42, 46 n. 16, 54–56, 63
  Destruction of 55
Bainbridge, W.S. xi
Balda 78
Balfour Declaration 333
Bamberg Apocalypse 311–312, 315
Banu Hashem 47–48, 59 n. 31, 61
Baptists 329
Bar Kochba Revolt 119, 122, 123 n. 22, 129, 137 n. 68
Bar Nazor, See: Odaenathus
Barcelona 278
Basel Zionist Congress 326, 333, See also: Zionism
Basil of Caesarea 144 n. 90
Basil the Younger, Saint 253
Basra 57
Bassari 77
Baumgarten, A. 118
Beatus Manuscript 314–315
Beatus of Liébana 295–297
Becket, T. 15 n. 2
Beguins 275, 277
Belial 28
Benvenuto da Imola 275 n. 18
Berbers 54
Berger, D. 149
Bergmeier, R. 80
Bergson, H. 339
Bernard Gui 277
Bernard of Angers 285
Bernard of Clairvaux 299
Bettelheim, B. 33
Bialik, C.N. 19
Birth 1, 22
Bittner, M. 244
Black Death 15
Blackstone Memorial 327–328
Blackstone, William E. 327–328, 331
  Jesus is Coming 328
Blumenberg, H. 336–339
Bonaventura, Saint 276
Book of Ste Foy's miracles 287
Bornu 75
Bosch 34
Bostanai 153 n. 113
Branch Davidians 343
Breugel 34
Britain, See: England
Buddha/Bodhisattvas 6–12, 14
  Maitreya 7, 10, 12, 14
  Samantabhadra 8
  Sakyamuni 8–9, 10 n. 11
Buddhism 1–14
  Chinese 1–14
  Indian 2
  Monks/Monasteries 7, 12–13
Buie, D.H. 24
Bulgaria 327
Bull, M. 337
Burgess, R. 150
Burke, K. 338
Burke, P. 335–336
Byzantines/Byzantium 46, 54, 151, 241, 247 n. 16, 248–249
  Apocalyptic Traditions 241–245

Calcidius 293
Calvinists 330
Cameron 75
Carinus 136 n. 65
Carlson, C.C. 334
Carolingian Dynasty 293
Catharsis 15–16, 33–34, 36
Catholic Church 363–365, 369–370
Caucasus 70
Celestine V, Pope 276
Central Asia 5
Charlemagne 296–297
Charles II 277
Chernobyl 242
Children of God 343
Christ 26, 28, 122 n. 20, 123, 126, 156, 161, 208, 212, 255, 257, 264, 269, 286, 293–294, 311, 314, 318–319, 322–323, 328–329, 344, 351, 354, 360, 364, 364–367, See also: Jesus
  And Antichrist 26, 28, 49, 286
  In Religious Art 314, 318–319, 332–333
  Incarnation of 123, 132, 212
Church and Empire Wars 272
Cincinnati 360
Circe 314
Clareno, A. 278 n. 32
Clement V, Pope 276
Clement of Alexandria 124 n. 24
Cluny 297
Codex Egberti 319
Cognitive Dissonance 205, 207, 272–273, 341–343, 352, 356, 361
Collins, J. 29, 35
Cologne 299–300
Columbus, C. 301–302
Communist Manifesto 336
Confession 94–95
Confucius/Confucianism 2–3

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Constantinople 145, 149 n. 101, 150 n. 106, 236
Copernicus 288
Corinthians I 17
Council of Trento 364
Covenant 90–91
Creation 90–91, 93
Crete, Messianic Movement 145–146
Crucifixion 124, 126, 133–134, 147, 328
  And Destruction of Jerusalem Temple 126
Curtis, Ernest R. 310
Cyril of Jerusalem 124 n. 24, 142
Cyrus/Cyrus Declaration 123, 134 n. 59, 331

Dagomba, Tribe 77
Dajjal 49
Damascus 43
Damascus Covenant/Document 82, 84, 114 n. 4
Daniel 85–86, 114–115, 118–124, 128–131, 135–136, 155–157, 160–163, 178–179, 182–183, 243, 256, 283, 288, 314, 332, 350, 359
  Seventy Week Scheme 114–115, 118–124, 128–131, 135
Dante 255, 258, 262, 264, 277
Daoism 3–4
Darby, John Nelson 328–329, 331
David 101
Day of Judgment 76, 163–164 257 n. 36, See also: Last Day/s, Last Judgment
Dead Sea Scrolls, See: Qumran Texts
Death 1–2, 15–18, 21–22, 24, 26–31, 33–35, 38, 87–88, 96, 100, 107–109, 194, 204–205, 254, 285–286, 321, See also: Martyrdom
  Triumph over 28–29, 31, 33, 35, 38, 194
Dejihad 70–71, 73, 75–76
Demons/Demonic Thinking 9–10, 25, 30, 37, 48 n. 28
Desymbolization 19–28
  Response to 23–28
Determinism 37
Devil 9, 20, 25–26, 29–30, 201, 337
Dharma 7–8, 10–12
  End of 7–8, 10–12
Di'bil al-Khuza'i 59 n. 84
Diocletian 138
Diocletian, Persecution of Christians 144
Disconfirmation xii–xiii, 16, 39–40, 66–67, 85, 271–273, 276, 280–282, 341–344, 349–362, 365–367, 368
Divine Names 164, 167–176
  Adonay 168, 173
  Change of Meaning 167–176
  Elohim 168–169
  Shadday 173–174
  Tetragrammaton 168–173
  Yah 177
  Yhwh, See: Tetragrammaton
Dolcinates 275–276
Dolcino, Fra. 274, 276 n. 18, 281
Dome of the Rock 295–296, 334
Domitian 296
Donne, J. 20
Dossa, R. 87
Douglas, M. xii
Dov Baer of Miedzyrzec 216
Dov Baer the son of Schneur Zalman of Lyadi 216
Drummer of Nicklashausen 76
Dualism 26, 28, 190–191, See also: Manichaism
Dunhuang Caves 6, 8
Durkheim, E. 16

Earth First Movements 339 n. 33
East Africa 76–77
Eastern Europe 217
Eastern Orthodoxy 242–245, 254
Ecclesiastes 17–18, 35
Edson, H. 356–357, 360–362
Eliade, M. 15
Elijah, Prophet 253 n. 29, 260, 354, See also: *Apocalypse of Elijah*
Emilia, Region in Italy 275
Emir of Ray Bouba 78
End of the World, Calculations of 44–48, 51, 58–62, 67, 71, 84–86, 113–153, 156, 160–163, 167, 193, 270–271, 282, 288, 291–293, 295–298, 302–303, 344–345, 344–345, 348–353
  Rabbinic/Pharisaic 118, 129–139, 148–149
  Skepticism 302–303
End of the World, Spiritual Interpretation of 164–167
Engelbert of Berg 299
England x n. 9, 15, 20, 292, 332, 336
  Elizabethan 20
Enoch 245, 252, See also: *Enoch, Book of*
Enoch, Book of 83, 86, 114, 263 n. 40

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Ephrem the Syrian 142–143
Epiphanius 144 n. 90, 147 n. 96
Epistle of Barnabas 123 n. 22, 130 n. 50
Eretz Israel, See: Land of Israel
Essenes 79–86, 113–119
  Bible Interpretation 81, 84–85
  End Calculations 113–118
  Eschatology 79–85, 113–118
  Messianic Activities 116–117
  Revolt Against Rome 117
Eternity 199–205, 213, 262
  And Modernity 201
Etz Hayim 189, 194–196
Euphrates River 42, 136 n. 67, 314
Eusebius of Caesarea 123, 124 n. 24, 132, 300
Exodus Story as future Redemption 125–128, 133–134, 140, 143–148
Expulsion from Spain, See: Spain—Expulsion from
Ezekiel, Prophet 224, 245
Ezra 252–253, See also: *Apocalypse of Fourth Ezra*

Facundus 314
Al-Fadl b. Sahl 65 n. 111
Far East 1
Ferdinand and Isabela, Rulers of Spain 301
Ferrara 276
Festinger, Leon xi, xiii n. 17, xiv n. 22, 272–273, 280, 341–345, 356, 361, 371–372
  Theory Criticism 341–345, 356, 361
Filastrius of Brescia 141 n. 79, 143
Fitch, C. 352
Florence 20–21, 277
Fo Shuo fa Miejin Jing, See: *Sutra of the Annihilation of the Dharma*
Fombina Emirate 75
Forgiveness 101–102, See also: Repentance
France 294, 332
Francis, Saint 282
Franciscan order 273–278, 282, 297, 301
Frederick II 272, 279–280, 297, 301
Freedom 94, 108
French Revolution 207, 332, 364
Freud, S. 17 n. 7, 37, 211
Friday, Saint 246–247, 249, 251, 252
Fried, J. 346
Froom, Leroy E. 362
Fulbe Nation 70, 72, 74–76
Fundamentalism 331–332, 343, 346, 348

Gadamer, H.G. 211
Galia Raza 189, 192–194, 197
Gallaecia 149
Galus Revolt 141–142
Garden of Eden 193–194
Garwa 77–78
Gaza 152
Gebeno of Ebereach 299
Gell, A. 208, 213
Gematria 160–162, 169, 180
Genesis Rabbah 135 n. 62
Gerard of Borgo San Donnino 274, 278–279
Gerbert of Aurillac 293
Gerhoch of Reichersberg 297
Germany vii, 23, 297, 332, 336, See also: Nazis/Nazi Germany
Gerson, J. 302
Al-Ghazzali 71
Giro, E. 369
Goethe 212, 214
Gog and Magog 291, 301, 329
Golden Calf Worship 142–143
Gonen, J. 19
Goodman, Robert F. 342
Gospels 259
Great Late Planet Earth 334, 338
Great Jewish Revolt Against Rome 119
Great Peace Scripture 3
Great Salt Lake 205
Greenberg, U.Z. 18–19
Gregorius of Nyssa 142, 144 n. 90
Gregory, Disciple of St. Basil the Younger 253
Gregory Nazianzus, See: Gregory of Nyssa
Grossetest, R. 278
Guide of the Perplexed 179
Gulf War 334
Guschiegu 77
Gush Emunim 335

Habad Hassidism, See: Hassidism—Habad
Hadrian 123
Al-Hakim, Khalif 296
Hamburg 237
Hanbal b. Ishaq 58–59

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Harasta, Village 43
Harmon, Elen, See: White, Elen G.
Harthama b. A'yan 62
Hartmann, R. 49
Harun al-Rashid 41, 46–47, 58, 62 n. 95
Hassid 90, 93, 101
Hassidism 184–185, 215–236, 220, 238
  Habad 215–236, 238
    Crown Heights 215
    History 215–220
    Kfar Habad 229
    Kiruv/Missionary Activities 217–218, 229–231
    Messiah Campaign 218–219
    Views about the Rebbe's Death 219–220
  Satmar 217
Haskala Movement 19–20
Hasmoneans/Hasmonean Dynasty 117, 119, 134 n. 60
Hausaland 72, 75
Hayat, Y. 188 n. 3, 195
Heaven 9–10, 200–201, 260–301, 321–322 See also: Paradise
Hegel, G.W.F. 206–207, 210, 241
Heidegger, M. 208–213
Hell 200–201, 245, 255, 260–261 286–289, 320–322
Henoch, See: Enoch
Henry II, King of England (1154–1189) 15
Henry of Harclay 302
Heribert of Cologne, Archbishop 287 n. 25
Herod the Great 116, 117 n. 11, 143
Herrad of Landsberg 290, 297
Heterodoxy/Heterodox Movements 3–4, 6, 14, 84, 113–114
  In China 3–4, 6, 14
Hildegard of Bingen 296, 298
Himes, J. 351–353, 356
Himmelfarb, M. 253
Al-Hindi 46 n. 19
Hippolytus 80 n. 7, 131 n. 50, 131 n. 52, 140 n. 78
Hiskett, M. 73
History 1–3, 5, 15–16, 28–30, 36–37, 66, 84, 113–114, 143, 189, 192, 194, 197, 291
  Chinese Conceptions of 2–3, 5, 11–13
  Historical Crises 15–16
  Meta History 189
Hofstadter, R. 30
Holmes, D. 332–333
Holocaust 19, 199, 211–214, 221
Honorius Augustodunensis 297
Hrabanus Maurus 298
Hugh of Digne 274, 278
Humility 107–108
Hunger, H. 249
Huns 150 n. 104
Husayn b. Hasan al-Aftas 57–58
Husserl, E. 203
Hutchinson, R.C. 205
Hydatius 149–150
Hyrcanus II 116 n. 7, 134 n. 60

Iamblichus 320
Ibn Taba'taba' 56–57
Ibrahim b. al-Mahadi 59 n. 83
Iceland 244
Icons 250–251, 263–267
  Byzantine Images 265–267
Imam/Imams 41, 45 n. 12, 47, 65
  Vanished Imam 65
Imam Mansur 70
Immorality 16, 17–21, 35–39
Imperiuzzi, F. 365, 369
Inclination, Evil 87, 94, 96, 100, 108, 109
India 1, 217, 302
Indian Religion 6
Indiana 217
Innocent IV, Pope 301
Inyanei De-Geulah 232
Iraq 51 n. 42, 57, 65, 334
  War, See: Gulf War
Irenaeus 131 n. 50
Isaiah, Prophet and Book of 28, 134 n. 59, 224, 225 n. 12, 320, 331
Islam 41–86, 295–296
  Sunni 42, 45, 47 n. 21, 49–51
  Shi'i 42, 45, 47–48, 50–51, 53–54, 56–57, 60
Israel, State vii, 218, 229, 327–336
  Restoration of 327–336
Italy 21, 184, 269, 273, 275, 368

Jacob, Patriarch 124, 166, 366
James, Lord's Brother 127
James, M.R. 243–244, 267
James, W. 24
Jendi 77
Jerome 123 n. 22, 124 n. 28, 144 n. 90, 150 n. 105, 289–290, 298

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Jerusalem xii, 117, 125, 144, 150 n. 104, 152, 333
Jerusalem Syndrome ix n. 6
Jerusalem Temple 89, 119–124, 127, 134, 142–144, 293
Destruction of 119–125, 134, 144 n. 90, 148, 151, 188, 293
First 121, 152
New 9 n. 10, 86, 263 n. 40
Rebuilt attempt 142–144
Restoration 196, 334, 350
Jesus x, xiv, 49, 117–118, 123–124, 132–133, 150, 271, 283, 328, See also: Christ
Jesus Christ, See: Christ
Jewish Patriarchate 147
Joachim of Fiore 241, 269–272, 279–280, 293, 297, 299–300
End of the World Calculations 271–272
Joachites 30 n. 56, 273–282, 364
Johanine and Joachite Prophecies 30 n. 56
John XXII, Pope 281
John of Parma 274
John of Pien del Carpine 301
John the Baptist xiv, 369
R. Jonathan 129 n. 44
Jordannes 150 n. 106
Joseph ha-Cohen 187 n. 2
Joseph Gikatilla 168 n. 55
Joseph the Comes 147 n. 96
Josephus 80–81, 121–122, 134 n. 59, 134 n. 60, 144 n. 90
R. Joshua Ben Levi 88–108, 253 n. 29
R. Joshua the Son of Perajah 124
Joshua the Stylite 151
Rav Judah 87, 138
R. Judah Brother of R. Salla the Pious 148
Judah the Patriarch 137 n. 68, 140 n. 79
Julian the Apostate 141 n. 79, 142, 144
Julius Africanus 123, 130 n. 50, 132 n. 55, 145 n. 93
Justice 35–36
Quest of 35–36
Justin Martyr 127 n. 35

Kabbalah 158–198, 220, 231, 236
And Halakah 195–197
Ecstatic 159–160, 173, 175, 177, 220
Of R. Abraham Abulafia 158–185
Kabbalists, Geronese 177
Kano, Region 72
Kant, I. 199, 201, 212–213
Kapitza, S. 22
Karbala, Battle of 42, 49
Karo, J. 189–192, 197
Katz, J. 19
Kepler, J. 288
Khalifat of Sokoto 70, 73, 75–77
Khalwatiyya Order 70
Khazars 54
Khurasan 52–53, 54 n. 56, 63
King of Light, See: Moonlight
Knhol, I. 116
Kohler, W. 311
Kook, Tzvi Y. 335
Kordovero, M. 192
Koselleck, R. 209, 211
Kovar, L. 37
Kovner, A. 214
Kracauer, S. 207
Kufa 54, 56
Kyriades 136 n. 65

Lactantius 140
"Lake City" xiv n. 22, 341–362
Lamentations 191
Land of Israel 134, 152, 191, 193
Landes, R. vii n. 1, viii n. 2, xiii n. 18, xiv n. 20, 35, 140–141
Landscape 306–316
Apocalyptic, See: Apocalyptic Landscape
In Roman Conceptions 309–310
Languages 169–170, 172, 181
Last Day/s 2, 4–5, 284–303, See also: Day of Judgment, Last Judgment
Last Judgment 34, 36, 82, 84, 265, 283–287, 292–293, 303, 316–323, 336, See also: Last Day
In Art 316–323, See also: Day of Judgment, Last Day/s
Lateran IV, Council of 281
Lazzaretti, Davide 363–372
Concept of God 365–366
My Struggle With God, or, the Book of the Seven Seals 366–368
Revelations 368–369
Lazzarettism 364–372
Overcoming Disappointment 365–366, 370–371
Leghorn 237

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Lemlein, A. 184
Letter of Our Lord that Fell from the Sky 244, 251, 256–257
R. Levi 136 n. 67
Lewis, B. 69
Libanius 309
Liebes, Y. 183
Life of Pachomios 253 n. 29
Lifton, R., Paradigm of Symbolic Immorality 15–40
Lindsey, H. 334, 338, 348
Locke, J. 211
Locus Amoenus 309–310
Lombard, P. 294, 297–299
Lord of Darkness 11
Lorenzo de Medici 21
Louis, Saint 274
Löwith, K. 336–337
Lucius III, pope 300
Luke 292
Luther, M. 90, 92–93, 102
Lutherans 330

Macrinus 136 n. 65
Macrobius 293
Al-Mada'in 57
Madelung, W. 49
Magdalen in Vézélay, Saint 293
Magdalino, P. 244, 255
Maggid Meisharim 189
Magic 104
Magu 77
Mahdi/Mahdism 46–53, 57, 62–64, 69–78
  In Africa 69–78
Maimonides 229
Maji Maji Uprising 76
Malam al-Hadjdji 78
Malam Musa 77
Malam Wadai 78
Maltsberger, J.T. 24
Al-Mamun 41, 48, 50 n. 36, 52–54, 56, 58 n. 78, 59–60, 62–63, 65–67
Manaemus the Essene 116–117, 118 n. 16
Mango, C. 244, 255
Manichaeism 11–12, 26
Mar Zutra 152–153
Mar Zutra, Young 154
Maratta 69
Marcellinus Comes 150 n. 106
Marranos 236–239
Marriage 81
Martin, B.G. 74
Martyrdom 98–100, 106, 107, 108, 110–111
Martyrs of Cordoba 295–296
Marwa 78
Marx and Marxism 22, 241
Mary, Mother of Christ 245–246, 252, 253 n. 30, 254, 257, 318, 363, 369, See also: *Apocalypse of the Theotokos*
Matthew 271, 294, 323, 352–353
McGinn, B. 21, 36
McLuhan, H.M. 39
Mctaggart, J. and E. 208
Mecca 42, 58, 65, 78
Mecca Letters 77
Medina 42, 43 n. 6, 57
Meeks, W. ix
Meissner, W.W. 24–25, 27, 40
Mekilta 133
Mekka, See: Mecca
Melancholy 20
Melanesia 76
Melito of Sardis 126
Merlin 293
Merovingian Dynasty 295
Merv 56, 61
Messianism/Messiahs 3–5, 22, 42–43, 45, 51–52, 56–57, 60, 62–64, 67, 69, 71, 75, 84, 113, 117, 130 n. 46, 134, 141–142, 145–146, 156–159, 163, 166–167, 170, 174–177, 179, 182–185, 188, 197, 218–220, 230–239, 256 n. 34, 365–368, 370
  And Change of Structures 187–197
  And Marginalization of Traditional Hierarchies 230–239
  Ben Joseph 87–88, 108–109
  Death of 87–88, 108–109
  Definition by Abraham Abulafia 159
  From the House of Aaron 84, 117
  In Islam, See: Mahadi/Mahdism
  Of the Rabbis 129–149
  Spiritual 157–158, 166–167
Metakharakterismos 248–249
Middle East Wars 335, 339
Midrash 89–111
Millenarian Movements vii–xiv, 273–282, 295–296, 339 n. 33, 341–372
  Disconfirmation xii–xiv
  Stages of Development ix–xiv
  "Upping the Ante" x–xiii

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Miller, William 344, 350–353
Millerite Movement 337, 344–362
  End Calculations 351–353
  Great Disappointment and its Aftermath 353–362
Ming Dynasty 14
Ming Wang, See: King of Light
Minorcan Jews Conversion to Christianity 145–146
Minorities (Friars) 274
Mishna 196, 228
Mishnat Yehudah 195
Mishne Torah 229
Missionary Activities xi, xiv n. 22, 176–178, 217–219, 229–230, 273–288, 341, 343, 345, 351–352
  And Religious Immigrants 215–219
  As an Answer to Failed Prophecies/ Cognitive Dissonance 273, 276–288, 341
Moddibo Adama 75
Molcho, S. 200
Mongols 301
Montana Freemen 355
Moonlight 7, 10 n. 11, 11–12, 14
Moses 125 n. 30, 167, 174, 252, 253 n. 29, 317
Mosque of Omar 330, See also: Dome of the Rock
Mount Zion 117, 331
Mudjaddid 7–721, 74–75
Muhammad al Baqir 45 n. 12, 47, 52–53
Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya 43 n. 6, 64
Muhammad b. Ibrahim 54
Muhammad b. Ja'far al-Sadiq 57
Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Zayd 57
Muhammad Bello 69, 76
Muhammad, Prophet 41, 45, 48, 49 n. 32, 54, 56–57, 60, 65, 295–296
  As Perceived by Christians 295–296
Muqatil b. Sulayman 50, 55 n. 60
Mysticism/Mystic Cults 21, 167, 185
Mythologization 31–32

Nana Asma'u 76
Naples 278
Naples, House of 277
Narbonne, Province 276
Nazis/Nazi Germany 23, 27, 206
Near East 135, 296
Neher, A. 182
Neoplatonism 199, 320
Nero 121 n. 19, 296
Nerva 123 n. 22
Neusner, J. 149
New Earth xiii
New Guinea 76
New Heaven xiii
New Jerusalem, See: Jerusalem—New
New Man: See Old Man/New Man
New World 9
Newton, I. 288–289, 346
Nigeria 69
Nishapur 63
Noah 257
Norbert of Xanten 299
Noyes John Humphrey Oneida Commune 354
Nu'aym b. Hammad 48–49, 55 n. 60, 58, 67

Odaenathus, Palmyrene Nobleman 136 n. 65
Odoacer 150 n. 106
Odysseus 314
Old Man/New Man 102–105, 107
O'Leary, S. 338
Oresme, N. 302
Orosius 145 n. 99
Otto of Freising 297–299
Ottoman Empire 192
Otzar 'Eden Ganuz 166, 171, 176, 179–180
Oxford 302

Palestine 51, 327–329, 331, 333–334
Palmyrenes 135, 136 n. 65, 137 n. 68
Panodorus 146 n. 93
Paradise 9–10, 193–194, 258, 261, 287
Paranoids/Paranoia 24–29, 30–31, 34–38
  Grandiosity 37–38
  Litigious 36
Paris 278–279
  University 274
Parma 275–276, 281
Parousia, See: Second Advent of Christ
Pascha, Week of 246
Passover Haggada 126–127
Patlagean, E. 244
Patricius 142
Paul, Apostle, 245, 251–252, 254, 264, 290, 328, 330, See also: *Apocalypse of Paul*

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Pentecost 246
Persia/Persian Empire 46 n. 17, 135, 136 n. 65, 151–152, 242
  Persecution of Jews 151–152
Pesher Habbakuk 85–86, 115
Pesher Nahum 115
Peter II 130, 351
Peter, Apostle 245, 252, See also: Apocalypse of Peter
Peter Comestor 298
Petronius 310
Petrus Johannis Olivi 277, 281
Pharisees 118–119, 125
Pico della Mirandola 21
Pictures/Pictoral Setting Of Apocalypse 306–320
Piedmont 276 n. 18
Pierre d'Ailly, Cardinal 297, 300
Pius IX, Pope 365
Plato/Platonism 155, 210, 214, 258, 323
  Platonism 203–204, 210, See also: Neoplatonism
Pliny the Elder 79, 291
Plymouth Brethren 329
Podskalsky, G. 255
Pompey 134 n. 59
Potter, D. 136
Premillenarism 331
Premonstratensian Order 297
Presbyterians 331
Priestly, J. 346
Protestantism 327–336, 343–372
  And Jewish State Restoration 327–336
Provence 281
Psalms 83, 88–106, 130, 250 n. 23, 257, 263, 333
Purgatory 258, 286, 294
Puritans 331
Puxian Pusa Shuo Zhengming Jing, See: *Sutra of the Realization of Understanding*

Qadiriyya Order 70
Al-Qa'im, Abbasid Khalif 69
Qa'im, See: Mahady
Qasr al-Durratayn 56 n. 69
Qing Dynasty 14
Quietus 136 n. 65
Qumran Texts 27, 29, 79–86, 113–119

Rabula Gospel 319
Rafi' b. Layth Revolt 46 n. 17
Raqqa 46
Rav 131 n. 51
Ravenna 271 n. 21
Reagan, R. 343
Rebirth 23–24, 26–27, 32
Redemption x–xi, 23, 29, 35, 47, 125, 141, 148, 153, 158, 165, 167, 173, 175–176, 182, 185, 188–189, 191–192, 195, 219–220, 231–235, 255–256, 283, 286
  Collective 255–256
  Individual 255–256
Reeves, M. 279–280
Religious Immigration 215, 217–218, 222–223, 225–239, See also: Ba'alei Teshuvah
Remorse 94
Repentance 94–111, See also: Ba'alei Teshuva
  Collective 105
Resurrection 80, 246
Revelation 4, 28–29, 34, 89, 119, 130, 140, 243, 270–271, 283, 288, 302, 307–308, 315, 321, 328–329, 334, 337
Richard the Lionheart 300
Ricold of Montecroce 301
Riecken H.W. xiii n. 17, xiv n. 22, 272, 342
Righteous 87, 90, 101, See also: Hassid
Robert II 294
Robertson, P. 343
Romagna, Province 275
Rome/Roman Empire 99, 115–116, 119, 121 n. 19, 122, 133–139, 143, 145, 150–151, 291, 295, 309, 330
  Destruction of 136–139
  Fall of 150–151 n. 106
  Foundation 136–137 n. 67
  Last Emperor Myth 291, 295, 330
  Sack of 145
Rome, Medieval and Modern City 174, 281, 363–364, 369–370
  Taken by the Italians 363
Romulus 151 n. 106
Romulus Augustulus 151 n. 106
Rupert of Deutz 297
Russia 216, 242

Sabbateanism/Sabbatean Movement 169, 184–185, 216, 235–237
Sacrifice 88–92, 94, 101, 106
Sacrifice of Isaac 126–127 n. 34

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Sadducees 80
Safed 191
Al-Saffah 50 n. 34, 69
Saints and Saints Cults 246–247, 249, 253, 287
Salaga 77
Salimbene de Adam of Parma 274, 275 n. 17, 278, 281
Salonika, See: Thessaloniky
Salvation 7, 22, 35–36, 260, 286, 307, 321–322, 367
Samuel, Amora 138
Samuel b. Nahmani 129 n. 44
Satan 26, 288, 329
Satmar Hassidic Movement, See: Hassidism—Satmar
Savonarola 20–21
Schachter, S. xiv n. 22, 17, 272, 342
Schatz-Uffenheimer, R. 185
Scheff, T. 33
Schmemann, A. 243
Schneerson, Menachem Mendel xi n. 12, 215–221, 231–233
Schneerson, Yosef Yitzchok 216, 221, 233
Schneur Zalman of Lyadi 216, 229, 231
Scholem, G. 182–185, 236–237
Scofield, S. 333
Scripture of the Monk Shouluo 8–9, 11–12
Sea of Galilee 20
Second Advent of Christ, 4, 124, 131–132, 140–141, 149, 255, 270, 283–284, 294
Second Coming of the Lord, See: Second Advent of Christ
Seder Olam Rabbah 121, 132 n. 55, 133
Seder Olam Zuta 154 b. 113
Sedulius Scottus 285, 294
Sefer ha-'Edut 160, 175 n. 87
Sefer ha-'Ot 163, 169, 177
Sefer ha-Temunah 189, 192
Sefer Gan Na'ul 161
Sefer *Sha'arei Tzedeq* 172–173
Sefer Yetzira 162, 175
Segarelli, G. 275–276
Sephirot 192–193
Septimus Severus 124 n. 28, 137 n. 68
Serbia 327
Serekh ha-Jachad 84
Sevcenko, I. 244
Seventh Day Adventist Church 344–345, 354, 359, 361
Severus, Minorcan Bishop 146
Shabbatai zvi XIII n. 17, 235–236, 239
Al Shafi'i 71
Shakers 343, 354, 362
Sharot, S. 237–239
Shekhinah and Keliphah 190–191, 193–194
Sherirah Gaon Epistle 152
Shouluo biqiu Jing, See: *Scripture of the Monk Shouluo*
Shouluo Jing, See: *Scripture of the Monk Shouluo*
Sibylline Oracle 135–137
Sicily 175, 296
Siffin, Battle of 51
Signs of the End ix–x, 130
Simeon Bar Yohay 194
Simon of St. Quentin 301
Simplicius 319, 320 n. 23
Sin, Knowledge of 102
Sin, Original 95, 97, 103
Sin, Victory Over 99–104
Sinners 87, 92–93, 94–98
Sitra Ahra 190, 193
Six Day War 335
Six Thousand Years World 131–133
Smyrna 237
Snow, S. 353–355, 362
Socrates Scholasticus 146
Sokoto Khalifat, See: Khalifat of Sokoto
Solar Templars 339 n. 33
Solomon, King 48 n. 28
Somalia 77
Soul After Death 200–201, 286
Space, See: Apocalyptic Space 258–267
  Sacred 317–319
Spain 58, 149, 184, 187–188, 195, 292, 295–296, 301, 311, 315
  Expulsion from 184, 187–188, 195
  Muslim 58
  Mozarabic 315
  Muslim Conquest of 295
Spirituality 157–158, 167
  Sufi 157
Stark, R. xi
Steudel, A. 113
Storras, G. 360
Sudan 71–72, 74, 77–78
  Eastern 78
  Western 71–72, 74, 77
Sufyani 46, 49–52, 54 n. 56, 55, 60,

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

See also: Abu-Sufyan
Historical 51–52
Suicide/Suicidal Person 16, 20, 22, 24–26, 38
Sunday, Saint 246, 249, 251–252
Sutra of the Annihilation of the Dharma 7–8, 11 n. 13
Sutra of the Realization of Understanding 8–13
Al-Suyuti 71, 74
Syria 41, 44, 51–52, 117

Al-Tabari 58 n. 78
Taborites viii, 30 n. 56
Tahir b. al-Husayn 54, 56 n. 65
Taiping Jing, See: *Great Peace Scripture*
Talmon, S. 113, 181
Talmud 87–111, 148, 151, 228, 231
Tanchelm 75
Tanganika 77
Tanya 229
Taubes, J. vii, xv, 241, 267
Abendländische Eschatologie 241
Teacher of Righteousness 85
Temple of Jerusalem, See: Jerusalem Temple
Tertullian 131 n. 50
Testament of Isaac 253 n. 29
Theodora, the Serving Maid of St. Basil the Younger 253–254
Thessalonians I 329
Thessalonians II 289
Thessaloniki 237, 265, 328
Third Age of the Spirit 364
Thomas, Apostle 253
Thomas Aquinas 284, 287, 291–293, 299
Thrace 150 n. 104
Tiberianus 309
Tiberias 152
Tiburtine Sybill 295, 330
Tikkunei Zohar 178, 194
Timaeus 137 n. 68
Time And Memory 210, 212–214
Time, Chinese Conception of 1–2, 9–12
Time, Cyclical 1–2, 8
Time, Historic 206, 209–210
Time, Inner 87–111
Time, Linear 1–2, 199–200, 208–209, 212–214
Time, Loss of 91, 96–102, 107, 199–200, 212
Time, Martyrial 98–100
Time, Normal and Abnormal 199–214
Time Of the End 157, 160–162, 169–170, 178–181, 195, 199–200, 208–209
Time, Tense 94, 96–101, 107, 108, 109–111, 199–202, 208–209, 213–214
Tishby, I. 184–185
Titus 144 n. 90
Togo 77
Torah 83, 132 n. 55, 190, 195–196, 228, 233
Torodbe, Tribe 69
Totalism 22–23, 25
Tours to the Other World 246–247, 249–256, 258–263
Tower of Babel 170
Tschakossi, Tribe 77
Turkey 191
Turks 54
Tus 41, 46 n. 17
Tuscany 363
Tusita Heaven 10
Tyconius 289–290
Tzemach Tzedek, Third Habad Rebbe 231

Ulama 72, 76
Corrupt 72
Umar II, Khalif 71
Umar b. al-Khattab, Khalif 54–55, 60–61
Umayyad Dynasty 41–42, 43 n. 3, 49–51, 54, 71
Umm Hani Bint Muhammad Al-'Abdusi 72
United States 21 n. 26, 327–330, 332, 334, 344
Usman Dan Fodio 69–76
Ussher, Bishop 351
U.S.S.R. 22

Varro 137 n. 68
Varus, Governor of Syria 172
Vespasian 122
Victims and Victimization 18, 22–32
Vienna, Siege of 242
Virgil 325
Virgin Mary, See: Mary, mother of God
Vital, H. 189, 195–197
Volpe, G. 279

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Waco Incident 339 n. 33
Wadai Kingdom 78
Wahhabi Movement 70
Walid b. Muslim 43
War Rule 116–117
Wasit 57
Weber/Weberianism 346, 348
Wednesday, Saint 246–247, 249, 252
Wenders, W. 201
Werblowsky, Z. 185
Westermann, D. 77
Wings of Desire, Film 199
White, Ellen G. 354, 359–360, 362
White, J. 354
White Russia 216
Wilson, W. 328, 331
Witztum, E. 33
Women 13, 72, 76, 253–254, 354, 359–360
World War II 205–206
Wu Zetian, Empress 13
Yazid I, Khalif 49
Yahya b. 'Abd al-Hamid al-Hamani 59 n. 80
Yemen 58
R. Yohanan 136 n. 65
Yom Kippur War 331
R. Yossi 121
Yuan Dynasty 14
Yueguang, Bodhisattva, See: Moonlight

Zanzibar 77
Zayd b. 'Ali 56 n. 69
Zechariah 87, 109
Zhengming Ming, See: *Sutra of the Realization of the Understanding*
Zimmerman, Captain 78
Zion 89, See also: Mount Zion
Zionism 20, 221, 331–335, 338
Ziyad al-Din al-'Iraqi 71
Zoara 152
Zohar 158, 183, 189–190, 194–196

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

CONTRIBUTORS

Aharon R. E. Agus
Hochschule für jüdische Studien, Friedrichstrasse 9, D69117 Heidelberg, Germany

Moshe Barasch
10 Rabbi Binyamin, Jerusalem, Israel

Albert I. Baumgarten
Department of Jewish History, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel 52900

Jane Baun
Department of History, New York University, 53 Washington Square South New York, NY 10012–1098, USA

David Cook
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of Chicago Chicago, IL 60637, USA

Rachel Elior
Department of Jewish Philosophy, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel 91905

Giovanni Filoramo
Via L. Spallanzani 26, I10134 Torino, Italy

Johannes Fried
Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, Historisches Seminar, Senckenberganlage 31, Postfach 11 19 32, D60054 Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Moshe Hazani
Department of Criminology, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel 52900

Peter Heine
Center for Modern Oriental Studies, Prenzlauer Promenade 149–152, D13189 Berlin, Germany

Moshe Idel
Department of Jewish Philosophy, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel 91905

Oded Irshai
Department of Jewish History, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel 91905

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

Hans G. Kippenberg
Fachbereich 9, Universität Bremen, P.O. Box 330440, D28334 Bremen, Germany

Gabriel Motzkin
Department of History, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel 91905

Steven D. O'Leary
Annenberg School for Communications, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089–1694, USA

Hubert Seiwert
Religionswissenschaftliches Institut, Augustusplatz 9, D04109 Leipzig, Germany

Annette Steudel
Theologische Fakultät, Universität Göttingen, Platz der Göttinger Sieben 2, D37073 Göttingen, Germany

Adam Jacob Szubin
698 Forest Avenue, Teaneck, NJ 07666, USA

Emmanuel Wardi
5 Hannania Street, Jerusalem, Israel 93106

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS
NUMEN BOOK SERIES

31 C. J. Bleeker, G. Widengren & E. J. Sharpe (eds.). *Proceedings of the 12th International Congress, Stockholm 1970.* 1975. ISBN 90 04 04318 7
32 A.-Th. Khoury (ed.), M. Wiegels. *Weg in die Zukunft.* Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Anton Antweiler zu seinem 75. Geburtstag. 1975. ISBN 90 04 05069 8
33 B. L. Smith (ed.). *Hinduism.* New Essays in the History of Religions. Repr. 1982. ISBN 90 04 06788 4
34 V. L. Oliver, *Caodai Spiritism.* A Study of Religion in Vietnamese Society. With a preface by P. Rondot. 1976. ISBN 90 04 04547 3
35 G. R. Thursby. *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India.* A Study of Controversy, Conflict and Communal Movements in Northern India, 1923-1928. 1975. ISBN 90 04 04380 2
36 A. Schimmel. *Pain and Grace.* A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-century Muslim India. 1976. ISBN 90 04 04771 9
37 J. T. Ergardt. *Faith and Knowledge in Early Buddhism.* An Analysis of the Contextual Structures of an Arahant-formula in the Majjhima-Nikāya. 1977. ISBN 90 04 04841 3
38 U. Bianchi. *Selected Essays on Gnosticism, Dualism, and Mysteriosophy.* 1978. ISBN 90 04 05432 4
39 F. E. Reynolds & Th. M. Ludwig (eds.). *Transitions and Transformations in the History of Religions.* Essays in Honor of Joseph M. Kitagawa. 1980. ISBN 90 04 06112 6
40 J. G. Griffiths. *The Origins of Osiris and his Cult.* 1980. ISBN 90 04 06096 0
41 B. Layton (ed.). *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism.* Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, New Haven, Conn., March 28-31, 1978. Two vols.
1. *The School of Valentinus.* 1980. ISBN 90 04 06177 0
2. *Sethian Gnosticism.* 1981. ISBN 90 04 06178 9
42 H. Lazarus-Yafeh. *Some Religious Aspects of Islam.* A Collection of Articles. 1980. ISBN 90 04 06329 3
43 M. Heerma van Voss, D. J. Hoens, G. Mussies, D. van der Plas & H. te Velde (eds.). *Studies in Egyptian Religion, dedicated to Professor Jan Zandee. 1982.* ISBN 90 04 06728 0
44 P. J. Awn. *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption.* Iblīs in Sufi Psychology. With a foreword by A. Schimmel. 1983. ISBN 90 04 06906 2

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

45 R. Kloppenborg (ed.). *Selected Studies on Ritual in the Indian Religions.* Essays to D. J. Hoens. 1983. ISBN 90 04 07129 6
46 D. J. Davies. *Meaning and Salvation in Religious Studies.* 1984. ISBN 90 04 07053 2
47 J. H. Grayson. *Early Buddhism and Christianity in Korea.* A Study in the Implantation of Religion. 1985. ISBN 90 04 07482 1
48 J. M. S. Baljon. *Religion and Thought of Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī, 1703-1762.* 1986. ISBN 90 04 07684 0
50 S. Shaked, D. Shulman & G. G. Stroumsa (eds.). *Gilgul.* Essays on Transformation, Revolution and Permanence in the History of Religions, dedicated to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky. 1987. ISBN 90 04 08509 2
51 D. van der Plas (ed.). *Effigies Dei.* Essays on the History of Religions. 1987. ISBN 90 04 08655 2
52 J. G. Griffiths. *The Divine Verdict.* A Study of Divine Judgement in the Ancient Religions. 1991. ISBN 90 04 09231 5
53 K. Rudolph. *Geschichte und Probleme der Religionswissenschaft.* 1992. ISBN 90 04 09503 9
54 A. N. Balslev & J. N. Mohanty (eds.). *Religion and Time.* 1993. ISBN 90 04 09583 7
55 E. Jacobson. *The Deer Goddess of Ancient Siberia.* A Study in the Ecology of Belief. 1993. ISBN 90 04 09628 0
56 B. Saler. *Conceptualizing Religion.* Immanent Anthropologists, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories. 1993. ISBN 90 04 09585 3
57 C. Knox. *Changing Christian Paradigms.* And their Implications for Modern Thought. 1993. ISBN 90 04 09670 1
58 J. Cohen. *The Origins and Evolution of the Moses Nativity Story.* 1993. ISBN 90 04 09652 3
59 S. Benko. *The Virgin Goddess.* Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology. 1993. ISBN 90 04 09747 3
60 Z. P. Thundy. *Buddha and Christ.* Nativity Stories and Indian Traditions. 1993. ISBN 90 04 09741 4
61 S. Hjelde. *Die Religionswissenschaft und das Christentum.* Eine historische Untersuchung über das Verhältnis von Religionswissenschaft und Theologie. 1994. ISBN 90 04 09922 0
62 Th. A. Idinopulos & E. A. Yonan (eds.). *Religion and Reductionism.* Essays on Eliade, Segal, and the Challenge of the Social Sciences for the Study of Religion. 1994. ISBN 90 04 09870 4
63 S. Khalil Samir & J. S. Nielsen (eds.). *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258).* 1994. ISBN 90 04 09568 3
64 S. N. Balagangadhara. *'The Heathen in His Blindness...'* Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religion. 1994. ISBN 90 04 09943 3
65 H. G. Kippenberg & G. G. Stroumsa (eds.). *Secrecy and Concealment.* Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10235 3

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

66 R. Kloppenborg & W. J. Hanegraaff (eds.). *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions.* 1995. ISBN 90 04 10290 6
67 J. Platvoet & K. van der Toorn (eds.). *Pluralism and Identity.* Studies on Ritual Behaviour. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10373 2
68 G. Jonker. *The Topography of Remembrance.* The Dead, Tradition and Collective Memory in Mesopotamia. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10162 4
69 S. Biderman. *Scripture and Knowledge.* An Essay on Religious Epistemology. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10154 3
70 G. G. Stroumsa. *Hidden Wisdom.* Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10504 2
71 J. G. Katz. *Dreams, Sufism and Sainthood.* The Visionary Career of Muhammad al-Zawâwî. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10599 9
72 W. J. Hanegraaff. *New Age Religion and Western Culture.* Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10695 2
73 T. A. Idinopulos & E. A. Yonan (eds.). *The Sacred and its Scholars.* Comparative Methodologies for the Study of Primary Religious Data. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10623 5
74 K. Evans. *Epic Narratives in the Hoysaḷa Temples.* The Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Bhāgavata Purāṇa in Haḷebīd, Belūr and Amṛtapura. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10575 1
75 P. Schäfer & H. G. Kippenberg (eds.). *Envisioning Magic.* A Princeton Seminar and Symposium. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10777 0
77 P. Schäfer & M. R. Cohen (eds.). *Toward the Millennium.* Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11037 2
78 A. I. Baumgarten, with J. Assmann & G. G. Stroumsa (eds.). *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience.* 1998. ISBN 90 04 10943 9
79 M. Houseman & C. Severi. Naven *or the Other Self.* A Relational Approach to Ritual Action. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11220 0
80 A. L. Molendijk & P. Pels (eds.). *Religion in the Making.* The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11239 1
81 Th. A. Idinopulos & B. C. Wilson (eds.). *What is Religion?* Origins, Definitions, & Explanations. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11022 4
82 A. van der Kooij & K. van der Toorn (eds.). *Canonization & Decanonization.* Papers presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR) held at Leiden 9-10 January 1997. 1999. ISBN 90 04 11246 4
83 J. Assmann & G. G. Stroumsa (eds.). *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions.* 1999. ISBN 90 04 11356 8
84 J. G. Platvoet & A. L. Molendijk (eds.). *The Pragmatics of Defining Religion.* Contexts, Concepts & Contests. 1999. ISBN 90 04 11544 7
85 B. J. Malkovsky (ed.). *New Perspectives on Advaita Vedānta.* Essays in Commemoration of Professor Richard De Smet, SJ. 2000. ISBN 90 04 11666 4

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access

86 A.I. Baumgarten (ed.). *Apocalyptic Time.* 2000. ISBN 90 04 11879 9
87 S. Hjelde (ed.). *Man, Meaning, and Mystery.* Hundred Years of History of Religions in Norway. The Heritage of W. Brede Kristensen. 2000. ISBN 90 04 11497 1

ISSN 0169-8834

Albert I. Baumgartner - 978-90-47-40056-1
Downloaded from Brill.com11/09/2020 12:09:12PM
via free access