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The Roots of Apocalypticism in Near Eastern Myth

Richard J. Clifford, S.J.
Weston Jesuit School of Theology.

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE AS SUCH IS NOT FOUND IN THE period covered by this article (the third to mid-first millennia in the ancient Near East) but chiefly in the period from the third century B.C.E. to the second century C.E., and, in some Christian circles, down to the Middle Ages. The ancient roots of apocalyptic literature, however, can be traced to far earlier literature of the ancient Near East (back to the late third millennium). Its early history is not merely of antiquarian interest, but illuminates the purpose and rhetoric of mature apocalyptic works. These latter works fall within a venerable tradition of theological and philosophical reflection on divine and human governance, a kind of ancient "political theory." Read apart from their literary history, works such as the books of Daniel and Revelation, *1 Enoch*, 4 Ezra, and *2 Baruch* can appear to modern readers as bizarre in imagery and confusing in logic.

The first modern scholar to have seriously attempted to trace the roots of apocalyptic literature in ancient texts was Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932), whose *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 and Ap Joh 12* appeared in 1895. He belonged to the history-of-religions school, or *religionsgeschichtliche Schule,* which champi-

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oned autonomous historical-critical scholarship and insisted that the Bible be seen against its environment. Gunkel argued that Genesis 1 and Revelation 12 consisted of "basically the same material, which [in Revelation] surfaces a second time, but in a different form. In the ancient instance it is the myth of *Urzeit*, which travels from Babylon to the Bible, in the new a prediction concerning the *Endzeit*" (p. 398).

His book demonstrated that Genesis 1 and Revelation 12 were not free compositions of their authors but adaptations of traditions from outside, ultimately from Babylon. He concluded that the combat myth entered Israelite literature in the monarchic period, rather than in the patriarchal era or the Babylonian Exile, the periods of borrowing suggested by earlier scholars. It is a mark of Gunkel's genius that with the little material available to him he did not simply list motifs and themes but concentrated his attention on the one *Gattung* (the combat myth) that included so much else: the *Urzeit* ("primal time") *Endzeit* ("end-time") equation, creation and new creation, the monster symbolizing evil, and divine kingship. Gunkel's pioneering work retains its usefulness despite its obvious deficiencies: he had access to only a fraction of the Akkadian texts now available and knew nothing of the combat myth in the Canaanite texts from Ugarit (first discovered in 1929); he had a romanticist tendency to overstress origins as explanation and undervalue reception and particular usage.

Later scholars have been able to make use of the Ugaritic texts, which are closely related to early Biblical Hebrew and are composed in the same poetic tradition, as well as the enormous amount of Sumerian and Akkadian literature unearthed and published since Gunkel. It is now possible to chart the history of relevant genres, motifs, and themes in a variety of works over many centuries. In particular, scholars can describe the interaction of Canaanite and early Israelite traditions and sketch the inner-biblical development that led to fully developed apocalyptic works such as Daniel and Revelation. A number of points are still under discussion. These include the way in which traditions from Mesopotamia came into Canaan as well as the date and extent of their influence and the inner-biblical sources of apocalyptic literature.

This article is selective, examining in the early literature only those genres, motifs or recurrent elements, and ideas that were important in the later mature apocalyptic works. Among the genres, the most important by far is the combat myth, for it provided not only imagery but also a conceptual framework for explaining divine rule over the world. Other genres are the *vaticinia ex eventu* ("prophecies after the fact") found in some Akkadian texts, and the

dream vision (though the relevance of the specifically Akkadian form of this last genre is disputed). Among the recurrent elements are the divine assembly under the high god responding to a major threat, cosmic enemies portrayed as monsters, various heavenly beings, divine decrees or secret knowledge, and a sage-mediator of heavenly knowledge. Among the topics are explorations of the nature of evil and new creation or restoration of the original order.

MESOPOTAMIA

History and Religion

The course of Mesopotamian history shows two impulses, one toward local rule exemplified in the city-states, and the other, more sporadic, toward large and complex political systems aimed at dominating large areas. The first period for which there is a record is the Early Dynastic (2900–2350 B.C.E.), a period when families ruled various cities. The Akkadian and Ur III dynasties at the end of the third millennium represent a shift from city-state to nation-state. The Akkadian system, in contrast to the earlier Sumerian system, featured a centralized state around king and court. Though Sumerian and Akkadian languages and populations were distinct, the culture itself was a common Mesopotamian one.

In the second millennium, Mesopotamia became divided into two geopolitical regions, Babylonia and Assyria. From the eighteenth century B.C.E. to the end of the millennium, Babylon and Assyria were the two great nation-states. Babylon and Assyria were international in ambition and contacts, and their fortunes unfolded in an international context. Northern Syria came into the picture as its coastal cities—Ugarit, Byblos, Tyre—rose to prominence. Northwest Mesopotamia became a meeting point of Mesopotamian and Levantine culture. The essentially cooperative international atmosphere was ended, however, by population movements in the last two centuries of the second millennium. The dominant empires of the first millennium were the Neo-Assyrian empire (935–612 B.C.E.) and its successor, the Persian empire (539–333 B.C.E.), both complex and vast in extent.

The chief gods in the pantheon were Anu (Sumerian An), "sky," the god of heaven and head of the older generation of gods, whose consort was Antu; Ellil (Sumerian Enlil), son of Anu, father of Ninurta, "king of all populated land," head of the younger generation of Sumerian and Akkadian gods whose consort was Ninlil or Ninhursag and whose cult center was Nippur; and Ea

(Sumerian Enki), god of water, wisdom, and incantations, whose consort was Ninmah or Damkina and whose cult center was Eridu. With the rise of the Amorites and of the city-state Babylon, the warrior-god Marduk became important, taking over titles of other gods. In Old Assyrian religion Asshur was the national god, to whom the king regularly reported his activities, especially war. After the middle of the fourteenth century B.C.E., the Assyrian pantheon became babylonized. In the Assyrian version of *Enuma elish*, Asshur took the place of Marduk.

The assembly of the gods was an important part of the organization of the divine world and the major decision-making body; all the gods were subject to its decrees. The members were of two groups, the fifty "great gods" and "the seven gods of the fates (*šīmātu*)." The divine triad of Anu, Enlil, and Ea was preeminent, with Anu presiding over the assembly. In a democratic give-and-take, the member gods made decrees affecting matters in heaven and earth and responded to various crises. Indeed, the divine assembly can be viewed as a reflection of "democratic" practices that once prevailed in Sumerian city-states. The Akkadian term is *puhru ilāni*, "assembly of the gods." The institution is also attested in Canaan: Ugaritic *phr [bn] ʾlm*, Phoenician *mphrt ʾl*, and biblical *ʿēdâ* (Ps 82:1) and *sôd* (Jer. 23:18, 22; Job 15:8; Ps. 89:8). In Mesopotamia, the members are specifically identified and act as individuals, but in Canaan the assembly as a whole or its head, El, acts rather than individual members (Mullen 1980).

The major office of divine governance was kingship. Kingship over the gods could be won by a particular god resolving a crisis or defeating a threat to cosmic order. Human kingship is age-old in Mesopotamia and was the dominant form of government everywhere from the early second millennium forward. The Sumerian King List seeks to demonstrate that the country was always united under one king, ruling successively in different cites: "When kingship was lowered from heaven, kingship was (first) in Eridu," and so on; it existed in heaven independently of any earthly king. When kings are mentioned in creation myths, they organize the human race so it can carry out its basic task of providing for the gods. Kings were not ordinarily considered divine but had to be appointed by the gods. A supernatural aura surrounded the king, for he was the regent of the gods, represented divine order on earth, and conversely, represented the people before the gods.

A common way of resolving threats to cosmic order was force of arms. The gods were involved in the wars that kings waged on earth; war was both political and religious. The new order resulting from the war could be said to represent the will of the god or gods. War was thus a way for the gods to exercise their rule and oversee the rise and fall of kingdoms.

Literature and Themes Relevant to Apocalyptic Literature

Genres

THE COMBAT MYTH. One of the most long-lived genres in ancient literature was the so-called combat myth. It lasted as a live genre into the period of full-blown apocalyptic works and had an enormous influence on them. In fact, the genre provided ancient poets with a conceptual framework for reflecting on divine power and human kingship, and on the rise and fall of nations. Instances of the myth in Mesopotamia are *Lugal-e*, *Anzu*, and *Enuma elish*. In Canaan it is represented by the Baal Cycle. In early biblical poetry it is found in Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh at the sea (Exodus 15) or over the sea itself (several psalms). No ideal form of the combat myth exists, of course, but a consistent plot line can be abstracted: a force (often depicted as a monster) threatens cosmic and political order, instilling fear and confusion in the assembly of the gods; the assembly or its president, unable to find a commander among the older gods, turns to a young god to battle the hostile force; he successfully defeats the monster, creating the world (including human beings) or simply restoring the pre-threat order, builds a palace, and receives acclamation of kingship from the other gods.

There are three combat myths sufficiently preserved to be analyzed: the Sumerian *Lugal-e* of the late third millennium; the Akkadian *Anzu*, extant in an Old Babylonian and a Standard (early-first-millennium) version; and *Enuma elish*, dated variously to the eighteenth, fourteenth, or, more commonly, the twelfth century. Each influenced its successor.

The best way of analyzing the myths is by attending to their plot rather than to their ideas, a method somewhat contrary to modern analytical habits. For us stories are usually regarded as entertainment or as illustration of a "point" derived from discursive reasoning, but for ancient Near Easterners narrative was the medium for expressing serious thought. The plots of the three combat myths will be briefly told with attention to "discourse time," the time taken in the telling.

Lugal-e tells how the young warrior-king Ninurta (god of thunderstorms and floods) defeated the mountain-dwelling monster Azag, restored the flow of the river Tigris, after which he judged the stones that had taken part in the battle, assigning them their various functions. The story begins with Sharur, Ninurta's weapon, reporting to his master that in the mountains the plants and stones have made Azag king and that the monster is planning to take over his domain. Ninurta's first foray against them, made against the advice of Sharur, is defeated by the dust storm Azag raises. Sharur now brings to Ninurta strategic advice from Enlil, Ninurta's father: send a rainstorm to put down the

dust. The strategy works; Ninurta defeats Azag. Ninurta then collects the waters that had been trapped in the mountain ice and routes them to the Tigris. Ninlil, his mother, lonesome for her absent son, pays him a visit. Ninurta sends her home before exercising judgment over the stones. Each is judged according to its degree of participation in the battle against him. Ninurta returns to Nippur to receive the acclamation of his father and the other gods.

Five features of *Lugal-e* are relevant for other combat myths, including those found in apocalyptic literature. (1) The relationship of the older god (Ninurta's father, Enlil) and the younger god (Ninurta)—a common relationship in combat myth—is perennial in ancient Near Eastern palace life, as Thorkild Jacobsen points out: "Under the early political forms, which are here reflected, the king (*lugal*) was usually a young man whose task it was to lead the army in war. The supreme ruler was an older experienced administrator, here Ninurta's father, Enlil. Thus his military exploits serve to impose and maintain Enlil's authority" (Jacobsen 1987, 236 n. 4). The same relationship holds for Anu and Marduk in *Enuma elish*, El and Baal in the Ugaritic texts, the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man in Daniel 7, and the one seated on the throne and the Lamb in Revelation 4–5. (2) The "evil," or threat to order, in this story is that the water necessary to fertilize the fields of Mesopotamia is trapped in mountain ice. The victory over or defeat of the evil consists in making that water once again available to the inhabitants, thus restoring the fertility intended by the gods. The nature of the victory casts light on the meaning of divine kingship in the myth. Kingship (including its permanence) is proportional to the threat that has been put down. The more profound the threat, the more profound the victory undoing it. Yet, as Neil Forsyth recognizes, not every warrior-god's victory is a cosmogony (1987, 44–45). Marduk's victory over Tiamat in *Enuma elish* surely is cosmogonic, but Ninurta's victory in *Anzu* is not so wide-ranging, nor is Baal's victory over Mot in the Ugaritic tablets. (3) The evil is portrayed as a "natural" force (water trapped in mountain ice), but here, as in other references to nature, there is an implied historical reference, for the northern and eastern mountains were the homelands of historical invaders of the plains. A dichotomous distinction between myth and history cannot be drawn; the two domains are related. (4) Judgment of enemies (and allies as well) follows the victory, an action that occurs also in *Enuma elish* (VI 11–32) and in the apocalypses in Daniel 7 and 8–12 and Revelation 17–19. (5) The victorious god reestablishes the original order; *Urzeit* becomes *Endzeit*. Rev 21:1 is a succinct expression of the victory: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and sea was no more."

The observations just made also apply to the second of our three Mesopotamian examples of the genre of combat myth, *Anzu*. It is partially preserved in an Old Babylonian version (first half of the second millennium) and much more completely in an early-first-millennium Standard Babylonian version, originally consisting of about 720 lines on three four-column tablets. It was canonical, in "the stream of tradition," that is, copied by scribes in their training and widely distributed. It influenced *Enuma elish*.

The prologue sings of Ninurta, "the Mighty One," a title that recurs throughout the myth. The world is in a crisis: the beds of the Tigris and Euphrates have been laid out, but no water flows in them to fertilize the land of Mesopotamia. At a certain point, the fresh waters of the Apsu are released to supply the two rivers, a happy turn of the plot somehow caused by the birth of Anzu (the text is not clear). Anzu is a birdlike creature with a monstrous head, conceived by earth and born in a mountain fastness. Such a creature would make an ideal gatekeeper for the gods, thinks Anu, the head of the older generation of gods, and recommends him to Enlil, head of the younger generation of gods. Anu's judgment proves disastrous, however, for Anzu uses his post to steal from Enlil the Tablet-of-Decrees, which determines the destiny of things, the "software program of the world." To meet the crisis, the assembly of the gods meets. Anu promises to any god who can capture back the tablet a great name and recognition as mighty. Anu turns first to Adad, then Gerra, and finally Shara, but all refuse to lead the army. They know that Anzu and not Enlil possesses the Tablet that makes its possessor's commands all-powerful.

Then Belet-ili, the mother goddess, asks Ninurta, the son of Enlil, to go out against Anzu. Family honor is at stake, she explains, for Anzu rejected his father. In contrast to the verbose refusals of the three gods, Ninurta's answer is a quick yes. He loses the first battle when Anzu's authoritative word turns his arrows back. Wise Ea's advice enables him to succeed: shake feathers loose from the birdlike Anzu and in the moment when he calls his loose feathers back to his body, release your feathered arrow so that it will be caught up in the irresistible stream toward Anzu's body. Caught up in the flow, Ninurta's arrow pierces and kills Anzu. Then Ninurta drenches the mountain open stretches with water. Wind-borne feathers from Anzu's dead body signal the gods that Ninurta is victorious. The gods summon Ninurta home and, declaring that he has avenged his father Enlil, acclaim him with a series of new names.

Analysis of *Anzu* in discourse time shows what events the poet chooses to delay on:

Prologue	Water crisis and solution	Assembly: three gods refuse to go	Appointment of Ninurta	Battle and victory	Celebration grant of names
I.1–14	1.15–83	1.84–155	I.156–II.27	I.28–III.22	
14 lines	69 lines	71 lines	79 lines	ca. 144 lines	ca. 48 lines

The initial crisis (Anzu's theft of the Tablet-of-Decrees) is quickly told (69 lines). The poem dwells on the deliberations of the assembly (Anu's attempts to persuade the three gods to recapture the tablet [71 lines] and the commission of Ninurta [79 lines, the two scenes totaling 150 lines]), Ninurta's battle and victory (ca. 144 lines), and the gods granting him new names (ca. 48 lines).

Four features of the combat myth *Anzu* should be noted as relevant to later apocalyptic works. (1) The threat from the lack of water in the opening lines is resolved somehow by Anzu's birth, but this resolution leads to the much more dangerous threat from the loss of the Tablet-of-Decrees. This turn breaks up the simple plot and foreshadows the complex two-part structure of *Enuma elish*. (2) The evil here is the dissolution of political as well as cosmic order. The assembly is rendered ineffectual as a *political* body, for it is unable from its senior members to muster an army to get back the tablet. It is *family* rather than political considerations that send Ninurta into the field. His victory restores the political office of king; with Anzu out of the way, the assembly is again effective and can acclaim him king: "They assigned to you full shepherdship of the people. As king they gave (you) your name 'Guardian of the throne'" (III.129–30). (3) The fundamental issue is kingship. Ninurta takes the kingship of the other gods; Anu, the head of the older generation, proved inadequate, as did Enlil and the three gods who refused to fight. They must yield to Ninurta, who has won the title Mighty One and restored the civic and political order destroyed by the loss of the Tablet. Ninurta's restoration of political order does not seem to be cosmogonic, though one should keep in mind that political order was part of what the ancients meant by creation. (4) Relevant to later apocalyptic literature are several recurrent elements: the monster Anzu as a composite animal (lion-headed eagle, or perhaps bat-headed, as befits one born in a cave), the active role of the assembly of the gods, and the god's personified weapon. In Daniel and Revelation, evil can be symbolized by composite animals, and the heavenly assembly plays a similar role though it is much less prominent.

The third Mesopotamian example is *Enuma elish* (named after its opening line), seven tablets in length, much copied and commented on in antiquity, and recited on the fourth day of the New Year festival.

The dramatic structure of *Enuma elish* is more complex than its predecessors, being in five acts.

1. I.1–20. The first twenty lines are a theogony, in which a series of gods are born when the primordial waters Apsu and Tiamat were an undifferentiated mass and there was no land. The emergence of the gods is also the emergence of two rival dynasties: Apsu-Tiamat versus Anshar-Anu-Ea-Marduk (Goldfless 1980, 127–30). The monster Tiamat thus represents both a natural force (cosmic waters) and a political reality. "Myth" and "history" are intertwined. Another indication of the historical interest in the entire myth is the large amount of discourse time devoted to political debate in the divine assembly.

2. I.21–79. In the initial confrontation of the rival dynasties, Ea defeats Apsu and builds his palace to celebrate the victory.

3. I.79–VI.121. Foreshadowed by the first confrontation, the major conflict between the son of Ea, Marduk, and the widow of Apsu, Tiamat, is the theme of the bulk of the work. Tiamat, still angry over the death of her husband Apsu at the hands of Ea, plots an assault against the rival dynasty. When they learn of her plans, the assembly is frightened and seeks to appoint a military commander. After two gods refuse to go, Marduk agrees on the condition that the assembly make his decree supreme. He slays Tiamat in single combat and from her body builds the universe and his shrine Esagil.

4. VI.122–VII.144. The gods, grateful for Marduk's victory and obliged by their oath, give him "Anu-ship." He in turn promises them that Babylon will be their new residence and that man, a new creature, will be their servant. From the blood of the slain Kingu (Tiamat's general), Marduk forms man. The gods build Marduk a city and a temple and give him fifty names of honor.

Many of the remarks already made about *Lugal-e* and *Anzu* also apply to *Enuma elish*. As in these other myths, one god is exalted over gods and humans. In contrast to the other myths, however, in *Enuma elish* Marduk does not *reestablish* a threatened or disturbed order but forms a world that never existed before. He creates. The genre of combat myth has been expanded not only in length and complexity but conceptually as well.

What does it mean to create in the ancient Near East? The concept of creation in the ancient Near East differs from the modern Western view, shaped as the latter is by evolutionary and scientific concerns (Clifford 1994, chap. 1). Ancient accounts usually imagined creation on the model of human activity (molding clay, building a house, fighting a battle) or natural processes (life

forms left by the ebbing Nile flood). What emerged from the process for the ancients was a *populated* universe, human society organized for the service of the gods with a king and culture, and not, as with modern accounts, the physical world (often only the planet earth in its solar and stellar system). Ancient accounts were often portrayed as dramas, which is not surprising in that the process was imagined as personal wills in conflict. This is far from the impersonal interaction of modern scientific accounts. Lastly, the criterion for truth in ancient accounts is dramatic plausibility in contrast to our need for one complete explanation.

In *Enuma elish,* creation of the world is possible because a hostile rival dynasty has come to an end with the death of Tiamat. A new stage has been reached with the exaltation of Marduk. As part of this settlement, Marduk builds a palace or palace-city where he can be acknowledged by the other gods as supreme. He forms the human race to work and provide for the gods. Creation is thus intimately linked to his victory. Later biblical texts link divine victory exaltation to creation and envision creation as the building of a temple or temple-city, for example, Isaiah 65–66 and Revelation 19–22.

VATICINIA EX EVENTU. Five texts from Mesopotamia, some of them formerly designated "prophecies" from their alleged resemblance to biblical literature, are now widely judged to be relevant to apocalyptic literature. They are best described as prophecies after the fact (*vaticinia ex eventu*). Sections typically begin with "a prince shall arise." No kings are named, presumably so that the vagueness will give the impression that future events are being predicted. Kings and kingdoms, however, can be identified from the historical details. Reigns are judged sweepingly as either good or bad. The surveys are very much like the historical surveys in later works such as Daniel 7, 8, and 11 and the Apocalypse of Weeks and the Animal Apocalypse in *1 Enoch.*

Whether all five texts represent a single genre is not certain, but there are two clear subcategories: prophecies in the third person (Text A, the Dynastic Prophecy, and the Uruk Prophecy), and prophecies in the first person (the Shulgi and Marduk Prophecies).

Text A, from seventh-century Asshur, is organized by the refrain "and a prince shall arise" (repeated eight times in a fragmentary tablet). The number of years in each reign is given as well as a characterization of the major events in that reign, historical, meteorological, and agricultural. The events in Text A took place in the twelfth century, five centuries before its composition, so they all are *ex eventu* by definition.

The *Uruk Prophecy,* possibly composed in the reign of Amel-Marduk (biblical Evil-Merodach, 561–560), preserved mainly on the reverse side of the tablet, narrates the rise of six kings. The fifth king is Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562). The genuine prediction comes in lines 16–19: "After him (Nebuchadnezzar II) his son will arise as king in Uruk and become master of the world. He will exercise rule and kingship in Uruk and his dynasty will be established forever. The kings of Uruk will exercise rulership like the gods." The past "predictions" are intended to lend credibility to the last statement. The course of history has been determined by the gods: Nebuchadnezzar's son is meant to rule forever.

The *Dynastic Prophecy,* a Late Babylonian text, speaks successively of the fall of Assyria, the rise and fall of Babylonia and Persia, and the rise of the Hellenistic monarchies. The victory of Alexander the Great over Darius at Issus in 333 B.C.E. is described. After this comes the genuine prophecy, a prediction of another battle, in which Darius is victorious over Alexander: "Enlil, Shamash, and [Marduk] will be at the side of his army [and] the overthrow of the army of the Nanaean (= Thracian, i.e., Alexander) he will [bring about]. He will carry off his extensive booty and [*bring (it)*] into his palace. The people who *had* [*experienced*] misfortune [*will enjoy*] well-being. The mood of the land [will be a happy one]." By its detail, length, and climactic placement of the final prediction, the text gives the impression that the gods have determined the victory of Darius over Alexander. The predicted victory, however, never took place; Darius never defeated Alexander.

In the second subcategory—prediction in the first person (by a god or king)—are two texts that were paired in scribal editions, the Shulgi Prophecy of the late second or early first millennium and the Marduk Prophecy, perhaps from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104).

In the *Shulgi Prophecy,* unfortunately heavily damaged, Shulgi, a Sumerian king of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112–2004), who was considered a god and the founder of the city of Nippur, speaks of the kings who will come after him. His successor will submit to Assyria, and Nippur will be cast down. The reign of the Babylonian king, however, will be cut short by the command of Enlil. Another king will arise, restore the shrines, and rebuild Nippur.

In the *Marduk Prophecy,* Marduk describes his (i.e., his statue's) peregrinations, which can be dated to the first millennium: the statue's journey to Hatti and back to Babylon, to Assyria and back to Babylon, and finally to Elam and back to Babylon. The god brought prosperity wherever he went, but his stay in Elam spelled disaster for Babylon. After Marduk returned from Elam to Babylon, however, "a king of Babylon will arise" (probably Nebu-

chadnezzar I, 1124–1103) who will make the city prosperous and punish Elam. The last part is the genuine prophecy, made credible by the post-factum "prophecies" preceding it. The text is a propaganda piece for Nebuchadnezzar.

The many similarities between the genre of "post-factum prophecy" and the historical surveys in apocalyptic literature suggest possible influence of the older literature on the younger. The most important similarity is that past events are "predicted" to lend credibility to the last-mentioned event, as in the Uruk Prophecy, the Dynastic Prophecy, and the Marduk Prophecy. Textual damage prevents us from knowing if the same is true in the other tablets. Daniel 7, 8, 9, and 11; *1 Enoch* 83–90, 91; and the *Sibylline Oracles*, likewise "predict" some events that are already past and some that are still future, the accuracy of the "predictions" making the genuine prediction at the end more believable. Further, history is seen as a sequence of kingdoms rather than, say, the dominance of a particular city, shrine, or deity. Even in the Marduk Prophecy, the emphasis falls on the king of Babylon. Persons are not named, as they are not named in apocalyptic literature. History is painted with a broad brush; details are few and conventional; reigns are either good or evil. The apocalyptic predictions in apocalyptic literature come to the speaker through revelation. The predictions in the Shulgi and Marduk prophecies come from a deity; perhaps this is true of the other tablets, but their beginnings are too poorly preserved to tell. Lastly, the language of omen texts has stamped the language of the "prophecies," a fact that should warn us against distinguishing too sharply between mantic wisdom (the science of divination) and prophecy/apocalypticism.

There are also important differences between the prophecies and apocalyptic literature. The most important is that the apocalypticists incorporated predictions of kingdoms into a new scenario. That scenario was cosmic threat, combat, and rule of the victorious god; it envisioned the end of the present world and divine judgment upon it. One text, however, already has a certain affinity to the scenario: the Uruk Prophecy predicts that after Nebuchadnezzar II, "his son will arise as king in Uruk and become master of the world. He will exercise rule and kingship in Uruk and his dynasty will be established forever. The kings of Uruk will exercise rulership like the gods [= forever]." In summary, the prophecies show that the apocalypticists were anthologists, borrowing genres such as the post-factum prediction to demonstrate that the course of history was under God's control and that in their day history as they knew it had come to an end and a new age was about to dawn.

DREAM VISION. A late-seventh-century B.C.E. Akkadian text, "The Vision of the Nether World," has been proposed as a source of the dream vision of

Daniel 7 (Kvanvig 1988, 389–555; *ANET* 1969, 109–10). In the relevant thirty-four lines on the obverse side, a visionary, Kummāya, sees in the night a vision of the netherworld: fifteen gods in hybrid form (human or animal heads, hands, and feet) standing before him, and "one man, his body was black like pitch. His face was similar to that of an Anzu bird. He was wearing a red robe. In his left hand he was holding up a bow. In his right hand he was holding a sword." The seer then sees the warrior Nergal on a throne, who, enraged, intends to put him to death because he has dishonored Ereshkigal, Nergal's wife. Ishum, Nergal's counselor, dissuades his master. A description of an ideal king follows, though the context is unclear: "This [spirit] which you saw in the netherworld, is that of the exalted shepherd: to whom my father [ ], the king of the gods, gives full responsibility. . . ." Next comes a prediction and an admonition, and the section concludes with brief reports in the first person and in the third person.

Though the text bears a general resemblance to Daniel 7, with the night dream of gods in hybrid form and the warrior-god on a throne pronouncing judgment, there are major differences. Judgment is given against the visionary himself, whereas in Daniel it is against the beasts from the sea; the ideal ruler in the *Vision* is extremely shadowy, whereas in Daniel he receives an eschatological kingdom. The *pattern of relationships* in the two texts is quite different. Finally, the texts have little in common with regard to aim. In the *Vision*, the aim is to encourage piety to the god of the netherworld; in Daniel, it is to encourage Jews to resist the hellenizing policies of the Seleucid kings (J. J. Collins 1993, 283–86). The "Vision of the Netherworld" is of interest, however, as a precedent for the tours of heaven and hell that are popular in later, especially Christian, apocalypses.

Recurrent Elements

One of the important and persistent recurrent elements in the genre of combat myth is the divine assembly, thrown into confusion yet charged with the responsibility of resisting the monster's threats. A considerable amount of discourse time is devoted to its discussions in *Anzu* and *Enuma elish*. Dramatically, the magnitude of the threat is expressed through the terror and consternation of the gods as they meet. The decrees of the assembly are powerful and binding in heaven and on earth; they are prominent in all the combat myths. Nonetheless, its decrees are not automatically effective against every cosmic threat, for they can be rendered ineffective by a monster. A warrior-god must do away with the evil before the decrees are effective. At the end of *Lugal-e* (lines 679 forward), Ninurta receives the homage of the Anunnaki gods and

his father Enlil grants him new status. In *Anzu,* the victorious Ninurta receives names of honor and authority from the gods, a harbinger of the fifty names that Marduk in *Enuma elish* receives from the gods. In *Enuma elish* the assembly's decree plays an extraordinarily important role. Before he sets out, his destiny is declared supreme: "Your destiny (*šīmtu*) is unequalled, your word (has the power of)! . . . From this day forwards your command shall not be altered. Yours is the power to exalt and abase. . . . We hereby give you sovereignty over all of the whole universe" (IV.4–14). In the final tablets (end of IV to VII) Marduk constructs the universe and the assembly's earlier decree takes effect as they acclaim his fifty names.

The decree of the assembly that exalts one deity because of his victory over cosmic enemies is a theme found in a transposed form in apocalyptic literature. Though heavenly decrees in the combat myth are primarily concerned with kingship, they can also be concerned with broader questions of the divine will and human activity. In the Bible, a vestige of the decision-making assembly is found in Gen 1:26 ("Let *us* make man in our image") and 11:7 ("Let *us* go down and confuse their language"), in the designation of heavenly beings as the host or army (the literal meaning of YHWH *ṣĕbāʾôt*), and in affirmations that Yahweh is incomparable to other heavenly beings (e.g., Exod. 15:11; Deut. 3:24; 1 Kgs. 8:23; Pss. 86:8; 95:3). Apocalyptic literature in particular exploits the heavenly assembly. God is often in the assembly, surrounded by heavenly beings, messengers or angels, and there is constant reference to "destinies," and decrees (Brown 1958a; 1958v; 1959).

Related to the decree of the assembly is the Tablet-of-Decrees (*ṭuppi šīmāti*), which in Akkadian narratives occurs only in *Anzu* (where it plays a central role), *Enuma elish* (I.57; IV.121; V.69, presumably derived from *Anzu*), and *Erra* (IV.44). The tablet was worn around the neck of the god in charge, and it could be put on and taken off like a garment—for Enlil removed it to take a bath in *Anzu*. Neither English "destiny" nor "fate" is a satisfactory translation of *šīmtu,* for these English words imply inevitability, whereas the Akkadian word connotes something *decreed* but not necessarily unalterable. "Destinies" were subject to change through magic; they were usually transmitted from a higher power, from god to king, king to subject, father to child. In mythology and literature, the highest gods, usually Anu, Enlil, and Ea, decreed the destinies establishing the nature and pattern of things in heaven and on earth. *Šīmāti* were regarded as introduced at creation, for *Enuma elish* (I.8) describes pre-creation as a period when "no destines had been decreed." Other words for similar determination of things and events are Sumerian *me* or *giš.ḫur* (= Akkadian *parṣu, uṣurtu*). In later apocalypses, the seer is frequently shown heavenly visions of meteorological and natural phe-

nomena and of future events. Such visions should be understood against the ancient Near Eastern background of "destinies"—things and events that have been determined by the divine.

Another relevant recurrent element of the genre of combat myth is the enemy as monster. Azag is a monster. Anzu's strange appearance was proverbial; his face, possibly that of a bat, inspired terror. Though Tiamat, personified Sea, is not described clearly in *Enuma elish,* scholars assume that the dragon depicted fighting a god on many seals is Tiamat; the seven-headed Hydra of some seals may have been later identified with Tiamat. The monsters are often interpreted as natural forces: for example, the storm-god's attack on the monster in the mountains reflects thundershowers sweeping into the mountain ranges. Though such a natural reference cannot be denied, there are as well historical and political dimensions to the monsters. Azag and Anzu reside in the northeastern mountains, the homeland of the enemies of the Mesopotamian plain dwellers. *Enuma elish* views Apsu, Tiamat, and Kingu as usurpers of the legitimate throne that belongs by right to Anu and Marduk. H. H. Schmid notes:

> In Mesopotamia, Ugarit, and Israel, *Chaoskampf* appears not only in cosmological contexts but just as frequently—and this was fundamentally true right from the first—in political contexts. The repulsion and the destruction of the enemy, and thereby the maintenance of political order, always constitutes one of the major dimensions of the battle against chaos. The enemies are not other than a manifestation of chaos which must be driven back. (1984, 104)

An important motif is the seer-hero who is brought into or ascends to the world of the gods to receive wisdom and knowledge about the future. It is his task to communicate this wisdom to the human race. The preeminent seer in apocalyptic literature is Enoch, the hero of the several booklets that make up *1 Enoch*. He is also the hero in other writings and is mentioned in Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, and the New Testament. As one raised up to heaven and given special knowledge, he served as the model for Daniel, John, and Ezra. Enoch has antecedents in Mesopotamian tradition.

A key biblical text that mediated Mesopotamian lore to Levantine literature and applied it to Enoch was Gen 5:21–24. There Enoch is seventh in a ten-member genealogy of pre-flood patriarchs. The Priestly writer makes comments about Enoch that are not made about the other nine patriarchs: instead of describing his death, the Priestly writer has "he walked with 'God' (*hāʾĕlōhîm*); then he was no more because God (*ʾĕlōhîm*) took him." The Hebrew spellings noted above are significant. The prefaced definite article *hā*- in the first occurrence suggests that the correct translation is not "God" but

"divine beings," the heavenly beings who lived with God. The Genesis text thus says that even while on earth Enoch associated with heavenly beings, unlike the other patriarchs. Further, the end of his stay on earth did not mean the end of his communion with heavenly beings; he was taken up into the heavens to be with God.

The Sumerian King List, a schematic history of pre-flood kings, which exists in copies ranging from ca. 1500 B.C.E. to 165 B.C.E., has long been recognized as a source of Genesis 5. The kings in the lists, like the ancestors of Genesis, are extraordinarily long-lived; in some versions of the list, there are ten kings, the last of whom is the flood hero. Some versions have in seventh place a figure like Enoch, named Enmeduranki or Enmenduranna, who ruled in Sippar, a city sacred to the sun-god. Enoch's age of 365 years, which differs so dramatically from the other pre-flood heroes in Genesis, is most naturally explained as a reflection of the solar calendar, another link to Enmeduranki of Sippar. Most important, two texts show Enmeduranki in the presence of the gods Shamash (the sun-god) and Adad. In one he is brought in to the assembly and given special wisdom.

> Shamash in Ebabbarra [appointed] Enmeduranki [king of Sippar], the beloved of Anu, Enlil [and Ea]. Shamash and Adad [brought him in] to their assembly, Shamash and Adad [honoured him], Shamash and Adad [set him] on a large throne of god, they showed him how to observe oil on water, a mystery of Anu [Enlil and Ea], they gave him the tablet of the gods, the liver, a secret of heaven and [underworld], they put in his hand the cedar-(rod), beloved of the great gods." (VanderKam 1984, 39–40; cf. Kvanvig 1988, 185–86)

Enmeduranki is brought into heaven and there is taught divination, how to read the future. He is the prototype of the biblical Enoch, who in Genesis is taken up to heaven to walk with the heavenly beings.

Further refinement to the Enmeduranki tradition has been provided by recently published texts that have made it possible to reappraise the so-called *bīt mēseri* ritual series.[1] The texts list the *apkallu*, legendary pre-flood creatures of great wisdom; seven in number, they taught the human race wisdom and craft.

Kings	*Sages*
1. Alulim	U-An
2. Alagar	U-An-dugga
3. Ammeluanna	Enmedugga
4. Ammegalanna	Enmegalamma
5. Enmešugalanna	Enmebulugga
6. Dumuzi	An-Enlilda
7. Enmeduranki	Utuabzu

They are followed after the flood by four more sages. The text gives ɛ *apkallu* a short notice. Utuabzu, the sage of Enmeduranki, has an especi interesting notice: "Utuabzu, who was taken up into heaven, the pure *pur* fishes, the *purādu* fishes of the sea, the seven of them, the seven Wise, ᵥ arose in the flood, who direct the plans of heaven and earth." Riekele Bor the editor, believes that the text strengthens the possibility that Enmedura as predictor of the future and the seventh ruler in primordial time was prototype of Enoch. He notes, however, that the myth of Enoch's journey heaven comes ultimately from Enmeduranki's sage, the seventh pre-flood sɛ Utuabzu.

Genesis 5:21–24 is the oldest surviving example of the Enoch tradit: in the Bible. From this modest source text a mighty stream was destined flow.

Themes

The two themes most relevant for later apocalyptic works are cosmic thr and new creation. Though the threat is undeniably prominent in the coml myth, the most important thing is the god's defeat of it and consequent ex tation to the top rank. In *Lugal-e* the evil is that the water destined to irrig the Mesopotamian plains is trapped in the ice of the northern and easte mountains. This is not simply a natural malfunction but the conscious str egy of the mountain-dwelling monster Azag, who has been made king by t mountain plants and stones. Azag thwarts the gods' intent that Mesop tamian fields be fertile and support human workers to care for and feed thei Azag's act is against gods and human beings. Azag and his constituency plants and stones are not purely mythical, for the northern and eastern mou tains were the homeland of the plains dwellers' historical enemies. The evil *Lugal-e* is therefore (in modern terms) both "natural" and "historical," affec ing both gods and human beings. By defeating Azag, Ninurta truly restor the cosmos as a coherent system.

In the first part of the two-part *Anzu* the evil is the same as in *Lugal-* that is, the failure of the mountain waters to reach the plains. How that prol lem was solved (at the beginning of the epic) cannot be determined from tl fragmentary text. The major evil, however, is Anzu's theft of the Tablet-o

Decrees from its rightful custodian, Enlil. The divine decision regarding all reality encoded in the tablet is in the power of a monster hostile to the divine assembly. The evil is that things will not work right because the tablet is in the wrong hands. By getting the tablet back, Ninurta ensures the survival of the world the gods have created.

Enuma elish is more complex, and so is the evil in its two sections. In the first section (I.1–79), the evil is the rival dynasty represented by Apsu, who is killed by Ea. In the second part, the evil is the rival dynasty represented by Tiamat. She is violent and irrational; the world would never have been created if she were to rule. Marduk's victory establishes the legitimate dynasty and eventuates in creation.

The three combat myths see the universe as threatened once upon a time by a monster with sufficient power to destroy it or change it for the worse. The divine assembly—that is, the gods as deciding and acting—cannot by itself resolve the problem. The evil is not simply a cosmic malfunction but is willed by a particular being. The evil plays itself out on the natural and historical planes.

Closely related to the evil is the god's victory over it. Is the victory merely a restoration of the pre-threat order, or is it new creation? At the very least, *Endzeit* becomes *Urzeit*, for the original order is renewed. This is surely true for *Lugal-e* and *Anzu*. *Enuma elish*, however, is a different case. It is true creation. Marduk makes the world as we know it. The world did not exist prior to Tiamat, for it is from her body that the cosmos is constructed.

⌒ CANAAN

History and Religion

By the third millennium Syria-Palestine was populated by West Semitic peoples speaking an Old Canaanite language. After 1200 B.C.E., the Old Canaanite area was divided into three areas: Palestine (the area south of Mount Hermon, later conquered by the tribes of Israel), the areas of the Aramaean city-states, and Phoenicia, the long narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean from Arvad to Mount Carmel in the south. In a Ugaritic text, "Canaanite" refers to an area distinct from the city of Ugarit, but in modern usage "Canaanite" is customary for the whole littoral.

A common literary tradition is attested for the Old Canaanite (Phoenician) culture. Religious and mythological poetic texts excavated at the Late Bronze (mostly fourteenth century B.C.E.) city of Ugarit display vocabulary,

especially word pairs, recurrent elements, and techniques found also in Phoenician inscriptions and in early biblical poetry. The Ugaritic texts provide a northern sampling of literary and religious traditions shared by Canaan and Israel.

Canaanite scribes in the employ of royal courts in the major cities knew Mesopotamian literature. Canonical texts have been found at Boghasköy (ancient Hattuša) in the Hittite empire, at Ugarit, at Meskene (ancient Emar, a crossroads of east and west), and even at Megiddo in Palestine (a fragment of *Gilgamesh*). These texts were understood by Levantine scribes, for Akkadian was a diplomatic language in the late second and early first millennia. One can assume that some scribes employed in Canaanite and Israelite temples and palaces were trained in the traditional manner—by copying canonical texts. It is thus not surprising to find Mesopotamian influence on Canaanite and biblical literature. A good example of a western borrowing of an eastern literary genre is the creation-flood story. Attested in the *Sumerian Flood Story, Atrahasis, Gilgamesh XI, Berossus,* and some versions of the Sumerian King List, it is echoed in the flood story found at Ugarit, and has strongly influenced the Bible in Genesis 2–11 (Clifford 1994, 144–46).

The god lists of Ugarit, like those of Mesopotamia, list many more deities than the few who play prominent roles in myths, but we are here chiefly concerned with the executive deities. The most important mythological texts found at Ugarit (in excavations from 1929 forward) are the story of King Keret, the story of Aqhat, and the cycle concerning Baal's combat. They are written in a cuneiform adaptation of the Canaanite alphabet.

The head of the pantheon is the patriarch El, creator of heaven and earth. His consort is Asherah. There is no sacred triad in Ugarit; Mesopotamian Enlil and Ea have no real analogues. El presides over the assembly of the gods, whose members in Ugaritic texts (unlike Mesopotamia) are not precisely identified nor shown engaged in lively debate. El or the assembly *tout ensemble* speak and act. El is portrayed as old and wise, though there are hints that in olden days he was a feared warrior-god. His decree, approved by the assembly, is of extraordinary importance. Both Anat and Asherah confess: "Thou art wise, O El, and thy decree is long life." The young god Hadad (Baal) is a warrior. The assembly decrees, "Our king is Aliyan Baal, our judge above whom there is no other." His weapons are those of the storm—lightning, thunder, wind, and rains that bring fertility—and his bellicose consort is Anat. Two divine beings play significant roles as Baal's enemies: Mot (Death) and Yamm (Sea). One of the major interpretive problems of the Baal Cycle is El's relation to Baal and to Baal's enemies Yamm and Mot. Mot is called "son of El,"

and Yamm in *KTU* 1.1 is given a name and palace by El. Elsewhere El favors Baal and grants him permission to build his palace.

Literature and Themes Relevant to Apocalyptic Literature

Genre of Combat Myth (Baal Cycle)

The six tablets of the Baal Cycle (*KTU* 1.1–6 = *ANET* 129–42[2]) belong to the genre of combat myth, which we have singled out as having extraordinary influence on apocalyptic literature. The similarities of the Baal Cycle to the Mesopotamian combat myths are striking: (1) the enemy is Sea in *KTU* 1.1–3 = *ANET* 129–31, 135–38, recalling Tiamat in *Enuma elish*; (2) the divine assembly under its president An or El is threatened and commissions a young warrior-god to battle the foe, though in the Baal Cycle the commission must be inferred from the goddesses' quote of the decree that their king is Baal; (3) events are decided by a battle that is cosmic in scope; (4) the warrior-god's victory is symbolized by a palace and dedication feast for all the gods. Some scholars have proposed that this combat myth originated among West Semites on the grounds that the sea phenomenologically is important only in Syria-Palestine. The theory is unlikely, however, because the word "sea" in Mesopotamian myths can refer not only to the ocean but to the waters in the northern mountains, as it does in *Anzu*. It is now clear that the literary antecedent of the Marduk–Tiamat conflict in *Enuma elish* is not the West Semitic Baal–Yamm story but the native *Anzu* (Lambert 1986).

The Ugaritic combat myth is in the same poetic tradition as early biblical poetry and thus is much more pertinent to later apocalyptic literature than the Akkadian works analyzed above. Unfortunately, four of the six tablets of the Baal Cycle cannot be put in their proper sequence because of broken beginnings or ends. Hence we cannot be certain of the plots. Here the Akkadian works are useful, for they can supply the sequence and plot only dimly discernible in the Ugaritic texts. In the Baal Cycle only tablets V (*ANET* 138–39) and VI (*ANET* 139–41) preserve the ending and the beginning that demonstrate their sequence. (Normally the last line of a tablet is repeated as the first line of the succeeding tablet.) Tablets I–III (*ANET* 129–31, 135–38) tell of the Baal–Yamm conflict and tablets IV–V (*ANET* 131–35, 138–41) of the Baal–Mot conflict. The majority of scholars assume a single cycle, which first depicts Baal's war with Yamm and then describes his war with Mot. It is more probable, however, that the two conflicts are not two acts in a single drama but variants of the same myth. There are good indications that the two stories are variants: tablets III (*ANET* 135–38) and IV (*ANET* 131–35) show

an identical sequence of actions (Baal has no palace like the other gods, an embassy is sent to the goddess to ask her to intercede with El for Baal's palace, the goddess prepares for her journey and departs for El's abode, the goddess praises El's decree, El grants permission, the craftsman god is summoned to build it. Positing two versions of a single myth avoids a dramatically implausible never-ending seesaw battle between Baal and his enemies.

BAAL–YAMM. Tablets I–III (*ANET* 129–31, 135–38) are about the Baal–Yamm conflict. We do not know the original sequence of the tablets, and so any summary of the plot must be regarded as tentative. At a certain point Yamm (Sea) is given authority ("a name") by El, who charges him to drive Baal "from his royal throne, the resting place, the throne of his domination." El commands the craftsman-god Koshar wa-Hasis to build a palace for Yamm. (Throughout the cycle, the palace plays an extremely significant role as the concretization of kingship.) So commissioned, Baal sends ambassadors to the assembly presided over by El, ordering them to surrender Baal. The assembly is terrified at the approach of Yamm's messengers, and El immediately hands Baal over, "Baal is your servant, O Yamm" ("your subject" in political language). Baal tries to fight but is restrained by Anat and Ashtart, presumably because they regard the assembly's action as legally binding. After some major gaps in the tablets, Baal eventually has the opportunity to attack his enemy with Koshar wa-Hasis at his side. Koshar fashions two magic weapons against Yamm, the second of which succeeds in knocking Yamm to the ground, where Baal finishes him off. Baal is acclaimed king: "Yamm is dead! Baal reigns!"

The Baal–Yamm story is more fragmentary than the Baal–Mot story; the plot is uncertain and important matters are left unexplained. Why does El commission Yamm and give him a palace? Why does the assembly hand Baal over to Yamm, and why is Baal later able to best him in combat? A major problem in Ugaritic mythology—the unclear relationship of El to Baal, Yamm, and Mot—keeps us from fully comprehending the essential point of this myth.

BAAL–MOT. The Baal–Death combat myth is told in tablets IV–VI of the Baal Cycle (*ANET* 138–42); the extant material is greater and in surer sequence than is the case with the Baal–Yamm story. Most scholars believe that tablets IV-V-VI are the proper sequence. Tablet VI (*ANET* 139–141) immediately continues tablet V (*ANET* 138–39), since its first line repeats the last line of tablet V, but the proper placement of tablet IV (*ANET* 131–35) is far from

certain. The story begins with Baal complaining that he has no palace like the other gods and must live in the home of El. Anat intercedes with Asherah, El's wife, to bring the plea to El, reminding him, "Thy decree is wise. . . . Thy decree is: Our king is Puissant Baal, our sovereign second to none; all of us must bear his gift, all of us must bear his purse." Although Baal has been given authority by the assembly, El's permission is still needed for his palace, the full sign of his kingship. El gives his permission. Baal gathers the material and Koshar wa-Hasis builds it. At its completion, Baal declares: "My house I have built of silver, my palace of gold" (*KTU* 1.4.vi = *ANET* 134–35) and invites all the gods to a dedicatory banquet. He marches triumphantly through numerous towns in the vicinity of his Mount Zaphon and from his palace proclaims his kingship in thunder as his enemies flee. In this moment of triumph, Baal instructs his messengers to proclaim his kingship to the underworld and invites Mot.

If *KTU* 1.5 (*ANET* 138–39) directly continues, as most scholars assume (though there are difficulties), then Baal's triumph is suddenly turned upside down as Mot invites, or rather commands, Baal to come to *his* underworld domain. Baal must descend with his whole entourage, and he says to Mot, "Your servant am I, and that for ever (= no set time)." Eventually messengers report back to El that "we came upon Baal fallen to the earth. Dead is Aliyan Baal, departed is Prince, Lord of the earth!" (*KTU* 1.5.vi.8–10 = *ANET* 139). El and Anat engage in mourning rites. Anat finds the body and brings it for burial to Mount Zaphon (*KTU* 1.6.i = *ANET* 139). El is unable to find among his and Asherah's children a suitable replacement for Baal, which makes dramatically clear that Baal is irreplaceable (*KTU* 1.6.i.132–67). Afterward the bereaved Anat encounters Mot, who callously tells her he consumed Baal "like a lamb in his mouth." Later, she seizes him in rage, cuts him up and sows him far and wide (*KTU* 1.6.ii.30–37). After a break of forty lines, El declares that "Aliyan Baal lives, existent is Prince, Lord of the earth," for he sees in a dream the signs of Baal's return to life: the heavens raining oil and the wadis running with honey. El's dream shows that Baal is alive; Shapshu, the sun-goddess, is asked to search for him. After a break, Baal appears, defeats rebellious sons of Asherah and takes the throne. In the seventh year of his reign, Mot comes to exact vengeance for the humiliation inflicted upon him by Anat: "Because of you, Baal, I experienced winnowing in the sea. Give me one of your brothers that I may eat." After about sixty lines of uncertain text, Mot comes to Baal on Mount Zaphon and accuses him of giving him his own brothers to eat (*KTU* 1.6.vi.14–16). Baal and Mot then fight like animals until both fall in exhaustion. At this point Shapshu intervenes and rebukes Mot: "How dare you fight with Aliyan Baal. . . . [Bull El your father] will

uproot the base of your dwelling. Surely he will overturn your royal throne. Surely he will shatter your scepter of judgment" (1.6.vi.24–29). Mot stops out of fear. Baal remounts his throne and the cycle ends with a banquet of the gods. Shapshu is lauded as judge, probably for her role in settling the conflict of kingship.

The overall interpretation of the Baal Cycle is made difficult by the uncertain sequence of tablets I–IV (and columns within tablet II), many broken passages, and our ignorance of its social location. Was the cycle recited in the temple? Was it used to support the authority of the king? Several interpretations have been proposed: ritual and seasonal, cosmogonic, and rhetorical and political. Each has some validity yet no single theory does justice to all the data. Few would deny any reference to the change of seasons. Mot represents the dry summer season or dry areas, and Baal represents the fertilizing rains of the Levantine winter. An exclusively seasonal explanation, however, neglects the obvious political features of the myth. Mot and Baal act more like generals and politicians than natural forces, and Baal's kingship has to have some reference to the Ugaritic king, who, like Baal, needed military power in order to reign. Others see in the cycle a cosmogony or creation account, in which Baal creates a cosmos after defeating some form of chaos. This interpretation accounts for the life–death struggle, and the prominence of cosmic order and the palace, but in the Ugaritic texts only El and Asherah are given the title creator; the most that Baal accomplishes by his victory over sea and death is to reconstitute cosmic and political harmony. Historical interpretations see the myth as reflecting the rise and fall of the gods of different peoples; for example, the rise of Baal allegedly at the expense of El reflects the god of a new dynasty in the history of Ugarit. This interpretation is unsatisfactory, however. Baal does not replace El but is commissioned by him, and the commission of a young god by a senior god in the face of a cosmic threat is a characteristic feature of ancient palace life and of the genre of combat myth.

The best approach is to view the cycle according to its genre, the combat myth, and to reconstruct its plot by analogy with the better-known combat myths of Mesopotamia. In the typical plot, a monster threatens the cosmic order; the assembly of the gods meets amid considerable trepidation; finding no willing warrior among the senior deities, it turns to a young outsider, who successfully defeats the monster and returns to the assembly to be acclaimed king. This abstract plotline does not completely resolve several puzzles in the Baal Cycle (e.g., the relation of El to Baal, Mot, and Yamm), but it allows us to arrange the tablets in order with some confidence. It also explains the prominent role of Baal's palace, the need for El's permission, the fact that Yamm and Mot, despite their names, are portrayed not as primordial forces

but as seekers of political power. Baal's royalty explains the relation of these mythic texts to the people of Ugarit, for human kingship is a reflection of divine kingship. These myths must support the authority of the Ugaritic king, whose proper rule ensures fertility, upholds family and civic order, and sees to the proper honoring of the gods.

Recurrent Elements

The assembly of the gods plays a significant role in the Baal–Yamm story.

> The gods sat to eat, / the holy ones to dine. / Baal stood before El. / When the gods saw them [the hostile messengers of Yamm], / . . . . . / the gods lowered their heads / upon their knees, / and upon their princely thrones. / Baal rebuked them. / "Why have you lowered, O Gods, / your heads upon your knees / and on your princely thrones? / I see, O gods, you are terrified / from fear of the messengers of Yamm, / the emissaries of Judge River. / Lift up your heads, O gods, / from upon your knees, / from upon your princely thrones!" (KTU 1.2.I.20–28)

Despite Baal's protests, the assembly surrenders him to Yamm's messengers, and their decision, even though made in fear, is binding.

In biblical passages such as 1 Kgs. 22:19–23; Isaiah 6; and 40:1–8; Psalm 82; and Job 1–2, the assembly plays a major role, and in apocalyptic literature it sometimes forms the context in which God acts, e.g., Daniel 7 and Revelation 4–5. The biblical emphasis on the unicity and absolute power of Yahweh reduces the members of the assembly to spectators, choristers, or messengers, but the assembly persists as part of the heavenly scene.

Sea is apparently a monster. In KTU 1.3.III.39–IV.3, Anat recalls the allies of Yamm, the enemies of Baal: El's river Rabbim, the dragon, the crooked serpent, Shilyat with seven heads. In KTU 1.5.I., Lotan is the ally of Mot. Lotan appears in the Bible under the name Leviathan in Ps. 74:13–14; Job 3:8; 26:12–13; 41:1–34; Isa. 27:1; Rev. 12:3; 17:1–14; 19:20; 21:1; 2 Esdras 6:49–52. Mot is not described but may also be a monster. To judge by their names, Yamm and Mot represent forces hostile to the human race and terrify the divine assembly. Unfortunately the precise nature of their threat is unclear.

The decree is ascribed to El. The assembly is not recorded as issuing decrees on its own. When the goddesses Anat and Asherah ask El to permit Baal to build a palace after his victory over Mot and Yamm, they praise his decree: "Your decree, O El, is wise. Your wisdom is eternal. A life of good for-

tune is your decree. Our king is Aliyan Baal, our judge without a peer" (KTU 1.3.V.30–33; 1.4.IV.41–44). The kingship of Baal needs the decree of El in order for it to be realized in a palace. In the Bible, Yahweh is acclaimed king by the denizens of heaven. Psalm 29 is the most explicit: "Give to Yahweh, O sons of El, give to Yahweh glory and might. . . . Yahweh is enthroned on Flood-dragon, Yahweh reigns as king forever!"

A recurrent element in apocalyptic literature—the use of animal names for human beings—has precedents in Ugaritic and in early biblical poetry, suggesting that it was part of the Canaanite literary repertoire. Animal names convey fleetness, ferocity, or strength. King Keret's dinner guests include "his bulls" and "his gazelles" (KTU 1.15.IV.6–8, 17–19), which are to be interpreted as "peers" and "barons." Baal's allies include "eight boars" (ḫnzr = Hebrew ḥzr), parallel to "seven lads" (KTU 1.5.V.8–9). The Bible has even more examples: ʾabbîr ("bull," "stallion") ʿayil ("ram") kĕpîr ("young lion") ʿattûdîm ("he-goats") among others (Miller 1971). Daniel 7 and 8 as well as the Animal Apocalypse in 1 Enoch 85–90 describe human heroes under the figure of animals.

Themes

The best clue to the nature of the cosmic threats in the Ugaritic texts is their names, Death (Mot) and Sea (Yamm). Death seems to represent death and sterility, and Sea, the Mediterranean Sea bordering on and perhaps threatening to overrun the coast. In the Bible the monsters have an implicit historical and political reference, but the Ugaritic texts are silent on such references. One can probably assume that the conquests of Baal have some reflex in royal ideology: for example, the king of Ugarit has been commissioned by El and his rule continues the work of Baal.

Because the nature of the cosmic evil is unspecified, the nature of Baal's victory over it must also be uncertain. Does Baal reestablish an order or does he create? He does not seem to attain the uncontested rank among the gods that Marduk attains in Enuma elish or to create the world. Only El and his consort Asherah are ever called creator. In comparison with the Mesopotamian accounts, Baal's royalty seems limited. At one point in the story, his enemies are actually supported by the assembly of the gods and El, and at another point he himself declares he is Mot's servant. Baal cannot defeat Mot in KTU 1.6.VI until Shapshu warns that El will hear and retaliate against Mot. Baal's characteristic thunderstorm is a phenomenon of winter, a hint perhaps that it is not effective in the summer season. The evidence suggests that Baal—and

probably the Ugaritic king, his regent on earth—enjoy limited kingship. The limit differs strikingly from the triumph of Ninurta in *Anzu,* Marduk (or Asshur) in *Enuma elish,* and Yahweh's victory in the Bible.

The above survey of Mesopotamian and Canaanite material prompts four observations.

1. One must be careful methodologically about describing the elements of the genre of combat myth in the ancient Near East. There is no ideal form of the myth but only diverse realizations. What is essential? Joseph Fontenrose's initial classification in *Python: A Study in Delphic Myth* (1959) was useful but relied too much on the personal qualities of the actors and too little on their function. Neil Forsyth's *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myths* adapts Vladimir Propp's description in *Morphology of the Folk Tale* to provide the following scheme (Forsyth 1987, 448–51).

1. Lack/   2. Hero emerges/   3. Donor/   4. Journey   5. Battle   6. Defeat   7. Enemy
   villainy.   prepares to act.   Consul-   ascendant.
                                    tation.

7. Hero recovers/   8. Battle rejoined.   9. Victory.   10. Enemy punished.   11. Triumph.
   new hero.

2. Kingship and cosmic order are inextricably bound up with each other in that the god's restoration of pre-threat order (*Lugal-e, Anzu;* Baal–Mot, Baal–Yamm?) or creation of order (*Enuma elish*) is *the* great act and sign of his kingship. The kingship of the victor god is in a sense "monotheistic"; that is, *one* god is singled out at the expense of the other gods' sovereignty, usurping their supremacy in the pantheon and over the universe.

3. What modern thought distinguishes as "nature" and "history" is not clearly distinguished in ancient thought. Natural forces are described as historical enemies. Monsters engage in political activities (stealing the Tablet-of-Decrees), lead armies, and conduct campaigns.

4. Do the texts look forward to a permanent final state? Norman Cohn concludes that Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and early biblical faith views were essentially "static yet anxious" (Cohn 1993, 227) and that Zoroastrianism introduced hope for a permanent phase of absolute peace. One can argue, however, that the combat myth, even outside the Bible, already contains a hope for a permanent kingdom, or, better stated, the unimpeded rule of a single deity. One god became supreme over all the other gods and over a particular cosmic evil. People presumably hoped for the abiding order, though

perhaps they were not surprised when fresh cosmic threats arose. But endless repetition, eternal return, is not the *message* in the combat myths considered above.

⌁ THE BIBLE

History and Religion

By ca. 1200 B.C.E., a group of tribes occupied part of Palestine and formed a league of tribes known as Israel, which shared a common story. Yahweh their God had rescued them from Egypt, made a covenant, and brought them into Canaan. Some poetry from this period survives.

To judge by this early poetry, Israel made use of the poetic repertory and concepts of Canaanite religious literature. The fixed pairs of words, vocabulary, and poetic syntax found in the largely fourteenth-century Ugaritic texts also occur in Hebrew poetry such as Exodus 15, Judges 5, Deuteronomy 33, and Psalm 114. The well-known animosity of the Bible to "Canaanite" religious practices should not mislead us into thinking the Israelites were a hermetically sealed enclave in Canaan. The very vehemence of the Bible shows the affinity between Canaanite and Israelite culture.

Israelite poets described Yahweh in the language used of the gods El and Baal in Canaan. The exploits of Yahweh were sometimes depicted in the genre of the combat myth. Yahweh is a storm-god using weapons of wind, rain, and lightning to defeat his foes (e.g., Pss. 18:8–20; 29; 77:12–21). Though sharing much with their neighbors, Israelite poets were distinctive in their explicit *historical* interest and reference. The poets celebrated Yahweh's victories not over other gods or monsters but over the army of Pharaoh in Egypt. Yahweh fought *Israel's* battles. These historical acts were nonetheless celebrated with mythic language and concepts, which deepened their significance and gave them a cosmic scope. The combined historical and mythic reference enabled Israel, relatively insignificant in comparison with other peoples, to reckon itself as extraordinary, the special people of the Most High God.

In the course of Israel's history, the prominence given to either the mythic or the historical dimension in religious writings varied. Early poetry generally maintained a balance between mythic and historical elements; for example, Yahweh fights on the heavenly plane for Israel (e.g., Judg. 5:4–5, 20–21), but the poem is mainly about a historical battle between Israel and a coalition of northern kings. In some works borrowed from neighboring courts and temples, Israelite scribes left mythological elements "untranslated," that is, not referred to historical events. Though some postexilic writings such as Isaiah

24–27, 65, and Zechariah 9–14 do not immediately refer mythological description to historical events, one must be cautious about making the myth–history correlation a criterion for charting the development of apocalyptic literature. Myth and history are not dichotomous concepts. Historical reference can be implicit in nonbiblical mythology, which may well have in view a historical people and dynasty (Roberts 1976). The prominence of myth or history in a literary work may depend on the genre rather than on a "worldview."

It has been argued that historical and sociological changes in the postexilic period, particularly the end of native kingship and the related "office" of prophecy, encouraged the development of apocalyptic writing. In sixth-century literature such as Isaiah 34–35, 40–55, and the later oracles of the book of Ezekiel, a change in the character of prophecy is already discernible. New traits or patterns have emerged. One is the democratizing and eschatologizing of classical prophetic themes and forms. A second is the doctrine of two ages, an era of "old things" and an era of "new things," the beginning of a typological treatment of historical events. The significance of history was increasingly discovered in future fulfillment. A third element is the resurgent influence of myths of creation used to frame history and to lend history transcendent significance (Cross 1973, 343–46).

Literature and Themes Relevant to Apocalyptic Literature

Genre of Combat Myth

We can distinguish four stages in the use of the combat myth by Israel: (1) early poetry such as Exodus 15, (2) liturgical poetry (psalms) of the monarchic period, (3) Second Temple literature such as Isaiah 40–66 and Zechariah 9–14, and (4) fully developed apocalyptic literature such as Daniel 7 and Revelation 12. In the first stage, the old hymns celebrate a past event, Yahweh's victory, which has brought Israel into existence. Yahweh defeated threats (Pharaoh, the Red Sea) to Israel's existence enabling the people to live safely in their land. In the second stage, hymns such as Psalms 93, 96, and 114 praise the ancient past victory that brought Israel into being. In communal laments such as Psalms 74, 77, and 89, Israel is threatened by enemies. The psalmist narrates before God in liturgy ("remembers") the original combat whereby God defeated its enemies. The purpose is to persuade God to repeat the primordial victory and defeat the present threat. In the third stage, the postexilic period, Israel has been destroyed in that it has lost its land and Temple. The validity of Yahweh's past victory has been annulled. Hence the

psalmist beseeches God to fight and win a victory over Israel's enemies *in the future*. In the fourth stage, exemplified in Daniel 7 and Revelation 12, a seer is told that the victory *has already taken place* in heaven; the seer is to bring the news of victory to the beleaguered faithful on earth.

The criterion for distinguishing the stages above is how the combat myth is viewed by each. In the first stage the combat-victory is a past and still valid event (the victory over Pharaoh at the Red Sea), and it is the reason for Israel's present existence. In the second stage, liturgical hymns praise the past victory as still potent. Communal laments, however, view the community as profoundly threatened to the point that the old saving event has lost its efficacy and must be renewed. In the third stage, the combat victory has been annulled, for Israel lies in ruins. Hence the community prays God to act again on the model of the ancient deed. In the fourth stage, the period of Daniel and Revelation, the combat has taken place and the victory has been won in the real or heavenly world, but only the seer (and his readers) knows it. We now turn to a representative work from each of the four stages.

1. Exodus 15 is the best known adaptation of the combat myth of the early poetry. Its early date is strongly suggested by archaic linguistic features (Cross 1973; Sáenz Badillos 1993). The first part of the poem celebrates Yahweh's defeat of Pharaoh *on* the sea (sea itself is not the enemy), and in the second part, Yahweh's leading the people to his shrine, where his kingship is acclaimed. Its genre—hymn—differs of course from the narrative realizations of the combat myth we have so far seen. The structure is not identical to Forsyth's ideal outline of the plot, which is drawn from purely narrative realizations. The first scene, "lack or villainy," occurs in v. 9, "I will purse, I will overtake, I will overtake, my desire shall have its fill of them." The assembly of gods is only vestigially preserved because of the demands of Israel's monotheistic faith. The battle is described in v. 8. Yahweh is exalted to kingship over the other gods (v. 11): "Who is like you, Yahweh, among the gods, / Who is like you, majestic in holiness, / Awesome in splendor, working wonders! You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them"; (v. 18): Yahweh will reign for ever and ever!" A special emphasis is the procession of the people through Canaan to Yahweh's shrine, where his kingship will be celebrated. The narrative plot has been broken up for the sake of liturgy.

The hymn celebrates a specific historical event in the myth—Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh at the Red Sea. "Historical" here means only that the Israelites believed the exodus took place at a particular time and place. Though the extant extrabiblical combat myths did not have an explicitly historical reference, they depicted creation or reestablishment of a particular cos-

mic order and must have therefore had in mind a specific king and people. The Bible is, nonetheless, much more explicit about historical events and gives them much more emphasis than nonbiblical texts.

2. In liturgical poetry of the monarchic period the combat myth is discernible in some hymns, for example, Psalms 93, 96, and 114, in which it functions as in the early hymns. The combat myth functions differently, however, in communal laments such as Psalms 74, 77, and 89. In this genre Israel, threatened by enemies, recites before God ("remembers") the old combat victory at the beginning. The purpose is to persuade God to repeat the primordial victory and defeat the present threat. This use differs from the previous stage and points forward to stage 3: the victory is a past historical event but its present potency is now in doubt. People have to pray that the original deed be renewed.

Psalm 89 is a good example of how the combat myth functions in communal laments. Recent commentators rightly regard it as a literary unity (Clifford 1980). It "remembers" before Yahweh his ancient world-creating victory (in this psalm it includes the installation of the Davidic king) in order to appeal to God's *noblesse oblige*: Will you allow the king who represents your combat victory to be defeated in battle? Verses 6–19 describe that cosmic victory as a single event that includes a procession and consecration of a king.

> [10]You rule the raging Sea;
>   you still its swelling waves.
> [11]You crushed Rahab with a mortal blow;
>   your strong arm scattered your foes.
> [12]Yours are the heavens, yours the earth;
>   you founded the world and everything in it.
> [Verses 16–19 describe a triumphant procession to Yahweh's shrine, after which the Davidic king is consecrated.]
> [20]Then you spoke in a vision to your consecrated one and you said,
>   I have set (my) servant above the mighty men,
>   I have raised up a man of (my) choice from the army.
>   . . . .
> [28]Yes, I make him my firstborn,
>   the highest of the kings of the earth.

3. After the capture of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the end of the monarchy, it was understandable that Israelites concluded that God's work had come to an end. Texts such as Isa. 51:9–11 view the combat victory as no longer in effect and ask God for a new deed similar to the ancient one.

> [9]Awake, awake, clothe yourself with power,
>   arm of Yahweh!
> Awake as in days of old,
>   generations long ago.
> surely it was you that hacked Rahab [sea monster] in pieces,
>   that pierced the Dragon.
> [10]It was you that dried up Sea
>   the waters of the Great Deep,
> that made the abysses of Sea
>   a road for the redeemed to walk on.
> [11]So let the ransomed of Yahweh return,
>   let them come with shouting to Zion.

Second Isaiah imagined the ancient deed that gave birth to Israel as the exodus conquest and a cosmogonic victory (43:16–17). God is about to do something new modeled on the old (43:18–21). In the prayer of 51:9–11, the prophet asks God to do again the ancient combat victory over Sea, which will result in the return of the exiles to Zion. The ancient deed is a thing of the past; it is now projected into the future. May God bring it about!

4. In Daniel 7, written in the 160s B.C.E., vestiges of the combat myth appear. In the plot of the Mesopotamian and Canaanite examples examined earlier in this essay, the young warrior, after vanquishing the sea monster and restoring order, receives kingship from the chief god and the assembly. Though no one would argue that fourteenth-century Canaanite texts directly shaped Daniel 7, there can be little doubt that the combat myth has influenced the scene: the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven (v. 13) recalls the epithet of Canaanite Baal, "rider of the clouds"; the Ancient of Days (v. 9) evokes the epithet of Canaanite El, *'b šnm*, "Father of Years." The pattern of relationships is further proof of influence: the interaction of two god-like figures is unprecedented in the Bible but common in the Ugaritic texts; there is opposition between the sea and the cloud rider. There are, of course, major differences such as the introduction of the motif of the four kingdoms, and the beast is slain not in combat but by judicial decree (J. J. Collins 1993, 286–94). Knowledge of the Canaanite background can highlight important points in Daniel 7: the earthly kingdoms symbolized by the four beasts are agents of a more primordial evil, Sea; no battle needs to be fought, the victory is already won; Israelite monotheism has made the old warrior-god into an angelic representative of Israel.

The book of Revelation has also drawn on the combat myth. One could perhaps argue that chaps. 4–5 are a vestigial reflection of the divine assembly

thrown into consternation by its inability to find within its ranks a defender of divine rule; the Lion turned Lamb would be the heavenly hero. Revelation 12 is more certain. The enemy is a seven-headed dragon, for which there is no biblical parallel but a clear one in the Ugaritic Baal cycle, "Lotan (Leviathan) the twisting serpent. . . . Shalyat with seven heads" (*KTU* 1.5.i.1–3 = *ANET* 138). The dragon's ten horns show an attempt to relate it to the fourth beast in Daniel 7. As in Daniel 7, Revelation 12 uses the combat myth (however vestigial) to show that the victory has been won (A. Y. Collins 1976). It has happened in the heavens, the real world, but is not yet displayed on earth. An event of *Urzeit* is now an event in *Endzeit*. When the beasts and the dragon will be destroyed on earth (Rev. 17:1–20:15), the new heavens will appear.

The above survey shows the various ways in which the genre of the combat myth appears in biblical literature. In many old poems and psalms the combat is past and undergirds the present order. With the exile, the present order has collapsed, and so the combat is moved to the future, with a view to restoration.

CONCLUSIONS

What can we learn about apocalyptic literature by studying its early antecedents? First of all they teach us that the imagery and themes of apocalyptic literature are not bizarre and obscurantist, as is sometimes claimed. For example, the combat myth was a customary ancient way of thinking about the world. Ancient Near Eastern "philosophical" thinking was normally done through narrative. Retelling one basic narrative in slightly different versions enabled ancients to reflect about the governance of the world and explain the course of history, especially the history of their own nation. Their era took for granted the existence and power of the gods and factored them into their reflection, as our era takes for granted and reckons with a different (and less ultimate) range of forces, for example, the power of ideas, of free trade, of energy resources. To do philosophy, theology, and political theory, modern thinkers employ the genre of the discursive essay rather than the narrative of the combat myth. Despite the differences, one should not forget that ancients and moderns share an interest in ultimate causes and both are intent on explaining the cosmos, the nature of evil, and the validity and the functions of basic institutions. Apocalyptic literature at bottom is not bizarre and opaque, but is rather a narrative way of reflecting about theology, philosophy, and history, and of inculcating a way of life.

Some of the exotic elements of apocalyptic literature, however, are intended by their authors. For example, the *post-factum* prophecies are deliberately vague, without place or personal names, to make them appear as prophecies of a future only dimly discerned. Heavenly visions are deliberately portrayed as wondrous and radically different from everyday life. Their exotic details are a narrative way of conveying the numinous quality of the heavenly world.

This article has focused on the combat myth as an important key to understanding some of the underlying issues of apocalyptic works. The genre always deals with the supremacy (kingship) of *one* god in the pantheon or heaven. Despite the mythic language, there is a "historical" perspective in all the instances of the genre because they refer to the personal and political realities of the human beings who tell them. In the Bible the historical reference is explicit, and the use of mythic language to interpret historical happenings is clear.

NOTES

1. The most important text was published by R. Borger, "Die Beschwörungsserie *bīt mēseri* und die Himmelfahrt Henochs," *JNES* 33 (1974): 183–96. Discussions are in Kvanvig 1988, 191–213; and J. C. Greenfield, "Apkallu," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn and P. W. van der Horst, 134–38 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

2. There have been several systems of reference to the Ugaritic texts, but *KTU* is now the standard text. A widely used English translation is that of H. L. Ginsberg in *ANET*. The equivalences of tablets of the Baal Cycle in *KTU* and *ANET* is as follows: *KTU* 1.1 = *ANET* VI AB iv; *KTU* 1.2 = *ANET* III AB, C, B, A; *KTU* 1.3 = *ANET* V AB; *KTU* 1.4 = *ANET* II AB; *KTU* 1.5 = *ANET* I AB; *KTU* 1.6 = *ANET* I AB.

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2

Persian Apocalypticism

Anders Hultgård
Uppsala University

PERSIAN OR IRANIAN APOCALYPTICISM PRESENTS A UNIQUE interest because of its striking similarities with the Judeo-Christian tradition, making at the same time a somewhat alien and unfamiliar impression that is due to a different cultural background. For almost two centuries the problem of Iranian influence on Jewish and Christian eschatology has attracted Western scholarship and also stirred up an ardent debate. Could it be that the entire worldview of Western apocalypticism up to the present time ultimately derives from ancient Iran? The end and renewal of the world, the apocalyptic time reckoning, the signs and tribulations of the end, the struggle of God and his Messiah against evil, personified in the figure of Satan and his demons, would thus be ideas having a foreign origin. The fact is that all these ideas are found in Iran and, what is more, they are essential and well integrated in the Zoroastrian religious worldview. Or—as the opposite party contends—does Jewish and Christian apocalypticism represent a natural and continuous development out of biblical prophecy?

The discussion is further complicated by the nature of the sources. The origins of Persian apocalypticism are not apparent, since the older texts, the Avesta, contain only isolated eschatological assertions or allusions to ideas that may be interpreted in an apocalyptic framework. In fact, no coherent apocalyptic tradition can be restored from the Avesta that has come down to

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