

THE NATURE OF EVIL IN JEWISH APOCALYPTIC: THE NEED FOR “INTEGRAL” SALVATION

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The discovery of the Qumran Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi texts has led to a resurgence of interest in Jewish apocalyptic writings and an increasing recognition of their significance for Christian theology generally and systematic theology in particular. Klaus Koch, in his important book *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*,¹ refers in this connection to the seminal thought of two German scholars in particular: the first is Ernst Käsemann, who in his essay entitled “The Beginnings of Christian Theology,” reached the rather controversial conclusion that “Apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology”;² the second is Wolfhart Pannenberg, who in his essay entitled “Redemptive Event and History”,³ reintroduced apocalyptic universal history as the horizon which spans the whole of Christian theology in general. Further impetus in the systematic field has come from Jürgen Moltmann who, in *The Theology*

¹ Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1972; translated by Margaret Kohl from the German *Ratlos vor der Apokalypitik*, 1970). Around the same time that Käsemann and Pannenberg published their essays, three other German scholars also made significant contributions to the revival of research into apocalyptic: O. Plöger’s *Theokratie und Eschatologie* (1959); D. Rössler’s *Gesetz und Geschichte* (1960); and Gerhard von Rad’s second volume, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (1960).

² Ernst Käsemann, “The Beginnings of Christian Theology,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Fortress and SCM Press, 1969) 82-107, at 102. From the German “Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 57 (1960) 162-85.

³ Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Redemptive Event and History,” *Basic Questions in Theology* (SCM and Fortress Press, 1970), 15-80. From the German “Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte,” in *Kerygma und Dogma* 5 (1959) 218-37.

of *Hope*,⁴ undertook to move the future aspect of faith back into the centre of theological reflection: he views hope as standing in an unbridgeable contrast to the present reality of history, hence he finds the element of discontinuity characteristic of apocalyptic dualism between the present age and the age to come, indispensable to his analysis of theological hope. Moltmann is keen to emphasize that apocalyptic is not concerned merely with the individual, but includes the whole of humanity and the entire universe. In the words of Paul Hanson, Moltmann “sees in the universal and cosmic perspective of apocalyptic an important safeguard against the snares of ethno-centricism and existentialist narrowing of human history”.⁵

While the apocalyptists were not systematic theologians, nevertheless the diversity of apocalyptic writings display a consistency inasmuch as they all tend to be based on “the vision of a prototypical heavenly order revealed to a religious community through a seer” which comes to expression in the literary genre known as “apocalypse”.⁶ The basic structure of this genre is that a revelation is given by God, through a mediator (angelic agency), to a seer, concerning future eschatological events that will establish God’s universal reign in a glorious age to come; that is to say, in a “new heaven and new earth” (Isa 65:17; Rev 21:1). It is not difficult to see how the basic structure of the genre serves to effectively “put the problems of the present in perspective...it provides a view of the world that will be a source of *consolation* in the face of distress”.⁷ In the context of deep conflict, the central question that occupies the apocalyptist is “how to overcome the discrepancy between *what is* and *what should be*. Why is faithfulness to the God of the Law rewarded by

⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (SCM Press and Harper, 1967).

⁵ Paul D. Hanson (ed.), *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses* (Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SPCK, 1983) 8.

⁶ Paul D. Hanson, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987) 27. John J. Collins, “Towards The Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979), offers a less comprehensive definition of apocalypse as a form of revelatory literature that discloses a “transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world” (9).

⁷ J. J. Collins, *Daniel With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 22. The comments of Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), are also to be noted: he says that the function of the genre of the apocalypse is that of providing “comfort to those tested by persecution and giving them encouragement to remain steadfast in their faith” (430).

persecution and suffering?”⁸ The apocalyptic writings portray reality as deeply marred by conflict and struggle, yet at the heart of apocalyptic there lies a paradox, for the more the poles in apocalyptic are pushed apart, the more they respond to one another. “This is the paradox of apocalyptic: the more history becomes catastrophic, the closer the kingdom of God becomes.”⁹ This paradox points to the role that dualisms play in the method of apocalyptic.

But while the *formal* aspects of the apocalyptic genre can be readily traced to Persian and Babylonian influences, caution must be exercised when weighing up these influences on the *content* of Jewish apocalyptic. It must always be borne in mind that the dualism of Jewish apocalyptic is not a dualism that threatens the validity of monotheism: “Jewish apocalyptic is essentially monistic in character, never losing the conviction that God the Creator is Lord over the whole creation, be it people or demons or inanimate nature.”¹⁰ The form of dualism that is invariably found in Jewish apocalyptic persistently asserts the sovereignty of Almighty God. The most effective way of delving into the question of how dualism functions in Jewish apocalyptic is to treat the topic under the three rubrics of “cosmic”, “ethical”, and “eschatological” dualism.¹¹

This essay will briefly examine these three types of dualism to be found in Jewish apocalyptic [sections (a) through to (c)] in order to ascertain the import of the apocalyptic thought-world for an understanding of the human predicament in this world of ours [which is traditionally elaborated in terms of the doctrine of original sin], and to discuss what understanding of the nature of divine salvation arises out of such a portrait [section (d)]. It will be shown that when all three types of dualism are held in dialectical tension, what emerges is a view of death in the full sense, that is, as “integral” in nature (there are cosmological, anthropological, and eschatological dimensions to the reality of death and sin). This implies that when we move to

⁸ J. C. Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982) 30. Emphasis added. Beker discusses four basic components of Jewish apocalyptic which Paul incorporates into his thought: “vindication”, “universalism”, “dualism”, and “imminence”.

⁹ André LaCocque, *Daniel in His Time* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988) 96.

¹⁰ D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 104.

¹¹ This is the manner in which Benedikt Otzen treats this topic in *Judaism in Antiquity* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 83-97, 171-218. D. S. Russell's chapter on “Dualism and Apocalyptic” in *Divine Disclosure* is very similar to Otzen's approach to the topic of dualism in apocalyptic.

consider the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary, then this unique death needs to be treated as an “integral” death out of which flows “integral” salvation for humanity and the world as a whole.

(a) Cosmic Dualism: The Battle Being Waged Without

This type of dualism brings to the fore the infinite distance between God and humanity, and between heaven and earth. Beyond the present world of time, space, and sense, there is another heavenly world altogether different from the earthly one, where the Most High God dwells with the holy angels. The gulf existing between these two worlds can be bridged either by the dream-visions with their otherworldly journeys, or by the mediation of angels.¹² The intermediary function of the angels underlines the utter transcendence of the heavenly world. But angels feature in another important aspect of cosmic dualism; namely, the *opposition between God and Satan* (also referred to as Belial, or Beliar). In a number of apocalyptic writings we find the basic assertion that the root cause of the evil pervading this present age lies in angelic and demonic powers that have usurped the reign of God in the universe. Almighty God has allowed these evil powers, which are engaged in wreaking havoc in the world by tempting humankind to do all manner of evil, to reign freely for a predetermined time until the final judgment when the sovereignty and justice of Almighty God will be made manifest to all.

Benedikt Otzen plausibly maintains that since the Old Testament has a realistic understanding of evil, but ultimately it has no satisfactory answer to the question of the origin of evil, the Jews seized on the foreign notion of Belial and his army of devils and placed it in a strictly monistic and monotheistic framework.¹³ The fact that Yahweh

¹² Examples of the heavenly journey or heavenly vision include: *4 Ezra* 4:21; *1 Enoch* 14: 8-10, 18-20; 18: 2-5; 36: 4; *2 Enoch* 5: 11-13; *Test Levi (Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs)* 2:6-5:2; and the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch)*.

¹³ Otzen, *Judaism in Antiquity*, 181. It is necessary to note that in the Old Testament, “Satan”, which appears in three fairly late passages (1 Chron 21:1; Zech. 3:1; Job 1:6-12), has a defined function as a member of God’s heavenly court; it is not a proper name. It refers to the office of adversary. But in the apocalyptic writings, Satan emerges as a proper name, he is the personification of evil, he is a demon prince who leads a great army against God. In the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* the figure of “Beliar” assumes great importance: He is the Lord of darkness (*Test Jos* 20:2) who is set over against the Lord of Light (*Test Sim* 5:3; *Test Naph* 2:6); Beliar has spirits under him who obey his will (*Test Iss* 7:7) and in the last days people will abandon God and serve Beliar (*Test Iss* 6:1), but the Messiah ben Levi will make war on him and release the captive souls in his hold (*Test Dan*

actually allows evil to wreak havoc in the world was explained by recourse to a basic conception that appeared earlier in Judaism, namely, the view that *freedom is given in order to enable human beings to choose between good and evil*. At this point an important synthesis takes place inasmuch as the adverse aspect of cosmic dualism was brought into play with the ethical dualism which is expounded below in section (b). This gave rise to the view that the human being is precariously poised between the cosmic forces of good and evil, so that the ethical battle taking place within the human heart was seen as reflecting the battle being waged in the macrocosmic realm. The battle imagery gives expression to another aspect of cosmic dualism: the *twofold division of humanity*. The righteous and blessed ones of God, who reject the lordship of Belial, are seen as distinctly separate from the godless and wicked who will not partake of the glorious new age to come when God will banish evil forever. The Qumran texts offer us perhaps the clearest example of this twofold division when they speak of “the Children of Light” and “the Children of Darkness”, or, as they are elsewhere called, “the Children of Righteousness” and “the Children of Falsehood” (*IQS* 1:9-10 and 3:20-21 respectively).

(b) Anthropological-Ethical Dualism: The Battle Being Waged Within

In other apocalyptic writings, the primary cause of evil in the present age is to be sought not in cosmic dualism (the demonic powers without), but rather in the individual’s wilful rebellion against God, that is, in the evil inclination of the human heart (the evil within). This is the position of “ethical dualism” which is implicit in the basic religious structure of Judaism: “I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live” (Deut 30:19); “Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death” (Jer 21:8); “In the path of righteousness is life, but the way of error leads to death” (Prov 12:28). To the Jewish mind, the human individual is poised between the two worlds of evil (death) and good (life), and it is the decision to adhere to the Law (with its cultic,

5:10), and he will bind Beliar (*Test Levi* 18:12) and cast him into the everlasting fire (*Test Judah* 25:3). See H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1944) 50-63. Mention should also be made of a characteristic expression for Satan to be found in the *Ascension of Isaiah* where we read of “*the prince of this world* and his angels and his sovereignties and his powers” (1:3). This expression is to be found in the New Testament: John. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. In sum, it is evident that in apocalyptic “we have a very marked development away from the concept of evil and its origins to be found in the Old Testament” - D. S. Russell, *From Early Judaism to Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1986) 89.

social, and ethical demands) which alone can bring the divine blessings of life. For the apocalyptists, however, this fundamental ethical choice was understood in terms of an extraordinary tension between the power of evil influences from without (Beliar and his cohorts), and human beings under the Law.¹⁴ Many texts paint a vivid picture of the human being in the grips of pervasive evil forces and yet ultimately capable of adhering to the Law and realizing the good, so that there is *no weakening of the accountability for human actions* to be found in these texts.

These reflections on the fundamental ethical choice facing the human being are developed into a theory known as the *yesser* theory of Rabbinic theology. The Hebrew word *yesser* conveys the sense of “striving” or “will.”¹⁵ In Rabbinic thought it is sometimes used neutrally with respect to the “good impulse” and the “evil impulse” (*m. Aboth* 2:11; 4:1; *m. Berakoth* 9:5), however the primary use of the term is negative, for it refers to a striving or drive which it is the human being’s duty to contest: “Who is mighty? He who subdues his [evil] impulse” (*m. Aboth* 4:1). The Rabbinic *yesser* theory brings the text of Deut 30:19, which was quoted above, into play with Gen 6:5 and 8:21, out of which arises the fundamental assertion that the human being is born with an evil inclination or impulse which he/she must endeavour to keep under control by way of adherence to the divine Law. The view that the word *yesser* tends to be used to express the evil impulse alone is reinforced by the Qumran texts. When the texts mention the “good impulse” they usually employ an expression which in English would be rendered as “a strong will” or “steadfastness of heart” (*IQS* 4:5; 8:3; *IQH* 1:35; 2:9).¹⁶ Yet when they speak of the “evil impulse”, the word *yesser* stands alone (*IQH* 5:6; 6:32), from which it seems reasonable to conclude that the word generally has a negative connotation which is perhaps best rendered by the English “lust”.

¹⁴ A good example of this basic tension is to be found in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*: (i) *Test Naph* 2:2-4 says that soul and body were carefully attuned at their creation, so that all people have the potential to live under the Law and to realize the good; (ii) In *Test Reub* 2:3-3:1 we read of the eight spirits given to humankind, the first of which is the “spirit of life” (this is the divine spirit breathed into humankind at creation) which is constitutive of human nature, and which is in oppositional relationship to the other spirits (of sight, hearing, smell, speech, taste, pro-creation, and sleep) which are concerned with material demands. This text is connected with the immediately following passage (3:2-8) dealing with the seven spirits appointed by Beliar against humankind and which are responsible for the deeds of rebellion (2:2). There are, in short, evil influences from without which penetrate the human senses, hence we have here a suggestion of a body-soul dualism; (iii) *Test Dan* 4:7-5:1 states plainly that despite the influence of Beliar, we are ultimately responsible for whether the Lord or Beliar dwells in us.

¹⁵ Otzen, *Judaism in Antiquity*, 89.

¹⁶ Otzen, *Judaism in Antiquity*, 90.

What we have in this Rabbinic theory, then, is “an idea not far removed from the thought of the apostle Paul”,¹⁷ who teaches that those who are in the “flesh” are not free to realize the good because they serve the “law of sin” (Romans 7-8). While humans are free to choose the good they experience themselves as inclining towards the gratification of “the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16).¹⁸ The only thing that can break the power of the personified cosmic forces of evil that underlie the *yesser* is the universality of the redemptive grace in Jesus Christ risen: To belong to Christ is to live in the power of the Spirit of new life, that is, life that is God’s triumph over the enemy of death. For Paul, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are “*the apocalyptic event*”.¹⁹

In the writings of the apocalyptists this notion of the evil inclination in human nature was linked to the notion of Adam’s “fall” in which all his descendants are implicated.²⁰ One of the clearest references in this regard is to be found in *2 Baruch*, which states, “For though Adam first sinned and brought untimely death upon all men, yet each one of those who were born from him has either prepared for his own soul its future torment or chosen for himself the glories that are to be...Thus Adam was responsible for himself only; each one of us is his own Adam” (54:15,19). In this apocalypse, then, while the sin of Adam has brought death to all of Adam’s descendants, all are nevertheless ultimately responsible for their deeds.²¹ In other

¹⁷ Otzen, *Judaism in Antiquity*.

¹⁸ J. Marcus, “The Evil Inclination in the Letters of Paul,” *Irish Biblical Society* 8 (1986), 8-21, illustrates how Paul also makes use of the *yesser* concept which is most clearly expressed in Gal 5:16: “Walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.” Paul speaks much more frequently of the “flesh” (over 65 uses of the word *sarx*) than he does of the *yesser* (Gal 5:16; I Cor 7:37, 5:8, 2:12; Rom 1:24, 1:26, 1:28, 6:12, 7:5, 8:5-7, 13:14). Marcus maintains that the frequency of the “flesh” language is evidence for “the pervasiveness of the apocalyptic framework in Paul’s thinking, since ‘flesh’ means the sphere over which the power of Satan holds sway” (17).

¹⁹ Marcus, “Evil Inclination,” 18.

²⁰ Two of the later Wisdom books also make clear reference to the fall of Adam: (i) In the Wisdom of Solomon we read that “Death came into the world only through the Devil’s envy, as those who belong to him find to their cost” (2:24). Death, then, is the result of Adam’s fall, however no inheritance of sin and guilt is implied here; (ii) In Sirach, we read that “From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all perish” (25:24). This text, like the previous one quoted, attributes death to the transgression of the first couple, but it goes further in linking our sin with the sin at the beginning. This idea does not necessarily amount to, however, the idea of the whole race being subject to inevitable sin.

²¹ This is also the position of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. In Eastern theology there is no

words, Adam is the cause of physical death but not spiritual death. A second important text is that of *4 Ezra*, which states, "O Adam, what have you done? For, though it was you who have sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants" (7:118). This text seems to go beyond that of *2 Baruch* in that it suggests that Adam's sin and guilt is transmitted to all his descendants: the evil inclination of the human heart is attributed to the "fall" of Adam. The writer of *4 Ezra* does go on to say, however, that this evil impulse can be controlled by the Law, that each individual can win the victory over sin (7:127-40), for reference is made to Deut 30:19 in likening the individual's fundamental ethical choice to a contest between two opposing forces within the human being.²²

(c) Eschatological Dualism: The Present Evil Age and the Final Age to Come

The previous two kinds of dualism only function effectively when they are placed within the framework of an eschatological dualism which is concerned with the apocalyptic understanding of history: it is a dualism on "the temporal plane, a contradiction between that *which has been* and that *which is to come*."²³ These two ages which are held in dualistic contrast are by definition cosmic in scope, and the dualism is eschatological because it concerns the final and definitive replacement of "this age" by "the age to come".²⁴ The "age to come" is unimaginably different from

notion of inherited culpability, what is inherited from the sin of Adam is mortality rather than sinfulness. Sinfulness is seen as a consequence of mortality, thus repentance is a *Pascha* from death to life. The overall dynamics are of life and death, not blessing and "fall". See the article written by the Orthodox scholar Revd. Dr. John Chryssavgis in Neil Ormerod's book *Grace and Disgrace: A Theology of Self-Esteem, Society, and History* (Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1992) 197-206; and J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* (London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1974) 143-46.

²² It should be noted that elsewhere in the apocalyptic writings this ethical dualism is expressed in the form of "two spirits" at enmity with each other, rather than in terms of "two ways" that lie before us. The Qumran Scrolls afford us a good example: "God...has appointed for him [man] two spirits of truth and falsehood...All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light; but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness" (*IQS* 3:17-19).

²³ Otzen, *Judaism in Antiquity*, 190. Emphasis added.

²⁴ In apocalyptic eschatology what is in view is the end of history. In prophetic eschatology (Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), by contrast, the divine judgement upon Israel for its apostasy is always followed by the promise of national restoration, hence the eschatological event of judgement is seen as standing within history, it signifies a "midpoint" or "turning-point" rather than a final end. The prophetic view of history "is thoroughly

all that has gone before because it is characterised by eschatological or eternal life, whereas “this age” is the all-embracing sphere of death, that is to say, the sphere in which we humans are separated from the divine presence due to the power of sin. In this perspective, it is *the language of death that expresses the disjunction between the two ages*. Here the term “death” is used in the extended sense of including the interrelated aspects of bodily demise or physical death, sin or moral/spiritual death, and eternal perdition or eschatological death.²⁵ Physical death is held to be the mark of moral death and prefigures the eschatological death which will befall the wicked at the final judgment. The first meaning of death as separation from the divine presence (which is in accord with the Old Testament understanding of death) is also applied to the final judgment, and it is this meaning of death as “eschatological death”, as the extension of physical and moral death, which is peculiar to Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. What unites this three-fold meaning of death is the theological notion that “to speak of death is to speak of the *relationship* of human beings to God. Death characterizes this relationship as one of *separation*. By definition, death...is not remediable through human effort”.²⁶ In the perspective of eschatological dualism, it is precisely death in its full sense that marks this present age as radically different from the age to come.

(d) A Dialectical Tension Between the Evil Within and the Evil Without

It light of the foregoing discussion of the three types of dualism characteristic of the Jewish apocalyptic thought-world, we are now in a position to draw some conclusions in regard to its understanding of the human predicament in the present age. The thrust of the discussion has been directed toward an appreciation of the nuanced understanding of the problem of evil which is developed both in terms of two conflicting cosmic forces and in terms of two competing inclinations within the human heart. These two portrayals of the root cause of evil in the world give rise to the *cosmological* and *forensic* portrayals of final judgment respectively. The cosmological

determined by the opposition between past and present, eschatological events marking the turning-point.” This contrasts markedly with the view of apocalyptic eschatology where “the eschatological events were not merely a turning-point, but rather the end of history” (Otzen, *Judaism in Antiquity*, 195).

²⁵ See Martinus C. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in I Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988) 83-84, where the various meanings of death and how they are intertwined are discussed.

²⁶ de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 84.

and forensic “tracks” of apocalyptic eschatology actually serve as “heuristic models” for interpreting the dynamics of the various texts, hence we must not get the impression that all the writings can be neatly categorized into one or the other of these “tracks”.²⁷

A consistent point does nevertheless emerge from the various apocalyptic writings, namely, one is personally responsible for one’s actions because one is able to set the heart on the good by way of adherence to the Law, which means that *ultimately the root cause of evil is to be sought not “from above” but rather “from within”*. The nuanced understanding of the relationship between the macroscopic and microscopic dimensions of evil has the considerable merit of warning us against two serious mistakes that are readily made in reflecting upon the problem of evil in this age: firstly, that of explaining evil exclusively in terms of the individual’s wilful act of sinning and wrongdoing; secondly, that of blaming Satan or Beliar and his evil cohorts for the present evil age and thus excusing ourselves. When both tracks of apocalyptic eschatology are held in dialectical tension, then the picture that emerges is that of the human being as never merely an individual but as an integral part of a larger living whole: evil is a reality that “inheres in the totality of the whole, and is operative in greater or lesser measure in each”.²⁸ The figure of Beliar or Satan may be seen as representing that totality of evil that persists from generation to generation, so that we are to understand that *in our acts of sinning we are not merely ourselves sinning*, for we are actually conspiring with forces which go beyond the realm of the mere individual. In the apocalyptic thought-world, then, the existence of macrocosmic forces of evil means that prior to the exercise of our ethical choice there already exist forces of disintegration and decay that seek to influence and determine human free-will towards all manner of wrongdoing, thereby adding to the burdening curse of the kingdom of evil (death) which is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of God (life).

Therefore, I believe an appropriate way of drawing the foregoing analysis of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology to a conclusion is by formulating the basic proposition that *cosmic dualism and ethical dualism must be held in dialectical tension* in order to safeguard against an exclusively one-sided approach to the problem of evil in the present age, and this dialectical tension is to be seen as functioning *within the*

²⁷ de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 85. A relatively pure form of the cosmological track is to be found in the “Book of the Watchers” (*1 Enoch* 1-36), while *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra* are examples of a relatively pure form of the forensic track. Works which feature both tracks prominently include the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Jubilees*, and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

²⁸ Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic*, 151.

framework of an eschatological dualism that highlights the discrepancy or disjunction existing between what is and what is to come. The most important event in the history of revelation remained, for the apocalyptists, in the future: "They looked forward to a decisive event in light of which history would finally reveal the meaning it had contained from the beginning."²⁹ While it must be conceded that apocalyptic views history schematically and almost mechanically, hence the writings tend to be declarative in nature, nevertheless we must not lose sight of the fact that the *type of determinism portrayed is also performative in character* and therefore not paralysing, since "apocalyptic determinism concerns only the external course of events. The fate of individuals is not predetermined".³⁰ This type of thought remains thoroughly Jewish. In the second century C.E., for example, Rabbi Akiba stated that, "All is foreseen, but free-will is accorded" (*m. Aboth* 3:15).³¹ In the cosmic dualism of apocalyptic all the external events of history are indeed foreseen, however ethical dualism emphasizes that free-will is still accorded to human beings, by means of which they can choose to transform their evil hearts and realize the good by means of obedience to the Law which guarantees participation in the glorious age to come; that is to say, the reward of eternal life for the saints of the Most High God.

What is the relation of Jewish apocalyptic thought to the traditional Christian doctrine of "original sin" and the "fall" of Adam? Well, let me begin by pointing out that the basic *assumption* underlying the traditional doctrine is discernible in the apocalyptic world-view; namely, that we humans are born into a sinful predicament which stands in fundamental need of God's self-communication in grace in order to realize the good life and arrive at our final end in the living God. For the apocalyptists, the giving of the Law to Israel is seen as the abiding self-communicating presence of the living God, which forms the basis of the real hope in the imminent eschatological salvation of God's final judgment of history, which will bring about the establishment of a "new heaven and new earth" where death shall be no more.

Where Jewish apocalyptic clearly represents a definite development of the intention of the J narrator in Genesis 2-3, however, is in regard to the notion of the "fall" of Adam. The development consists in the fact that Adam is no longer interpreted symbolically but has become an historical individual whose transgression has unleashed the power of *death* into the world (but not the power of sin - this is Paul's

²⁹ LaCocque, *Daniel in His Time*, 107.

³⁰ J. J. Collins, "Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John," *CBQ* 39 (1977) 336.

³¹ Cited by LaCocque, *Daniel in His Time*, 99.

contribution in Romans 5:12).³² To my mind, when both tracks of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology are held in dialectical tension, the result is a far more nuanced and complex understanding of the human predicament in this world than is to be found in the Genesis creation narrative (which, it must be borne in mind, was put together well before Judaism adopted the notion of a life hereafter). For now *sin is portrayed as having cosmological, anthropological, and eschatological dimensions*, all of which are inextricably intertwined, so that inquiry into any one element cannot proceed without bringing into play the other two. These various interrelated aspects of the human predicament in the world share some common ground with, but also some notable differences to, the traditional doctrine of original sin, as the following paragraphs will seek to bring to light.

To begin with, the import of the cosmological dimension of sin lies in that it draws attention to the fact that we humans do not commence our sinful history alone; we are born into a situation of sin. This is to say that when we sin we are not merely ourselves sinning but are participating in powers of evil external to ourselves, powers which seek to determine our free-will in the direction of wrongdoing. If we are passively subject to evil powers from without, then this implies that sin should not be viewed as the mere individual act or transgression against a divine law. The cosmological aspect of sin therefore clearly points to the need to recognize a pre-personal dimension to sin, which is an integral part of the traditional doctrine of original sin. But in spite of this common ground, there also exists a notable difference on this point inasmuch as the traditional doctrine asserts that the pre-personal disposition to sin is inherited from within, whereas the cosmological track of apocalyptic holds that this passive

³² There are some commentators (such as K. Barth, F. J. Leenhardt, and H. Schlier) who have tried to interpret Adam in Rom 5:12 symbolically, but such a reading is problematic, I believe, because it clearly violates Paul's basic contrast between the "one man" Adam and the "one man" Christ: these two personages represent not stages in history, but history's beginning and end. With respect to what Paul says in Rom 5:12, it is simply not in continuity with contemporary Jewish thinking, for Paul ascribes to Adam the advent not only of death, but also of sin. The statement that "death spread to all men" cannot be taken to mean, however, that Adam brought the penalty of death upon his posterity, that all are doomed to death without any personal responsibility (so-called "inherited death"), for Paul immediately adds the phrase "because all sinned." With these words, Paul introduces a secondary causality of personal responsibility alongside the primary causality of the transgression of the one man Adam which unleashed the powers of sin and death into the world.

element exerts its influence from the standpoint of a situation of evil powers external to the individual.³³

It is when we turn our attention to the anthropological dimension of sin as portrayed in the ethical dualism of Jewish apocalyptic that we find the acknowledgement of a pre-personal dimension to sin within the individual person, which is expressed in terms of an evil impulse (*yesser*) within the heart. This *yesser* concept of Rabbinic theology bears some striking resemblances to the Pauline term “flesh” that refers to the sphere over which the “powers of sin and death” hold sway. In the perspective of ethical dualism, however, it is important to note that we are not only subject to evil passively due to the innate evil impulse within, but we also actively conspire with the evil within, so that ultimately we are still held to be personally responsible for our sinful deeds. Thus while this *yesser* concept of ethical dualism affirms a pre-personal dimension to sin within the individual person (supports the traditional view), nonetheless the forensic track of apocalyptic eschatology cannot be appealed to for lending support to the notion of so-called “inheritance of sin” (against the traditional view).³⁴ The picture that emerges in ethical dualism parallels that depicted by Paul in

³³ The cosmological dimension of sin, note, corresponds to the “situational” reinterpretation of original sin in contemporary Catholic theology. The situationists (such as Piet Schoonenberg, Karl Rahner, and Karl-Heinz Weger) take the post-Tridentine formula of original sin as a privation of sanctifying grace as their starting-point, and attempt a reinterpretation of the doctrine by introducing into this formula the concept of the human being as historical situatedness, which results in original sin being portrayed as an “Existential” of human freedom. See G. Valdervelde, *Original Sin: Two Major Trends in Contemporary Roman Catholic Reinterpretation* (Amsterdam: Rodopi N.V., 1975). The other major trend is the “personalist” reinterpretation propounded by thinkers such as A. Vanneste and U. Baumann.

³⁴ The universality of sin was traditionally upheld by citing the Latin phrase “in quo omnes peccaverunt” in connection with Rom 5:12, where the “in quo” (in whom) was given as the translation of the Greek phrase *eph ho*. The meaning of verse 12 would therefore be, “all have sinned in the sin which has entered into the world through Adam” (hence the notion of an inheritance of sin). But it is now widely recognized that the “in quo” is a mistranslation of the Greek phrase *eph ho*, which should be rendered “because” or “on the condition that”. In this case, the “peccaverunt” refers not to humankind’s sin in Adam but to each individual’s personal sins by which the sin of Adam is freely ratified in each. Those who endorse the translation “because” for the Greek phrase *eph ho* include: Achtemeier, Althaus, Bardenhewer, Barrett, Bengel, Bonsirven, Brandenburger, Bruce, Bultmann, Byrne, Cranfield, Dibelius, Dodd, Gaugler, Huby, Käsemann, Kuss, Lagrange, Lindeskog, Meyer, Michel, Moule, Moo, Murray, Pesch, Prat, Sanday and Headlam, Schlier, Wilckens, and Winer. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 413-16.

Romans 7:14-20 where he seeks to give expression to the paradoxical condition of a kind of involuntary impulse at the core of the voluntary human will.

The dialectical relationship between cosmic and ethical dualism, it was proposed earlier, functions within the framework of an eschatological dualism that highlights the disjunction between what is and what is to come. Both the situation of sin external to the individual and the reality of personal sin within, point toward the intrinsically eschatological aspect of sin: that is, the final judgment of God and the definitive establishment of the age of glory where sin and death shall be no more. Given that human history is deeply marred by conflict, suffering, persecution, and death, it cries out for a decisive eschatological act of God in light of which the meaning and purpose of the historical process will be finally revealed to all in a glorious age to come. The vexing problem of evil in the world must be tackled not from the standpoint of the beginning of history but from the vantage point of the *dynamics of the ultimate*. For the apocalyptists, perfection is neither a state of affairs that was lost at the beginning of history due to the first sin of Adam (against the traditional doctrine of original sin), nor can it be attained within history given the powers of evil that inhere in the totality of the whole (against prophetic eschatology); rather, it belongs to a future age to come that will bring history to a final end. This suggests that instead of attempting to interpret the doctrine of original sin in terms of a past epoch, the doctrine can be better elucidated in terms of a *directional qualification of present reality*: there exists a “disjunction” or “gap” between the present age into which each one of us sinners is born, and the glorious age to come. This “disjunction” between the two ages is expressed by the language of “death” in apocalyptic history, so that the basic dynamic is held to be that of death in this age (separation from God) and new life in the age to come (union with God). This represents a significant contrast to the traditional doctrine where the dynamic is considered to be that of original perfection in Adam and subsequent “fall” from grace.

The disjunction between the two ages, which is expressed by the language of death, is apparent in Paul’s writings, especially in 1 Corinthians 15: “For as all die in Adam, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (15:22). But while Paul uses apocalyptic motifs derived from contemporary Judaism,³⁵ the fact that he regards the crucifixion

³⁵ While Paul does not employ the literary genre of apocalypse, he does use apocalyptic motifs derived from contemporary Judaism. On this point, see Beker, *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel*, 29-53. According to Beker, Paul incorporates into his thought four basic motifs derived from Jewish apocalyptic: (i) “vindication” of God in the death and resurrection of Christ; (ii) “universalism”- Christ’s death becomes the focal point of God’s universal wrath and judgment, whereas the resurrection signifies the free gift of new life in Christ for all. The universal reign of God is interpreted in the context of a cosmic anthropology, that

and resurrection of Jesus Christ as *the* apocalyptic event since the “principalities and powers”³⁶ in the world have been vanquished by the death of Christ, brings to light a marked difference from his Jewish counterparts. The Book of Revelation, which is the only full-blown apocalyptic work in the New Testament, further emphasizes this notable difference which consists in the central figure of the crucified One; that is to say, the Son of the Most High God is portrayed not in typical apocalyptic fashion as a Warrior-Messiah or fire-breathing figure from heaven, instead the image used is that of a humble Lamb that has been slain (Rev 5:6). As a result of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on Calvary, the “mystery” or “secret” of the kingdom of God is now appropriated by faith, through the Spirit of new life, that is, life that is the triumph of the living God over the enemy of death (cf. 1 Cor 15:26).

In light of the nuanced and complex understanding of the reality of sin as having interrelated cosmological, anthropological, and eschatological dimensions, God’s

is, the human being as poised between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world; (iii) “dualism”- “The forces of evil that dominate the present world are both macrocosmic and microcosmic powers: the angelic forces under Satan rule not only the world of history and nature but also the inner being of persons” (39); (iv) “imminence”- this motif intensifies the others by heightening the hope for the actualization of God’s vindication and universal reign, which will eliminate all dualistic structures and their concomitant suffering. See also de Boer’s work, *The Defeat of Death*, where it is argued that Paul’s apocalyptic eschatology is christologically determined and that it is of the cosmological type, although we do find in Paul even the forensic “track” (Rom 2:6) whose import, though, is processed cosmologically (183).

³⁶ Texts referring to “principalities and powers” include: 1 Cor 2:8, which says that “the rulers of this age” have crucified Christ; 1 Cor 15:24-26 talks about how Christ at the final judgment will deliver the kingdom to the Father “after destroying every rule and every authority and power;” we read in Col 1:16 that all things were created in Christ, “in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities;” Col 2:15 emphasizes that “the principalities and powers” were disarmed by Christ’s triumph on the Cross; Eph 1:21 talks about the glorification and exaltation of Christ who sits “far above all rule and authority and dominion...not only in this age but also in that which is to come;” and finally, Eph 6:12 informs us that “we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of the present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” For a treatment of this topic, see Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (Herder & Herder, 1964). Schlier explains that the intention of these powers consists in “destroying” (to present the world as a world of death), “tempting” (human withdrawal and falling away from God), and “deceiving” (falsehood - hence Satan is referred to as the “accuser” of the brethren).

saving activity in the sacrificial death of the Paschal Lamb (which is an “integral” death given that it includes in its purview physical, moral and eschatological death) should be thought of as *integral* salvation. On this view, salvation through the death of Christ must not be restricted to the mere forgiveness of individual sins, rather it consists of the following elements which point to the full-flowering of the movement of creation as a whole. (1) If the “powers of sin and death” in the world have been conquered by the death of Christ on Calvary, and we sinners act in deep complicity with these powers, then conversion to God becomes possible when these negative powers have been vanquished by God so as to offer us the vision of a new life which corresponds to God’s good purpose for all that is. In other words, the cosmological aspect of salvation in Christ alerts us to the fact that we are forgiven for our evildoing from the standpoint of final causality, not efficient causality. (2) In spite of our deep complicity with the powers of death in the world, we are nonetheless still ultimately responsible as persons for our actions, so that clearly salvation in Christ involves forgiveness of personal sins and conversion to true freedom in following the way of Christ, which is the way of the cross, for the sake of a fallen world. (3) Intrinsic to both the cosmological and anthropological dimensions of sin is the eschatological dimension of God’s final judgment against sin, which will definitively establish the kingdom of God and finally reveal the meaning that history had contained from the very beginning. Salvation in Christ is eschatological salvation because in conquering death (both the evil within and the evil without) by his death, Christ has borne God’s judgment against sin on our behalf (cf. 2 Cor 5:21) in order that we might enter into irrevocable union with the living God in whom our original identity is to be found (our being created in the divine image).

By way of a final concluding comment, it is apparent that talk of integral salvation through the integral death of Christ is tantamount to affirming *universal* salvation in Christ. But here we come across a basic conundrum of the Christian faith: for if baptism into Christ’s death is held to be necessary for receiving the saving benefits of his victory over the powers of death in the world, and the majority of people in the world are not Christian, then how can we intelligibly and credibly hold to the universalistic scope of salvation in Christ? Furthermore, given that we Christians continue to struggle against our complicity with the powers of sin in the world, and we are still subject to the powers of death, then how can we make better sense of the basic claim that we share, through the Spirit, in the new life in Christ? It is my contention that theology needs to move toward thinking of the event of death itself as a profoundly salvific event when conceived along the lines of the *gift* of dying into the death of Christ who has destroyed death by his death. Within such a framework, the powerlessness of death presents itself as the privileged locus for the manifestation

and actualisation of God's self-gift in Christ, through the Spirit, which results in a newly embodied self. The universal saving significance of the Christ-event therefore can be regarded as manifesting itself definitively to all in death, for death emerges as a situation that corresponds most fully to the revelation of the divine nature as God's self-gift in grace. It is in death that all will become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) by way of the gift of "admirable exchange" of natures in the person of Christ.

This essay is not the place to elaborate on such a topic. The intention has been to illustrate the import of the Jewish apocalyptic understanding of sin and death for a more comprehensive or holistic portrayal of the nature of divine salvation, which can provide a basis for further reflection on the paschal mystery of Christ. I am currently working on a broad treatment (in the form of a book) of a theology of death developed along the lines mentioned above, and the work is well on the way to being completed in the not too distant future.