

The Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition and the Shaping of New Testament Thought

Benjamin E. Reynolds and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, editors

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The Mystery of God's Wisdom, the Parousia of a Messiah, and Visions of Heavenly Paradise

1 and 2 Corinthians in the Context of Jewish Apocalypticism

Matthew Goff

Introduction

The study of apocalypticism in the Pauline Epistles has been a major topic of New Testament scholarship for over one hundred years. While this scholarship is rich and varied, one recurring theme in this tradition is that apocalypticism in Paul centers on his proclamation of the *parousia* of the resurrected Christ as an unique and epoch-changing event, signaling God's ultimate victory over sin and death.¹ This act is itself understood as "apocalyptic."² A key problem is how Paul's apocalypticism should be understood in relation to the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. There is a *Tendenz* among scholars who specialize on Paul to compare his writings to Jewish apocalyptic literature to emphasize the difference between them. Judaism is conceptualized as

1. See, for example, J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 204–8; idem, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). Consult also J. Louis Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5:16," in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 87–110; R. Barry Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism*, JSNTSup 127 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

2. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 205: "The cross, then, is the apocalyptic turning point of history."

having false dichotomies that Paul transcends. Beker, for example, understands Jewish apocalypticism as centered on a doctrine of two ages, an eschatological dualism that radically distinguishes the present age from the world to come—for Beker, the cross is the fulcrum point between the two epochs that also blurs the distinction between them, since the crucifixion took place in the past but anticipates the coming *parousia*.³ However, as Stuckenbruck has demonstrated, it is not clear that Judaism should be characterized as having a “two ages” doctrine.⁴ The eschatological defeat of evil is often characterized not as a sharp break with history, but rather as one element of a larger divine plan that guides the unfolding of history, from creation to judgment, as in, for example, the Apocalypse of Weeks and the Animal Apocalypse.

De Boer’s characterization of Jewish apocalypticism relies upon a distinction between two types of apocalyptic eschatology—a cosmological mode, in which the present is under the dominion of evil, supernatural powers that will be overthrown at the eschaton, and a “forensic” type in which the emphasis is not on evil cosmological powers but the individual and his personal struggle with sin.⁵ Again, the Jewish context provides a dichotomy that Paul collapses.⁶ This distinction is grounded in traditional debates about Paul, with Bultmann understanding Paul’s eschatology as “forensic,” while for Käsemann, it is “cosmological.”⁷ De Boer acknowledges that his two types of apocalyptic eschatology blend together in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is especially clear in the Treatise on the Two Spirits (1QS 3:13–4:26), which situates the individual’s struggle with sin against a cosmological struggle between light and darkness.⁸ I do not think that de Boer perceives the full significance of his observation—his understanding of Paul’s apocalypticism is rooted in scholarship that was written long before the scrolls were fully published. The scrolls problematized existing paradigms in Pauline scholarship but they nevertheless persist. Perhaps the emphasis on the return of Christ as a unique event hinders comparative analysis.

These realizations underscore the importance of interpreting Paul in the context of Jewish apocalypticism. This article does so, focusing on 1 and 2 Corinthians. The writings of Paul, a Diaspora Jew familiar with both Judaism and the broader Hellenistic world, are complex and betray the influence of various cultural and literary traditions. These include not only Jewish apocalypticism, but also the wisdom tradition, exegetical traditions, and Stoic philosophy.

3. *Ibid.*, 211.

4. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Overlapping Ages at Qumran and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Pauline Theology,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature*, ed. J.-S. Rey, STDJ 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 309–26.

5. He points to Testament of Moses 10 as an example of the former and 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra as examples of the latter type. See Martinus C. De Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. J. J. Collins; B. McGinn, and S. Stein, 3 vols. (New York: Continuum, 2000), 1.345–83 (359). Consult also *idem*, “Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, eds. J. Marcus and M. L. Soards, JSNTSup 24 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 169–90.

6. So also Leander E. Keck, “Paul and Apocalyptic Theology,” *Int* 38 (1984): 229–41 (235).

7. De Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 361.

8. *Ibid.*, 360.

When the focus is placed on 1 and 2 Corinthians in relation to Jewish apocalyptic literature, the overall impression is not one of Paul's radical break from this tradition but his continuity with it. This is evident in terms of the centrality of the motif of receiving and transmitting supernatural revelation, described with "mystery" terminology (1 Corinthians 1-4), the arrival of a messiah who ushers in the resurrection of the faithful (1 Corinthians 15), and the apostle's claims of a visionary ascent to the heavens (2 Corinthians 12). The fact that Paul understood the messiah to have already arrived and been crucified certainly changes the eschatological timetable when compared to Jewish writings, but the basic scenario, in which a messianic figure inaugurates the eschatological defeat of evil and the bestowal of eternal life to the righteous, is found in both Paul and Jewish apocalypticism. The parallels are even stronger, not surprisingly, when the apostle is examined in relation to Jewish apocalypses that are virtually contemporary, especially 2 Baruch (late-first century CE).

Jewish Apocalypticism

Our understanding of ancient Jewish apocalypticism has improved considerably over the past generation. This is true with regard to both primary and secondary sources. In terms of primary sources, many texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls were not published until the 1990s or even later. This horde brought to light the oldest available manuscripts of Jewish apocalypses, spurring extensive interest in this material.⁹ This also led to renewed appreciation of numerous other Jewish apocalyptic texts that date roughly to this period that were already available, including 2 Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, and the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37-71). These developments have made it easier to discern the prominence of apocalyptic elements in the letters of Paul and the New Testament in general. Because of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Judaism at the turn of the common era can be re-envisioned as a religion in which apocalypticism was dominant in diverse and significant ways.

With regard to secondary sources, John Collins's *The Apocalyptic Imagination* has exerted enormous influence since its publication in 1984 on how people understand apocalyptic literature, and continues to do so.¹⁰ He proposes a form-critical approach to the genre apocalypse, with texts identified as apocalypses because they attest an assemblage of various literary features, including but not limited to pseudepigraphic authorship, an *angelus interpres* (an angel who

9. These include 4Q201 and 4Q208, Aramaic manuscripts, respectively, of the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36) and the Astronomical Book (1 Enoch 72-82). These compositions are dated to the third century BCE. See Józef T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).

10. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). See also Lorenzo DiTommaso, "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity. (Part I)," *CurBR* 5, no. 2 (2007): 235-86; "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity. (Part II)," *CurBR* 5, no. 3 (2007): 367-432.

interprets the vision received by the visionary), the eschatological destruction of the wicked, and resurrection.¹¹

Collins stresses that at the core of the apocalypses is a claim of divine revelation.¹² According to his well-known definition of the genre apocalypse, it constitutes a type of "revelatory literature with a narrative framework."¹³ A person purports to have received knowledge from a heavenly source, such as a vision or interaction with angelic beings. The word "apocalypse" itself stresses this theme, derived from the Greek *ἀποκαλύπτω*, which literally means "to uncover."

While the apocalypses often are eschatological, this is not always the case. The earliest representatives of this genre, the Book of the Watchers and the Astronomical Book of 1 Enoch (third century BCE), are not primarily eschatological.¹⁴ While these works have eschatological elements (e.g., 1 Enoch 10, 80), their main focus is the dissemination of knowledge about, respectively, the nature of the world at the time of the flood and the regular motion of the moon and sun. Moreover, highly eschatological apocalypses, such as Daniel and Revelation, illustrate the importance of the theme of revelation, since their eschatological content is revealed to a visionary by a heavenly source.

1 Corinthians: Worldly Strife and Heavenly Mysteries

First Corinthians is a lengthy example of broader exchange of correspondence between Paul and a community of Corinth. He probably wrote 1 Corinthians in the mid-50s CE in the city of Ephesus (16:8).¹⁵ According to 1 Corinthians 1:11, Paul wrote this missive because he learned of a report from "Chloe's people" that described the Corinthian community as beset with divisions and quarrels (cf. 5:1). Paul seeks for this group to be "united in the same mind and the same purpose" in their devotion to Christ (1:10).

Paul claims to have himself received some form of divine revelation, presumably a vision of the resurrected Christ (15:3-8; cf. Acts 9:1-9). He uses forms of the word *ἀποκαλύπτω* when describing what was disclosed to him (1 Cor 1:7; Gal 1:12; 2 Thess 1:7). He, in turn, transmits these disclosures to his students. Paul encourages the Corinthians to move beyond the human or worldly issues that divide them and be united in their comprehension of the spiritual truth

11. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 7.

12. So also Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 70.

13. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5.

14. There are also numerous texts that are eschatological but not apocalypses, such as the post-exilic prophetic writings of Joel or Isaiah 24-27.

15. Hans Conzelmann, *First Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 4.

that he has disclosed to them (e.g., 3:3–8; 6:12–20). He claims to give them a “mystery.”¹⁶ This is particularly evident in chapters 1–4. Paul offers to them “God’s wisdom, secret and hidden (literally ‘wisdom hidden in mystery’), which God decreed before the ages for our glory” (2:7). He also writes that one should “think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries” (οἰκονόμους μυστηρίων θεοῦ; 4:1). The “mystery” is a supernatural, transcendent reality that Paul has made known to the Corinthians. He conveys to them knowledge of God’s wisdom, a comprehensive, deterministic divine scheme which guides the unfolding of history and creation, presented as a revealed “mystery” (2:1; 3:19).

Paul’s focus on understanding mysteries at the beginning of 1 Corinthians helps establish the theological horizon against which the rest of the letter should be understood. Such language is also significant at the end of the letter: “Listen I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die but we will all be changed” (15:51).¹⁷ Mystery language in a sense forms an *inclusio* for 1 Corinthians as a whole.

Pedagogical Mysteries in 1 Corinthians and the Dead Sea Scrolls

It used to be commonplace to understand the mystery language in Paul in terms of Hellenistic mystery cults.¹⁸ Raymond Brown argued in the late 1960s that Qumran texts demonstrate that Paul’s mystery terminology reflects his “Semitic background” and should be primarily interpreted in terms of Second Temple Judaism.¹⁹ This perspective makes sense. The term רָא (rāz) is employed frequently in the Dead Sea Scrolls to signify revealed knowledge, much like *mysterion* in Paul. The *Habakkuk Peshier*, for example, claims that God has revealed to the Teacher of Righteousness, a leading figure for the Qumran sect, “all the mysteries of the words of his servants, the prophets” (1QpHab 7:5; cf. 1QH^a 9:21; 10:13; CD 3:18). The Qumran scrolls also establish that the term “mystery” signifies supernatural revelation in the apocalypses. The Aramaic version of 1 Enoch 106:19, for example, reads: “I know the mysteries of (רָא) <of the Lord> that the holy ones have revealed and shown to me” (4Q204 5 ii 26–27).²⁰ The Aramaic section of Daniel (chs. 2–7) employs this term extensively to denote supernatural knowledge. In Daniel 2, the word signifies God’s revelation to Daniel of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its interpretation (2:18–19,

16. Compare Eph 3:3–4, in which Paul claims to have received a mystery through revelation and in turn attempts to give the Ephesians an understanding of the “mystery of Christ.” See also Rom 11:25; 16:25; Eph 6:19; Col 1:26–27; 2:2; 4:3. Consult Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity*, WUNT II/36 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990), 158–63.

17. First Corinthians 15 is discussed below. In 1 Cor 14:2, he describes speaking in tongues as speaking in mysteries (cf. 13:2).

18. For the history of scholarship on this issue, see Benjamin Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with its Bearing on First Corinthians*, BZNW 160 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 8–16.

19. Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term “Mystery” in the New Testament*, FBBS 21 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968).

20. For this reconstruction, see George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36, 81–108*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 537. Cf. 4QEn^a 1 iv 5 (1 Enoch 8:3).

27–30, 47 [2x]; 4:6). In the apocalypses Daniel and 1 Enoch, “mystery” (*rāz*) denotes esoteric knowledge from heaven to which a privileged visionary has access. Paul uses the Greek *mysterion* in a similar way.

The mystery language of Paul can be better understood through the publication of a Qumran text published in 1999 entitled 4QInstruction (1Q26; 4Q415–418, 423).²¹ This work was written in Hebrew by a teacher to his students, called *mebinim* (“the ones who understand”), during the second century BCE. The *mebin* (typically addressed in the singular) has a form of elect status (4Q418 81 4–5). He is repeatedly asked to study the *רז נהיה*. This is an enigmatic phrase that can be translated “the mystery that is to be.” The “mystery” was revealed previously to the student (4Q416 2 iii 18; 4Q418 123 ii 4). He can learn knowledge on many topics through the contemplation of this mystery, such as the knowledge of good and evil and the fates of people during the eschatological judgment (4Q417 1 i 8; 4Q417 2 i 10–11). The mystery that is to be is associated with the nature of history.²² God created the world by means of this mystery (4Q417 1 i 8–9). The mystery that is to be signifies a divine deterministic plan, according to which history and creation are orchestrated.

The use of mystery terminology and the theme of revelation are somewhat different in 4QInstruction from what one typically finds in the apocalypses. The *rāz* in this Qumran text is not associated with the revelation of one particular issue, as in Daniel 2 (the disclosure of the king’s dream). The *רז נהיה* constitutes a more comprehensive revelation about the nature of reality, as created by God. The mystery that is to be is also inextricably mingled with the pedagogy of 4QInstruction. The heavenly revelation does not itself provide knowledge; this comes, as the teacher incessantly reminds the student, from reflection and contemplation of the mystery that is to be. This is quite different from the apocalypses, in which a seer receives a cryptic vision that is then explained to him by an angel (e.g., Daniel 7; 4 Ezra 11–12). The *mebin* of 4QInstruction has no *angelus interpres* to guide him; he has to figure out the meaning of the mystery that is to be himself. The text likely represents a strand of the sapiential tradition that is characterized by extensive influence from the apocalyptic tradition.²³ This would help explain 4QInstruction’s distinctive focus on the study of supernatural revelation.

The mystery that is to be in 4QInstruction offers an instructive parallel to the *mysterion* language of 1 Corinthians. The Corinthians, like the *mebin* of 4QInstruction, have mysteries revealed to them. Also, like this Qumran text, the *mysterion* they are given constitutes not a revelation regarding one particular issue, but rather a more general insight into God’s dominion

21. Matthew J. Goff, *4QInstruction*, WLaw 2 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013).

22. In 4Q417 1 i 3–4, for example, the mystery that is to be is linked to the past, present and future: “what exists, what has existed” and “what will be” (cf. 4Q418 123 ii 3–4). See Goff, *4QInstruction*, 144–47.

23. Goff, *4QInstruction*, 22.

over history and creation. First Corinthians includes neither a symbolic vision nor *angelus interpres*, in contrast to the apocalypses. Like the *mebin* of 4QInstruction, the Corinthians are students whose spiritual progress depends upon their comprehension of the mysteries conveyed to them by their teacher Paul. Understanding such mysteries requires his guidance. He compares the Corinthians to “fleshly” (i.e., worldly) infants to whom he feeds milk so that they may become “spiritual” (heavenly) adults (1 Cor 3:1–2; cf. 4:20). Both 4QInstruction and 1 Corinthians attest an engaging combination of pedagogy and the revelation of heavenly knowledge. Scholars have observed that 1 Corinthians 1–4, in which mystery terminology is most prominent in the letter, may have been influenced by the wisdom tradition.²⁴ The apostle may have drawn from a strand of the sapiential tradition best represented by 4QInstruction.²⁵

The *Parousia* of a Messiah: 1 Corinthians 15 in the Context of Second Temple Judaism

Paul believed that cataclysmic changes would soon take place that would transform the world. His first sustained discussion in 1 Corinthians of this topic is in chapter 7 (cf. 3:13; 4:5). The Corinthians wrote to the apostle for guidance on matters regarding sex and marriage (7:1). Paul wants them to put these “worldly” topics in their proper context, as part of a form of existence that will come to an end:

I think that, in view of the impending crisis (τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην), it is well for you to remain as you are. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife . . . I mean, brothers, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none. . . . For the present form of this world is passing away (7:26–31; cf. 10:11).

Paul provides a more extensive discussion of the issue in chapter 15. He envisions a final, dramatic moment: “We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and we will be changed” (15:51; cf. 16:22; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Cor 5:1–5).²⁶ Paul shows relatively little interest in the life of Jesus or his teachings. For Paul, the central issue is the death and resurrection of Christ. This, he argues, has inaugurated a transformation of the natural order, the unfolding of the full and unfettered

24. The word *σοφία* occurs sixteen times in this unit, but only three times elsewhere in Paul (Rom 11:23; 1 Cor 12:8; 2 Cor 1:12). See Hermann von Lips, *Weisheitliche Traditionen im Neuen Testament*, WMANT 64 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 318–55. Consult also Sigurd Grindheim, “Wisdom for the Perfect: Paul’s Challenge to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor 2:6–16),” *JBL* 121 (2002): 689–709.

25. Both texts may also draw on common exegetical traditions regarding Genesis 1–3. See Matthew J. Goff, “Being Fleshly or Spiritual: Anthropological Reflection and Exegesis of Genesis 1–3 in 4QInstruction and 1 Corinthians,” in *Christian Body, Christian Self: Concepts of Early Christian Personhood*, ed. C. Rothschild and T. Thompson, WUNT 284 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 41–59.

26. The trumpet he expects to hear is likely played by an angel (Matt 24:31; Rev 8:2–9:14; 11:5; 1QM 2:16–3:11).

sovereignty of God, unblemished by any evil power. Christ is “the first fruits of those who have died,” utilizing an agricultural metaphor that evokes the initial produce gathered at the harvest (1 Cor 15:20, 23). The resurrection of Christ is the beginning of a paradigm—the resurrection of the faithful will replicate his own experience of resurrection (cf. Rom 6:4–11). Paul uses an Adam/Christ typology to make this point: “For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being” (15:21; cf. vv. 43–49; Rom 5:12–21).²⁷ Whereas God introduced death through Adam, he has established (eternal) life through Christ.

Christ is resurrected, “then at his coming (*ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ*) those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor 15:23). The *parousia* signifies the return of the resurrected Christ, who will inaugurate the resurrection of the faithful.²⁸ As Paul explains in 15:35–55, they are to lose their perishable bodies and receive imperishable ones. After this, “then comes the end (*τὸ τέλος*), when (*ὅταν*) he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after (*ὅταν*) he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power” (v. 24).²⁹ At some point before he returns control of the kingdom to God, Christ defeats the worldly rulers. While Paul’s language denotes kings and potentates, the apostle envisions a more comprehensive overthrow of wickedness, sin, and even death (15:26, 54–55; cf. Rom 8:38; Eph 1:21). When exactly this overthrow is to take place is not stated in the letter. It was perhaps thought to take place at the *parousia* of Christ. This is suggested, for example, by 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (see further below).³⁰

There are three stages to Paul’s eschatological proclamation in 1 Corinthians 15. The first for him had already occurred, the resurrection of Christ. The second is his *parousia*, which includes the resurrection of the faithful and the defeat of the worldly powers. The third is the *telos*, the fulfillment of God’s plan, the transmission of divine rule back from Christ to God, submitting himself to the deity’s rule (15:28). Paul does not fill out the details, but at some point, Christ receives control over God’s kingdom.³¹ This means, although this is not stated explicitly in the letter, that the resurrected Christ becomes a king or at least some sort of representative of the heavenly kingdom (cf. Rev 20:4–6). First Corinthians does not assert clearly when Christ is to assume this exalted status. It may take place at his resurrection or his *parousia*.³² After

27. Goff, “Being Fleshly or Spiritual,” 52–58; Stephen Hultgren, “The Origin of Paul’s Doctrine of The Two Adams in 1 Corinthians 15.45–49,” *JSNT* 25 (2003): 343–70.

28. For the *parousia* and its delay, see Jörg Frey, “New Testament Eschatology—an Introduction: Classical Issues, Disputed Themes, and Current Perspectives,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. J. G. van der Watt, WUNT II/315 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 3–32 (25–26).

29. In this verse, the second *ὅταν* class is subordinate to the first and thus translated “after.” See Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 271.

30. “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of this mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming (*τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ*)” (cf. 2:1; 1 Thess 4:15).

31. The kingdom of God is a prominent trope elsewhere in Paul: 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9–10; 15:50; Rom 14:17; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:15; 1 Thess 2:12.

32. See further below. De Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 377–78, engages the same problem.

Christ returns the kingdom to God, the dominion of his heavenly kingdom is exerted fully in the world.

The eschatological scenario in 1 Corinthians 15 is profitably interpreted in terms of Jewish apocalypses that are roughly contemporary with Paul—the Parables of Enoch, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, all of which are dated to the late-first century CE. The Parables is an important witness to Danielic traditions in this period. In Daniel 7, the ferocious fourth beast, who is explicitly identified as a worldly kingdom (the Seleucid Empire), is judged and destroyed by God, who sits on his heavenly throne attended by myriads of angels (vv. 25–27). Then “one like a son of man” descends from the clouds to earth, where he is given kingship. The sovereignty of the kingdom of heaven is reestablished on earth, with the one who descended understood as a heavenly representative of God’s rule.³³

In the Parables of Enoch, eschatological judgment is not implemented by God in heaven but by the Son of Man, understood as the title of a messianic figure, unlike Daniel 7 itself, who sits on a throne on earth (1 Enoch 46:2–3; cf. 61:8; 69:29). According to 1 Enoch 62:2, he will implement the eschatological destruction of the wicked: “And the word of his mouth will slay all the sinners, and all the unrighteous will perish from his presence” (cf. 46:4; 48:8). The Son of Man will overthrow kings and worldly powers: “all the kings and the mighty and the exalted and those who rule the land will fall on their faces in his presence” (62:9). The scenario inaugurated by this figure includes a cataclysmic transformation of the earth, in which the “mountains will leap like rams” and there will be a resurrection of the dead (51:1, 4). Those saved are called the righteous and chosen, establishing a correspondence between them and the messianic Son of Man, who is also called the Righteous and Chosen One.³⁴ The iteration of Danielic traditions in the Parables is closer to 1 Corinthians 15 than Daniel 7. In the Pauline text, like in the Parables, the messianic figure exerts divine dominion on earth. In both, the messiah overthrows the worldly powers, which represent not simply actual kings but wickedness more generally, as an obstacle to God’s unfettered dominion over the earth.

There may be a reflex of Danielic tradition, as in the Parables, in the apostle’s use of the term *parousia* in 1 Corinthians 15:23.³⁵ This is not explicit in this verse or elsewhere in the letter. However, elsewhere in the New Testament, this term has an explicitly Danielic resonance. Matthew 24:27 reads: “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου)” (cf. vv. 3, 37,

33. This was probably originally a reference to the archangel Michael. See John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 310.

34. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 44. See also John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 196–205.

35. Maurice Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979), 152.

39). This terminology patently relies upon Daniel 7, as does this figure's descent to earth on clouds.³⁶ This transformative moment is punctuated with a trumpet blast, not unlike 1 Corinthians 15:51.

Interpreting the *parousia* of Christ envisioned in 1 Corinthians 15 as the descent of the Son of Man (an expression admittedly never found in the letters of Paul), understood as a messianic figure who implements God's judgment, would help explain why Paul presents the resurrected Christ as the descent of a heavenly being who overthrows earthly kings. This would also make intelligible why 1 Corinthians describes Christ as a representative of God's kingdom. This may also suggest an answer to an issue left unclear in 1 Corinthians itself—when Christ assumed control of the kingdom that he returns to God in 15:24: not when he was resurrected, but rather when the resurrected Christ descends from heaven to judge, as does the Son of Man in the Parables.

In 4 Ezra, the emergence of a messianic figure also inaugurates an eschatological scenario.³⁷ According to chapter 7, a city shall appear, most likely a reference to the heavenly Jerusalem (v. 26). This shall happen when the messiah is revealed, a statement that implies he is preexistent and hidden, to emerge at a certain point, a theme expressed more clearly elsewhere in the book (12:32; 13:26, 52). Four hundred years afterwards, he is to die, although this may be a later Christian addition to the text (7:29), and then, after seven days of primeval silence, "the world that is not yet awake shall be roused and that which is corruptible shall perish. The earth shall give up those who are asleep in it and the dust those who rest there in silence. . . . The Most High shall be revealed on the seat of judgment" (4 Ezra 7:31–33).³⁸

Both 4 Ezra and 1 Corinthians 15 assert that a major cataclysm will end the present form of this world. The righteous shall be resurrected and the wicked shall be destroyed. In both texts, the advent of a messiah signals that these events are to unfold, but what the messiah actually does during this cataclysmic period is unclear, at least in 4 Ezra 7. There, God, not a messiah, judges humankind from his throne, although a messiah carries out this function in 12:32–33. First Corinthians 15, likewise, states that a messianic figure destroys the wicked, as do other early Jewish texts (e.g., 4Q174 1 i 7–8; 11Q13 2 13).

Second Baruch, a work closely related to 4 Ezra, envisages a scenario that is even closer to that of 1 Corinthians 15.³⁹ This work includes an exposition on the nature of the coming tribu-

36. Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Influence of Daniel on the New Testament," in Collins, *Daniel*, 90–99.

37. For the messianism of 4 Ezra, see Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 207–13.

38. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 203.

39. *Ibid.*, 212–25; Matthias Henze, "'Then the Messiah will begin to be revealed': Resurrection and the Apocalyptic Drama in 1 Corinthians 15 and Second Baruch 29–30, 49–51," in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament. Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen. Internationales Symposium in Verbindung mit dem Projekt Corpus Judaico-Hellenisticum Novi Testamenti (CJNHT) 17.–20. Mai 2012, Heidelberg*, ed. M. Konrad and E. Schlöpfer, WUNT 322 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 441–62. In this volume, also see

lation (2 Baruch 26–30). The coming cataclysm, which is periodized into twelve units (ch. 27), will signal the advent of the messiah:

That which will happen at that time bears upon the whole earth. Therefore, all who live will notice it. For at that time I shall only protect those found in this land at this time. And it will happen that when all that which should come to pass in these parts has been accomplished, the Anointed One will begin to be revealed (29:1–3).

The earth will become incredibly bountiful in terms of agricultural produce, a yield only enjoyed by the righteous of Israel. Everyone else has been destroyed. In 2 Baruch 29, the arrival of a messiah triggers these events but he himself appears to play a passive role. The expression “will begin to be revealed” suggests he existed prior to this moment, to emerge at the beginning of the eschatological scenario.

The importance of the messiah becomes clearer in chapter 30: “And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the anointed one has been fulfilled and he returns with glory that then all who sleep in hope of him will rise” (v. 1; cf. 50:1). The term for “appearance” is *m'tyt'*. This term corresponds in the Syriac New Testament to the Greek *parousia*.⁴⁰ Second Baruch proclaims the *parousia* of a messiah. The phrase “the appearance of the anointed one has been fulfilled” is likely in parallelism with the one that follows, “he returns with glory”—two different ways of saying that the messiah, after he initially appeared shall reemerge upon the earth in a new and powerful way.⁴¹ The return of the messiah is associated not with a universal resurrection of the dead, but rather only of those who had “hope in him.” The most immediate antecedent of this last pronoun (“him”) is not God but the anointed one. Elsewhere, the text discusses the physical transformation of the righteous at this moment.⁴²

Second Baruch lays out a form of messianic expectation that is strikingly similar to that of 1 Corinthians 15. In both texts, the eschatological scenario begins with an initial phase associated with the appearance of a messiah. This is then followed by a second stage defined by his *parousia*, at which the resurrection shall take place, for those who had some sort of devotion to this figure. Also, both texts envision not simply a physical resurrection but present this as the ultimate exaltation of the righteous, who assume a heavenly, eternal form of existence. First Corinthians 15 is, however, more explicit than 2 Baruch 29–30 that the messiah shall assume a

Samuel Vollenwieder, “Auferstehung als Verwandlung. Die paulinische Eschatologie von 1Kor 15 im Vergleich mit der syrischen Baruchapokalypse (2Bar),” 463–90. Consult also Matthias Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel: Reading Second Baruch in Context*, TSAJ 142 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 324–39.

40. Henze, “Then the Messiah will begin to be revealed,” 451.

41. It is not fully clear in the text where the messiah went, to return to this world. See Henze, *ibid.*, 452.

42. 2 Baruch 51:3: “the glory of those who proved to be righteous on account of my law . . . their splendor will then be glorified by transformations, and the shape of their face will be changed into the light of their beauty so that they may acquire and receive the undying world which is promised to them.”

form of heavenly kingship on earth, at which time he vanquishes the wicked. Elsewhere, however, 2 Baruch claims that the messiah is to have dominion on earth and defeat powerful rulers, not unlike 1 Corinthians 15:25 (39:7–40:1).

Comparison with 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, and the Parables of Enoch helps clarify the oft made claim that 1 Corinthians 15 should be understood in terms of Jewish apocalypticism. The Jewish texts do not establish a false dichotomy that Paul transforms. It is primarily not an issue of Paul's Jewish "heritage" or "background." Rather, apocalypticism was, during Paul's life, a vibrant and creative complex of traditions that numerous Jews appropriated when composing apocalyptic writings. Paul did not transcend this cultural process. He was a participant in it. He turned to contemporary Jewish apocalyptic traditions to understand the death of Jesus. Jewish apocalypses of the first century CE, especially 2 Baruch, help explain why Paul, like other followers of Jesus, thought that the resurrected Christ would return in glory to resurrect the righteous and give them eternal life.

Was Paul Wary of Lustful Angels? 1 Corinthians 11:10 and the Watchers Myth

In terms of understanding 1 Corinthians vis-à-vis Jewish apocalypticism, one other issue merits discussion. It is often thought that chapter 11 alludes to the watchers myth of the Book of the Watchers.⁴³ In 11:2–16, Paul offers a much debated discussion of proper head coverings for the men and women of the Corinthian community. The key verse is 1 Corinthians 11:10: "For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels (διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους)." The authority to which this verse refers denotes some sort of head covering. Paul asserts that a woman should cover her head when praying or prophesying, and that a veil or growing the hair long would suffice (11:6, 15). Whose authority is signified by the woman's covering is unclear.⁴⁴ It could refer to the authority that she demonstrates when taking part in worship, or it may denote that of the man over the woman.⁴⁵ The authority at issue is related to the social hierarchy of the genders. This is evident in the initial phrase "For this reason" of 1 Corinthians 11:10, which refers to what it immediately precedes: "Neither was man created for the sake of woman but woman for the sake of man" (v. 9), alluding to the creation of Eve

43. For an overview of the critical issues and scholarly discussion of this passage, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Why Should Women Cover Their Heads Because of the Angels? (1 Corinthians 11:10)," in *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts*, WUNT 335 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). See also Scott M. Lewis, "Because of the Angels: Paul and the Enochic Traditions," in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, eds. A. Kim Harkins, K. Coblentz Baultch and J. C. Endres (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 81–90; Jason D. DeBuhn, "Because of the Angels: Unveiling Paul's Anthropology in 1 Corinthians 11," *JBL* 118 (1999): 295–320.

44. The precise meaning of "authority" in this verse is much debated. For an overview of common critical interpretations, see Stuckenbruck, "Why Should Women Cover Their Heads," 214–15.

45. Lewis, "Because of the Angels," 83.

for Adam in Genesis 2:18–24. While 1 Corinthians 11:10 is ambiguous, the woman's wearing of a head covering prevents her from being disgraced and ensures that her participation in worship is in harmony with the social order.

The members of the Dead Sea sect understood themselves to be in fellowship with the angels in the context of worship, praying, as it were, shoulder to shoulder with them (e.g., 1QH^a 11:21–23).⁴⁶ As Fitzmyer observed in the 1950s, the claim in 1 Corinthians 11:10 that a woman should cover her head “because of the angels” appears to likewise understand worship as taking place with angels (cf. 4:9).⁴⁷ First Corinthians 11:3 homologizes a gender hierarchy with a theological one: “Christ is the head of every man, and the husband (man; ἀνὴρ) is the head of his wife (woman; γυναῖκός), and God is the head of Christ” (cf. 14:34–35). The social hierarchy of the genders (man over woman) is reinforced by superiority of God. This suggests that in 1 Corinthians 11:10, how women should pray amidst the angels is to reflect the overarching gender hierarchy advocated by Paul. This is quite in contrast to Galatians 3:28, which claims that participation in Christ transcends gender. First Corinthians 11:10 presents the female gender as somehow threatening or disturbing the community's liturgical communion with the angels, and her head covering mitigates this destructive potential.

The angels may disrupt their fellowship with the Corinthians as well. This is how appeal to Enochic tradition comes into play. So understood, the women's covering protects them from sexual advances from angels. The covering should thus be understood as signaling the woman's modesty, a strategy for her to avoid enticing male desire. If one thinks of the angels as similar to those of the Enochic Book of the Watchers, such concerns are fully warranted. This interpretation has a venerable history, found in early commentators on 1 Corinthians such as Tertullian.⁴⁸

It is not clear, however, that an Enochic reading of 1 Corinthians 11:10 is warranted. It is not necessary to turn to the watchers myth to make sense of the passage. Paul's undisputed letters contain no unambiguous appeal to Enochic texts or traditions. First Corinthians stresses that women are to cover themselves during worship. Interaction between humans and angels in a

46. Björn Frennesson, “In a Common Rejoicing”: *Liturgical Communion with Angels in Qumran*, SSU 14 (Uppsala: University of Uppsala Press, 1999).

47. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “A Feature of Qumrân Angelology and the Angels of 1 Cor. xi.10,” *NTS* 4 (1957–58): 48–58. This essay is also available, with a postscript from 1966, in his *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 187–204. See also Henry J. Cadbury, “A Qumran Parallel to Paul,” *HTR* 51 (1958): 1–2.

48. In *On the Veiling of Virgins* 7.2 he writes: “For if (it is) on account of the angels—those, to wit, whom we read of as having fallen from God and heaven on account of concupiscence after females—who can presume that it was bodies already defiled, and relics of human lust, which such angels yearned after, so as not rather to have been inflamed for virgins, whose bloom pleads an excuse for human lust likewise? For thus does Scripture withal suggest: ‘And it came to pass’, it says, ‘when men had begun to grow more numerous upon the earth, there were withal daughters born to them; but the sons of God having desried the daughters of men, that they were fair, took to themselves wife of all whom they elected’ (cf. Testament of Reuben 5:5). Cited from Lewis, “Because of the Angels,” 89.

liturgical context is not an issue in 1 Enoch 6–11. In ancient Judaism, angels in general are not sexually threatening to women. In Enochic literature, this problem is restricted to a specific set of angels who went astray before the flood. They were punished and imprisoned, to await their ultimate destruction in final judgment (1 Enoch 10:4–15). If Paul had that myth in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians, those angels would have been unable to force themselves upon women.

In Watchers, the theme of male lust is important. The angels see from heaven the beautiful women and descend (1 Enoch 6:1–2). Paul does not emphasize that the head covering of women is necessary to hide female beauty from the male gaze. He compares a woman without such apparel to a female with a shaved head (1 Cor 11:5). A woman without the proper covering is, for Paul, disgraced and shamed—not a sight that will attract the sexual desire of males, angelic or human. A good analogy would not be the veiling of women in Islam and the justification for this practice in conservative circles that the veil is to curtail male lust.⁴⁹ It is not clear that 1 Corinthians 11:10 alludes to the Enochic watchers myth.⁵⁰

Heavenly Ascension in 2 Corinthians

The interpretation of 2 Corinthians can also be enriched by comparison with Jewish apocalypticism. Second Corinthians 6:14–15, for example, attests a dualistic pairing of light and darkness, followed by one which opposes Christ and Belial. Belial is a supernatural figure of evil that appears repeatedly in Qumran texts with an apocalyptic perspective (e.g., 1QM 13:10–11; CD 5:18).⁵¹ The combination of a Christ-Belial opposition with a light-darkness dyad suggests that Paul drew upon dualistic traditions found in the Treatise of the Two Spirits, which contrasts good and evil angelic forces, allied respectively with light and darkness (1QS 3:13–4:26).

The passage of the letter that resonates most powerfully with the Jewish apocalyptic tradition is 2 Corinthians 12:1–10.⁵² The beginning of this pericope reads:

49. Such attitudes are often based on a passage of the Quran, which states that a woman should cover her beauty with garments so that it will not be seen by men, aside from her husband and male family members (24.31–32; cf. 33.59). See Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). I thank my colleague Adam Gaiser for these references.
50. The angels can nevertheless be understood as disruptive or even dangerous to the women of the Corinthian church. There is a long-standing Jewish tradition that being in the presence of the divine can be perilous, in particular to non-priests. Hagar, for example, expresses amazement that she has seen a heavenly being (the text is ambiguous as to whether it is God or an angel) and remains alive (Gen 16:9, 13; cf. 2 Sam 6:6–7). Standing directly before a divine presence could have easily been considered by Paul as a potentially hazardous act, for which women, whom he considers lower than men, in particular need protection. See Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 189.
51. Devorah Dimant, "Between Qumran Sectarian and Qumran Nonsectarian Texts: The Case of Belial and Mastema," in *History, Ideology and Bible Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, FAT 90 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 135–51.
52. Albert Hogeterp, "The Otherworld and This World in 2 Cor 12:1–10 in Light of Early Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," in *Other Worlds and Their Relation to This World: Early Jewish and Ancient Christian Traditions*, ed. T. Nicklas et al., JSJSup 143 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 209–28; Christopher Rowland and Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, CRINT 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 379–408; Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 170–75.

It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord (*ὄπτασις καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου*). I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught up into paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat (2 Cor 12:1–4).

Paul claims that someone else had some sort of visionary experience. But it is clear that he is talking about himself (vv. 7–9). In 2 Corinthians 12:1, he uses the language of *ἀποκάλυψις* to signify the revelations he describes. This may refer to the “apocalypse” of Christ, some sort of vision in which he saw the resurrected Christ, that he mentions elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor 15:8). Second Corinthians 12 may allude to a vision of the enthroned Christ in this heavenly realm. But he does not say this. Paul asserts that it is about the “third heaven” and “paradise” (more on these below), tropes that the Pauline corpus nowhere else treats in a substantive way. Paul is intentionally vague regarding the content of his vision.

The apostle twice uses the verb *ἀρπάζω* (“to be caught up”) to describe the visionary experience (cf. Acts 8:39; 1 Thess 4:17).⁵³ This language suggests that he was seized and lifted to the heavenly world by angels. Paul describes a vision of heavenly ascent. This is also suggested by his elusive suggestion that he may have left his body (2 Cor 12:2–3). There is nothing about the vision that is eschatological, although elsewhere in the letter, he alludes to the dramatic event he describes in 1 Corinthians 15 (i.e., 2 Cor 5:1–5).

Second Corinthians clearly shows continuity with the apocalyptic tradition, in which visions from the heavenly world are critical. But the vision mentioned in this chapter is not simply of the sort often found in the apocalypses, in which a visionary is shown various cryptic images that are interpreted by an angel. Heavenly ascents are a major trope in one of the subtypes of the genre apocalypses distinguished by Collins—the “otherworldly journey,” in which the visionary travels, often accompanied by angels, and is shown secrets about the heavenly world (e.g., 3 Baruch, Apocalypse of Abraham, 2 Enoch).⁵⁴

The Jewish apocalypses contain several accounts of visionaries being lifted up to the heavens by angels. In 1 Enoch, this happens to Enoch repeatedly (e.g., 18:1–5; 72:1; 106:19). The beginning of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, as preserved by Clement, describes an ascent that is similar to that of 2 Corinthians 12: “And a spirit took (*ἀνέλαβέν*) me and brought me up into the fifth heaven. And I saw angels who are called ‘lords,’ and the diadem was set upon them in the Holy Spirit and the throne of each of them was sevenfold more (brilliant) than the light of the rising sun” (*Strom.* 5.11.77.2).⁵⁵ This material supports the view that in the vision mentioned in

53. Hogeterp, “The Otherworld and This World,” 217; Rowland and Morray-Jones, *Mystery of God*, 141.

54. Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

2 Corinthians 12, Paul understood himself to have been seized by angels and taken to the heavenly world.

The Enochic literature is also relevant because it mingles the apocalyptic and mystical traditions.⁵⁶ Enoch is transformed by his ascent to the heavenly world. The disputed ending of the Parables of Enoch identifies Enoch as the Son of Man figure (1 Enoch 71:14). While this may be a secondary, later addition, a Jewish attempt to show that Enoch, not Jesus, is the Son of Man, the identification may be a consequence of Enoch's mystical transformation in heaven.⁵⁷ He is lifted up and placed before the Lord of Spirits (70:1). Before his presence, Enoch claims that "my flesh melted and my spirit was transformed" (71:11). Enoch's heavenly transformation is more extensive in 2 Enoch. When Enoch travels to the tenth heaven, his clothes are removed and he is given heavenly garb—an image Paul employs in 2 Corinthians 5:2—and anointed with oil (2 Enoch 21:7). Enoch realizes that he is changing: "And I looked at myself, and I had become like one of his glorious ones, and there was no observable difference" (v. 10). In 3 Enoch, the figure of Metatron, who has an exalted status in heaven, called "the Prince of the Divine Presence" and even "the Lesser Yahweh," is none other than the transformed Enoch (3 Enoch 4:3; 12:5).

Second Corinthians, like 2 Enoch and 3 Enoch, attest a combination of themes that resonate with the apocalyptic and mystical traditions of ancient Judaism.⁵⁸ This is evident not simply in Paul's claim of revelation that involves some sort of visionary glimpse of the heavenly world. The vision resonates with these Enochic texts in more specific ways. Paul states that the visionary was taken up to paradise and the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2, 4). In 2 Enoch, Enoch is shown ten heavens. Paradise, the ultimate abode of the righteous modeled after the garden of Eden, is in the third heaven.⁵⁹ In 3 Enoch, the visionary who ascends is not Enoch but Rabbi Ishmael. Enoch/Metatron is one of the rabbi's interlocutors in heaven who discloses divine knowledge to him. The goal of Ishmael's ascent is "to behold the vision of the chariot" (3 Enoch 1:1). Third Enoch not only attests and reworks traditions regarding Enoch found in older apocalyptic texts. The composition is an important witness to Merkavah mysticism, a religious tradi-

55. Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: JTSA, 1960) 18–19.

56. Peter Schäfer, *Die Ursprünge der jüdischen Mystik* (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2011), 449–50, 475; Ithamar Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism* (Frankfurt am. Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1988), 142–43.

57. For this interpretation, see James C. VanderKam, "Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37–71," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 169–91. Consult also Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 326–32; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 187–91.

58. So also Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 17. The fifth century *Cologne Mani Codex* likewise presents the vision of 2 Corinthians 12 as similar to the revelations of Enoch. This work, best known for its account of the early life of Mani, emphasizes Enoch and quotes material from an "Apocalypse of Enoch" that stresses that angels took him to heaven and showed him heavenly secrets. The text then immediately moves to Paul and stresses that he was likewise given revelation in the third heaven. The text appeals to both figures to argue that important apostles and prophets from the past, were recipients of revelation (58.1–62.17). See Ron Cameron, and Arthur J. Dewey, *The Cologne Mani Codex (P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780): Concerning the Origin of His Body* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979), 45–47.

59. 2 Enoch 8:1 A: "They brought me up to the third heaven. And they placed me in the midst of paradise" (cf. 9:1). The Greek Life of Adam and Eve (Apocalypse of Moses) also presents the third heaven as the location of paradise (37:5). See Hogeterp, "The Otherworld and This World," 220; Rowland and Morray-Jones, *Mystery of God*, 393–96.

tion that developed in late antiquity, according to which rabbis developed various theurgic and ecstatic techniques in order to acquire a glimpse of the "chariot," God on his heavenly throne.⁶⁰

The exceptional claims made by Enoch in 2 Enoch and Rabbi Ishmael in 3 Enoch about what they saw in heaven helps explain why Paul is so reticent to describe what he saw in the third heaven. He asserts that the visionary saw what "no mortal is permitted to repeat" (2 Cor 12:4).⁶¹ Such prohibitions are also found in Jewish mystical texts.⁶² This reluctance speaks to the transcendent nature of the heavenly realities disclosed in the vision. Paul's reticence suggests that he considered it inappropriate to describe them, at least to the Corinthians.⁶³ In 1 Corinthians, he criticizes them for having a fleshly or worldly perspective (e.g., 3:1). Perhaps Paul did not think that they were ready to hear about the heavenly wonders he beheld.

Early Jewish literature contains an example of a person boasting about their affinity with the heavenly world. In one Qumran text, entitled the *Self-Glorification Hymn* (4Q491c), a person boasts of having had some sort of heavenly ascent that has changed him. He claims to be counted among the angels. He asserts in highly immodest language: "Who is comparable to me in my glory?" (l. 8). This transformative experience has also allowed him to bear sorrows and sufferings like no one else (l. 9).

The *Self-Glorification Hymn* is a good example of someone boasting about their direct interactions with the heavenly world. It is hard to take at face value Paul's claim that he is not boasting in a similar way. His indirect allusions to his incredible vision followed by his affirmation that he will not boast about it (2 Cor 12:6), conveys to his audience that his vision is very much worthy of such boasting but that Paul, the paragon of humility, chooses not to do so. Moreover, he then claims that, to avoid becoming too elated, he was given a thorn in the flesh and torments by Satan (v. 7). This suffering produces weakness and hardships, which he gladly boasts about (vv. 11–12). He, like the speaker in the *Self-Glorification Hymn*, connects his suffering to his ascent. Boasting was the context in which he brought up the vision in the first place (11:16–33; cf. 1:12; 7:14). Weakness (like foolishness) is, for Paul, not a bad thing but a sign of divine favor and affinity with the heavenly world (e.g., 1 Cor 1:25–27). Weakness and hardship thus become, paradoxically, compatible with a claim of heavenly ascent. Paul appeals to both motifs to bolster his own authority in the correspondence preserved within 2 Corinthians (e.g., 11:7; 12:11).

60. For an example of such techniques, see *Hekhalot Rabbati* (Schäfer §§204–5). Consult Rowland and Morray-Jones, *Mystery of God*, 235; Ra'anan Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism*, TSAJ 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

61. Contrast the Apocalypse of Paul of the Nag Hammadi library, in which Paul describes his ascent to the third heaven and then to even higher heavens, up to the seventh, recounting what he sees.

62. The famous rabbinic story about the four who entered paradise states that one is not permitted to speak about the *merkavah* with someone, unless that person is wise (*m. Hag* 2.1).

63. Compare the ending of the *Testament of Job*, where the daughters of Job are mystically transformed and begin to speak, but not in a language of this world but in "the angelic dialect" (48:3).

Conclusion

Collins's well-known definition of the apocalypse emphasizes that the revelation that is conveyed in a text belonging to this genre can be "temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."⁶⁴ First Corinthians, with its emphasis on the *parousia*, resonates with the first point, and 2 Corinthians, and its allusions to the third heavens, with the second. Paul in these letters claims to have access to divine knowledge with regard to both history—particularly its end—and the cosmos. He lived at a time in which apocalypses were composed and the apocalyptic tradition was an important element of Judaism. There is no evidence that he wrote any apocalypses. But he nevertheless turned to this tradition to understand the death of Christ and his *parousia*. Pauline apocalypticism is not a radical transformation of Jewish apocalypticism but is, rather, in considerable continuity with it.

64. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5.