



'WHAT IS INSCRIBED IN THE BOOK'

THE BOOK MOTIF AS A PRODUCTIVE FORCE IN THE APOCALYPSES OF DANIEL

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Apocalyptic literature generally confronts the reader with an array of images, which are often quite difficult to interpret. Yet, the active interpretation of the images and events described is a central aspect of the genre. Using a Marxist framework of productive forces, the article examines one particular recurrent image in the visions of Daniel: the book. The article argues that through the repeated use of images of celestial and terrestrial books, an understanding of history alternative to the normative social relations is developed. Furthermore, a sense of dualism embedded in the theology of the visions justifies the interpretation of a semi-canonized corpus of sacred literature. And finally, textual interpretation extends the possibility of cultural production to marginalized groups. Not only does the content of the apocalyptic visions of Daniel protest against the predominating politics of empire, but the form of the genre itself is a method of reclaiming history and religion for the Daniel community.

INTRODUCTION

The visions of Daniel describe, amongst other things, revolutions: the four beasts of Daniel 7, the ram and the goat of Daniel 8, the celestial and terrestrial battles of Daniel 10–12. In each case, an existing political order is overturned, often just before an entirely new social order arises. The details of this new social order are inevitably vague, but it includes justice for those oppressed by the existing imperial powers and elevation to a place of honour for members of the Daniel community (Dan. 12:3). But not only do the apocalyptic visions of Daniel hope for a better future – they mean to enact it.

The visions also attempt to reconstruct a history and sense of culture alternative to the history and culture conducive to the predominating social order. As a culturally productive force, the visions of Daniel offer a history that is different from the triumphs of Earthly empires – if only by offering a different historical *meaning* for those triumphs. The visions offer a different *way* of reading history, through the interpretation of a semi-canonised corpus of literature. Through the repeated motif of celestial and terrestrial books, the visions also attempt to legitimise apocalyptic literature and textual interpretation as an appropriate and superior productive force. Before addressing this 'book motif' and its use, but I would like first to elaborate on the concept of productive forces.

APOCALYPTIC AS A PRODUCTIVE FORCE

As a productive force, the raw materials of apocalyptic literature – prophecy, myth, symbolism and so on – are used to construct the consciousness of the Daniel community, but are also a preexisting part of the Daniel community. Marxism has generally conceived of productive forces as essentially those means by which to create commodities; on the level of cultural criticism, a productive force 'may be seen as a particular kind of agricultural or industrial production, but any such kind is already a certain mode of social co-operation and *the application and development*

of a certain body of social knowledge. The production of this specific social co-operation or of this specific social knowledge is itself carried through by productive forces.’ (Williams 1977, 91; emphasis added). A literary genre is also ‘a certain body of social knowledge’ that can be used to produce specific kinds of ‘social co-operation.’ This view of productive forces precludes the possibility of easy reduction to a specific set of means of production and reproduction. It is not simply a question of determining *if* something is a productive force, but *how* it is a productive force. The apocalyptic visions of Daniel are certainly a productive force, but I am concerned more with how the visions function as productive forces.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx lays out a relationship between productive forces, division of labour and consciousness – three terms essential for this analysis. For Marx, consciousness is intrinsically linked to human production: ‘As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production’ (Marx 1978, 150). Consciousness is affected by, and even co-substantial with, the productive forces at the disposal of humans in order to satisfy their needs. Marx defines consciousness as ‘concerning the *immediate* sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside of the individual’, but also as consciousness of ‘nature... a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force’ (Marx 1978, 158). Critiquing Marx, Raymond Williams sums up this definition as ‘direct positive knowledge’ (Williams 1977, 59); but consciousness is never composed solely of direct positive knowledge, invariably being part of the belief, the understood, the decided, the conceived. To rectify this, Marx does make a distinction between this direct positive knowledge and the ‘ideological reflexes and echos’ (Marx 1978, 154) of the life process, which still retains a ‘naive dualism’ (Williams 1977, 59) between ideas and material life. Furthermore, consciousness precedes the material process as much as it is a result of the material process. Borrowing an example from an older and somewhat wiser Marx, an architect conceives of a building before giving it physical form. The consciousness of a person and of a public is both produced and producing, and ‘the most important thing that a worker ever produces is himself’ or, on a social level, ‘themselves and their history’ (Williams 1980, 35).

This brings me to my first step in viewing apocalyptic literature as a productive force, insofar as Williams carries the concept of production from the narrowly deterministic field of economics into the field of culture. Marx, critiquing *capitalist* production, often forecloses his own theories against wider theories of *cultural* production. Williams cites Marx’s claim in the *Grundrisse* that piano-makers and piano-sellers are considered productive workers, but piano-players are not. In Williams’s view, ‘as a way of considering cultural activity ... this is very clearly a dead-end’ (Williams 1980; see also Williams 1977, 93–94). In composing or performing music, a piano-player creates the fact of her existence as a piano-player, and creates the culture which forms part of consciousness every bit as much as a carpenter or an architect. Analogously, the writing and interpreting of literature – both acts that are represented in the visions of Daniel – is as much a culturally productive process as paper manufacturing and bookselling.

The next step lies in Marx’s connection between productive forces and division of labour. The satisfaction of needs is an ongoing process, driven by changing conditions, and leading to the development of other, more complex needs. Sooner or later, divisions of labour develop along ‘material and mental’ lines (Marx 1978, 159). The division of labour is not simply an expression

of individual skills, but also an expression of ownership: 'division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour.' (Marx 1978, 151). Williams is again instructive in this respect by examining the implications of the division of labour and ownership on access to the means of cultural production. In the essay *Means of Communication as Means of Production*, Williams examines modern communications technology (radio, film, television, telephone, photography and so on) as productive of social consciousness and culture, and distinguishes between three classifications of communication in this sense: amplificatory, durative and alternative. Amplificatory means, such as television or even megaphones, can express verbal and/or non-verbal communication across wider geographic areas; durative means, such as magnetic tape and digital technology, store communications across time; alternative means do not directly transmit communications, but express communications through writing, graphics, signs and symbols. These categories are obviously abstract, and in real practice most means of communication would incorporate aspects of two or even all three categories. What these categories are meant to highlight are 'issues of control and direct access to the developed means of amplification and duration', as opposed to alternative means, which 'are of direct interest to a ruling class' (Williams 1980, 56). As technology grows more complex, divisions of labour and ownership also increase, so that large-scale amplificatory and durative means of communication can only be directly and fully accessed by capitalist and state monopolies.

While 'excluded classes' can partially access amplificatory and durative means of communication, alternative means of communication reach outside of the dominant relations of production. On the other hand, while the former two means of communication generally require only basic communicative skills such as speaking or gesturing, alternative means require that 'a crucial primary skill – for example, writing or reading – has also to be mastered.' (Williams 1980). While these necessary skills provide their own set of problems, within alternative means of communication lies the potential for a re-evaluation or even an abolition of the divisions of labour and ownership. I view apocalyptic literature as an alternative means of communication in that it constitutes a re-evaluation of the dominant social relations.

Writing about thirty years prior to Williams, Walter Benjamin also worked along similar lines. Benjamin was concerned with 'the capacity of the artwork to encode information about its historical period' (Jennings 2008, 9). The type of 'encoding' that Benjamin addresses in *The Work of Art in The Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility*, is the 'aura.' In Benjamin's definition, the aura is 'A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be.' (Benjamin 2008, 23). The 'distance' in this evocative description is the work's 'historical testimony', the utter uniqueness of its origins and the 'changes of ownership [which] are part of a tradition which can be traced only from the standpoint of the original [work] in its present location.' (Benjamin 2008, 21). The historical testimony of, say, the Mona Lisa, becomes as much a part of our perception of it and our response to it as the technical skill of the work itself. On a more materialist level, the aura encodes the social relations surrounding the historical testimony. Aura is inevitably related to the rituals surrounding the work – either the rituals of the religious cult, or the 'secularised ritual[s]' of modernity, such as 'the secular worship of beauty' (Benjamin 2008, 24). These rituals are expressed in appropriate forms of ownership, display and criticism. Therefore, the aura implicitly reinforces the bourgeois social relations expressed by the ritual: 'The way in which human perception is organised – the medium in which it occurs – is

conditioned not only by nature but by history.’ (Benjamin 2008, 23). Bourgeois art is bourgeois because it insists on being perceived as such.

Benjamin’s major interest in *The Work of Art* is not the aura *per se*, but the breakdown of the aura as technology advances the possibilities for reproduction. This breakdown is described as ‘the liquidation of the value of tradition in the cultural heritage’ (Benjamin 2008, 22): ‘It might be stated as a general formula that the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence’. This mass existence is akin to the proliferation of access to the means of communication with which Williams is concerned.

In terms of apocalyptic literature, the heavy appropriation of prophetic literature and ancient Near-Eastern imagery constitutes the breakdown of the aura in those previous literatures; this breakdown coincides with a greater concern toward democratization. For Benjamin, a literary technique that demonstrates the correct ‘political tendency’ (Benjamin 2008, 80) puts an ‘improved apparatus’ in the hands of the greatest number of people, ‘and this apparatus is better, the more consumers it is able to turn into producers’ (Benjamin 2008, 89). Literature can do this ‘by transcending the specialization in the process of intellectual production – a specialization that, in the bourgeois view, constitutes its order’ (Benjamin 2008, 87). The visions of Daniel are part of a genre that is by its nature participatory, or more precisely, enables participatory readings of history, symbolic traditions and prophecy that break down the traditional social relationships of priesthood, monarchy and empire in late-antique Judaism.

The visions of Daniel generally present an allegorical understanding of history using a series of images that immediately evoke a sense of mystery and wonder. Roland Boer recalls that the nature of allegory is to conceal the referent in the language it uses, stating that ‘allegorical language speaks of something that remains hidden, just below the horizon as it were, but nevertheless present’ (Boer 2003, 206), eliciting in the reader the same sense of mystery. Therefore, anybody outside of the ideological system, and hence the social relations, of the apocalypse will find the interpretation of the apocalypse almost impenetrable. Usage of allegory itself becomes a protest against the *status quo*. Apocalyptic becomes a means of envisioning a new future because ‘the terms and conditions of the present are by definition inadequate for thinking, hoping and enacting a radically different future.’ (Boer 2003, 211). Apocalyptic is a means of communication that breaks with those inadequate ‘terms and conditions’ and causes the audience to ask fundamental questions about its society and history, possibly motivating it toward a new history. By providing the people with a means of (cultural) production that highlights the process of interpretation, a new social consciousness can develop that might flourish outside of the traditional social relations. Before examining how the visions in Daniel accomplish this, I would like to address the social background of these apocalypses.

THE DANIEL COMMUNITY

The apocalypses of chapters 7–12 probably reached their final form, or something close to it, during the reign of the Seleucid emperor Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ruled from 175 to 164 BCE. Fiercely anti-Jewish, Antiochus enforced progressively harsh edicts on the Palestinian-Jewish community, preventing certain religious practices and sending a military garrison into Jerusalem. Animosity toward Antiochus culminated when he erected an ‘abomination’ (שקד).

Dan. 9:27), possibly a statue of Zeus, in the Jerusalem Temple in 167, instigating the Maccabean revolt. Although they were the most famous and most militant opponents of Antiochus, the Maccabees hardly represented a unified front. Many Jews openly adopted the Hellenistic culture brought by the Greek emperors, and some, including members of the priesthood, collaborated with Antiochus. Daniel reveals its partisan leanings in a possible reference to these Hellenisers as ‘those who forsake the holy covenant’ (11:30). However, the book of Daniel, despite being at least sympathetic to the Maccabees in its anti-Hellenistic stance, is not necessarily a product of the Maccabees.

The identity of the Daniel community remains hotly debated. One major theory identifies the *Hasidim* (Ἁσιδαῖοι), pious Jews who formed a social movement in 3rd–2nd century BCE Palestine, as a possible source for the apocalyptic sections of Daniel. Briefly, the *Hasidim* joined the Maccabees in their anti-Hellenist struggles (1 Macc. 2:42), but later left the cause due to some positive associations with the priesthood (1 Macc. 7:13–14). Owing to the more pacifist tendencies of apocalyptic, André LaCocque sees a split between the *Hasidim* and the Maccabees: while the Maccabees fought for political control, the ‘participation of the *Asideans* [*Hasidim*] in the resistance against the Seleucids was strictly limited to the conquest of religious freedom.’ (LaCocque 1993, 320). Louis Hartman and Alexander Di Lella take the *Hasidim*/pacifist association even further: ‘The Book of Daniel as a whole may rightly be viewed as a pacifistic manifesto of the *Hasidim*.’ (Hartman and Di Lella 1978, 43).

John Collins rejects the view that the apocalypses of Daniel originated among the *Hasidim*, and favours the *Maskilim* (משכילים), or ‘Wise’, identified in Daniel 11:33 (Collins 1975, 218–234). This group originated in the Babylonian diaspora and was exposed to the forms of mantic wisdom – interpretation of dreams and visions – represented in the court-tales of Daniel (ch. 1–6). Members of this group later emigrated back to Palestine and they, or their ancestors, produced the apocalypses in the context of the persecutions of Antiochus (Collins 1975, 232).

Rather than judging the relative merits of each hypothesis, I want to point out some intersections between the two, characterising the social background of the apocalypses. What I want to highlight is the sense of marginality in the community and its alienation from the politics of the day, as well as the literary and theological capacity to engage history, politics and community *outside* of the typical social relations – all of which seem to be agreed upon, with some variations, by the different hypotheses outlined above.

1. In each hypothesis, the Daniel community is an association that sees itself as set apart from the predominating politics. Indeed, politics itself is viewed with skepticism in the divinely ‘managed universe’ (Collins 1977, 98) that the apocalypses presume. As noted above, Collins’s view is that the apocalypses of Daniel are the provenance of a group closely associated with the Babylonian diaspora, who believed in a ‘special wisdom’ that set them apart from the wider population (Collins 1975, 234). LaCocque speculates that the cultic interests expressed in the apocalypses are evidence of a connection between the *Hasidim* and priestly circles (LaCocque 1993, 335–336), but does not preclude tense relations with the temple priesthood. According to LaCocque, the *Hasidim* were precursors to the Pharisees, whose ‘oral law or *Halakhah* was meant to erect an authority superseding the one of the priests.’ (LaCocque 1993, 317). Furthermore, the *Hasidim* were likely composed, at least in part,

by groups excluded from the ‘vastly richer’ governing classes (LaCocque 1993, 319). In both hypotheses, the Daniel community is a political minority.

2. Though they disagree as to how far it extends, both hypotheses attribute a pacifist ideology to the apocalypses. While some hypotheses argue for an absolutely pacifist stance, LaCocque favors a more nuanced ‘quietism’ for the *Hasidim*, whose participation in the Maccabean revolt was exceptional insofar as it was felt, briefly, that the revolt constituted the final eschatological conflict. Once it became ‘clear that the Maccabees [were] engaged in a personal pursuit of glory and power’ the *Hasidim* suspended their engagement, and reverted to their traditional pacifism (1 Macc. 7:13–14; LaCocque 1993, 331). The Daniel community is therefore widely thought to have held a theology of historical determinism, and viewed military ambitions as ‘a little help’, as the Maccabees are described in Dan. 11:34.
3. The apocalypses originated from a scribal milieu. LaCocque argues that the formulaic vocabulary of the apocalypses suggests a scribal culture (LaCocque 1993, 326). Collins also places apocalyptic literature in a scribal context (Collins 1998, 39), though not of the type that produced typical proverbial wisdom literature, but of a type that engaged in mantic wisdom (Collins 1975, 232). Although the literature was produced with a certain specialised learning, it was not necessarily meant to be kept secret; rather, Daniel 11:33 describes an effort ‘to make the many understand.’
4. LaCocque explicitly describes a theologically dualistic world-view for the *Hasidim*. This world-view justified the participation of the normally pacifist *Hasidim* in the Maccabean revolt: ‘the conflict took in their eyes a dualistic, cosmic dimension’ (LaCocque 1993, 331; cf. Dan. 10:13). Collins describes a more fluid world-view in Daniel 7, where the host of Heaven intermingles with the Jews without a hard distinction between the two (Collins 1998, 105).¹ Describing ‘the people of the holy ones of the Most High’ (Dan. 7:27), the vision presumes ‘three levels of a multi-dimensional reality’ (Collins 1998, 106). While Collins does not directly link Persian dualism to the ‘Wise’, this group could have carried such a belief from the Babylonian exile. The Daniel community clearly held some notion of a dualistic universe, where events in Heaven are reflected on Earth, and vice versa.

Drawing some general conclusions from the above hypotheses, I would summarise the Daniel community as a movement with very limited political power. There is evidence, though, that this movement retained adherents from the educated classes – possibly priestly and/or scribal. This movement’s view of history – that Heaven was actively involved within the historical events of the day – played a major role in its action (or inaction) in the resistance movement against the Greek occupation. But more importantly for this study, a particular kind of literature was developed around this theology. This literature presumes, as well as justifies, the political marginality of the movement (God is doing what God sees fit, and everything will work out in the end), and also highlights the quality of literacy and learning embedded within the movement. This latter characteristic is demonstrated most distinctly in the apocalypses by the frequent motif of the book.

CELESTIAL AND TERRESTRIAL BOOKS

The motif of a celestial book is well attested in ancient Near-Eastern mythology (LaCocque speculates that their origins lay in Babylonian and Egyptian religion; 1979, 144) as it is in Biblical literature. The first Biblical reference in Exodus 32:32–33 records those who have not sinned against God. The Prophets and Writings contain similar motifs; Malachi 3:16 has a very clear reference to a ‘book of remembrance’ (ספר זכרון) written at God’s request, and Psalms 69:29 and 87:6 refer to the ‘book of life’ (ספר חיים) and ‘record of peoples’ (כתוב עמים), respectively. What makes Daniel unique is the high frequency and varied contexts of the motif’s occurrence.

The first occurrence of this motif is in Daniel’s vision of the celestial court; the books are opened as part of the court’s proceedings (7:10). Presumably, these books contain a record of the deeds of the four beasts on which the subsequent judgment against them is to be based and/or the judgment itself. A non-canonical parallel to the court record occurs in the *Animal Apocalypse* of 1 Enoch in an extensive account of the writing, reading and closing of the document (1 Enoch 89:70–71).² A court scene similar to Daniel 7 appears as well: ‘And I saw until a throne was constructed in the pleasant land and the Lord of the sheep sat upon it, and he took all the sealed books and opened those books before the Lord of the sheep.’ (1 Enoch 90:20). In an important distinction from Daniel 7, the Lord of the sheep in the *Animal Apocalypse*, not to mention the reader, has been informed of the contents of the book in advance. By refraining to be explicit about the contents, Daniel 7 necessitates an inference of what the court record contains. Therefore, this particular use of the court record incites an interpretation of a predetermined history and sanctifies that interpretation insofar as it is part of the Heavenly realm.

The more eschatological ‘record of truth’ (כתוב אמת) appears in Daniel 10:21. This book contains a history of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires, disclosed by an unnamed angelic figure that battles ‘the Prince of Persia’ alongside Israel’s own angelic benefactor, Michael. The account is a combination of historical details, accurate and otherwise, and supernatural interventions. The *Apocalypse of Weeks* in 1 Enoch reflects a close parallel to Daniel 10: ‘The vision of Heaven was shown to me, and from the words of the watchers and holy ones I have learned everything, and in the Heavenly tablets I read everything and I understood.’ (1 Enoch 93:2). The tablets relate an obscure history comprising a period of 10 weeks. Both 1 Enoch and Daniel 10 portray divine texts that reveal eschatological and alternative readings of history, and often must be accompanied by an interpretation from a divine being. C. L. Seow states that the purpose of portraying the course of history as a written text is to imply ‘authenticity, for what is inscribed therein may be verified... permanent, indelible records’ (Seow 2003, 167). This statement is reasonable, but we can take it even further: the authenticity of one reading of history challenges the authenticity of other readings of history.

Both the court record and record of truth are concerned with histories which have led up to the present moment. By presenting the reader with an evaluation of history different from that of the dominating empires, the visions effectively ‘liquidate’ the value of a particular historical tradition – an act that, as stated above, Benjamin considered to be an essential part of the decay of the aura. Is this decay not part of ‘the desire of the present-day masses to “get closer” to things’ (Benjamin 2008, 23) to exert some control over history, if only by making the claim that God controls history?

Undoubtedly the most influential celestial book is the book of life in Daniel 12:1, which describes the resurrection of the people during the eschaton. Although the book is not named in Daniel, a similar Qumran text, *The Words of the Luminaries*, explicitly mentions the book of life in a prayer similar to the one in Daniel 9: ‘Free your people Isra[el from all] the countries, both near and far, to where [you have exiled them]. All who are written in the book of life’ (4Q504 *Frgs.* 1–2 *col.* VI).³ The last line is repeated nearly verbatim in Daniel 12:1: ‘everyone who is found written in the book.’ The chief characteristic of the book of life is that it takes note of those who retain membership in the covenantal community. The book of life firmly places the Daniel community within that membership even though, as I have noted, that community is politically marginal.

Up until now, I have only addressed books that can be regarded as celestial or supernatural, but these books occur in the context of the actual, or terrestrial, books of Daniel. These *physical* books are either explicitly mentioned or alluded to throughout the apocalypses: in 7:1, Daniel states that he wrote down his dream and vision; in 12:4, Daniel is directed by his angelic interlocutor to keep the book secret until the time of the end. The instruction to keep the book secret (cf. 8:26; 12:9) is likely meant to explain why this vision was only revealed to the community at such a critical historical moment. Yet, the most important actual texts for the visions of Daniel are Jeremiah’s prophecies. In chapter 9, Daniel attempts to discover the relevance of the prophecies (cf. Jer. 25:11 and 29:10) for his own time during the reign of the fictional Darius the Mede of chapter 6. This attempt gives insight into the importance of textual interpretation to the Daniel community. Jeremiah predicted a 70-year duration for the Babylonian exile, but from the perspective of Antiochus’ oppression, no real liberation seems to have occurred. Jeremiah’s prediction would be devoid of any meaningful content – unless, that is, the prediction did not actually mean 70 years. After Daniel’s long prayer, the angel Gabriel appears and explains the ‘true meaning’ of the prediction: the 70 years actually refers to 70 *weeks* of years, or 490 years (9:24).

Dream interpretation in the book of Daniel is often referred to as *peshet* (פֶּשֶׁט). This word appears frequently in Aramaic in Daniel 2, referring to the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Occurrences in Daniel 5 portray the interpretation of the writing on the wall and in 7:16, Daniel asks a divine attendant to give the *peshet* of the vision. In apocalyptic literature, the *peshet* interprets divine revelation: ‘God’s messages are concealed in codes, whether visions, dreams or scriptures. There is need of a wise interpreter to understand the mysteries’ (Collins 1977, 78). As the court-tales establish, Daniel is well suited for the interpretation of Jeremiah or, at least, for the reception of the interpretation.

The concern with the prophecies of Jeremiah demonstrate that the Daniel community had a functioning body of scripture which was regularly interrogated for something deeper than simply the ‘plain meaning’ of the text. Moshe Halbertal states that for the proper interpretation of these texts, ‘divine inspiration is considered necessary for the interpretation of Scripture and serves as the very ground for the interpreter’s authority. The interpreter here is an inspired reader, a person endowed with unique abilities to discover the “solution” (*peshet*) of the text’s meaning’ (Halbertal 1997, 49). The apocalyptic genre replaces the waning prophetic genre, and the scriptural interpreter becomes something of a stand-in for the prophet. In order to effectively serve as this ‘stand-in’, the interpreter must, obviously, accomplish some level of literacy so that the interpreter may engage the text of the prophecy. Literacy, then, is evidence, in this case, of an alternative commu-

nicative system. Williams states that ‘the traditional alternative systems, in which speech is rendered or recorded in print... are then often easier to *recognise* as alternative systems, with all their social difficulties of acquiring the necessary social skills’ (Williams 1980, 61). In a society where literacy, the ‘necessary social skill’ of scriptural interpretation, is still relatively rare, it is easy to see why, as Halbertal claims, the interpreter was seen as divinely inspired.

A further indication that prophecy in the Daniel community was regarded more as canon to be studied is through the use of divine mediators. At no point in chapters 7–12 is Daniel able to interpret the visions himself. Always, an angelic interpreter, either named or unnamed, is the exegete. LaCocque considers this the death-knell of prophecy: ‘In classical prophecy it is the prophets who take the place of angels. Their reappearance in the books of Ezekiel and Zechariah announces the end of prophecy and the rise of apocalyptic: revelations are too profound to be grasped without divine explanation’ (LaCocque 1988, 102). The description of Daniel interacting directly with the divine embodies yet another possible attribute of an alternative system ‘in which the *appearance* of direct communication has in effect been produced’ (Williams 1980, 61; emphasis added). But rather than creating the appearance of direct person-to-person communication, which is Williams’s concern, the visions of Daniel create the appearance of direct Divine-to-person communication.

CONCLUSION: SACRALISING PRODUCTIVE FORCES

The book motif is borrowed, partly, from earlier ancient Near-Eastern traditions, and is frequently expressed in apocalyptic literature. But the prevalence of this motif in the visions of Daniel indicates something more than the passive reception of a genre and its attributes: it suggests the advent of an alternative consciousness of the understanding of history and divine revelation. To accomplish this, the visions do three things I have laid out over the course of this study: 1) it challenges the ‘historical testimony’ of sacred literature and the social relations upon which it rests; 2) the interpretative process extends the possibility for cultural production to a wider group; 3) the theology of dualism justifies textual interpretation as the appropriate method of understanding history.

The use of divine texts in the visions of Daniel can be illuminated by the dualism expressed in the visions. As already stated, this is not a hard-and-fast dualism, characterised by a vast gulf between the natural and the super-natural; it is continuous, with the divine often portrayed as right alongside, or even representing, the faithful. Just as the events and people on earth are given a divine cast through a dualistic theology, cultural elements like texts and interpretation may be given the same cast. Heaven, it seems, has its own sacred canon: the book of life, the court record and the book of truth. These texts profoundly shape the course and the understanding of events both in Heaven and on Earth, and often need an angelic interpreter – a Gabriel to our Daniel, if you will (note the common theophoric indicator at the end of each name). The dualistic theology held by the Daniel community provided a way of seeing textual interpretation as not only superior, but sanctified.

As a productive force, textual interpretation and apocalyptic literature provide an improved apparatus for understanding history and the community’s place in history. It is, as I have already argued, participatory by its very nature, calling the reader to actively consider the images in apocalyptic and what they could possibly mean. And though the book of Daniel emphasises the

‘Wise’ as the proper interpreters, there is very little explicit criterion for what makes one wise. In this sense, the possibility is at hand of a greater and more diverse group of people utilizing and receiving benefit from these new cultural forces of production. The ability to assume a positive role in history is no longer dictated by the hereditary lines of monarchy and priesthood, but by the ability of one to understand and make others understand the divine forces at work.

The Daniel community did not adopt apocalyptic literature simply because it was a convenient genre that happened to be at hand; the genre was adopted because of its extraordinary otherness, because of its capacity to disrupt the ‘criterion of authenticity’ (Benjamin 2008, 25) of somebody else’s history. When the writer of Daniel 9 proposes an alternative understanding of the prophecies of Jeremiah, the view that those prophecies must mean very particular and specific things is being questioned. The Daniel community challenges the normative social relations with a new understanding of the history of those social relations, and thereby actively produces a different future through its unorthodox view of the past.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ As Collins emphasises, “interpretation of the holy ones as the angelic host does not in any case exclude reference to the persecuted Jews.”
- ² All translations for 1 Enoch are by Nickelsburg and VanderKam.
- ³ Interpolations are those of the translator (Florentio García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* [Boston: Brill, 1997–1998], 1017).

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