CHAPTER TEN

RESURRECTION AS GIVING BACK THE DEAD

I

The relationship between the Apocalypse of John and the extra-canonical Jewish apocalypses has been variously understood. At one extreme are those who see Revelation as a typical Jewish apocalypse, whose admittedly Christian authorship makes little significant difference,1 while at the other extreme are those who distinguish sharply between prophecy and apocalyptic and minimize Revelation’s resemblances to the Jewish apocalypses in order to classify it as a Christian prophecy in continuity with Old Testament prophecy.2 This discussion has often not sufficiently recognized the diversity of the Jewish apocalypses, both in themes and in literary forms. Nor has it sufficiently distinguished the various dimensions of Revelation’s possible relationship to them. Thus one could ask whether John is indebted to Jewish apocalyptic for the literary forms he uses, for theological ideas, for symbolic images, for the ways in which he interprets Old Testament scriptures. In each of these aspects he may be more or less distinctive while also being indebted to apocalyptic tradition. His distinctiveness may be comparable to that of one Jewish apocalypse in relation to others3 or it may be due to his deliberately Christian

1 J. Massyngberde Ford, Revelation (AB 38; New York: Doubleday, 1975) offers one version of the view, which was more popular in a past era of source criticism, that Revelation in fact originated as a Jewish apocalypse (among the followers of John the Baptist, according to Ford), to which some Christian additions have been made. The rather common view that Revelation is ‘more Jewish than Christian’ (cf. R. Bultmann’s famous statement: ‘The Christianity of Revelation has to be termed a weakly christianized Judaism’: Theology of the New Testament, vol. 2 [London: SCM Press, 1955] 175) rests on the untenable presupposition that early Christianity was something different from Judaism, whereas in fact first-century Christianity was a distinctive form of Judaism.

2 Most recently, F. D. Mazzaferr, The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-critical Perspective (BZNW 54; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1989). His case for Revelation’s continuity with OT prophecy is excellent, but unfortunately his account of Jewish apocalyptic is a caricature. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) chapter 5, rightly refuses the alternative of prophecy or apocalyptic.

prophetic consciousness and message. We should probably reckon with both types of distinctiveness.

One aspect of Revelation's relationship to the Jewish apocalypses which has been little enough explored is Revelation's use of specific items of apocalyptic tradition which also appear in Jewish apocalypses and sometimes also in later Christian apocalypses. Where these have been noticed they have often been taken to show that John was actually borrowing from a particular Jewish apocalyptic work, such as 1 Enoch. Although it is a priori quite likely that John had read some of the Jewish apocalypses which we know, it seems to me impossible to prove his specific literary dependence on any such work. The traditions in question usually turn out to be attested in a variety of works, Jewish and Christian, in such a way that a chain of literary dependence is very difficult to reconstruct and it seems more plausible to think of traditions which were known, independently of their use in particular apocalypses, in circles, Jewish and Christian, which studied and produced apocalyptic literature. One such tradition, which occurs in Revelation, will be studied in this chapter. It is a way of describing the general resurrection, which in Revelation 20:13a takes this form: 'And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them.'

The study of the tradition to which Revelation 20:13a belongs will not only illuminate this verse's relationship to that tradition and illustrate Revelation's use of apocalyptic traditions. It will also be a contribution to the study of ideas of resurrection in early Judaism and early Christianity. For most Jews and Christians, including most of those who wrote the extant literature, such ideas were embodied in conventional ways of speaking about resurrection: words, phrases, images, and scriptural allusions. Some of these, such as the image of resurrection as a waking from sleep, are well-known. But study of the full range of conventional ways of speaking of resurrection in the literature of this period has only begun. It is important that it be pursued

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5 For other examples, see Baulcham, *The Climax*, chapter 2.