THE MYTHOLOGY OF HOLY WAR IN DANIEL
AND THE QUMRAN WAR SCROLL:
A POINT OF TRANSITION IN JEWISH APOCALYPTIC

BY

JOHN J. COLLINS

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At the end of the last century H. GUNKEL drew attention to the
mythic pattern of conflict between a god and a chaos-monster as a
central motif in Jewish apocalyptic.¹) Using the Babylonian myth of
Marduk and Tiamat, GUNKEL argued for extensive Babylonian
influence in Israel, much of which came in the pre-exilic period, but
which also supplied the figurative language for apocalyptic. Since the
discoveries at Ugarit, GUNKEL’s theory of Babylonian influence has
been seen to be exaggerated, but his insight into the importance of the
conflict motif has been vindicated. In the Ugaritic texts, Baal does
battle with Yamm, the sea monster, for the kingship of the gods. He
is victorious in the battle and returns to set up his temple and enjoy a
banquet with the gods.²) In the OT, motifs from this pattern are
frequently adapted and applied to Yahweh.³) Yahweh’s victory over
the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and again in wars of conquest, estab-
lished him as the divine warrior par excellence. In the pre-exilic
prophets and the Deuteronomistic history this portrayal of Yahweh
fades into the background, but it re-emerges strongly at the time of the
return from the exile.⁴) In the exile Israel had again fallen

¹) H. GUNKEL, Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit (Göttingen, 1895).
²) CTCA 2 and 4. (= GORDON, Ugaritic Textbook, Rome, 1965 129 and 51).
³) See especially CROSS “The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth” in God
Warrior in Israel’s Early Cult” in Biblical Motifs ed. ALTMAANN (Harvard, 1966)
pp. 11-30; Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic pp. 91-176; P. D. MILLER, The
⁴) See P. D. HANSON, “Zechariah 9 and the Recapitulation of an Ancient
into chaos and required the activity of the Divine Warrior to liberate her.

The high point of Jewish apocalyptic came at another period when the order of Israel's history was plunged into the chaos of war and persecution, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is not surprising then that the old mythology of the conflict between god and chaos should again be evoked. In particular, the books of Daniel and the Qumran War Scroll are replete with the imagery of holy war. In this paper I wish to discuss the particular ways in which the imagery is modified or transformed in those books. Specifically, I wish to study the difference between the two books in their basic conception of holy war, a difference which, I believe, marks a highly important point of transition in the development of Jewish apocalyptic.

**The traditional mythology of holy war**

When we speak of holy war in the context of Israelite religion, we think, first of all, of the wars of the period of the conquest and judges. The practice of Israel's holy war must be understood against the background of the mythology of holy war in the ancient Near East and especially Ugarit. We may distinguish two aspects of this mythology. First there was the primordial, paradigmatic, purely mythical war between the gods. In the case of Ugarit this was fought between Baal and Yamm or Baal and Mot; in Babylonian myth between Marduk and Tiamat. This myth was primarily cosmogonic. This is quite explicit in the Babylonian Enuma Elish, but is also implicit in the Ugaritic Baal cycle. Both myths show how the primordial forces of chaos had been reduced to order by the activity of a divine warrior. This primordial battle served, then, as a paradigm for future battles which the god and his earthly people must fight to preserve order over chaos.

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6) See G. von Rad, *Der Heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (Zürich, 1951). Also his *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London, 1953) pp. 45—49. However, von Rad's contention that holy war in Israel was primarily defensive in character has not been sustained by subsequent studies. Cf. most recently F. Stolz, *Jahwes und Israels Kriege* (Zürich, 1972).
7) See especially the works of Cross and Miller, above n. 3.