

The Reception of the Book of Daniel
(and Danielic Literature) in the Early Church

Wisdom and Apocalypticism Section

SBL Annual Meeting in Washington, November 18-22, 2006

by Gerbern S. Oegema, McGill University

3520 University Street, Montreal, QC. Canada H3A 2A7

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Abstract

Whereas cosmogony has traditionally been seen as a topic dealt with primarily in wisdom literature, and eschatology, a field mostly focused upon in apocalyptic literature, the categorization of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings into sapiential, apocalyptic, and other genres has always been considered unsatisfactory. The reason is that most of the Pseudepigrapha share many elements of various genres and do not fit into only one genre.

The Book of Daniel, counted among the Writings of the Hebrew Bible and among the Prophets in the Septuagint as well as in the Christian Old Testament, is such an example. Does it deal with an aspect of Israel's origin and history, a topic dealt mostly with in sapiential thinking, or only with its future, a question foremost asked with an eschatological or apocalyptic point of view? The answer is that the author sees part of the secrets of Israel's future already revealed in its past. It is, therefore, in the process of investigating Israel's history that apocalyptic eschatology and wisdom theology meet.

This aspect is then stressed even more in the later reception history of the Book of Daniel as well as of writings ascribed to Daniel: if one wants to know something about Israel's future in an ever-changing present situation, one needs to interpret the signs of the past. In this process, the interpretation of Israel's place in political or world history, and the question of how the rise and fall of world powers have influenced and still influence Israel's fate, often becomes a central focus of interest.

1. Introduction

The reception of the Book of Daniel and Danielic Literature in the Early Church is quite a relevant topic for the “Wisdom and Apocalypticism Section” of the Society of Biblical Literature, namely for these reasons: Daniel is a biblical book; Danielic literature is related to biblical literature; the Book of Daniel belongs to the Writings in the canon of the Hebrew Bible, of which an important part includes wisdom literature, whereas in the Septuagint’s Greek translation and the subsequent Christian canon the book is counted among the Prophetic books; and, finally, the book of Daniel is considered it to be an apocalyptic writing by modern scholarship.¹

Within this context one of the questions dealt with in this paper is: Does the book of Daniel deal with an aspect of Israel’s origin and history, a topic dealt mostly dealt with in sapiential thinking, and history or only with its future, a question foremost asked with an eschatological or apocalyptic point of view? The answer is that the author sees part of the secrets of Israel’s future already revealed in its past. It is, therefore, in the process of investigating Israel’s history that apocalyptic eschatology and wisdom theology meet.

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2. The Reception of Daniel by the Church Fathers

2.1. Irenaeus of Lyon

The first author of the Early Church who dealt with the Book of Daniel was Irenaeus of Lyon (ca. 130/140 - ca. 200 C.E.). In his most important work, written in Greek in the 80s of the second century C.E. and widely known under the title *Adversus Haereses* (*Haer.*), he clearly expresses his anti-gnostic views.² After a detailed interpretation of the

¹ Paper read at the “Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Early Judaism and Early Christianity Section” of the Society of Biblical Annual Meeting, Washington, November 18-22, 2006. See especially Klaus Koch, „Stages in the Canonization of the Book of Daniel“, *The Book of Daniel. Composition and Reception* (ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, VTSuppl 83,2; 2,2, Leiden: Brill 2001), 421-489. See also Gerbern S. Oegema, *Zwischen Hoffnung und Gericht. Untersuchungen zur Rezeption der Apokalypik im frühen Christentum und Judentum* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 82; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 49ff and 113ff.

² Text in: A. Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, et al. (eds.), *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies. Livre IV. Édition critique d’après les versions arménienne et latine 1-2* (Sources chrétiennes 100; Paris: Cerf, 1965;

paradise narrative in *Haer.*V:22-24 (Genesis 2 is explained with John 8:44),³ in *Haer.*V:24:1 he concludes his salvation-historical line of thought by saying: “Like he [i.e. the devil] has lied in the beginning he also has done so at the end by falsely stating: ‘This all has been given to me, and I will give it to those, whom I choose to give it to (Luke 4:6).’”⁴

Irenaeus then elaborates that the worldly power and the dominion of kings can only lie in the hand of God, after which in *Haer.*V:24:2-3 there follows an excursus on earthly power: it is not a tool of the devil, but has been created by God as a “means to limit evil.”⁵ Against the background of this example of salvation history there seems to lie apocalyptic thinking, according to which the good and evil powers have dominated mankind since the days of creation.

Following this, he deals with the *topoi* “Antichrist” and “1000-year Reign.” As it was prophesied at the beginning of the world (Gen 3:15) and is indicated in the narrative about the temptation of Jesus (Matt 4:1-11), at the end of days Christ will besiege the great Seducer and finally destroy him. This then becomes the main theme in *Haer.*V:25:1-30:4. He begins to discuss the theme of the “Antichrist” in detail, which until then had been only briefly touched, in *Haer.*V:25ff.⁶ In this section he mostly refers to the key passages of Daniel 2, Daniel 7-9, Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 13 and 17.

Whereas the expression “Antichrist” is Christian, the image of an anti-divine ruler is much older and is already found in the Hebrew Bible and in the Jewish apocalypses of the Second Temple Period.⁷ Besides Daniel 7 and 9:11, *Assumption of Moses* 8; 4 *Ezra* 11-12, and 2 *Baruch* 39, one should think of 1 John 2:18,22 and 4:3; 2 John 7; 2

ibid., *Livre V*. 1-2 (SC 152-153; Paris: Cerf, 1969. *Adversus Haereses* (*Haer.* IV and V) is quoted here according to the edition of SC 100 and 152-153. For an introduction, see: Antonio Orbe, “Irenaeus,” *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (ed. Angelo Di Berardino; Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1992), 413-416; Hans Lietzmann, *Geschichte der alten Kirche 1-IV* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1932-1944), quoted here according to the reprint of Berlin/N.Y.: W. de Gruyter 1975, II, 206ff.; Brian E. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 28ff; Robert Frick, *Geschichte des Reich-Gottes-Gedankens in der alten Kirche bis zu Origenes und Augustin* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1928), 58-67. For *Haer.*, see Winfried Overbeck, *Menschwerdung: Eine Untersuchung zur literarischen und theologischen Einheit des fünften Buches Adversus Haereses` des Irenäus von Lyon* (diss., Univ. Münster, 1991; Bern: Lang, 1995).

³ See further Overbeck, *Menschwerdung*, 356ff.

⁴ See further Overbeck, *Menschwerdung*, 368.

⁵ See also e.g. Sap 6:1-11; Rom 13:1ff. and bAZ 3b-4a.

⁶ See Overbeck, *Menschwerdung*, 379ff.

⁷ Bibliographic references: Wilhelm Bousset, *Der Antichrist in der Überlieferung des Judentums, des Neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche. Ein Beitrag zur Auslegung der Apokalypse*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895; Gregory C. Jenks, *The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* (BZNW; Berlin/N.Y.: de Gruyter, 1991; Stefan Heid, *Chiliasmus und Antichrist-Mythos. Eine frühchristliche Kontroverse im Heiligen Land* (Bonn: Borengässer, 1993). See also: G. Völker, *Kleine deutsche Prosadenkmäler des Mittelalters vom Antichrist. Eine mittelhochdeutsche Bearbeitung des Passauer Anonymus* (München Fink 1970); Overbeck, *Menschwerdung*, 384ff. See finally: Lambertus J. Lietaert-Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist. A Tradition-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

Thessalonians 2:3-12; John 5:43; Revelation 13 and 17; *Baruch* 4,1-5; *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* 4; *Sibylline Oracles* VIII:88f and 139-159; as well as Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 31:2-32:4 and 110:2.

From these passages one can conclude that the image of an anti-divine ruler in the second century C.E. is still quite diverse and certainly not unified. This antichrist figure could either be identified with a political figure (Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Dan 7-9 and 11, the last Roman emperor in *4 Ezra* 11-12, *Nero Redivivus* in Revelation 13 and *Ascension of Isaiah* 4)⁸ – or be associated with expressions like “Son of destruction,” “Satan,” and “Antichrist,” as well as “false Prophet” and “Pseudo-Anointed.”⁹

Irenaeus, therefore, stands at the beginning of the development of a more and more consistent “Antichrist theology”¹⁰ - in which a cosmic battle between the Antichrist and the Messiah/Christ is seen behind the struggle between Israel/the Church and the world powers, starting already at the time of creation - , and gives a detailed account of the expected sequence of events during the coming of the Antichrist in *Haer.* V:25:1.¹¹

2.2. Hippolytus of Rome

Hippolytus of Rome (first half of the third century C.E. [?]; about whose life little is known), who according to Eusebius was a bishop, possibly in Palestine or surrounding area, was “a churchman who disdained profane science in order to cultivate the Scriptures. His works are essentially commentaries on sacred texts and nearly always on the OT, interpreted by a typological exegesis, which he applies to Christ and the church,” thus according to Pierre Nautin.¹²

His *Commentarium in Daniele* preserved in Greek¹³ – one of the first Christian Bible commentaries – is of great importance for our topic.¹⁴ A work that is also relevant is the

⁸ Also see Jenks, *Origins*, 175ff; 199ff and 274ff.

⁹ For the so called “Antichrist-Myth” in the Greco-Roman period, see Jenks, *Origins*, o.c. On the similar absence of a “messianic idea in Judaism”, see Gerbern S. Oegema, *Der Gesalbte und sein Volk. Untersuchungen zum Konzeptualisierungsprozeß der messianischen Erwartungen von den Makkabäern bis Bar Koziba* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1994), 305.

¹⁰ For the advancement of the anti-Christ legend in the early-church apocalypses, see the literature specified above.

¹¹ Reinhard Bodenmann, *Naissance d'une Exégèse: Daniel dans l'Église ancienne des trois premiers siècles* (BGBE 28; Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 263, quoted in Overbeck, *Menschwerdung*, 400.

¹² So Pierre Nautin, “Hippolytus,” *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (ed. Angelo Di Berardino; Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1992), 383-385 (quotation on p. 384); See also Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld* (1.-11. Jh.), 2. Aufl., (Frankfurt/M/Bern: F. Lang 1990), 1, 227f and Lietzmann, *Geschichte*, II, 251.

¹³ For a distinction between the works written by Hippolytus and those attributed to him, see Nautin, *Hippolytus*, 383-384.

¹⁴ Text and translation: Gottlieb N. Bonwetsch (ed.), *Hippolyt's Kommentar zum Buche Daniel und die Fragmente des Kommentars zum Hohenliede* (GCS 1,1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897); Hans Achelis (ed.), *Hippolyt's kleinere exegetische und homiletische Schriften* (GCS, 1, 2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897). See also Daley, *Hope*, 38-41; Frick, *Geschichte*, 121-122 and Gottlieb N. Bonwetsch, “Zur handschriften Überlieferung des Daniel-Kommentars Hippolyts,” *NGWG* 3 (1918): 313-317.

older treatise “*De Antichristo*,”¹⁵ a florilegium of apocalyptic passages from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Hippolytus expects the Antichrist (chs. 6; 49), who will rebuild Jerusalem (ch. 6), but will be subordinated to the power of Rome, the “new Babylon” (chs. 30-36). The Antichrist will seduce mankind (chs. 54-58) and persecute the church (chs. 59-63). At the end of days, John and Elijah (ch. 64; see also chs. 44ff.) and, afterwards, Christ himself (ch. 64) will come. Christ will execute the judgement, after which the righteous will inherit paradise, and the wicked ones will be punished in hell (ch. 65).¹⁶

In Hippolytus’ Commentary on Daniel, book IV is particularly important, as it offers an interpretation of Daniel’s vision of the four animals (Daniel 7) and refers it to 1) the empire of the Medes, Assyrians, and Babylonians, 2) the empire of the Persians, 3) the empire of the Macedonians, Hellenes, or Greeks (IV:3-4), and 4) “the presently ruling” empire of the Romans (IV:5): “However, the now ruling animal is not one nation, but it is a collection of all languages and generations of mankind and is prepared to be a multitude of warriors, who are all called Romans, but do not originate from one country” (IV:8).¹⁷

At the end of the four empires according to Dan 7:17-18 the heavenly reign will start (IV:10). Christ is the firstborn, the Son of God, to whom everything on earth and in heaven has been subordinated, the firstborn “before the angels” and the first born “from the dead” (IV,11).¹⁸

Hippolytus answers the question of when “the Seducer”¹⁹ will come and on which day the “Parousia” of the Lord will be (IV:16), with a peculiar calculation. The age of the world has been set at 6000 years, and as Christ was born 5500 years after the creation, the end of days will take place 500 years after that (IV:23). The calculation of the age of the world is found (as can be found in earlier interpretations) on the basis of verses like Gen 2:3; Ps 90:4 (= LXX Ps 89:4), and 2 Peter 3:8. Afterwards Hippolytus in IV:35 interprets Dan 9:25-27 as referring to the second coming of Christ and the time of the resurrection of the dead as follows:

After the 62 weeks have passed and Christ has returned, and the Gospel has been preached everywhere in this world and the time has passed, there is one week left, in which Elijah and Enoch will come, and in their midst appears the abomination of the Antichrist, who will announce destruction to the world. Afterwards he will abolish the sacrifice (Dan 9:27), which has been sacrificed at every place and by every nation to God. Then in IV:49f, Hippolytus gives an even more vivid description of the Antichrist, about which “all scriptures, both the Prophets” speak, “as well as the Lord has given

¹⁵ Achelis, *Schriften*, GCS 1,2, 1-47.

¹⁶ For an introduction, see Daley, *Hope*, 38-39 and further: David G. Dunbar, *The Eschatology of Hippolytus of Rome* (Univ. Diss., New Jersey, 1979); David D. Dunbar, “The Delay of the Parousia in Hippolytus,” *VC* 37 (1983): 313-327.

¹⁷ Text and translation after Bonwetsch, *Hippolytus* (GCS 1,1), 205.

¹⁸ For the pre-existence of Messiahs in Judaism, see 4 *Ezra* 7:26-30; 12:32; 12:26; 1 *Enoch* (*Ethiopic Apocalypse*) 46:1-2; 48:3; 62:7; 2 *Baruch* (*Syriac Apocalypse*) 30:1 and bPes 54a.

¹⁹ According to *De Antichristo* 25, the antichrist is a Jew from the tribe of Dan; so also in Irenaeus’ *Haer.* V, 30,2; see further Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 1, 227f.

testimony of, and the Apostles taught about, [and] his name was secretly revealed by John in the Book of Revelation.”²⁰

The text of Dan 9:26-27, which in earlier times had been linked to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Hippolytus now applies to the Antichrist and makes him – in connection with the Synoptic Apocalypse (Mc 13 *par.*) and the Revelation of John – the basis of his detailed description of the end of days (cf. IV:51ff).

In summary we can say that Hippolytus expected the coming of the Antichrist, who would rebuild Jerusalem; the coming of Elijah and Enoch;²¹ and the return of Christ, who would capture the Antichrist, after which there would follow the resurrection and the final judgement. Hippolytus bases his interpretation on Genesis 1 (the six days of creation) and Revelation 20 (the capture of Satan and the 1000-year reign), which he, with the help of Ps 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8, joins to an all-embracing view of history.²²

2.3. Origen

Origen (ca. 185 - 253/4 C.E.) was born in Alexandria, worked in Caesarea,²³ was one of the “most important Greek Church Fathers”²⁴ and at the same time is “without doubt the most controversial figure in the development of early Christian eschatology.”²⁵ He was a student of the Neoplatonic Ammonius Saccas and possibly of Clement of Alexandria²⁶ and was well versed in Jewish Bible interpretations. He is the author/editor of the so-called *Hexapla*, the Bible edition in Hebrew, Hebrew in Greek transcript, as well as in the

²⁰ Text and translation after Bonwetsch, *Hippolytus* (GCS 1,1), 278-281.

²¹ On the coming of Elijah and Enoch see *Comm. in Dan.* IV,35ff.

²² On Hippolytus’ understanding of history see Gerhard Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie. Die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Großreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem tausendjährigen Friedensreich (Apk 20). Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (München: Fink 1972), 79-80: „Die Kontroverse um den zeitlichen Ansatz und die konkrete Beschaffenheit des tausendjährigen Interims ist zu seiner Zeit schon in vollem Gang, klare Fronten zeichnen sich ab. Doch wie sein Lehrer Eirenaios, beharrt auch Hippolytos auf einer mittleren Stellung. Einerseits wendet er sich gegen Gaius, der schon in der Menschwerdung Christi die Fesselung Satans auf tausend Jahre (Apk 20,2f) gegeben sah, mit dem Argument, daß die Verführungsmacht Satans keineswegs gebrochen sei, vielmehr erst am Ende der Zeiten vernichtet werde, und daß ferner die Zahl tausend nur den Zeitraum eines vollkommenen Tages symbolisiere (2 Petrus 3,8; Ps. 90,4 (LXX: 89,4), an dem die Herrschaft Christi aufgerichtet werde. Eine reale Zeitbestimmung scheint damit ausgeschlossen. Andererseits nimmt er aber die sechs Tage der Weltschöpfung wieder wörtlich und deutet sie - mit Verweis auf dieselben Schriftzitate, diesmal in umgekehrter Sinnrichtung genommen - auf die sechstausend Jahre Weltzeit, wobei jedoch der siebte Tag, der Sabbat, von der realistischen Deutung ausgenommen bleibt. [...] Tenor seiner Schriften bleibt die generelle Warnung vor schädlicher Neugier, verbunden mit der Mahnung zur Geduld.” See further Gottlieb N. Bonwetsch, *Studien zu den Kommentaren Hippolyts zum Buche Daniel und Hohen Lieds* (TU 16.2, Leipzig: Hinrichs 1897), esp. 44ff.

²³ Introduction: Henri Crouzel, “Origen,” Di Bernardino, *Encyclopedia*, 619-623.

²⁴ Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 1, 228; See further 228ff and Lietzmann, *Geschichte*, II, 305ff.

²⁵ Daley, *Hope*, 47; See also 47ff and Frick, *Geschichte*, 95-104.

²⁶ For Clement of Alexandria, who is not treated here, see Daley, *Hope*, 44-47 and Frick, *Geschichte*, 82-95.

Greek translations of a recension of the Septuagint and those of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion.²⁷

In his Commentary on Matthew,²⁸ *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* XXXII-LIX, Origen deals with the Synoptic Apocalypse (according to Matt 24:3-44).²⁹ In it he treats the following thematic topics: The “announcement of the destruction of the Temple” (chs. 29-31), the “beginning of the time of distress” (chs. 32-39), the “culmination of the time of distress” (chs. 40-47), the “Coming of the Son of Man” (chs. 48-52), and the “warnings for the end of days” (chs. 53-59). Here it will be of interest to refer to his interpretation of Dan 9:24-27 (about the seventy weeks and the “abomination”), in which he explains the characteristics of Christian Bible interpretation and refers, for example, to the destruction of Jerusalem: Only those inspired by the Holy Spirit can truly understand Scripture, especially the Book of Daniel, and they will recognize that the Prophet has foresaid that the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem will last until the end of days, i.e. the fulfillment of the world.³⁰

²⁷ See PG 15-16,3 and Fredericus Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum: Oxonii, Etypographeo* (Oxford: Clarendon 1875).

²⁸ Text in: PG 13,1641-1694. *Comm. Matt.* likewise in: GCS 10-12. German translation after GCS 10-12, in: Hermann J. Vogt, *Origenes: Der Kommentar zum Evangelium nach Matthäus. Eingeleitet, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen I-III* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1983, 1990, and 1993).

²⁹ Text in: PG 13, 1641ff. Translation (after GCS 10-12) in: Vogt, *Origenes*, III, 92-166. An English translation of most parts of *Comm. Matt.* does not exist.

³⁰ See Crouzel, *Origen*, 622 (includes an overview of editions and secondary literature); Daley, *Hope*, 48ff; A. H. Cornélis, “Les Fondements cosmologiques de l’Eschatologie d’Origène,” *RSphTh* 43 (1959): 32-80, 201-247; Adele Monaci, “Apocalisse ed escatologia nell’ opera di Origene,” *Augustinianum* 18 (1978): 139-151; Celia Rabinowitz, “Personal and Cosmic Salvation in Origen,” *VC* 38 (1984): 319-329; moreover: Henri Crouzel, “L’Exégèse origénienne de I Cor 3.11-15 et la purification eschatologique,” *Epektasis (Festschrift J. Daniélou)* (ed. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengiesser; Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 273-283; Henri Crouzel, “Mort et immortalité selon Origène,” *BLE* 79 (1978) 19-38, 81-96 and 181-196; *ibid.*, “L’Hadès et la Géhenne selon Origène,” *Gr.* 59 (1978): 291-331, and the bibliography in Daley, *Hope*, 274-275. The interpretation of Dan 9:24-27 by Origen reads as follows: “Die Reden Daniels wirklich zu verstehen, ist aber niemandem möglich außer dem Heiligen Geist, der in Daniel war, um die ganze Rede über die Wochen und über den Greuel der Verwüstung, von dem er spricht, offenbar zu machen. Wenn aber auch wir einiges zu dieser Stelle darlegen sollen, wie es uns richtig scheint, muß man sagen, daß diese Rede die siebenzig Jahre zu zeigen scheint, die nach der Ankunft unseres Heilandes waren. Diese Woche nämlich, die wegen der sieben Jahrzehnte Woche genannt wird, bestätigte das Vermächtnis für viele, als auch die Apostel Christi, die sich nach seiner Himmelfahrt dem Gebet und der Lehre widmeten, von Gott zur vollen Kenntnis des Willens der vom Heiligen Geist [eingegebenen] göttlichen Schriften erleuchtet wurden. In der Mitte der Woche aber, d.h. nach dreieinhalb Jahrzehnten, wurde das Opfer des Altares hinweggenommen, d.h. in fünfunddreißig Jahren wurde erfüllt, was geschrieben war: In der Mitte der Woche werden Opfer und Trankspende weggenommen. Damals kam aber auch über den Tempel, der in Jerusalem war, der Greuel der Verwüstung von Tempel und Stadt, zu der Zeit nämlich, als sie die Stadt Jerusalem von einem Heer umgeben sahen’ [Lk 21,20], damit sie erkennen sollten (entsprechend dem, was der Heiland über es prophezeit hatte), daß seine Verwüstung nahte’ [Mt 23,38]. Und dieser Greuel der Verwüstung, der am Tempel von einem Heer angerichtet wurde, welches Jerusalem einschloß, wird vom Propheten als bis zur Vollendung der Zeit’ dauernd bezeichnet, so daß die Vollendung der Welt über die Verwüstung Jerusalems und des Tempels, der in ihm ist, hereinbricht.” Translation according to Vogt, Origenes (see footnote 28), III, 113-114.

2.4. Eusebius of Caesarea

Eusebius (ca. 265-340 C.E.) was since 313 Bishop of Caesarea and was influenced by Origen, whose library he inherited, as well as by one of Origen's students, whose name (Pamphilus) he adopted.³¹ The diligently historical and exegetical Eusebius became mainly known through his *Historia ecclesiastica*.³²

From his writing *Life of Constantine*,³³ a panegyric on the first "Christian" emperor Constantine in four books, whom he compares favourably with Cyrus, Alexander, and Moses, the final passage is worth citing here (*Vit. Const.* LXXV):

He alone of all the Roman emperors has honoured God the All-sovereign with exceeding godly piety; he alone has publicly proclaimed to all the word of Christ; he alone has honoured his Church as no other since time began; he alone has destroyed all polytheistic error, and exposed every kind of idolatry... (182).³⁴

Podskalsky describes and evaluates Eusebius' eschatological interpretation of the central passages of Daniel 2 and 7 in reference to the Roman Empire as follows and compares it with that of Origen:

[...] so sieht Origenes in ihr den ersehnten Anbruch eines weltweiten Friedens in einem geeinten Reich, durch den erst die Erfüllung der christlichen Mission ermöglicht wird. Und er erweckt den Anschein, als ob diese providentielle Aufgabe des Römischen Reiches andauerte. Damit ist eine neue Epoche in der Geschichte der Danielexegese angebrochen: ohne die wenig schmeichelhaften Attribute des letzten Weltreichs zu leugnen oder umzudeuten, werden sie durch anderorts entlehene, unabhängig motivierte Ergänzungen in ihrem Aussagegehalt suspendiert. Den vorläufigen Höhepunkt erreicht diese Wende mit Eusebios von

³¹ See Carmelo Curti, "Eusebius of Caesarea in Palestine," Di Bernardino, *Encyclopedia*, 299-301; Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 1, 262-268. See further Daley, *Hope*, 77-78.

³² Text: GCS 2,1-3. Referring to the *Hist. eccl.* after this edition. For the other works of Eusebius, see PG 19-24; SC 31, 41, 55 und 73 (*Hist. eccl.*) and 206, 228, 262, 266, 215 and 292 (*Praep. Ev.*); GCS 6 and 8,1 (*Dem. ev.* and *Praep. Ev.*) as well as (concerning *Hist. eccl.*) the newer text-critical edition in: GCS 58; See also Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Eusebius. Werke* 1/1-VIII/2, 2nd and 3rd ed. (Berlin: W. de Gruyter 1982-1993). For an (older) German translation see: Philipp Haeuser, *Des Eusebius Pamphili Bischofs von Cäsarea Kirchengeschichte aus dem Griechischen übersetzt* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1932, Nachdruck Darmstadt 1997); Text and French translation likewise in: G. Bardy, *Eusèbe de Césarée. Histoire ecclésiastique. Livres V-VII. Texte grec, traduction et notes* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1955), 45-59.

³³ *Life of Constantine* was violently discussed in the research; See Curti, "Eusebius," 299; "apocryphal" and "panegyric." See also Harold A. Drake, *What Eusebius Knew: The Genesis of the Vita Constantius*, *CPh* 83 (1988): 20-38 and Brian H. Warmington, *The Sources of some Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' "Ecclesiastical History" and "Life of Constantine,"* *StPatr* 23 (1985): 93-98.

³⁴ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (Clarendon Ancient History Series, n./vol.; tr. and ed. Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999). See also P. J. M. Pfäffisch, *Des Eusebius Pamphili Vier Bücher über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantin und des Kaisers Konstantin Rede an die Versammlung der Heiligen* (Bibliothek der Kirchenväter; Kempten/München: Kösel, 1913), 190.

Kaisareia. Er übernimmt zunächst die vorsichtige Deutung des Origenes, versucht aber daneben, in einer für ihn bezeichnenden Weise, mit paränetisch-typologischen Begründungen, die beiden Danielvisionen zu harmonisieren` [...]. Beide Autoren heben die Stärke, versinnbildet durch das Eisen, als wesentliches Merkmal des vierten Reiches hervor; Eusebios jedoch mit eindeutig positiver Akzentsetzung. Ähnlich wie bei Origenes, zeigt sich auch bei ihm das eigentlich Neue in seiner unabhängig vom Buch Daniel formulierten Meinung über das römische Reich, dessen entscheidende Zäsur von Kaiser Augustus auf Konstantin den Großen verschoben wird. Eusebios scheut sich nicht, den Vers 'Die Heiligen des Höchsten werden das Reich empfangen' (Daniel 7,18) in seiner Tricennatsrede auf den Herrschaftsantritt Konstantins zu beziehen. Denn zusätzlich zu der durch die Geburt der Monarchie erreichten, friedlichen Einheit des Reiches kam mit Kaiser Konstantin auch das Licht der Frömmigkeit [...] und der Verfall der Gottlosigkeit [...] zum Durchbruch. Damit ist zwar nicht in Worten, aber in der Sache das römische Reich mit dem Reich Christi verschmolzen.³⁵

2.5. Jerome

Jerome was born in 347 C.E. in Dalmatia, studied in Rome, and lived from 386 to his death in 419 C.E. in Bethlehem.³⁶ He revised the various Latin translations of the New Testament, and this translation, known as the Vulgate, contains all of the books of the New Testament as we know it today in the West.³⁷

Jerome's eschatology is intrinsically connected with his knowledge of the Bible, his former admiration of Origen, his other personal contacts, and the many events in his long and ascetic life as a scholar.³⁸ In the context of his spiritual-personal, allegorical exegesis, he would interpret the apocalyptic future expectations mostly as a confrontation of the individual with death.³⁹ However, later in his life he would also take the apocalyptic tradition increasingly literally:

So his Commentary on Daniel (written in 399, to refute Porphyry's historicizing explanation of that book) interprets the Antichrist as a human figure, a Jew of humble origin, who will soon overthrow the Roman Empire and rule the world (2.7.7f; 2.7.11; 4.11.21).⁴⁰

³⁵ Podskalsky, *Reichseschatologie* (see footnote 22), 11-12.

³⁶ Jean Gribomont, "Jérôme," Di Berardino, *Encyclopedia*, 430-431. Text: PL 22-30; CSEL 54 and 59.

³⁷ Robert Weber, *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, 2. ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt). However, see now: Pietro Rossapo, "From the Vulgate to the New Vulgate," *Translation of Scripture. Proceedings of a Conference at the Annenberg Research Institute*, May 15-16, 1989, Philadelphia 1990, 193-202.

³⁸ Daley, *Hope*, 101-104; Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 1, 333-339. On the messianic interpretation of Prophetic passages see Félix M Abel, "Saint Jérôme et les prophéties messianiques," *RB* (NS) 13 (1916): 423-440; 14 (1917): 247-269.

³⁹ Daley, *Hope*, 101.

⁴⁰ So Daley, *Hope*, 101. Text: PL 25, 491-584. For the Jewish background of the Antichrist, see Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte*, 1, 336-337.

Also, his commentaries on Isaiah, written between 408 and 410 C.E. (*Comm. Isa.* VI:14.1; XIV:51.6; XVI:59.14; XVIII:65.17f), and Ezekiel, written after 411 C.E. (*Comm. Ezech.* XI,36.38),⁴¹ express his latter day expectations, which may have been influenced by the attack of the Barbarians at the beginning of the fifth century C.E.: The Roman Empire will soon fall, the Antichrist is near, and the appearance of heretics within the Church is a sign of the coming end.⁴²

Finally in his commentary on Daniel (*Explanatio in Daniele*) it becomes obvious that he does not look upon the biblical books from a historical distance, as is the case with Neoplatonic Porphyry, but the Book of Daniel is for the time in which Jerome lived, still very relevant, as is stressed by Podskalsky:

Gegen die rein historisch-kritische Deutung des Porphyrios betont er leidenschaftlich die eschatologische Zielrichtung des Buches Daniel als exegetisches Prinzip: den Verweis auf zukünftiges Geschehen sieht er schon im Wort ΕΛΚΩ (Daniel 2,31) allegorisch ausgedrückt; seinem Gegner wirft er vor, nicht nur Authentizität und Inspiration des Buches Daniel als einer prophetischen Schrift zu leugnen, sondern auch, sich mit seiner Vorentscheidung, alle Gesichte nur auf Vergangenes zu deuten und damit das römische Reich nicht zu berücksichtigen, in unlösbare Widersprüche zu verwickeln bezüglich des fünften, ewigen Reiches. Er selbst dagegen legt - unter gleichzeitiger Zurückweisung des Chiliasmus - die für den Okzident klassisch gewordene Abfolge der Weltreiche so fest: dem Reiche der Babylonier folge das der Meder und Perser, das auch die Babylonier einschließe, das makedonische Reich Alexanders und seine Nachfolgestaaten und endlich das römische Reich. Bei letzterem hebt er besonders die Schwächung durch die Barbareneinfälle seiner Zeit hervor. [...] Beachtung verdient jedoch die skeptische Haltung zum römischen Reiche, dem er - ohne zeitliche Festlegung -- ein baldiges (?) Ende voraussagt.⁴³

When the western Goths attacked Rome in the year 408, Jerome thought this to be a sign of the end of days, but after the city had been taken and the end did not come, he softened this acute expectation of the end.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Text: PL 24 and 25.

⁴² Likewise, see John P. O'Connell, *The Eschatology of Saint Jerome* (Mundelein: Seminarium, 1948; T. Larriba, "Ei comentario de San Jertinimo al Libro de Daniel. La profecias Bobre Cristo y Anticristo," *ScrTh* 7 (1975): 7-50

⁴³ Podskalsky, *Reichseschatologie*, 13; See also Daley, *Hope*, 101.

⁴⁴ See Karl-Heinz Schwarte, "Apokalyptik/Apokalypsen V: Alte Kirche," *THE* 3, 267-268, , as well as William Adler, "The Apocalyptic Survey of History Adapted by Christians: Daniel's Prophecy of 70 Weeks", *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (ed. James C. VanderKam and William Adler, Assen/Philadelphia: Van Gorcum/Fortress Press 1996), 201-238.

2.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has offered a few examples to illuminate the reception history of the Book of Daniel in the Early Church, and specifically has asked whether the analysis of a political situation from a faith perspective is an interpretation of a past, present, or future situation. Coming back to this question, we can now state that also the Church Fathers reflected upon the future of the Church within the context of the Roman Empire by investigating Israel's origin by studying its Scriptures, especially the Book of Genesis and the Book of Daniel.

In this process the Church Fathers understood the struggle between the Church and the Roman Empire as a cosmic battle between the Antichrist and Christ, in much the same way as the author of the Book of Revelation - or going back even further in history - , in the same manner as the authors of the books of Genesis and Daniel had described before, a description which they, the Church Fathers, could now fully understand through the Holy Spirit.

The main elements of apocalyptic thinking are thus found in the influence on mankind of good and evil or personified of that of the Antichrist and the Messiah/Christ since the creation, as well as the calculation of the exact time of the end of days. Examples of eschatology are especially found in the scheme of salvation history and the apocalyptic survey of history by using Daniel's scheme of the seventy weeks, whereas cosmogonic and sapiential motives are mostly connected with the creation narrative. For the Church Fathers, however, these genres were mere means to interpret the past in order to know more about the future.

We can furthermore make the important observation that in the period from the second to the fifth century C.E. there is a shift away from focusing on the Antichrist and the Fourth Empire of the Book of Daniel as represented by the Roman Empire to a more friendly approach to the Roman Empire, which at the end of the fourth century - i.e. after Constantine the Great and the success of the Christian mission - could be understood in a Christian way, now endangered by evil powers from outside (the Barbarian invasion), or, as an alternative, was seen as the Fifth Empire replacing the four previous ones.

In all of this the Church Fathers didn't care much, whether their political interpretation was typical cosmogonic, sapiential, eschatological, or apocalyptic exegesis, although they knew the many rhetorical advantages of these and other genres, as they were able to use and adapt them for their own specific purposes.