the traditional messianic expectation of the descendant of David is unclear, though the use of some traditional Davidic passages lends some support to this theory (e.g., 46.1ff.). The confluence seems to be more apparent in 4 Ezra. In chapter 13, which is clearly dependent on Daniel 7.13, we find that the reference to the eschatological agent is to 'my son' (v.32), kept by God for many ages (13.26, cf. 'Messiah' in 12.32). That these two works are not totally eccentric has been indicated by the discovery of a fragmentary text, which speaks of the activity of Melchizedek in the last days (11 *Q Melch*). In this work it is said that Melchizedek sits in judgement; Psalm 82.1 is applied to him. What is more, he is said to be the one anointed by the spirit (Isa. 61.1f.). This text has indicated the beliefs in a heavenly figure with the appearance of a man which are to be found in some early Jewish texts. The identification of that heavenly figure with a righteous man of Israel's past and the employment of messianic categories to speak of this man all point to a growing fluidity, particularly in texts of a sectarian character, with regard to messianic belief.[23]

Discussion of messianic figures in Judaism inevitably concentrates on the descendant of David as *the* messianic figure. It must be remembered, however, that in the Old Testament various figures are said to be anointed, for example, prophets (Isa. 61) and priests (Lev. 8.12) as well as kings.

The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs had for a long time acquainted us with the belief in the coming of a priestly as well as a Davidic Messiah (e.g., Test. Levi 18 and Reuben 6.8). This belief has been strikingly confirmed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls which speak of Messiahs of Aaron and Israel (1 *QS* 9.11). What is more, in a text which prescribes the regulations for the messianic meal (1 *QSa* 2.1ff.), it is quite apparent that the Messiah of Aaron, the priestly Messiah, takes precedence over the Davidic Messiah. It has been suggested that there was a development in the messianic beliefs of the Qumran community, starting from a priestly messianism based on the expectation that another priestly teacher would arise (CD 20.15).[24]

Another figure mentioned in the Qumran texts is that of the prophet (1 *QS* 9.11, 4 *Q Test.*). The expectation of a prophet who should come in the last days is, like the hope for a descendant of David, firmly rooted in Scripture. In Deuteronomy 18.15ff. (quoted in 4 *Q Test.*) Moses predicts that a prophet should arise like himself who would teach the people of God. This is a belief which is well attested in the New Testament (John 1.31; 6.14) and probably had some influence on the earliest christological formulations.[25] Related to this belief was another rooted in Scripture, namely the expectation that Elijah would come (cf. Mark 6.15; 8.28; 9.11f.).[26] According to Malachi 4.5, the coming of Elijah will be before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 'And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.' In other words Elijah's coming reverses the

process, which the messianic distress had set in motion, when dissension and strife were the order of the day (*M. Sotah* 9.15; Mark 13.12f.; Jub. 23.9). In addition to this restoring function, Elijah's coming seems to link with the coming of the prophet like Moses in one important way: the interpretation of the Torah. In 1 Maccabees 4.46 we find that the desecrated stones of the Temple are removed to a suitable place, until a prophet should arise who would be able to tell the people exactly what should be done with them. Similarly in the Mishnah (*M. Eduyoth* 8.7) the coming of Elijah will be the time when disputed issues over ritual cleanness and other disputed halakic issues would be settled (*M. Baba Metzia* 3.4f; 1.8; 2.6; *M. Shekalim* 2.5).

The evidence of Philo and the later Samaritan material indicates that the belief in the return of a prophet like Moses was a source of rich and varied speculation of a most extravagant kind. Hints of this Mosaic speculation,[27] albeit confined to the Lawgiver himself and devoid of messianic trappings, are to be found in the rabbinic literature. Particularly important is the belief that Moses' ascent of Sinai was to be regarded as a heavenly ascent (cf. Exod. 24.9). Moses' pre-eminence as the communicator of the definitive divine revelation from God to his people makes him a figure apart from all others. His communion with God and knowledge of heavenly secrets are the basis of a position of special privilege. The prophet who would follow in his steps in the last days, therefore, would be in a peculiarly privileged position to know God (Exod. 33.19f.) and legislate for all those things which were necessary for the proper administration of human affairs.

15

Pragmatism and Utopianism in Ancient Judaism

(a) Zealots and Quietists

The dominant theme in the Old Testament is of God's inspiration of his people to carry all before them as they enter to inherit the land which he had promised to the patriarchs. The stories of the conquest of Canaan in Numbers, Joshua and Judges vindicate the belief that God would raise up men who would lead the hosts of the holy nation in battle to fulfil the divine promises. In Jewish legend these ideas obviously played an important role in conditioning the views of the people of God. So we find that, in the final form of the text of the Pentateuch, the story of the overthrow of Jericho in Joshua 5f. is a great religious occasion, when the might of God is revealed through the obedient response of his people. The heroes of Israel's past like Phineas,[1] whose zeal for God made him violently purge from the community of Israel a man who had yoked himself with a Midianite woman (Num. 25.6ff.), and Gideon (Judg. 6f.) inspired a belief in succeeding generations that the way to achieve the mighty acts of God was by obedient response to God and a readiness to take up arms and fight a holy war for the Lord.[2]

That this was not the only tradition, though it may well have been the more dominant, can be shown by reference to other events in Israel's past. The vanquishing of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea is an example of the way in which God with outstretched arm himself slew the enemies of Israel (Exod. 15). In this act the tradition reports that Israel was a passive recipient of the divine mercy and could only look on in wonder as God wrought victory for his people. The divine warrior theme which underlies many of these ideas has received much attention in recent study.[3] It would appear that it could take the form of a direct intervention by God in the affairs of men such as we find, for example, in the Psalms (e.g., 18.7ff.) and in Isaiah 59.15ff. or through the processes of history as in the deliverance from the hand of Sennacherib (Isa. 37.36). It is in the prophecies of Isaiah of Jerusalem that this tradition of dependence on God alone for deliverance for his people reaches its peak. In the crisis over the invasion of Assyria the counsels of the prophet to his nation are clear.[4] The people of Zion are not to resort to alliances with foreign nations (Isa. 30.1ff.) or to force of arms (Isa. 31.1ff; 30.15). Israel has to learn that in the processes of history is the hand of the Lord to be discerned (Isa. 10.5ff.), that quiet trust and faith in God is the key to salvation (Isa. 10.16; 28.14ff.; 29.5ff.; 31.4). This was a tradition which was taken up within the Isaianic tradition by Isaiah of the Exile. In his oracles the people of God are to be witnesses to God's mighty acts in history as a way is prepared for the exiles to return to Zion and the glory of God is revealed before men (Isa. 40.3ff.).

The first century AD saw a considerable increase in the yearning for deliverance of the people of God, such as the fathers had experienced. In the middle of the second century BC the Jews threw off the domination of the Seleucid overlord, who wished to impose Hellenistic ways on Israel by force. The heroic exploits of the Maccabean martyrs,[5] and the success of the tiny nation against the might of the Seleucid empire inevitably fired hopes that similar things could happen again. The situation was made worse because of the possession of the land of Israel by the Romans and the use of its revenue for the profit of an unholy nation. On the death of Herod the Great, who had kept the country under a degree of control, his sons were unable to continue to hold the line, not least because of the feuding which went on between them.[6] The placing of Judaea under direct rule from Rome necessitated a census, which was regarded by many as a horrific encroachment on the rights of the holy land of God. The census involved the assessment of tribute of the land for a pagan, foreign overlord, and the outburst was perhaps to be expected. Judas the Galilean, who instigated the revolt against Rome, said

that the census was tantamount to the reduction of the people of God to slavery (*Ant.* 18.4f.) and argued that the Jewish people should accept no one as their master but God alone. Here we have a reflection of the earnest determination found in the ancient traditions to maintain the integrity of the holy nation by force of arms. Despite the disparaging remarks made by Josephus with regard to the Zealots (*BJ* 7.268), it would appear that they did look to the inspiration offered by the biblical zealots as well as to the Maccabees. The incidents, which Josephus relates as examples of their neglect of the law of their fathers, may represent both his attempt to discredit the Zealots and his ignorance of their belief that their actions may have been a *restoration* of the law of their fathers, which had been perverted by the hierarchy in Jerusalem. A glance at their activities will indicate that this was indeed the case. Thus the election of the High Priest by lot during the First Revolt (*BJ* 4.147ff.) was probably an attempt to ascertain, by this age-old method, which member of the priestly family should exercise the office; (e.g., Neh. 10.34). Their execution of collaborators with Rome would be part of an attempt to purge the holy city of all defilement (*BJ* 4.138ff.). Also their abolition of the sacrifice on behalf of Caesar would be the removal of an unnecessary contamination of the cultic activity (*BJ* 2.410). Thus, far from indicating their lawlessness these activities probably reflect their concern to put right abuses in the commonwealth of Israel.

There has been much discussion over whether there was a Zealot party in existence throughout the first century.[7] What cannot be doubted is that there were many groups and individuals, whose intention it was to oppose the presence of Roman power by force. That there was a degree of continuity between the Sicarii, who were active in the middle of the first century AD and during the revolt, is confirmed by the fact that descendants of Judas took a prominent place in the movement. They were led by Menahem and eventually fled to Masada where they committed suicide in the face of capture by the Romans in AD 73 (*BJ* 7.320ff.).

The concern of all these groups, whatever their origin and however loosely they may have been connected, was the redemption of Zion. For the Zealots, Hayward argues as follows:

> ...the census [of AD 6] should be regarded as slavery, and they called on loyal Jews to begin the process of redemption which could not be accomplished without their active assistance [*Ant.* 18.5]. The Bible explicitly states that Israel should not be numbered [2 Sam. 24]: further, the census was a preliminary to taxation, and all adult male Israelites would be required to pay tribute to Caesar with coins bearing Caesar's image. This, in the eyes of Judas, constituted a breach of the Torah, which forbids images, idolatry and worship of other gods. This sharpening of the Torah's demands is evident also in the second tenet of the fourth philosophy, the affirmation that God alone is leader and master, a biblical commonplace which those who fought against Rome were to take *au pied de la lettre*.[8]

At the heart of the Zealot theology, therefore, was the conviction that the freedom of Israel and the redemption of the people of God could not come about unless, as in days of old, the people of God themselves worked actively for this goal. It was no use in their eyes to wait passively for the kingdom of God to come. In this respect the War Scroll (1 *QM*) gives a dramatic insight into the beliefs of those who believed that the establishment of the reign of God on earth would only come about as the result of the participation of the sons of light to eliminate the sons of darkness.

That there were other attitudes towards the way in which salvation would be initiated has already been stressed. Even Josephus, who was later to desert to the Romans, started the revolt as a commander of the Jewish troops. Theologically, there is every reason to suppose that there would have been some hesitation over support for the revolt. Debates recorded between rabbis at the end of the first century reveal that there was a difference of opinion over the conditions, which were necessary for the inauguration of the kingdom of God. On the one side, there were those who thought that the repentance of Israel was a necessary precondition, whereas on the other, there were those who thought that its coming did not depend in any way on human response.[9] We may suspect that those, who believed that it was necessary for Israel to repent before the Messiah came, would have viewed the uprising against Rome with considerable suspicion. Whatever the reason for the escape of Yohanan ben Zakkai from Jerusalem (*ARN* 22f.),[10] it would appear that some of the sages were deeply unhappy with the situation in Jerusalem and sought an opportuniy to start their deliberations elsewhere. Of course, whether or not they gave initial support to the war we are not now in a position to ascertain, though there is every likelihood that at least some of the leading Pharisees supported it.[11]

Leaving aside those who would have objected to the Zealot position, because they considered that the measure of autonomy granted to Jews in Palestine and the daily worship in the Temple were sufficient reasons for supporting Roman rule, we must now consider the views of those who espoused a position which was in the tradition of Isaiah of Jerusalem. On the whole, it would probably be fair to say that the apocalyptic literature evinces an essentially passive attitude. It is true that one or two passages seem to countenance the idea that the people of God will have a part to play in the final struggle (e.g., 1 Enoch 90.19; Syr. Baruch 72.2), but by and large, the picture which emerges of the eschatological events is of a vast struggle in which the people of God are spectators of a drama on a cosmic scale. Thus we may find that the establishment of the kingdom of God comes about after a period of intense distress; God works through human history to bring about his kingdom (Syr. Baruch 25ff.). Otherwise the intervention of a celestial agent, like the heavenly Son of Man in the Similitudes, 'puts down

the kings and the mighty from their seats' (1 Enoch 46.1ff.) and establishes a reign of righteousness. At the heart of this approach lies a definite caution with regard to those who claim to be on the point of establishing the kingdom by force of arms (cf. Luke 16.16). The apocalyptic literature is quietist in its approach, preferring to concentrate on urging the righteous to stand firm so that when the kingdom finally does come, they may stand with the elect on Mount Zion (cf. Rev. 14). The apocalypses set out to reveal the totality of the divine plan as a reassurance to the elect and as the basis of their confidence that their obedience to the divine commandments and any suffering that may bring upon them are worthwhile.

(b) Present Response to God and Apocalyptic Fantasy

It is very common to find students of Judaism polarizing Jewish attitudes between rabbinic legalism and eschatological expectation,[12] or priestly, cult-centred religion and the dynamic expectation of the apocalyptists.[13] Such simple summaries of the nature of Judaism have their attractions and the approach has elements of truth in it. The fact is that not enough is done to explore the real nature of such a polarization between various outlooks and the reasons for it.

We have noted that the historical circumstances of Judaism in the Hellenistic and Roman period bred dissatisfaction and hopes for redemption. In so far as the hopes for redemption were themselves the common property of all Jews, we may suspect that the future hope was a feature of the religious and political outlooks of all groups at this time. Nevertheless it would be wrong to minimize the difference in the emphasis placed on eschatology which confronts us in the literature, or to misunderstand the character of the political response, which is involved in it.

One recent commentator on Pharisaism has argued that the first century BCE saw a progressive disengagement of the pharisaic movement from the political arena. In practice this meant involvement with the leading council of the land, the Sanhedrin. It was matched by an increased emphasis on individual piety and by a stress on individual purity through the fulfilment of obligations relating to purity and tithing.[14] What became central was the demand laid upon the individual Jew to reflect the divine holiness. This meant a preoccupation with the minutiae of everyday living and the way in which the circumstances of the day demanded reflection and even modification of the tradition handed down by the fathers. The crucial question now was not, 'Why does God allow circumstances to exist which make true holiness difficult and at times impossible?', but, 'How can the individual best come to terms with the demand of God within the historical framework in which he finds himself?' The decision of the pharisaic-rabbinic tradition to concentrate on the second question rather than the first had several consequences. First of all, it meant that the circumstances in which Jews found themselves were facts of life the changing of which should not normally be of any concern to them (cf. Rom. 13.1). Of course, there were certainly instances where change was urged by Jews, when the circumstances were such that it became impossible for Jews to practise their religion properly, such as Caligula's attempt to erect a statue of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem.[15] Secondly, the concentration of Jews was on the creation of sufficient space for the practice of religion. Once that was achieved, so that purity and ceremonial observance were possible, agitation for change ended. Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all for those who ruled the Jews, this attitude did not conflict too directly with the dominion of the rulers. No doubt there were many instances when the Jews fell foul of the powers that be,[16] but, in fact, this attitude meant that the status quo was accepted; the Jews were to avert their gaze from the wider horizons of the apocalyptic dreams, and turn to the narrower preoccupation with individual and community holiness. That is not to say that there was a repudiation of that wider horizon, for the eschatological hopes of Scripture were retained. Eschatology was something which was left to God alone; he it was who would inaugurate the fulfilment of the promises in his good time. Meanwhile the obligation laid upon the people of God was to present themselves a holy nation of individuals rather than a holy land.

A similar outlook confronts us in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Like the Pharisees, the Qumran community concentrated on holiness, but maintained that its fulfilment depended on *complete* separation. The creation of sufficient space within society itself was not adequate for some of them. They too did not lose their eschatological perspective; the War Scroll indicates how important that was for them. But that preoccupation with universal transformation is subtly undermined in their writings. This is most apparent in those passages which speak of the present communion with heaven enjoyed by members of the community.[17] It has been argued with some conviction that the eschatological bliss reserved for the new age was already believed to be a possibility for the members of the community. As such it provided a diversion from the iniquities of the present age. The closed life of the community in the desert was itself heaven on earth, and as such, the practice of holiness within the community would guarantee the persistence of that compensation for the lack of fulfilment on the cosmic scale of the divine promises.

In contrast to this view, what we know of the Zealots suggests a radically different attitude. As is well known, the Zealots believed that, while the Romans were on the soil of *eretz Israel*, they were defiling the Holy Land, and it became essential to remove them from it by force.[18] For the Zealots personal piety was not enough. Unlike the Pharisees they could not be

content with the quest for an answer to the question how God's people might be holy, granted the present political circumstances. For them it was crucial to deal at once with the blight on that quest for holiness which was focused in the Roman presence in the promised land and the compromise of the hierarchy in Jerusalem. The consequences of this outlook were revealed in AD 66, when internecine strife and anarchy followed the departure of the Romans (*BJ* 4.129ff.).

As far as we can ascertain, the hierarchy in Jerusalem itself depended on the continued coexistence with the Romans. If the hint we get from John 11.49 is anything to go by, the priestly-dominated Sanhedrin had reason to fear the possibility of unrest among the populace. They were in danger of losing the focus of their religious supremacy, the Temple, as well as the limited autonomy that they enjoyed. Whatever the dissatisfaction with the Roman hegemony among the priestly aristocracy, by the middle of the first century AD they had become inextricably intertwined with the Romans. The exercise of the High Priestly office depended on the Roman procurator, and the continued running of the Temple and the vast complex of related activities was also dependent on the Roman policy of allowing the religious and political institutions of provinces to continue as far as possible.[19] The fact that the sacrifice prescribed in the Torah could be offered to God in the Temple and that important religious activity centred in the Temple was preserved, meant that the priests had an enormous investment in the continuation of Roman oversight of Judaea.

We have noted what a strong thrust there was towards a pragmatic attitude, both with regard to the maintenance of Roman power and the practical outworking of the faith, granted the continued political and social constraints of the time. The responses of various groups were different, but the majority felt that in practice the biblical idealism had to take second place to a more limited fulfilment of the religious observances within the constraints of a society under foreign domination. But Jews could not escape the reality of their eschatological idealism. We find that the fantasies of the future hope continued to make their appearance. The cosmic concerns of the religion were never allowed to die, despite the factors which compelled some to lay stress on the need for a present, inadequate response. These visions of hope functioned in four ways. First, they demonstrated the way in which the Jewish imagination continually brought to the surface the centrality of that future hope. Secondly, for some they acted as an inspiration to take action in the direction of achieving that utopia which was set out in the visions. Thirdly, they expressed frustration with the socio-economic situation and a longing for divine vengeance and the righting of all wrongs.[20] Fourthly, they offered some an escape from reality, a fantasy of what things might be like and a compensation for the inadequacies of the present, not only for the apocalyptic seer but also for his readers. The reality of the divine world of perfection is established in the visions. A divine dimension to human existence is demonstrated to the readers in the visions of heaven. While it may have had the effect of strengthening adherence to existing religious traditions, that flight into the visionary world often restored support for the status quo by suggesting that while there would be a time of perfection in the future the powers that be (Rom. 13.1) must meanwhile be obeyed as they had been ordained according to God's ordering of the times and seasons.[21]

It would be dangerous to suppose that such dreams of the divine perfection in heaven, the future utopia or the theodicy evident in some apocalyptic communications, were the product of one group or functioned in precisely the same way in all the groups, which made use of this type of thought. We may suppose that the apocalyptic outlook was widely spread within Judaism, but as in every society the dreamers and the pragmatists regarded it in different ways. The pragmatists would not necessarily repudiate it but view it with less sympathy than those who did not have to or did not want to struggle to reach an accommodation with the present order of things. For those who sought to answer the question, 'How shall we be obedient to God, granted the present state of things?' the dreams of redemption and divine glory did not loom so large on the horizon of their everyday practice. Those who found the present state of affairs intolerable, for whatever reason, would have viewed the dreams as a spur to action and a frank rejection of current accommodations. No doubt all shared the same hope; the crucial issue was how that hope coloured the practice of Judaism.

(c) *The Crisis for Eschatology*

One can only conjecture what the fevered expectation was like in the city of Jerusalem as the siege was intensified by the Roman legions. Josephus gives us a glimpse of the fervent expectation and the insane hopes of deliverance, which circulated among the populace during those tragic days. That the eschatological hopes held in common in different forms by all members of the Jewish religion contributed to the attitudes which brought about the destruction of the city cannot be denied (*BJ* 5.400; 6.285, 364).[22] When one realizes what great suffering such beliefs had caused, and that they brought the Jewish religion to the brink of destruction, it will come as little surprise if it were found that there was a massive reaction against such views in Judaism.

With the destruction of Jerusalem and the cessation of the Temple worship in AD 70, one might have expected a profound shift in the attitudes of the Sages assembled at Jamnia (Yavneh) whose task it was to reorganize the Jewish religion to meet the challenges of an era without the Temple and the long-established institutions of the Jewish faith. It is often suggested that

there was a reaction against such eschatological speculations[23] after AD 70 both among Jews and Christians, though for the latter it is assumed that the delay of the parousia was the main reason for a change in eschatological perspective.[24] There is some evidence to suggest that this was indeed the case. Often quoted is a saying of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, the great architect of rabbinic Judaism, which seems to indicate a certain reserve towards eschatological matters:

> If you have a seedling in your hand, and they say to you, Look, here comes the Messiah, Go out and plant the seedling first and then come to meet him (*Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* 31).

But while the saying indicates that messianic claims should be treated with some degree of caution, there is in fact nothing here which indicates a repudiation of eschatology. Indeed, considering what problems it had caused, it seems surprising that there is such a positive piece of advice given by Yohanan. Such an assessment fits in very well with what we know of the attitudes which developed after the Revolt.[25] Included in the Tefillah, a prayer reformulated after the fall of Jerusalem, were several prayers for eschatological fulfilment. Particularly worthy of note are Benedictions 7, 9, 10, 11, 14 and 16:

> 7 Look on our affliction and plead our cause and redeem us for thy name's sake.
>
> 9 Bless this year for us, Lord our God and cause all its produce to prosper. Bring quickly the year of our final redemption; and give dew and rain to the land; and satisfy the world from the treasuries of thy goodness; and bless the work of our hands.
>
> 10 Proclaim the liberation with the great trumpet and raise a banner to gather together our dispersed.
>
> 11 Restore our judges as in former times and our counsellors as in the beginning; and reign over us, thou alone.
>
> 14 Be merciful, Lord our God, with thy great mercies, to Israel thy people and to Jerusalem thy city; and to Zion, the dwelling place of thy glory; and to thy Temple and thy habitation; and to the kingship of David thy righteous Messiah.
>
> 16 Be pleased, Lord our God and dwell in Zion; and may thy servants serve thee in Jerusalem.

Nowhere is the continuing strength of the eschatological hope more evident than in these words, which formed a regular part of the worship of Jews. The fervent hope for redemption and the restoration of Israel's fortunes was kept alive in the bleakest days of all for Judaism. That these hopes loomed large on the Jewish horizon during this period is testified by the outbreak of a second revolt against Rome in AD 132.[26] Information about the causes and course of this revolt are scanty in the extreme, but we may be sure that the continuation in so firm a fashion of these beliefs must have had a large part to play in fanning the discontent and the hope of liberation. Indeed, the fact that another leading figure of the early second-century rabbinic Judaism, Rabbi Akiba, identified Simeon ben Koseba, the leader of the revolt as the messiah (*j. Ta'anith* 68d) is another indication of the level of support given to such expectations and their fulfilment by a leader of nascent rabbinic Judaism. The thing which strikes one most about early rabbinic Judaism is not the reserve which is encountered from time to time in these texts about eschatology, but the fact that such hopes continued to linger on; not in some attenuated form but in the full-blooded expectation of an imminent restoration of Israel's fortunes, despite the manifest failure of such eschatological fantasies in the débâcle of the First Revolt.

Even if the case cannot be made for the diminution of eschatological ideas after the fall of the Second Temple, there does seem to be evidence to support the view that there was an increased emphasis in this period on what might be termed the 'vertical' dimension of the relationship with God, communion with the divine, i.e. mysticism. Research into the beginnings of Jewish mysticism has advanced considerably in the last thirty years, thanks largely to the pioneering work of Gershom Scholem. What is now becoming clear is that already, during the period of the Second Temple and extending back considerably into the early Hellenistic period, there was a developed mystical lore based on the study of the first chapter of Ezekiel, the *merkabah*.[27] We have already noted that in the apocalyptic literature there is evidence of this interest, and the suggestion was made that some of these visions may reflect the actual experience of unknown mystics, who preferred to cloak their experience under the garb of some ancient worthy. Interest in the divine throne chariot (*merkabah*) continued in early rabbinic Judaism. If we can assume that the early rabbis continued in the mystical-visionary praxis, then the study of the first chapter of Ezekiel would offer communion with the divine which was bound to give reassurance in times of crisis.[28]

Communion with the divine in the life of the religious community is not something which was confined to mystics. After all, the rabbinic literature is full of evidence to suggest that rabbis believed that the Divine Presence, the *shekinah*, was with rabbis and indeed any group studying the Torah,[29] yet for the élite who were privileged to become part of the tradition of the exponents of the mysteries of theosophy and cosmology the mystical communion with God and his world afforded a glimpse into a world which was cut off from ordinary mortals. The knowledge of the celestial mysteries and the contemplation of them were an effective antidote to the demoralizing effects of oppression and despair in the world of men.

Such a belief that it was possible to taste in the present age the glories of Paradise is attested in the Qumran Scrolls, as we have seen. In the *Hodayoth*, the Hymns, there are several passages which indicate that the community

believed that it already participated in the lot of the angels, a belief which is to be found elsewhere in the literature of Judaism, particularly in the apocalypses. Inherent in apocalyptic is an interest in the world above, as it existed above the firmament, quite independent of any future expectation.[30] Not only did the apocalyptists see heaven as the repository of secrets about the world to come but also as a realm, which existed above and in which they could participate, albeit on a temporary basis. In the Qumran texts not only do we find in the War Scroll (12.1ff.) that the community is said to be engaged in a cosmic struggle, but it also thought of itself participating in the life of Paradise, the life of the angels. Geza Vermes has pointed out this particular aspect of the sect's existence and indicated its relationship to the mystical beliefs of the Jewish apocalyptic-mystical tradition:

> The aim of the holy life lived within the covenant was to penetrate the secrets of heaven in this world and to stand before God for ever in the next. Like Isaiah who beheld the Seraphim proclaiming 'Holy, holy, holy' and, like Ezekiel, who in a trance watched the winged Cherubim drawing the divine Throne-Chariot, and like the ancient Jewish mystics who consecrated themselves, despite official disapproval by the rabbis, to the contemplation of the same Throne-Chariot and the heavenly places, the Essenes too strove for a similar mystical knowledge . . . The earthly liturgy was intended to be a replica of that sung by the choirs of angels in the heavenly Temple.[31]

In a similar vein we find the writer of the Jewish(-Christian?) hymn book, the Odes of Solomon,[32] which has many affinities with Qumran theology, stressing that it was possible during the worship of his group for its members to participate in the glory of the end-time. In 11.16f. (cf. 20.7) the writer talks about being taken up to Paradise. At the very least, he thinks that, like Paul (2 Corinthians 12.3), he can enjoy the heavenly Paradise in the present rather than having to wait for the coming of the new age for that privilege, as in Revelation 2.7. Elsewhere the writer uses the language of the heavenly ascent to speak of the glories which he experienced in the life of the community:

> I rested on the spirit of the Lord, and she lifted me up to heaven and caused me to stand on my feet in the Lord's high place before his perfection and glory (cf. 1 *QH* 3.20: I walk on limitless level ground, and I know there is hope for him whom thou hast shaped from dust for the everlasting Council).

Many years ago R. M. Grant suggested that we should look for the origin of gnosticism in the frustrated eschatological hopes of groups like that found at Qumran.[33] He pointed out that there is in apocalyptic a vertical dimension which, when loosed from the horizontal-eschatological dimension, quickly becomes a form of spirituality, which is akin to gnosticism.[34] Whether such Jewish theology ever took the path suggested by Grant, we cannot at present be certain. What is clear, however, is that there did exist within Judaism a ready-made compensation for the crisis over the fulfilment of the eschatological hopes in the apocalyptic tradition itself. It needed only a change of emphasis for the apocalyptic-mystical tradition to concentrate more on the vertical dimension of its spirituality than the horizontal, with the latter's emphasis on the fulfilment of the divine promises in history. The uncertainty of the times meant that a crisis for eschatological hopes was inevitable, but the support and sustenance which the mystical element of religion offered to Jews at this time tempered the worst effects of these disasters.

PART III

The Emergence of a Messianic Sect