

Last evening (25 Apr 86) son Bill & I heard N.K.Gottwald at the NW section of religion scholars (AAR/SBL)--who was astonished to see us (he having had Bill in his CAL home for a week many years ago, and having visited him in Wash. State; and he, who very long ago was my teaching assistant in Hebrew & Greek, expecting to see me on the other Coast, viz, at NYTS--but Loree & I are here in Portland OR for an ordination and for the dedication of our most recent grandchild). ....Norman's brilliant & compassionate (personally & politically) lecture was from rough notes, and unfortunately it wasn't audiorecorded, but I videorecorded it on 1 3x5, ie, I took notes, and this thinksheet is the result, though here Norm may only barely recognize his lecture: I, too, must be passionate and compassionate, though here possibly not brilliant. So to some cogitations....(" mean, and mean only, direct quotations from the lecture.)

1. Biblical apocalyptic is inherently both religious and political, both in the symbolic mode; and to reify the symbolic therein is to bastardize religion and demonize politics. (NKG did not use the words "reify," "bastardize," "demonize," or even "inherently"--so now you know I have a highly personal, if not idiosyncratic, way of taking notes. But this note #1 is precisely faithful to the fundamental note in NKG's lecture.)

2. The above abuse removes us from the sphere of "the love and justice of God" and submits us to the principalities and powers (a phrase he didn't use): In American politics "we have begun to get our identity from the Beast," a "miss~~ap~~en anomaly," "the image of our overgrown power." "We are the Rome of this day." As this ref. was to Rev.13, it brought to mind--and he and I talked of it later--the Federal case, Berger v. the US, with this biblical chapter as the literary locus. The case is peculiarly appropriate to the apocalyptic/political crossroads, as the decision turned on whether the poverty family denied welfare actually believed that the Beast was about to take over the US by seizing the central Social Security computer in Wash.DC. Over the objections of four levels (city, county, state, Federal) of government lawyers, the great Jewish judge Jacob Weinstein (who soon was to pass judgment on a case involving billions of \$) interviewed me for 45 minutes as to (1) the meaning of Rev.13 ("of which," said he, "I know nothing at all") and (2) the sincerity of the unemployed, near-illiterate couple who'd rather starve than let their three children be given Soc. Sec. numbers. When I'd persuaded him that (1) the Computer Beast made sense within that couple's religiopolitical paradigm, and (2) they honestly believed what they were willing to starve, and starve their children, for, Weinstein concluded in their favor: the first time for a Federal decision against the law that to receive welfare, one must have a Soc. Sec. number.... I can see the case as useful in case-method teaching on the boundary between Bible (esp. eschatology, prophecy, apocalyptic) and ecopolitics, the boundary NKG's lecture inhabited. (The judge happily ruled irrelevant the question whether I, the case's expert witness, agreed with plaintiffs' belief. Their brilliant young Catholic lawyer took their case pro bono: no \$. "The love and justice of God" does not always come out on the short end. Come to think of it, I, too, was noble: a week of my time and no bucks.

3. It was heartwarming to hear Norman praise Amos Wilder, my 90-year-old PhD mentor, for having written what is still the best book on how to view and use biblical eschatology/apocalyptic, viz, THE ETHICS AND ESCHATOLOGY OF JESUS (which was his PhD dissertation come to print long after he received the degree, Yale '32). I must not forbear to share with you my most recent story on this great soul and scholar: A few weeks ago, in Worcester MA, he gave me a hug and said "Elliott, I must be in another section" of the NE section of AAR/SBL; "Please send me a copy" of the paper I was about to read; "I'm an old man, and hungry for wisdom." Nothing personal, I think: I didn't take it as expressing a special expectation that I'd illumine him, but rather as only a way of honoring a colleague and honoring God, the Source of all wisdom, who blinds only those who are wise in their own eyes. <sup>over</sup>

4. Thos. S. Kuhn, in his classic THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS (U. of Chicago/62/70), speaks *passim* to what I may call the reification of symbol when it's fading or fragmenting; again, I may put it as the literalization of metaphor when one begins, consciously or unconsciously, to live with one foot outside of the metaphor. Or when one, impacted by a foreign (ie, new) paradigm, (1) rationalizes the old paradigm in defense, but (2) pays the double price that (a) the original function of the symbol-metaphor-paradigm as home for the soul & life modulates into a school, in both senses, for academic debate, and (b) the rational structure, which was intended to be skeleton & armor for the old paradigm, becomes a prison in which the soul is narrowed and the mind confined to an internal logic drifting ever more away from reality and into idiosyncrasy & even schizophrenia. (The above, in conception & diction, is mine: the Kuhn kernel is that (148) "When scientists disagree about whether the fundamental problems of their field have been solved, the search for rules gains a function it does not ordinarily possess. While paradigms remain secure, however, they can function without agreement over rationalization or without any attempt at rationalization at all." Elsewhere he states this as that when thinking comes to the edge of a "paradigm plateau" and one is about to fall off into the abyss, "paradigm insecurity" drives one (my metaphor) to build a fence at the edge. ...NOTE: Since the book is omniapplicable to thinking, it might better be titled THE STRUCTURE OF CONCEPTUAL REVOLUTIONS. "Scientific" is used because Kuhn is a thinker in science, just as "theological" is often used because the speaker-author is a thinker in religion. While I object to this on the ground of provincialism, I accept it as addressing the speaker-author's primary audience.)

5. The deterioration-to-rationalization described in the above paragraph characterizes religious fundamentalism (in all religions). NKG was pointing to it within Christianity/Protestantism/Darbyism(dispensationalism). J.N.Darby, founder of the Plymouth Brethren, taught that all the biblical reff. to the future can be stretched along a timeline: God thus tells us, with the help of the Scofield Bible, what's coming next-next-next-and-next.... As an ideology is an idea + power, everybody's endangered when a false hermeneutic--in this case, dispensationalism--comes to power; which has been happening with the religiopolitical New Right and appears (as in a recent WBAI evidencing) in Reagan's utterances: Nicaragua, Star Wars, Lybia are all stretched along a line encircling "the Evil Empire," the USSR: World War III is inevitable with a "biblical" necessity paralleling the "historical" necessity of Marxism (though NKG did not draw this parallel). If it were not for this alliance with power, dispensationalism could be forgotten as an aberrant-heretical hermeneutic; but we'd better not make that mistake, and (NKG implicitly) biblical scholars have both a religious and a political obligation to speak truth to this false alliance. Geo. Ladd & Billy Graham are evangelicals resisting this "Rambo complex" promoted by, eg, Hal Lindsey & Pat Robertson. The scenario: (1) The End began with the refounding of the State of Israel (1948) and the reunification of Jerusalem (1967); (2) The present world-historical struggle is US-Israel v. USSR-Arab states; (3) Moscow will lead, from the northeast, an invasion of the Holy Land (Eze.38f). This inevitable war is in line with God's plan, with US as God's helper, "strengthening American triumphalism and moral self-assurance." But "the Bible is full of scenarios about the End," and it's false and pernicious to go into the picture gallery and come out with one picture converging all the other pictures (which is what Darby did, more thoroughly than anyone else before him). The resultant "annihilation of any symbolic character" to apocalyptic" is intellectualistic, positivistic, scientistic; it is "apocalyptic flattened out," as though apocalyptic were science instead of (comparable to) science fiction, which is (like apocalyptic) "not about the future but about the potentialities of the present as a decisive present." In this perversion, Biblical apocalyptic values "are overlooked and overturned."

6. Over against oppressive, unjust, insensitive power, Biblical apocalyptic is directed mainly to the encouragement of "marginal or hard-pressed people." So "prophecy lives on in another form in apocalyptic," "mobilizing values and energies for the critique of power gone wrong" which has my consent if I don't engage in "critical resistance." To the apocalyptic picture we must add social analysis and political strategy.