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MARK J. BODA AND J. GORDON McCONVILLE, EDITORS

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Cover photo of Gedaliah son of Pashhur seal, by Gabi Laron © Eilat Mazar

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citing Bulgakov in a biblical commentary to be distracting. They may decry the use of a modern dogmatic system to illuminate “pre-Christian” texts like Daniel. But the witness of apocalyptic and wisdom texts to creation’s transcendent frame is underappreciated in many churches today. My own seminarians often find the idea foreign to their Sunday learnings. Is this metaphysics not alien to the church? Is it not a psychological projection or a bizarre philosophy? I want to push back against such concerns, citing a theologian of the church. The scriptural idea of God’s primal hardwiring of wisdom into the world’s depths presents the church no threats.

Bulgakov speaks of a created Wisdom of God, which forms a “sophianic” (Sophia based) substratum lying “in the depths of the world’s being.” It is “the heavenly face of the world’s being.”⁸ This view accords with Andrew Errington’s studies of ethics in the book of Proverbs. Errington finds wisdom to be far more than usable observations. It is wise, revealed *prescription* about leading “a *genuinely* successful life”⁹—that is, a life *objectively* well lived. In this view, wisdom in Proverbs is not about “prudence,” not about a calculated securing of personal happiness and worldly success. Rather, it is about Wisdom’s summons to ennoblement.

The idea that divine ordering is hardwired into creation by God as an immanent scaffolding is a well-rehearsed concept among scholars of Old Testament theology. In this view, what humans have made of history runs counter to an objective order of creaturely reality reflecting God’s purpose in creation. Biblical scholars generally speak of the idea not in terms of Bulgakov’s metaphysical, trinitarian framework, however, but framed within biblical, Hebrew idiom and the Hebrew Scripture’s internal theology.

Parallel to Bulgakov, H. H. Schmid identifies in texts like Isa. 40–55 a dynamic force of rightness and flourishing embedded in the very fabric of creation.¹⁰ Isaiah 45:8 pictures this “rightness” (*ṣədāqā*) sprouting up from the earth as God brings on God’s salvation. Where Bulgakov speaks of Sophia, Schmid speaks of “rightness” as a continuous, sustaining justice and wisdom that orients creation on God’s future restoration. “God supports the world order and intends to bring it into realization.”¹¹

Whether with Schmid we speak of the “rightness” of creation (of *Weltordnung*) or with Bulgakov of the world’s sophianic substratum, we are referring to the biblical notion that creation is inherently constituted as a vehicle for divine self-expression. The shared emphasis on a divine cosmic patterning and on its future blossoming as cosmic restoration represents a striking continuity between Schmid’s cosmic rightness and Bulgakov’s sophianicity of creation, the living self-revelation of God in creation. Both scholars speak of the world as reflecting divine purposes and pointing toward fulfillment.

Intertextual and allusive forces inspired the newly synthesized, summative vision of Daniel and other apocalyptic texts. Daniel arose as biblical texts from across Israel’s experience with God came together through citation and allusion. Thus, innerbiblical referencing and allusive language are integral to Daniel, fundamental to its structure and argument. Daniel is, at its core, a work synthesizing earlier biblical themes, hopes, and dreams. As Jan-Wim Wesseliuss summarizes it, “The book of Daniel may well be the most intertextually determined and complex . . . among the books of the Hebrew Bible.”¹²

Theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar speaks of “the dramatic rhythm” of God’s workings in history.¹³ He argues that God’s interactions with the world have grown steadily more complex over time, revealing a “continual raising of the stakes.” Apocalyptic texts such as Daniel’s scroll powerfully reflect the culmination of an ever-intensifying divine intervention.¹⁴ The increasingly impactful fulfillments of God’s ends illuminate a bright future but also cast ever darker shadows, forcing us to face down horrific evil and chaos. In Daniel’s thinking, which is “porous” to heavenly reality, antithetical tensions (married contraries) find resolution in dialectical breakthroughs, including a resurrection faith.

Practical Challenges in Preaching and Teaching Daniel’s Scroll

Apocalyptic prophecies questioning life’s adequacy and looking to seismic changes in reality are not everyone’s cup of tea. Surreal visions of colossal trees and warring monsters are challenging to interpret.

Expositors' attempts to pin down the visions historically have often resulted in spectacularly disconfirmed interpretations. For such reasons the teaching and preaching of Daniel in mainline denominations (such as my own) have been limited. The Revised Common Lectionary includes Daniel only three times in three years and makes no use of the court tales. When the court tales are studied outside of worship, Deistic approaches of moralizing and domestication seem dominant. The approach of suspicion to Daniel's apocalypticism, however, represents a real loss. Christian life has sometimes become indistinguishable from generic ethical living.

A prominent "disconfirmation" from the 1840s CE revolved around the Baptist preacher William Miller's misinterpretation of the number 2,300 in Dan. 8:13–14. Imagining the figure to represent thousands of years, Miller placed the world's end in 1844. The failure of this interpretation is now known as the Great Disappointment. On October 22, 1844, tens of thousands of Millerites across the United States waited expectantly for Christ to return and the world to end. They had given up their homes, farms, possessions, and livelihoods in preparation. When the day came and went without anything happening, they were left in a state of shock, despair, and disappointment.¹⁵

Miller was far from the first famous Christian whose interpretations of Daniel proved embarrassing. Already around the year 204 CE, Hippolytus of Rome in his commentary on Daniel discussed a certain Christian leader in Syria who persuaded many church members to go into the desert or into the mountains to experience the coming of Daniel's "Son of Man." The wandering seekers became a huge public nuisance. Only the coincidence that the governor's wife was a Christian and had spoken to her husband on behalf of her fellow religionists avoided their suffering a persecution (*Daniel* IV.18.1–5).¹⁶

Daniel was a chief source of contention in the rise of modernist biblical criticism. Emblematic of the controversy is the title *Daniel in the Critics' Den* given by Sir Robert Anderson (1841–1918) to his reasoned polemic of 1902 against the new historical-critical reading of Daniel. Several decades before this popular work, the Anglican biblical scholar Edward Pusey, Regius Professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford, asserted in his *Daniel the Prophet* (Oxford: Parker, 1864) that a defense of a Babylonian-era time of composition stood center stage in Christianity's battle with modernist criticism.¹⁷

More than a century after Pusey and Anderson, Daniel is still contested territory in the thinking and theology of conservatives and liberals. In fact, one is hard pressed to name another biblical book approached so differently in commentaries on the right and on the left. Irreconcilable interpretations of Daniel's visions are assumed as normative by those on each side, with little respectful appreciation of opposing viewpoints. Is the final monstrous beast of Dan. 7 the ancient Hellenistic kingdom of Antiochus IV Epiphanes or an apocalyptic threat looming over today's world? The two options seem worlds apart.

Commentaries focused on continuing the tired battle over Daniel's history of composition risk giving insufficient attention to the scroll's present holistic literary, theological, and canonical meaning and its witness to the *raz nihyeh*, "the mystery of being that is now unfolding." In this commentary I intend to avoid this lamentable reductionism. A middle way between extremes can be grasped. In taking this middle way, I suspect that cautious and methodical scholars on both the right and the left will accuse me of departing from standard historical norms and methods. It is more important to me to push back against the rampant positivism and historicism in Daniel's interpretation than to maintain reputations as a trusted refiner of mainstream exegesis. If the faithful lose Daniel's forward-looking hope in creation's renewal and the dead's resurrection, we remain locked in a malaise of immanence with no orienting, unifying, and empowering narrative of transcendence. Our gratitude, awe, and worship are profoundly diminished.

The authentic work of Daniel is revitalizing faith, helping us see our daily lives as part of God's sacred drama. Daniel should restore joy and purpose, countering the despair of a purely immanent worldview. But taking a middle way of interpretation, how do we begin our new journey into Daniel's scroll? How do we recapture the book's vision?

Let us admit that Daniel's lively narrative of immaterial dynamics represents more than an allegory. The scroll's symbols and icons are not epiphenomena (phenomena secondary to the observable, material world), mere accompaniments of what is really moving and shaking history. Rather, the scroll

presupposes a transcendent reality that is way out of our experience, which is home to otherworldly “Monitors” (Dan. 4:13) and disembodied hands (5:5). The grand miracles of the scroll, such as the appearance of the hand, are wasted on the foreign kings about whom the stories speak. The epiphany of the hand did Belshazzar no practical good. The miracle, then, was not for him but for us, to whom the scroll is offering a vision of “the unfolding mystery of being,” the *raz nihyeh*. Daniel sets us on a path that C. S. Lewis describes as leading us “further up and further in.”¹⁸

Preoccupation with the Immaterial World of Dreams and Visions in Daniel’s Scroll

Other biblical texts speak of God and angels, of course, but Daniel is downright *offensive* to skeptical Deists. There are visions of cosmic mountains, world-sized trees, Gabriel and Michael, and a host of heavenly denizens. Chapter 10 describes an unseen backdrop of combat between an archangel and a spirit-commander of Persia. Any bourgeois, petty approach, as seemingly espoused by many modern expositors, does not fit well with Daniel. Such an approach can accommodate a creator God concerned with straight history, but not an irreducibly transcendent frame like this! Neither can an approach of comparative mythology be of use. Any thought of demythologizing Daniel is ridiculous.

Interdisciplinary methods, along with unconventional terminology, are appropriate—and indeed requisite—when dealing with a text so “porous” to transcendence as Daniel. Our text does not oppose rationalist criticism but operates in a different register that engages the alien workings of an immaterial frame. In Dan. 7:12, for example, central Principalities possess enigmatical lifespans in a world of alien logic. Time functions differently here. Whereas earthly empires always decline and collapse, Daniel’s visionary beasts are still alive and kicking at the final judgment.

The interpreter of Daniel’s scroll, therefore, must appropriate and repurpose cross-disciplinary tools and terms to clarify how Daniel leads its readers to a threshold where the mundane, conventional mind encounters *šamayin* (heaven), where the visible and easily perceptible opens into the *raz nihyeh* (the hidden but unfolding mystery of being). Daniel is filled with enigmatic dreams, revelatory visions, and manifestations of eerie entities such as Monitors, disembodied hands, angelic commanders of Persia and Greece, and the host of heaven. Included in the mystery of being, beyond the unseen host, are sapiential orientations, equilibriums, guide rails, and dynamics. When mysterious words associated with scales and balances appear in Dan. 5:5, 25–28, Belshazzar confronts the suppressed but objective truth of his reign’s imbalance. When the king immediately soils himself (5:6), his reign’s foul wantonness manifests itself in a loss of continence. He must learn that he has upset unseen equilibriums, pressed up against Sophia’s guide rails.

As an apocalypse, the scroll of Daniel aims to reveal dimensions of reality normally unseen and inaccessible to mortals (Dan. 2:11; 4:7; 5:8). As the Babylonian court sages declare, no one except gods could hope to explain the meaning of stimuli from unseen dimensions, “and their dwelling place is not with mortals” (2:11). Anthea Portier-Young writes, Daniel’s visions “reveal a deeper, invisible reality.” Before their truth, “Antiochus the deceiver (Dan. 8:25) would have nothing meaningful to say.”¹⁹ If this is our scroll’s core aim and point, with which readers are invited to concur, are there plausible ways of believing the idea intelligible in our disenchanting age? After all, I agree with Taylor that a malaise of immanence traps our “buffered” selves!

Are there cross-disciplinary models illuminating the Sophia-based dynamics associated with the “deeper, invisible reality” presupposed by Daniel, such as married contraries, transcendent archetypes, synchronicities, and shadow confrontations? Such transcendent phenomena are native to Daniel, apparent in any close reading of the scroll. The scroll constantly references stimuli from outside known material dimensions of reality that, in an obfuscated manner, influence terrestrial human life and behavior. The angel commanders guiding Persia and Greece in Dan. 10 are just the prime instance.

An example from Dan. 3 is the simultaneous flaring of Nebuchadnezzar’s rage and the flames of his furnace (without a causal link!), an eerie metaphysical dynamic termed “synchronicity.” Synchronicity was first named and explored by figures such as quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli, a mainstream and

influential scientist. Hot rage is something essentially *mental*, and fire is something *material*. They flame simultaneously due to their interconnection in an underlying immaterial cosmic frame. To the extent that they overcome the dualism of mind and matter, synchronicities are *micro-apocalypses*. As scholars have long noted, apocalyptic literature tends to grapple directly with reality's antinomies and dualisms, like that between matter and mind. These "contraries," as William Blake called them,²⁰ appear to undergo a dialectical sublation in apocalypticism.

A recognizable example of a transcendental archetype in Daniel is chapter 6's "pit of lions," which is attested neither as a Persian punishment nor as a way of keeping captive lions. Pits were used to capture lions, trapping them alive (see Ezek. 19:4), not as lions' dens and living spaces. Daniel's "pit," then, can only represent a shared human experience of the existential threat of the Abyss, of the chaos of the cosmic Deep. It is thus far from coincidental that the biblical heroes Joseph, Jeremiah, and Daniel are all rescued from *the pit*, that is from exile, despair, and death. Daniel 6's Aramaic term for pit, *gōb*, is paralleled by Aramaic *gûb* in the targums of Gen. 37:22, 24 and Jer. 38:6.

In this commentary, I have little choice but to engage with analytical psychology, especially with its archetypal theory. This has nothing to do with psychologizing Daniel, that is, with reducing dreams and visions to something "inner" and subjective. Rather, language of archetypes provides a conceptual framework for handling the objectivity of Daniel's iconic, prototypical "pit" (6:7), "cosmic mountain" (2:35; 9:16, 20; 11:45), "world tree" (4:10–12), "boastful horn" (7:8, 11, 20–21; 8:9–12, 23–25), and other unseen molds. By the same token, language from cosmology, metaphysics, and even quantum mechanics will be needed to speak lucidly about Daniel's dynamic interplay of heaven and earth, its vitalist universe of hidden agency, and its sapiential workings.

Daniel demands a theoretical elasticity, a willingness to stretch beyond the usual bounds of the exegetical disciplines. My eclecticism is not an exercise in exegetical creativity and eccentricity; it is a necessity born of our scroll's nature. A commentary on Daniel that remains confined to historicizing methods risks flattening our text's cosmic scope and revelatory aims. Let us permit Daniel to speak in its own disorienting register.

Let me now pause briefly to address a concern of some in this commentary's intended audience that my leveraging of concepts from analytical psychology such as "archetype," "synchronicity," and "shadow" represents an inappropriate endorsement of extrabiblical intellectual concepts and modern non-Christian thinking. I can think of no better rejoinder than to reference Saint Augustine's defense of his own appropriation of the observations and truths of non-Christian thinkers, which he famously articulated in *De doctrina christiana* (*Christian Instruction*, 397 CE). Augustine uses the account in Exod. 12:35–36 of the Hebrews despoiling the Egyptians to argue that Christians are called to appropriate and repurpose the intellectual and cultural treasures of the world for the glory of God. He believed that God wants us to engage, critique, and redeem all aspects of human knowledge, making them tools for understanding divine truth.

Wisdom literature is known for sharing a sort of open, global discourse with non-Israelite cultures (see 1 Kings 10). To this end, it leverages transcultural archetypes that exemplify virtues or vices such as the diligent ant in Prov. 6:6–11 and the virtuous woman in Prov. 31:10–31. In studying Dan. 1:8–21 below, we will note how our four court-sages model themselves on the Rechabites, who function as an archetype of the "wise person," demonstrating how straitened living can align with divine interconnection and presence.

One might ask whether my understanding of Daniel—characterized by a courageous confrontation with a transcendental framing of reality—aligns with the known cultural intellectual domains traditionally associated with ancient sages. Could it be that interpreting Daniel in this way reflects not his historical context but instead imposes concepts derived from much later developments in psychology or metaphysics?

It is natural to be skeptical, but I encourage my readers to approach my interpretive model with an open mind and refrain from prematurely dismissing it as anachronistic. Instead, consider the possibility that Daniel's narrative fits humanity's age-old engagement with enduring, perennial questions about the

relationship between the material and immaterial, the visible and the transcendent. Psalm 139 recognizes both dimensions of reality. It knows observable biology *and* Sophia's invisible realm. Verse 13 knows that the fetus is in a "mother's womb" but v. 15 acknowledges a cosmic backdrop—namely, an embryo in "the depths of the earth." The archetypal allusion in v. 15 is clarified by mother-earth iconography associated with the ancient Near Eastern goddess Ninhursag. Fetuses crouch about her image and her breast actively nurses.

Within Daniel's ancient cultural framework, mantic wisdom, which encompassed practices like dream interpretation and other means of discerning hidden truths, was central to the intellectual lives of court sages. In the Babylonian and wider Mesopotamian traditions, figures such as diviners and astrologers were esteemed for their ability to use the tools of wisdom to interpret an immaterial, structured frame that overlapped with the material world. They claimed to "mine" earth's inaccessible depths (Job 28:3, 12–13).

Daniel operates in a known ancient mode, comparable to what we see with Joseph in Genesis. Gerhard von Rad argued that apocalypticism comes not from prophecy but from wisdom traditions, the traditions in which Joseph was at home. He erred in dropping prophecy as a relevant source, but his insights on the connection of apocalypticism and wisdom are valuable.²¹ Let us specify Joseph's and Daniel's special domain as "mantic wisdom"—mantic wisdom defined broadly as insight gained through channeling the "deeper, invisible reality" that Portier-Young speaks of as the origins of Daniel's visions.²² We can affirm without hesitation that Daniel's apocalyptic theology leverages manticism.

Note that Hans-Peter Müller found mantic wisdom to be a prime seedbed of apocalyptic thinking.²³ True, Matthew Goff finds Müller's turn to mantic wisdom unhelpful, but the judgment is based on Goff's restriction of the scope of such wisdom to divination, including oneiromancy.²⁴ I adopt a broader sense of manticism, taking it as insight acquired through channels other than conventional reasoning or straight empirical observation. Through such channels flow the apocalyptic revelations of Daniel.

The scroll's apocalyptic visions are rooted in the sapiential depths of the world's being (Ps. 139:15)—the *raz nihyeh*, dimensions inaccessible to empirical observation. When Daniel drops farthest into these depths, empirical sensation ceases altogether (Dan. 8:18; 10:9). Like the prophet in Zech. 4:1, Daniel is "awakened" within a state of deep sleep to perceive hidden dimensions of reality. Mark J. Boda interprets these moments as indicating that "revelation comes to Daniel as he falls into deep sleep and then is 'awakened' into what appears to be another dimension." Thus, Boda notes, the "rousing" of the prophet by the angel for a new vision in Zech. 4:1 is not "from" sleep but "as if" (*kə*) from sleep.²⁵

The idea of the world's sapiential "hardwiring" was not a foreign Babylonian idea imported into Israelite thought. Rather, it aligns with Israel's theological tradition that a wisdom substratum undergirds creation. This wisdom, while neither obvious nor easily discerned, is central to the mysterious workings of divine Providence. It shapes the course of history and guides humanity toward its ultimate destiny. Proverbs encapsulates this concept. "The LORD laid the foundations of the earth with wisdom, establishing the heavens with understanding" (Prov. 3:19 CEB)—a wisdom that sustains God's interests.

This wisdom substratum of creaturely being is evident in a variety of narrative accounts. Joseph, the renowned Hebrew court sage of Egypt, accessed the sophianic substratum through the channeling properties of water—a form of hydromancy (Gen. 44:5, 15; Dan. 8:2, 6; 10:4–5; 12:5).²⁶ Water plays a pivotal role in other revelatory moments (see Gen. 32:22–32[23–33]; Exod. 7:15–24; 8:5–7; Ezek. 1:1; Lev. Rab. 24.3).

Later, Moses (Exod. 25:9), Bezalel (Exod. 31:2–3), and Solomon (1 Chron. 28:19) accessed transcendent paradigms (Hebrew *tabnît*) to construct God's tabernacle and temple. Atop Mount Sinai, Moses beheld the immaterial archetype (*tabnît*) of the tabernacle's design (Exod. 25:40). Bezalel, the sage behind the tabernacle's construction, resembles Daniel in his God-endowed "divine spirit" (Exod. 31:3; Dan. 5:11–12), mirroring Daniel's wisdom (Dan. 5:11–12) as he constructs the tabernacle as an iconographic mirror of God's unseen cosmic order.

Isaiah 2:1–5 prophesies that, in God's time, Zion will reveal its role as an iconographic interface embodying the overlap of earth and heaven. Zion's temple design pays homage to God's mountaintop

garden and mirrors the cosmos as a divinely ordered temple. In Isa. 2, Zion transfigures physically, revealing its hidden mythos as a focal point in cosmic architecture. The entire world will see how the terrestrial and celestial overlap and that Zion embodies the interface. What Isaiah sees as God's glory filling the temple in Isa. 6:1–5 mirrors how Sophia possesses all creation. The seraphs sing of the correlation: "The whole earth is full of [the LORD's] glory" (Isa. 6:3). This truth now lies latent, but it makes its epiphany at the point of Isa. 40:5 for "all flesh" to see. Psalm 97:6 reads Isa. 40:5 as the theophanic actualization of God's hidden order. It interprets eschatology as manifesting an embedded "rightness" (*sedeq*, v. 6). This "rightness," or as the seraphim put it, "glory" (*kābôd*), is long familiar to creation (Ps. 19:1[2], *kābôd*).

Israel's sages held parallel convictions about our world mirroring divine wisdom and order. Thus Prov. 8:22–31 elaborates on God's use of wisdom at creation. God established the world to operate according to the principles and structures of wisdom. Therefore, no one can live successfully in God's world apart from aligning with the character of Sophia. Wisdom 7:24–26 expands on this core belief, portraying Sophia as the breath of God's power—a vital, supernatural force animating the universe.²⁷

Jesus in Luke 19:40 affirms a responsive, vitalist cosmos, echoing texts such as Ps. 96:11–13 and Isa. 55:12, where creation itself recognizes and celebrates God at his appearance (see also Isa. 45:8; Hab. 2:11; Wis. 16:24). When confronted about his works of healing on the sabbath, Jesus reminds his accusers that God is always at work (John 5:17), since God's providence never stops its guidance of history. As John Macmurray interprets Jesus's words, human history is continually subject to God's innate involvement. The work of Jesus must follow suit.²⁸ Rabbinic discussions (in b. Ta'an. 11a; b. Hag. 16a) further explore the concept of a "reactive" universe. Keeping these texts in mind will help us understand Daniel's scroll, where fateful decisions trigger a reactive universe's response (e.g., Dan. 4:31, 33; 5:5, 30) and where poetic justice appears self-activated. Consider the allusion to Ps. 57:4–6 in Dan. 6:24 or the eerie "karma" by which Nebuchadnezzar's bestial rule (7:4) lands the king among the wild beasts (4:33).

Wisdom, as presented in the Bible, is not an inert, impassive ordering of creation but something deeply spiritual, cosmic, and relational. It is a divine force embedded in creation and history, guiding us toward the immediate and ultimate purposes of God. In fact, David Bentley Hart is correct to insist that human and divine reality are not merely capable of eventual integration but that the divine is necessarily "already innate in us." Hart advances a radically nondualistic Christian metaphysics from within creedal orthodoxy. He cogently insists that if the divine is not already innate in humanity, then Christ incarnate becomes like one of Dan. 7's composite monsters, "not the God-man, but rather a semi-divine monstrosity . . . a divine-human hybrid."²⁹

As B. C. Gregory aptly states, "Throughout the apocalypses revelation and hidden knowledge are characterized as wisdom; . . . both wisdom (especially Hellenistic wisdom) and apocalypticism share an interest in the structure of the universe as a medium of God's will and as inextricably linked to history, salvation, and eschatology."³⁰ Francis Spufford offers an analogy for speaking of this sapiential substratum. He speaks of sensing, at times, the world's background "hiss," the "crackle" of the empty grooves at a vinyl record's end. This "hiss" is nothing other than Sophia's "null track" sound.³¹

Consider again 4QInstruction, the Qumran sapiential composition whose wisdom interests broaden into a rigorous quest for transcendent truth and end-time hope. The scroll's concerns include such obfuscated realities as God's end-time judgment and the angelic world (e.g., 4Q416 1; 4Q418 69 ii; 4Q418 81). Its belief in the *raz nihyeh* is an affirmation of an unseen but substantive wisdom tasked with structuring creaturely reality. Sergius Bulgakov finds just such ideas plausible and worthy of consideration.

Bulgakov rejects empirical positivism, which limits the reality of the world to its observable states. Just because science cannot find a spiritual mold or *tabnît* (Exod. 25:9) does not mean it does not exist "in the depths of the world's being."³² Ensnared as we are in the world's physical forms, Bulgakov observes, we will likely find traces of such sapiential cosmic structuring only "in obscure anamnesis,

slumbering in the human soul.”³³ Bulgakov’s rhetoric of “obscure anamnesis” and secret recesses of mentation points to humanity’s collective, unconscious reservoir of spiritual patterns and forms. This reservoir funds the symbols leveraged by God in revealing truth through dreams.

Like Bulgakov, the celebrated Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (1904–84) articulated a theology of a shared human interconnection with God rooted deep in the unseen, transcendental structures of creaturely experience. As a sort of natural revelation, humanly shared, archetypal patterns disclose these unseen structures.³⁴ While they approach the idea of a substratum framing creation from different traditions (Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic), Bulgakov’s and Rahner’s insights represent a shared intuition about the deep, immaterial architecture of our collective creaturely existence.

Proverbs 8:1 reads, “Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?” Can’t you hear Sophia’s voice? God’s revelations come through prophets and apostles but also through the sort of natural, general revelation of which Prov. 8 speaks. (Also Ps. 19; Wis. 13:5; Rom. 1:19–20; 2:9, 11–12, 14–15.) Bulgakov illuminates the metaphysical dynamics at play when he describes Woman Wisdom/Sophia as a mediating presence, linking God and the world as an immaterial, spiritual interface (here, see esp. Wis. 7:25–27).³⁵ The God-patterned sapiential substratum of life lures us through dreams and visions, but also more directly in waking experience through teachers and sages, through conscience, and through surprising “coincidences.”

Dark actions of deeply flawed persons or groups can provoke countermoves from Wisdom (see Wis. 16:24). In Daniel, a mysterious cosmic entelechy is ever present—a God-embedded orientation and reactivity.³⁶ When Belshazzar desecrates the temple vessels, Babylonia falls that very night (Dan. 5:30–31). When an anointed figure so God-focused as to sacrifice himself emerges (9:26a), a knee-jerk reflex takes place in the selfsame verse, and the universe serves up a diabolical doppelgänger (9:26b). An evil twin, a married opposite, springs forth. No mere random tyrant, he represents patterned counteractivity, for he counters holiness with sacral affronts blaspheming God (9:27).

An archetypal, polar antipode to selfless holiness has been triggered in Dan. 9:26, what Blake calls a “contrary” and C. G. Jung a “shadow.” Why resort to Blake’s and Jung’s terminology? Because the end of Dan. 8 uses Isa. 53’s vocabulary to sketch the tyrant archetype as the specific antithesis of the Lord’s suffering Servant. It strains credulity to reduce his end-time epiphany to a divine punishment or a reasoned judgment. For Daniel, God has now finished judging Israel (Dan. 9:12–14). Now is the era when God’s anger and wrath have turned away from God’s holy city and God’s people (9:19).

Here again we find examples of spiritual dynamics associated with the Daniel scroll’s affirmation of invisible dimensions of being, a realm of “deep and hidden things” (Dan. 2:22). The adjective *’āmmîq* (deep) in Dan. 2:22 refers to unfathomable realities, accessible only through mantic wisdom and revelation. The Akkadian cognate relates to wisdom and mantic skill, and the term is also wisdom diction at Qumran (see 4Q541 3.3).

After researching Daniel and apocalyptic theology for over three decades, I have concluded that there is no other way to read the text respectfully than to take seriously its assumptions about an unseen sapiential dynamism undergirding the cosmos. As alien as this approach will inevitably seem to many mainstream biblical scholars on both the left and the right, I am firmly convicted that it is the only way out of the positivism and historicism that shackle Daniel exegesis. I request the reader to bear with me in this.

How does the idea of an unseen sapiential scaffolding of creation fit with classical, Nicene Christianity? Admittedly, Bulgakov’s wisdom-focused theology raises eyebrows, especially when it seems to lodge Sophia (Woman Wisdom) within the Trinity while also identifying it as a created frame of terrestrial reality. Caution is appropriate when any theologian stretches Nicaea’s formulation of God’s nature. Bulgakov, however, denies that he ever thinks of Sophia as a fourth person of the Trinity.³⁷ I likewise affirm the Nicene definition of the Trinity as three co-equal, co-eternal persons in one essence.

Having no need to speak of a “Divine Sophia” in this volume, I leverage only Bulgakov’s concept of a “creaturely Sophia,” that is, an underlying dynamism fostering the world’s coherence, beauty, and goal. The creaturely Sophia is not interior to God, but the world’s created foundation, lying outside of God’s

inner life.³⁸ This Sophia's work is sowing receptivity to the apocalyptic advent of the messiah and the Spirit. Bulgakov insists that all nations have been prepared for God's reign, that the Messiah's advent possesses a compelling inner justification. How else do we explain that the Gentiles turned out to be more receptive to the preaching of the Christ than Jesus's own kinfolk?³⁹

The Anglican theologian Rowan Williams has written favorably about Bulgakov, particularly admiring his intellectual depth and coherence as well as his creative and deeply spiritual imagination. The former archbishop views Bulgakov's postulated "creaturely Sophia" appreciatively, especially how Bulgakov articulates the relationship between God and creation in a nondualistic framework.⁴⁰ While remaining attentive to its sometimes-risky ambiguities, he sees Bulgakov's concept of Sophia as an affirmation of creation's sacramental character, of the nonpantheistic interconnectedness of the divine and the created orders.⁴¹ He grasps that for Bulgakov, creation longs for the apocalyptic revelation of what it fundamentally already is (see Rom. 8:22), that all created reality presses toward beauty. This is precisely the juncture where apocalyptic theology is so misunderstood. Many scholars of biblical apocalypticism fail to grasp the beauty of Paul's metaphor of childbirth, which, combined with his emphasis on liberation and renewal, points to a profound continuity between creation's present and future natures. As conceived in both Daniel's scroll and in Paul's epistles, apocalyptic redemption brings not destruction, but fulfillment. Language of fulfillment is essential for Bulgakov in light of "Sophia acting within the created sphere and pushing it to its eschatological goal."⁴²

Sergius Bulgakov has likewise inspired David Bentley Hart, the celebrated Eastern Orthodox theologian. From within creedal orthodoxy, Hart leverages Bulgakov's view that a shared divine wisdom, a supernatural scaffolding, buttresses all human culture. In fact, human mentation itself persistently interweaves with transcendence. As Hart puts it, "There are certain [transcendental] forms of experience so fundamental to human rationality that, without them, we could not think or speak at all," and these structures represent supernature lodged within nature.⁴³ They supply the revelations that empowered Balaam in Numbers and that propelled the wise men to seek out the Christ.

Here again we have heaven and creation brilliantly interrelated in a nondualistic, nonpantheistic framework. Citing Bulgakov's work, Hart writes, "Creation, incarnation, salvation, deification: in God, these are one gracious act, one absolute divine vocation to the creature to become what he has called it to become."⁴⁴ For Hart, to exist as a human is already to have at least partially responded to a divine vocational call of deification: "Creation is already deification—is, in fact, theogony."⁴⁵ At multiple points in the commentary to follow, we will observe the terrestrial and the heavenly interrelating in fluid continuity, in accord with Hart's metaphysics. We will see humans and angels operating apart from any essential dualism. The two groups fight in the selfsame martial ranks in both Daniel and in the Qumran War Scroll (Dan. 7:21, 25; 1QM 1.10; 7.6; 12.8–9). So too 1QM 17.5–8 speaks of humans at Qumran as part of Michael's angel army.