

APOCALYPSE
AND THE WRITINGS ON
REVELATION

D. H. LAWRENCE

EDITED BY
MARA KALNINS

 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

This, the Cambridge Edition of the text of *'Apocalypse and the writings on Revelation'* now correctly established from the original sources and first published in 1980, © the Estate of Frieda Lawrence Ravagli 1980. Introduction and notes © Cambridge University Press 1980. Permission to reproduce this text entire or in part, or to quote from it, can be granted only by the Literary Executor of the Estate, Laurence Pollinger Ltd, 18 Maddox Street, Mayfair, London W1R 0EU. Permission to reproduce the introduction and notes entire or in part should be requested from Cambridge University Press. Acknowledgement is made to William Heinemann Ltd in the UK and the Viking Press in the USA, who hold the exclusive book publication rights for the work as published (copyright 1931, 1932, 1966, 1972) in their respective territories, for the authorisation granted to Cambridge University Press through the Frieda Lawrence Ravagli Estate for use of the work as published in preparing the new scholarly text. Introduction to *The Dragon of the Apocalypse* is published by permission of The Bancroft Library. *Apocalypse* and the appendixes in this edition are published by permission of the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

First published in paperback 2001

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Lawrence, David Herbert
Apocalypse and the writings on Revelation.
(The Cambridge edition of the letters and works of D. H. Lawrence)

I. Bible. New Testament Revelation – Commentaries

I. Title II. Kalnins, Mara III. Series

228'.06 BS2825.3 79-41417

ISBN 0 521 22407 1 hardback

ISBN 0 521 00706 2 paperback

CONTENTS

General editors' preface	page vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Chronology	x
Cue-titles	xiii
Introduction	i
<i>Apocalypse</i> and the Writings on Revelation	3
Publication	24
Reviews	31
Appendixes	37
The texts	
A Review of <i>The Book of Revelation</i> by Dr. John Oman	41
Introduction to <i>The Dragon of the Apocalypse</i> by Frederick Carter	45
<i>Apocalypse</i>	57
Appendixes:	151
I <i>Apocalypse</i> , Fragment 1	153
II <i>Apocalypse</i> , Fragment 2	177
III <i>Apocalypsis II</i>	195
Explanatory notes	201
Textual apparatus	241

INTRODUCTION

Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation

This volume contains Lawrence's writings on the Book of Revelation: namely the short review of John Oman's *Book of Revelation* published in *Adelphi*, April 1924; and two works he wrote in 1929–30 shortly before his death: 'Introduction to *The Dragon of the Apocalypse* by Frederick Carter', and *Apocalypse*. The Appendixes present for the first time previously unpublished material on Revelation.

Lawrence's familiarity with the Book of Revelation dates from his youth, when he attended the Congregationalist chapel in Eastwood – 'From early childhood I have been familiar with Apocalyptic language and Apocalyptic image'¹ – and the influence of the Bible, its imagery, language and symbolism, did much to form his style and to shape his vision of man and the cosmos. But it was not until 1923 when he began corresponding with Frederick Carter,² an English painter and a mystic, that Lawrence thought of writing about the Book of Revelation. Carter was impelled by his interest in astrology and the occult and by his liking for Lawrence's work to write to him in December 1922 asking for his opinion of a manuscript and drawings on the symbolism of Revelation. Lawrence, then living at Taos, New Mexico, agreed to read the manuscript,³ although his own interests at the time lay in the psychological revelation, rather than the astrological symbolism, of St John's apocalyptic writing: 'Your letter interests me, and makes me want to read your whole MS. Myself I am more interested in the *microcosm* than in the *macrocosm*, and in the gates to the psyche rather than the astrological houses. But one gets such rare hints from astrology.'⁴

¹ 'Introduction to *The Dragon of the Apocalypse*', p. 54.

² Frederick Carter (1883–1967), painter and etcher, studied in Paris and Antwerp and on his return to England took up book illustrating. The MS he sent DHL in 1923 was eventually revised and published as *The Dragon of the Alchemists* (1926). Carter is the author of *D. H. Lawrence and the Body Mystical* (1932), which tells of his association with DHL, and *Gold Like Glass* (1932). His second book on apocalyptic symbols, for which DHL wrote his 'Introduction', was originally entitled *The Dragon of the Apocalypse* but the title was later changed by Carter to *The Dragon of Revelation* (1931) and the book as a whole was still later revised and published as *Symbols of Revelation* (1934).

³ Letter to Carter, 31 December 1922.

⁴ Letter to Carter, 8 March 1923.

In the previous year Lawrence had completed *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, where he had explored his ideas about the psyche, and in March 1923 he left Taos and moved to Mexico where he began work on 'Quetzalcoatl', the novel that was to become *The Plumed Serpent*. From here he wrote to Carter offering to help him find a publisher and to write a foreword to the manuscript if he liked it: 'If I find myself capable, I will gladly do a brief foreword for the drawings: when I get them.'⁵ But it was not until 15 June 1923 that Carter's astrological drawings and the text of *The Dragon of the Apocalypse* as it was then called, finally arrived.⁶ Lawrence's reaction was enthusiastic, and in an important letter dated 18 June 1923, he explained his own theories about St John's Revelation:

It's a revelation of Initiation experience, and the clue is in the microcosm, in the human body itself, I believe, and the Zodiac is only used from the table of the Zodiacal Man, and the Man in the Zodiac has his clue in the man of flesh and blood. . . The subtle thing is the relation between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Get that relation – the Zodiac man to me – and you've got a straight clue to Apocalypsis.⁷

Lawrence interpreted the astrological scheme of Revelation that Carter had sent him as an attempt to narrate a profound psychical experience in man, an experience too fundamental for rational explanation or scientific description. For him, St John's book was a 'revelation of Initiation experience', a manual of esoteric lore derived from the ancient pagans, corrupted by later Jewish and Christian editors, but nevertheless showing the way to mystic liberation of the self. A clue to this process, he argued, lay in the ancient symbol of the Zodiacal Man, the starry figure of the heavens whose body was composed of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, symbols of the powers ruling the various parts of man. This great figure was an emblem of that mystic correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm, the individual and the universe. Lawrence had assimilated these esoteric ideas from his extensive reading during the war years of writers on the occult and especially of Helena Blavatsky, the Russian-born theosophist. Though his critical sense made him doubtful of the value of her theosophical books *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* – 'they're not *very* much good'⁸ – he

⁵ Letter to Carter, 23 April 1923.

⁶ Letter to Carter, 15 June 1923. The revised version of this MS was later published as *The Dragon of the Alchemists* (1926).

⁷ Letter to Carter, 18 June 1923.

⁸ Letter to Nancy Henry, 13 November 1918. See also letter to Mark Gertler on DHL's occult readings, 28 April 1918.

Helena Blavatsky (1831–91) was a Russian-born spiritualist who became involved in spiritualist research in New York as well as in Europe and, with Col. H. S. Olcott and W. Q. Judge, founded the Theosophical Society. She wrote *Isis Unveiled* (1877), *The Secret*

believed in the existence of true and ancient knowledge which had been repressed by Christianity with its doctrine of a spiritual salvation which must be attained in another world: 'The religious systems of the pagan world did what Christianity has never tried to do: they gave the true correspondence between the material cosmos and the human soul. The ancient cosmic theories were exact, and apparently perfect. In them science and religion were in accord.'⁹ However, 'the early Christian world . . . rejected every trace of the old true science – every trace save, perhaps, the unreadable riddle of the Apocalypse'.¹⁰ With the decline of Christianity in our century we needed to regain 'the old true science', to find a way of releasing the potential for a richer and fuller life in the here and now. 'The Resurrection is to life, not to death'¹¹ wrote Lawrence as early as *The Rainbow*. Increasingly he turned away from Christianity (with its emphasis on the crucifixion and the hereafter) to the pagan religions of re-birth and the occult theories of revivifying descent into the self, for the symbols with which to express his belief: 'Man wants his physical fulfilment first and foremost, since now, once and once only, he is in the flesh and potent. For man, the vast marvel is to be alive. For man, as for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive.'¹²

Lawrence had been particularly influenced by the Dublin theosophist James Pryse, whose *The Apocalypse Unsealed* he had read.¹³ He liked Pryse's notion of a latent power within man that could be liberated through the controlled awakening of the seven principal nerve centres or 'chakras' along the spine. The 'chakra' – generally translated as 'plexus', a term Lawrence used in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* though elsewhere he also calls it a 'primary affective centre' – is a vortex or centre of psychic energy. In yoga this power is called *kundalini* and is symbolically represented as a dragon or a serpent coiled at the base of the spine; it is that 'startled life which runs through us like a serpent, or coils within us potent and waiting, like a

Doctrine (1888), *The Key to Theosophy* (1889) and *The Voice of Silence* (1889).

⁹ 'The Two Principles', *Phoenix II* 227.

¹⁰ 'Fenimore Cooper's Anglo-American Novels', *The Symbolic Meaning*, ed. A. Arnold (New York, 1962), p. 76.

¹¹ *The Rainbow* (1915), chapter 10.

¹² *Apocalypse* p. 149.

¹³ Letter to David Eder, 25 August 1917.

Have you read Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*? In many ways a bore, and not quite real. Yet one can glean a marvellous lot from it, enlarge the understanding immensely. Do you know the physical-physiological-interpretations of the esoteric doctrine? – the *chakras* and dualism in experience? . . . Did you get Pryce's *Apocalypse Unsealed*?

James Pryse, author of *The Apocalypse Unsealed* (1910) and friend of Helena Blavatsky, had also introduced A. E. and W. B. Yeats to magic and initiation rites.

serpent'.¹⁴ When awakened this serpent releases a life-giving force by moving upward and gaining power with the 'conquest' of each 'chakra'. According to Pryse the opening of the seven seals in Revelation represents this movement, 'the opening, and conquest of the great psychic centres of the body' as Lawrence phrased it,¹⁵ and the New Jerusalem is the newly regenerated spirit. Lawrence's letter to Carter continues with an interpretation of St John's imagery in Revelation as precisely this process of willed self-liberation.

I believe . . . his imagery started primarily from the physical psyche, the organic and the nervous and cerebral psyche, and expanded into the stars. That I believe. He was seeking to project the spinal chord into the Galactic Way. The Seals are ganglia of nerve-consciousness, projected into zodiacal signs and star-constellations. The Dragon is the Will and Desire. The riders are the energetic messages, releases of consciousness and energy, resultant on the conquest by mind and will of one after the other of the primary affective centres. . . . The revelation is a conquest, one by one, of the lower affective centres by the mind, and the New Jerusalem is the mind enthroned.¹⁶

Lawrence had already explored some of these ideas in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and in the early versions of *Studies in Classic American Literature*, re-written in the winter of 1922–3,¹⁷ where he expresses his conviction:

It is quite certain that the pre-Christian priesthoods understood the process of *dynamic* consciousness, which is pre-cerebral consciousness. It is certain that St. John gives us in the Apocalypse a cypher-account of the process of the conquest of the lower or sensual dynamic centres by the upper or spiritual dynamic consciousness, a conquest affected centre by centre, towards a culmination in the *actual* experience of spiritual infinitude.¹⁸

This redeeming conquest however was not a subjugation of the physical to the cerebral, a notion that Lawrence with his belief in the primacy of instinct and passion over intellect would have detested, but the release of power latent in the dark lower centres. This meant a fresh start away from intellect, as he wrote to Carter, 'in the first great direction, with the polarity downwards, as it was in the great pre-Greek Æons, all Egypt and Chaldea. Greece changed the direction, the Latins went it full tilt. The great *down* direction,

¹⁴ *Apocalypse* p. 123.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁶ Letter to Carter, 18 June 1923.

¹⁷ Letter to Carter, 8 March 1923 which reads: 'I am publishing *Studies in Classic American Literature* this spring, but I have taken out all the esoteric stuff. Best keep it esoteric.'

¹⁸ 'Fenimore Cooper's Anglo-American Novels', *The Symbolic Meaning*, 75.

away from mind, to power, that was old Egypt. The sceptre, not the logos.¹⁹ Lawrence believed that the movement in 'the great *down* direction' would end the domination of the Logos, the Word, and would restore the balance between the spiritual and sensual planes of existence that Greece, Rome and Christianity, with their emphasis on the spirit and the mind, had destroyed. Man need not wait for a postponed spiritual salvation – he held the key to fulfilment within himself, bound in the 'physical psyche'. Lawrence resolved the logical and semantic contradiction inherent in this term by defining the 'physical psyche' as the inseparable union of soul and body through the life-force informing both: 'the psyche comprising our whole consciousness, physical, sensual, spiritual, pre-cerebral as well as cerebral'.²⁰ The initiation process depicted in Revelation was 'the rise of pre-cerebral consciousness in the great plexuses, and the movement of passional or dynamic cognition from one centre, towards culmination or consummation in what we may call whole-experience or whole consciousness'.²¹ This 'whole consciousness', what Jung termed 'integration', was the attainment of inner harmony and balance and a sense of living connection with the greater universe. Like Jung, Lawrence saw the human psyche poised between two worlds – the objective material universe, and the subjective inner world – with an equal need to relate to both, to integrate them for the enrichment and development of the psyche. 'What man most passionately wants is his living wholeness and his living unison'²² he later wrote in his *Apocalypse*. Only by recognising the duality inherent in the cosmos and in man's being and by transcending it, could that 'living wholeness', the aim of human existence, be achieved. To this state of wholeness and to the power that creates it Lawrence gave many names – the Crown, the Rainbow, the Holy Ghost, the New Jerusalem are some of them – but it was always in essence a religious experience, a fulfilling of the human potential, of God incarnate in man: 'the clue or quick of the universe lies in the creative mystery...in the human psyche...the only form of worship is *to be*'.²³

Lawrence adopted ideas and images from many myths and religions in his search to discover the means of achieving this wholeness, but he always returned to the Bible and finally to the Book of Revelation, in whose vision of the opening of the seven seals and the re-birth of the soul, he found a symbolically dramatic account of that quest. He recognised that the

¹⁹ Letter to Carter, 18 June 1923.

²⁰ 'Fenimore Cooper's Anglo-American Novels', *The Symbolic Meaning*, 75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

²² *Apocalypse* p. 149.

²³ 'Nathaniel Hawthorne I', *The Symbolic Meaning*, 137.

importance of his extensive reading in anthropology and the esoteric as well as his liking for Carter's astrological schemes lay in the stimulus they offered to his imagination and he did not seek for any ultimate validity in the doctrines he found there. Indeed he acknowledged in the 'Foreword' to *Fantasia*:

I am not a proper archaeologist nor an anthropologist nor an ethnologist. I am no "scholar" of any sort. But I am very grateful to scholars for their sound work. I have found hints, suggestions for what I say here in all kinds of scholarly books, from the Yoga and Plato and St. John the Evangel and the early Greek philosophers like Herakleitos down to Frazer and his "Golden Bough," and even Freud and Frobenius. Even then I only remember hints – and I proceed by intuition.²⁴

Lawrence corresponded with Carter over the summer of 1923 about the publication of the *Dragon*, and in the autumn converted his original offer of a brief foreword into the possibility of writing an introduction.²⁵ His subsequent travels to California, Mexico and then England temporarily disrupted plans for the *Dragon* but in December 1923 Lawrence was again writing to Carter, and from 3–5 January 1924, he stayed with him in Shropshire,²⁶ drawn by the prospect of discussing the dragon emblem which was to become the central symbol of *The Plumed Serpent*. Carter recalls the visit.

At different periods I had occasion to discuss his theories upon the psyche with him and compare opinions upon the significance of old myths and traditions. And whilst he was staying with me for a little while in Shropshire, we considered means for the development of a certain line of research in symbolism, and the publication of some essays and a book or two about ancient ideas on the soul and their permanent validity, and of the problem of the last end of the world.

The first fruit of our conversation – an essay preliminary – was an article, written by me, on 'The Antique Science of Astrology' and one or two articles on man and cosmos by Lawrence, all published in the *Adelphi Magazine* in the early part of 1924. More would have followed – for example one on the Sacred Art of Alchemy – but serious business difficulties in America called him back there. And so fell through the whole scheme which he had in mind for a publishing office of books to be

²⁴ 'Foreword' to *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922).

²⁵ Letter to Carter [15? September 1923]

I got the new MS. of the *Dragon* from Seltzer today. So long these things take! I am going through it carefully. I think you'll have to give me permission to punctuate a little more, and sometimes to re-arrange your words a trifle, where you are a bit obscure. Will you do this? Because I am going to do my best to get Seltzer to publish the book. And perhaps I will write an introduction.

Thomas Seltzer (1873–1943) publisher and translator, was DHL's chief American publisher in the early 1920s.

²⁶ See letters to Carter [1? January 1924] and [6? January 1924].

established in London and, beyond that, a society of students to live and work in New Mexico, on the farm at Questa, near Taos.²⁷

Carter's article was to be the first of 'a series of articles on... the astronomical symbolism that conditioned the religious writings of the beginning of this era'.²⁸ It undoubtedly owed something to Lawrence, who revised it – 'I made a few slight alterations only to your style, which is sometimes odd and obscure... and the title I think shall be *The Ancient Science of Astrology*'²⁹ – and several passages bear an unmistakably Lawrentian stamp for, as Carter observed, Lawrence 'had an insistent desire to amend, enhance and colour anything that deeply moved his interest'.³⁰ Carter's article did not appear until the April issue of the *Adelphi* and he never wrote another,³¹ but Lawrence's two essays, 'On Being Religious' and 'On Human Destiny', came out in the February and March 1924 issues respectively. They contain Lawrence's thoughts on the universal nature of religion, for which St Augustine's words (also quoted by Carter in 'The Ancient Science of Astrology') are an epitome: 'There never has been but one religion, nor has it ever been absent from the world. It commenced to call itself Christian in apostolic times.'³² It is in this spirit that Lawrence felt that today 'the long light of Christianity is guttering to go out and we have to get at new resources in ourselves'.³³ These essays pose what was always for Lawrence the central question facing humanity in every age: 'How shall Man put himself into relation to God, into a living relation?'³⁴

Lawrence's interest in apocalyptic symbols prompted him to read a new interpretation of St John, *Book of Revelation* by John Oman, published in

²⁷ Carter 5–6. The two articles were 'On Being Religious' and 'On Human Destiny' published in the *Adelphi* for February and March 1924, respectively. In March 1924 the Lawrences moved to The Flying Heart ranch, seventeen miles from Taos, New Mexico, which had been presented to them by Mrs Mabel Dodge Luhan. DHL first re-named the ranch Lobo and later Kiowa. However the Lawrences continued to receive their post at nearby Del Monte ranch, Questa, Taos.

²⁸ Carter 32.

²⁹ Letter to Carter [11? January 1924].

³⁰ Carter 34.

We made a synopsis of the first article which I wrote out and sent to him in town. Lawrence read it and inserted a few passages before the typescript was made. Some of these it was necessary to delete for his notions of the interrelation of parts in the astrological heavens and their stars was hazardous, but even yet some hints of the Laurentian purple may there be discovered by the perspicuous reader. Carter 32.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³² These words were quoted by Carter in his article 'The Ancient Science of Astrology', *Adelphi*, i (April 1924) 1005, but they also reveal the direction of DHL's thinking at this time.

³³ 'On Human Destiny', *Phoenix II* 628.

³⁴ 'On Being Religious', *Phoenix* 726–7.

1923, which he thought 'fairly sound'.³⁵ On [15? February 1924] he wrote to John Middleton Murry, then editor of the *Adelphi*, enclosing a short review: 'I send you a little review of Oman's book, which you print if you like or throw away if you like. . . Don't put my name on the review if you use it.'³⁶ This appeared under his pseudonym 'L. H. Davidson' in the April 1924 issue. Middleton Murry may have altered the text but there is no surviving manuscript or typescript of this review and in the absence of any subsequent correspondence the published version is assumed to have had Lawrence's sanction. (It is therefore the *Adelphi* text which is printed in this volume.)

In this short review the lines on the apocalyptic of Revelation are an equally telling comment on Lawrence's feeling about and commitment to our century: 'John's passionate and mystic hatred of the civilization of his day, a hatred so intense only because he knew that the living realities of men's being were displaced by it, is something to which the soul answers now again.'³⁷ His own 'passionate and mystic hatred of the civilization of his day', a civilisation which he saw as progressively dehumanising the individual, was to express itself in the bitter and misanthropic aspects of his writings in the years to come, but the need to search for 'the living realities of men's being' was the primary force in the development of his thought and art. It was a search that was to lead him back to old pagan religions and myths in the quest for symbols that would refresh the springs of religious experience in modern man.

The attraction of Revelation was inexhaustible, as Lawrence acknowledged,³⁸ and its symbols, imagery and myth continued to fascinate him; but for the moment his correspondence with Carter lapsed, and with it the particular desire to write on Revelation itself. It was not until the end of his life that he returned to the idea of writing about St John's apocalyptic

³⁵ Letter to Carter [14? February 1924]. Dr John Wood Oman (1860–1939) was a Presbyterian theologian. From 1907 to 1935 he was professor at, and from 1925 to 1935 principal of, Westminster College, Cambridge. He published his *Book of Revelation* in 1923 (DHL, however, refers to it as *The Book of Revelation*). His other writings include a translation of F. D. E. Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion* (1893), *Vision and Authority* (1902), *The Church and the Divine Order* (1911), *Grace and Personality* (1917).

³⁶ Letter to John Middleton Murry [15? February 1924]. John Middleton Murry (1889–1957), author, editor and critic, met DHL in 1913, whereupon began a long, although erratic and tempestuous, friendship. Murry married Katherine Mansfield in 1918. He edited the *Athenaeum* (1919–21) and wrote two books on DHL: *Son of Woman* (1931) and *Reminiscences of D. H. Lawrence* (1933).

DHL's review was published in the *Adelphi*, i (April 1924) 1011–13 under a version of his pseudonym 'L. H. Davison', here 'L. H. Davidson'. See Nehls, i. 471.

³⁷ 'A Review of *The Book of Revelation* by Dr. John Oman' p. 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

work. Carter recalls the disappointing end to their correspondence soon after Lawrence's visit in January 1924:

When he left it was settled that he was to be back again in March from Germany, and with all the schemes discussed in working order – even started. But by that time difficulties in business had called him away to New York. Nothing was done and my MSS came back from London, the matter seemed to have ended. A rare postcard from a discouraged Lawrence and another. Away in that far corner of the country I heard nothing except rumours sufficiently vague, until, once more residing in London, Lawrence's venture into painting came under discussion.³⁹

In the intervening years Lawrence had travelled back to Mexico where he finished *The Plumed Serpent*, and then returned to Taos again. Finally in September 1925 he left America for good and sailed for Europe. Between 1925 and 1929 he spent much of his time in Italy, at the Villa Mirinda near Florence, where he wrote *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; and he travelled to Austria, England, Germany, Majorca, Switzerland and France. But his health, never robust, was failing, and at the end of September 1929 the Lawrences decided to return to Bandol in the south of France, where they moved into the Villa Beau Soleil. There Lawrence was to write his last poems, a few late reviews and essays, and his last book, *Apocalypse*.

News that Lawrence's paintings had been seized from the Warren Gallery in London and impounded for obscenity in the summer of 1929⁴⁰ had reached Frederick Carter and, hearing that Lawrence was again on the continent, he contacted his agent and their correspondence resumed.⁴¹ Lawrence's interest in Revelation revived and on 30 August 1929 he wrote to Carter enquiring after the old manuscript of the *Dragon* and again offering to help with publication and with a foreword.⁴² The original *Dragon*, however, no longer existed. A much reduced and revised version had been published as *The Dragon of the Alchemists* in 1926 and the remaining

³⁹ Carter 41–2.

⁴⁰ The Warren Gallery at 39a Maddox St, London, was owned by Mrs Dorothy Trotter (née Warren), a friend of DHL's since 1915. DHL's pictures were exhibited at the gallery from June to September 1929. For the story of their impounding see Nehls, iii. 327–89.

⁴¹ See Carter 42. DHL replied to Carter on 23 August asking where he might get a copy of *The Dragon of the Alchemists*. See also letter to Edward Titus, 19 August 1929 and letter to Charles Lahr [23? August 1929]. Edward Titus had published the 'Paris Popular Edition' of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* which included 'My Skirmish with Jolly Roger' in May 1929.

⁴² Letter to Carter, 30 August 1929.

I should really like to read the whole thing again, and see if my first impression holds good. I should like to read the second version too. And if I like the *Dragon* as much as I originally did – though I admit it was a bit tough and tangled – I'm sure we can find a way of printing it complete, even if I have to write a real spangled foreword to it (perhaps you would refuse to let me)...

manuscript ‘had been reconsidered, rewritten in parts, rejected in others as too complicated and esoteric, too occult’.⁴³ During the autumn of 1929 Carter agreed to work on its reconstruction. He sent portions of manuscript to Lawrence, and on 1 October Lawrence mentioned that he had undertaken ‘to do some work on the Apocalypse, more or less in conjunction with Frederick Carter’.⁴⁴ With characteristic enthusiasm he wrote to Charles Lahr, the London bookseller, ordering a formidable reading list that included ‘a good annotated edition of *Revelations* – or of New Testament’, a copy of Carter’s published book, and ‘any books, really good, on civilisation in the Eastern Mediterranean, before the rise of Athens – on Tree and Pillar cult – on the Chaldean and Babylonian myths – Sir Arthur Evans on Crete is so huge and expensive’.⁴⁵ On the same date he wrote to Carter acknowledging that he had received his last manuscript.

The “Apocalypse” came yesterday, and I have read it. And again I get a peculiar pleasure and liberation out of it. It is very fragmentary – I suppose it is natural to you to be fragmentary. But in fragments fascinating. . . Send me whatever remaining MS. there is, and we will see how we can arrange. We’ll get it published. What I shall have to do is to write a comment on the Apocalypse also, from my point of view – and touching on yours – and try to give some sort of complete idea. . . We will make a joint book. I very much want to put into the world again the big old pagan vision, before the *idea* and the concept of personality made everything so small and tight as it is now.⁴⁶

Lawrence was reading portions of Carter’s manuscript, including an essay entitled ‘Apocalyptic Images’ and *The Dragon of the Alchemists* around 10 October⁴⁷ and beginning to tackle Archdeacon Charles’ scholarly books on Revelation: ‘I have got “Charles” from Lahr – two fat vols – and have ordered Moret and Loisy in Paris.’⁴⁸ He wrote to his friend Koteliensky asking for John Burnet’s *Early Greek Philosophy* which he used extensively

⁴³ Carter 42.

⁴⁴ Letter to Lahr, 1 October 1929.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Sir Arthur John Evans (1851–1941), the famous archaeologist whose excavations in Crete uncovered the prehistoric Palace of Knossos, had written *The Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult* (1901).

⁴⁶ Letter to Carter, 1 October 1929.

⁴⁷ See letter to Carter, 10 October 1929.

⁴⁸ Ibid. ‘Charles’ refers to the two-volume *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Revelation of St. John* (1920) by R. H. Charles (1855–1931), Archdeacon of Westminster from 1919. Archdeacon Charles was a distinguished biblical scholar, author of many translations of and works about the Old and New Testaments. DHL consulted his *Commentary* for his own work on Revelation. The two French books (see also letter to Carter, 1 October 1929) were *Rituel journalier en Egypte* by A. Moret and *L’Apocalypse de Jean* by A. Loisy (see also letter to Titus, 7 October 1929). DHL never received the Moret book, however (see letter to Titus, 20 November 1929).

for the late poems and essays. 'Do you still have that book *Early Greek Philosophers* which I bought when I was last in London? if so, would you send it me, I want to do some work on the Apocalypse and consult it.'⁴⁹ Lawrence had read and re-read Burnet over the years and had been profoundly influenced by his account of early Greek science, religion and philosophy. As early as July 1915 he had written: 'I shall write all my philosophy again. Last time I came out of the Christian Camp. This time I must come out of these early Greek philosophers'⁵⁰ and 'I shall write out Herakleitos, on tablets of bronze.'⁵¹ In his search to define his cosmology and to understand the manifestations of God as he saw them revealed in the phenomenal universe, Lawrence found the pre-Socratic vision of the cosmos – 'All things are full of Gods'⁵² – naturally congenial: 'We want to realise the tremendous *non-human* quality of life. . . the tremendous unknown forces of life.'⁵³ Two of Heraclitus' ideas in particular had a lasting influence on Lawrence and are present in most of his writing after 1915. First, the notion of the duality inherent in the universe and the concept of the 'Boundless' – the primary absolute out of which all duality emerges to form the universe but which itself transcends these contraries: 'All existence is dual, and surging towards consummation into being'⁵⁴ and 'the Infinite, the Boundless, the Eternal. . . [is] the real starting point'.⁵⁵ And second, Heraclitus' belief that 'strife' or conflict is the power which causes all things to rise into being.

There are the two eternities fighting the fight of Creation, the light projecting itself into the darkness, the darkness enveloping herself within the embrace of light. And then there is the consummation of each in the other, the consummation of light in darkness and darkness in light, which is absolute: our bodies cast up like foam of two meeting waves, but foam which is absolute, complete, beyond the limitation of either infinity, consummate over both eternities. The direct opposites of the

⁴⁹ Letter to Koteliansky, 10 October 1929. DHL had read John Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1892) several times over the years, though he mistakes the title here. He first mentions the book by title in a letter to Dollie Radford on 5 September 1916 although it is probable that he had read it the previous year (see letter to Bertrand Russell [21? July 1915]. John Burnet (1863–1928), Professor of Greek at the University of St Andrews, wrote several books on Plato and Greek philosophy. Samuel Solomonovich Koteliansky ('Kot') (1882–1955) was a Ukrainian-born translator who came to England in 1911 where he met DHL, whose life-long friend he became. He collaborated with Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Leonard Woolf and DHL in translating Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Gorky, Bunin, etc.

⁵⁰ Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, [19 July 1915]. The 'philosophy' refers to an early version of 'The Crown' entitled 'Morgenrot'.

⁵¹ Letter to Bertrand Russell, [21? July 1915].

⁵² Burnet 48. This is a quotation from Thales.

⁵³ Letter to Gordon Campbell, 21 September 1914.

⁵⁴ 'Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine', *Phoenix II* 470.

⁵⁵ Letter to Morrell [12? July 1915].

Beginning and the End, by their very directness, imply their own supreme relation. And this supreme relation is made absolute in the clash and the foam of the meeting waves. And the clash and the foam are the Crown, the Absolute.⁵⁶

Lawrence first explored Heraclitus' doctrines in 'The Crown', written in 1915, and the ideas he adopted are found in nearly all his subsequent writing, not only in the non-fiction but also in the novels, for Lawrence's concept of character is based on Heraclitus' notion of creation through conflict. Rarely seen as 'stable egos', in the sense of concrete personalities whose motivations and behaviour can be analysed, Lawrence's characters are depicted as beings in a continual flux of opposition, evolving themselves through the conflict of deep pressures from within and without, destroying or creating themselves into new being: 'And there is no rest, no cessation from the conflict. For we are two opposites which exist by virtue of our inter-opposition. Remove the opposition and there is collapse, a sudden crumbling into universal nothingness.'⁵⁷ John Burnet's book was therefore immensely important in shaping Lawrence's thoughts about humanity and the universe. His indebtedness is particularly striking in the late works and the *Last Poems*, and indeed in a rare acknowledgement he mentions that the prefaces written in the autumn of 1929 for a new edition of his *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* poems 'are part original and sometimes quotations from the fragments of Xenophanes and Empedocles and others, but I should like it all put in inverted commas, and let them crack their wits (the public) to find out what is ancient quotation and what isn't (It is nearly all of it me)'.⁵⁸

On 29 October Lawrence wrote to Carter that he was still trying 'to make a book for the public'⁵⁹ out of Carter's various manuscripts, but his letter already contains the firm outlines of the ideas about Revelation which he was to expand later.

Personally, I don't care much about the bloody Revelations, and whether they have any order or not – or even any meaning. But they are a very useful start for other excursions. I love the pre-Christian heavens – the planets that become such a prison of the consciousness – and the ritual year of the Zodiac. But I like the heavens best *pre-Orphic*, before there was any "fall" of the soul, and any redemption. The soul only "fell" about 500 B.C. or thereabouts with the Orphics and late Egypt. Isn't that

⁵⁶ 'The Crown', *Phoenix II* 371.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁵⁸ Letter to Laurence Pollinger, 25 November 1929. Laurence Pollinger (1899–1976) was at this time working for Curtis Brown, Ltd, DHL's literary agent in England from 1921 and in America from 1923. The new edition of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* was published by the Cresset Press (1930) with wood-engravings by Blair Hughes-Stanton.

⁵⁹ Letter to Carter, 29 October 1929.

so? Isn't "fall" and "redemption" quite a late and new departure in religion and in myth: about Homer's time? Aren't the great heavens of the true pagans – I call all these orphicising "redemption" mysteries half-Christian – aren't they clean of the "Salvation" idea, though they have the re-birth idea? and aren't they clean of the "fall", though they have the descent of the soul? The two things are quite different. In my opinion the great pagan religions of the Aegean, and Egypt and Babylon, must have conceived of the "descent" as a great triumph, and each Easter of the clothing in flesh as a supreme glory, and the Mother Moon who gives us our body as the supreme giver of the great gift, hence the very ancient Magna Mater in the East. This "fall" into Matter (matter wasn't even conceived in 600 B.C. – no such idea) this "entombment" in the "envelope of flesh" is a new and pernicious idea arising about 500 B.C. into distinct cult-consciousness – and destined to kill the grandeur of the heavens altogether at last. The Jews were particularly pernicious, for them regeneration, instead of being vital and hyacinthine, was always moral and through the nose. So I wish you would always look for the great heavens, and damn the candlesticks.⁶⁰

The letter summarises Lawrence's belief in the wisdom of the ancient pagans whose myths contained a lost 'science' as he was fond of calling it, that showed the way to that state of harmony and spontaneity when man still lived 'breast to breast with the cosmos'.⁶¹ The Orphic religion which arose in Greece between the sixth and third centuries B.C. saw the soul as a fallen god, and sought to release it from the 'wheel of birth', from further reincarnation in a physical form, and thus enable it to become once more a god living in eternal bliss. For Lawrence, however, this division of soul and body was a pernicious falsehood. He argued that the physical and the spiritual, the phenomenal and the imaginative must be fused for the greater life. The pagan religions had created their resurrection rituals as symbols of the heavenly interfusing the earthly to the enrichment of the human soul. But today 'we have lost the art of living',⁶² of achieving that state when body and soul were in balanced harmony. The clue to regeneration lay in understanding that the soul – 'that forever unknowable reality which causes us to rise into being'⁶³ – is indeed inseparable from the body: 'the body is the flame of the soul',⁶⁴ a notion very close to Blake's: 'Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.'⁶⁵ Even God is 'our experience of the senses'⁶⁶ and can be apprehended through what Lawrence

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *Apocalypse*, p. 130.

⁶² *Etruscan Places* (1932), chapter 4.

⁶³ *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, chapter 11.

⁶⁴ *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), chapter 19.

⁶⁵ 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell', *Blake: The Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (1966), p. 149.

⁶⁶ *Apocalypsis II*, Appendix III, p. 197.

called 'the *natural* religious sense':⁶⁷ 'Whenever the soul is moved to a certain fulness of experience, that is religion.'⁶⁸

Lawrence railed against St John and the smug morality of much of Revelation with its power lust for the end of the world and the reign of martyrs and its doctrine of salvation for the 'elect':

I do hate John's Jewish nasal sort of style – so uglily moral, condemning other people – prefer the way Osiris rises, or Adonis or Dionysus – not as Messiahs giving "heaven" to the "good" – but life-bringers for the good and bad alike – like the falling rain – on the just and unjust – who gives a damn? – like the sun.⁶⁹

As for my soul, I simply don't and never did understand how I could "save" it. One can save one's pennies. But how can one save one's soul? One can only *live* one's soul. The business is to live, really alive. And this needs wonder.⁷⁰

Much of his feeling against the Old and New Testaments – 'My very instincts *resent* the Bible'⁷¹ – came from the memory of his strict Congregationalist upbringing, 'that stiff, null "propriety" which used to come over us, like a sort of deliberate and self-inflicted cramp, on Sundays'.⁷² Yet looking back in 1929 he acknowledged that this training had given him that intimate knowledge of the Bible and its poetry which so deeply influenced his writing: 'I think it was good to be brought up a Protestant: and among Protestants, a Nonconformist, and among Nonconformists, a Congregationalist. Which sounds pharisaic. But I should have missed bitterly a direct knowledge of the Bible, . . .'⁷³

Lawrence had lost his faith in Christianity during his student years, and he never regained any belief in the anthropomorphic deity of his childhood. But his rejection of Christian doctrine never diminished his faith in a God, though he often refused to call him by that name,⁷⁴ nor shook his reverence

⁶⁷ 'Hymns in a Man's Life', *Phoenix II* 599.

⁶⁸ *Apocalypse*, Fragment 1, Appendix I, p. 155.

⁶⁹ Letter to Carter, 10 October 1929.

⁷⁰ 'Hymns in a Man's Life', *Phoenix II* 599.

⁷¹ *Apocalypse*, p. 59.

⁷² 'The Return Journey', *Twilight in Italy* (1916). Also see Carter 26.

⁷³ 'Hymns in a Man's Life', *Phoenix II* 600. DHL continues: 'The Congregationalists are the oldest Nonconformists, descendants of the Oliver Cromwell Independents. They still had the Puritan tradition of no ritual. But they avoided the personal emotionalism which one found among the Methodists when I was a boy.'

Nonconformist is a term generally used of all dissenters but especially those of Protestant sympathies such as the Presbyterians (in England), Congregationalists, Methodists, Quakers and Baptists. Congregationalism believes in the principle of democracy in Church government; every local church is fully independent, acknowledging only Christ as its head.

⁷⁴ See Earl Brewster and Achsah Brewster, *D. H. Lawrence: Reminiscences and Correspondence* (1934), p. 224. Earl Brewster, the American painter and student of oriental philosophy, and his wife Achsah, knew DHL at Capri (1921–2) and continued their friendship upon his return from the United States in 1925.

for the mystery and beauty of the created world. In 1911 he had written: 'There still remains a God, but not a personal God: a vast, shimmering impulse which wavers on towards some end, I don't know what –'⁷⁵ and in 1929 he wrote: 'There is Almighty God... there must be that in the cosmos which contains the essence, at least, or the potentiality, of all things, known and unknown... And this terrific and frightening and delighted potency I call Almighty God.'⁷⁶ The crucial question was always how to come into living contact with God and how to live to the fullest of one's capacity by awakening 'the religious element inherent in all life... the sense of wonder'.⁷⁷

His own sense of wonder never diminished even in these last months of his life, although encroaching ill-health progressively limited his ability to read and to work. Early in November 1929 Lawrence confessed to his friend Brewster Ghiselin, 'I'm doing nothing at the moment'⁷⁸ and to his publisher Secker, 'as for work, I haven't felt like doing anything at all and am still that way. I neither write nor paint – which I suppose is best for my health.'⁷⁹ Then his letter to Carter of 7 November betrays a growing frustration with the latter's manuscripts and an indecision about their publication.

The last batch of *Apocalypse* – and the last chapter of it very interesting. I think you are right, not to do any more of this MS. We must try and put a book together out of these four MSS. The difficulty is, you see, that for the general reader nothing hangs together, and many chapters are absolutely dry and without live interest – you have got much drier and colder than you were some years ago – whereas for the scholar there is not enough developed argument and scholarship. We must see what we can do – it will be difficult to get a publisher.⁸⁰

But his reading for the projected study of *Revelation* continued. He admired Moffatt's translation of the Bible which he was using,⁸¹ he asked Charles

⁷⁵ Letter to Ada Lawrence, 9 April 1911. *Letters*, i. 256.

⁷⁶ *Apocalypse*, Fragment 1, Appendix I, p. 155.

⁷⁷ 'Hymns in a Man's Life', *Phoenix II* 599.

⁷⁸ Letter to Brewster Ghiselin, 3 November 1929.

⁷⁹ Letter to Martin Secker, 3 November 1929. Martin Secker (1882–1978) was DHL's principal publisher in England from 1921 until the 1930s when the English rights to his books were bought by Heinemann.

⁸⁰ Letter to Carter, 7 November 1929. Mandrake Press had actually announced a forthcoming book, 'The Revelation of St John the Divine' with an introduction by D. H. Lawrence and illustrations by Frederick Carter, but the Press was suspended shortly after its announcement and the project came to nothing. See also Carter's letter to the Editor of *The London Mercury*, xxii (September 1930), 451.

⁸¹ Letter to Lahr [2? November 1929]. 'Did I thank you for the Bible and Testament? I like that Moffatt translation.' James Moffatt, *The New Testament: A New Translation* (1913).