

# New Testament Apocalypticism in the Late Second Temple Era<sup>1</sup>

## Apocalyptic Writings of the Late Second Temple Era

A degree of uncertainty surrounds the dates of most early Jewish writings and all the New Testament books.<sup>2</sup> The apocalyptic texts of the late Second Temple era are no exception in this respect.<sup>3</sup> Only five Jewish apocalyptic writings can be confidently dated to the years 66-136 CE: three apocalypses of Palestinian origin, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*;<sup>4</sup> and two apocalyptic oracles of Diasporic origin, *Sibylline Oracle 4* and *Sibylline Oracle 5*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For editions, translations, and secondary sources on the texts that are discussed in this section, see L. DiTOMMASO, *Bibliography of Pseudepigrapha Research, 1850-1999* (LSTS 39), New York 2001, and the sources cited in the notes below. For a discussion of the dates and origin of most of the texts that are discussed in this section, see J.R. DAVILA, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* (JSJ.S 105), Leiden 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Apocalyptic literature is defined by an underlying apocalyptic worldview, apocalypticism. For the purposes of the present paper, apocalyptic writings may also be defined by the presence of apocalyptic eschatology, which is to be distinguished from other kinds of eschatology, including prophetic and gnostic. See L. DiTOMMASO, «Eschatology in the Early Jewish Pseudepigrapha and the Early Christian Apocrypha», in H. MARLOW – K. POLLMANN – H. VAN NOORDEN (edd.), *Eschatology in Antiquity: Forms and Functions*, New York 2021, 235-249.

<sup>4</sup> The original language of all three apocalypses is Hebrew (or possibly Aramaic) and their concerns indicate a Palestinian rather than Diasporic origin. Dissenting voices are still heard; cf., recently, M. SOMMER, «Ein Text aus Palästina? Gedanken zur einleitungswissenschaftlichen Verortung der Apokalypse des Abraham», in *JSJ* 47(2016), 236-256.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to these five works, K.R. JONES includes *3 Baruch* and *4 Baruch* in his monograph, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (JSJ.S 151), Leiden 2011.

Although *4 Ezra* (= 2 Esdras 3–14) is set during the Babylonian Exile, after the loss of the First Temple, it was written around the year 100 CE, thirty years after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. The book consists of seven visions.<sup>6</sup> The first three (3,1–5,20; 5,21–6,34; 6,35–9,25) are revelatory dialogues in which Ezra questions the angel Uriel on the righteousness of a God who had permitted the Temple to be destroyed and his chosen people to be exiled. Ezra represents the voice of the Jewish community. His probing questions are its questions, asked from the depths of existential distress after the catastrophe of 70 CE. Uriel is the voice of Heaven. His answers vary in their details but convey only one message: God is beyond human comprehension and ultimately one must trust in him. In the pivotal fourth vision of the book (9,26–10,59), Ezra encounters a woman who is weeping over the death of her son on his wedding day. He urges her to maintain her trust in God, despite her great woe. Suddenly the woman transforms into a shining city, the New Jerusalem of the world to come. In his reply to the grief-stricken woman, Ezra has internalised Uriel's argument. His conversion to the apocalyptic ideas of history, salvation, and justice, which had been catalysed through his dialogues with Uriel, is meant for the intended readers of the apocalypse to experience themselves, so that they will arrive at the same mental space. It is the climax of *4 Ezra*. The final three visions of the book (11,1–12,51, 13,1–58, 14,1–49) relate the details of God's plan for history and are presented without disputation, the necessary adjustments having been already made in Ezra's worldview – and thus the worldview of the readers of *4 Ezra*.

*2 Baruch* (*Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*) is set in the period immediately before the Babylonian Exile.<sup>7</sup> Major features of the book include a first-person narrative introduction (chs. 1–9), a revelatory dialogue between Baruch and God on divine judgment and the end to come (13–20) and the messiah and resurrection of the dead (22–30), Baruch's vision of the forest (36–43) and the cloud (53–76), and his letter to the

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<sup>6</sup> The scholarship on *4 Ezra* is immense. The magisterial commentary of M.E. STONE, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis, MN 1990, remains the best place to begin.

<sup>7</sup> The scholarship on *2 Baruch* is less immense than that of *4 Ezra* but still substantial. See P. BOGAERT, *L'Apocalypse syriaque de Baruch* (SC 144-145), Paris 1969; G.B. SAYLOR, *Have the Promises Failed? A Literary Analysis of 2 Baruch* (SBL.DS 72), Chico, CA 1984; and J.F. HOBBS, «The Summing up of History in *2 Baruch*», in *JQR* 89(1998), 45-79, among others.

Assyrian exiles (78–87). Some of these features are approximately paralleled in *4 Ezra*. Others are unique to *2 Baruch*, such as three public consolatory addresses by Baruch to the people of Jerusalem (ch. 31–34, 44–47, and 77).

The relationship between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* remains a vexing issue. Both *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* were composed for a Jewish audience that was in existential crisis after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.<sup>8</sup> Both are formal apocalypses, according to the definition proposed in *Semeia* 14.<sup>9</sup> They were composed around the year 100 CE<sup>10</sup> and share enough material to presume a literary affiliation. But which text influenced the other remains an open question. As Michael E. Stone states, «the existence of an intimate relationship is quite obvious, but the direction of dependence is very difficult to determine».<sup>11</sup> But as Matthias Henze explains, the relationship between the two apocalypses may be phrased not only in terms of one-to-one literary dependence, but also as two similar products of the same cultural microclimate.<sup>12</sup> One indication of the latter kind of relationship is the differing responses of each apocalypse to its current existential crisis. Where *4 Ezra* is more pessimistic, deterministic, and driven by the need to convince its intended audience, *2 Baruch* is more optimistic and stresses the ongoing efficacy of human free will and the relevance of the laws of the covenant.

Less clear is the relationship between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, on the one hand, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which also dates to the same era.<sup>13</sup> The *Apocalypse of Abraham* has two main parts. Chapters

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<sup>8</sup> See STONE, *Fourth Ezra, passim*, and more recently, K. BERTHELOT, «Is God Unfair? The Fourth Book of Ezra as a Response to the Crisis of 70 C. E.», in A. LANGE – K.F. D. RÖMHELD – M. WEIGOLD (edd.), *Judaism and Crisis: Crisis as a Catalyst in Jewish Cultural History*, Göttingen 2011, 73–89, L. DITOMMASO, «Who is the «I» of *4 Ezra*?», in M. HENZE – G. BOCCACCINI (edd.), *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall* (JSJ.S 164), Leiden 2013, 119–133; and L. GORE-JONES, «The Unity and Coherence of *4 Ezra*», in *JSJ* 47(2016), 212–235.

<sup>9</sup> J.J. COLLINS, *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (Semeia 14), Missoula, MT 1979, 1–20 at 9 («Introduction: Towards a Morphology of a Genre»).

<sup>10</sup> See the useful summary in L.L. GRABBE, «*4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* in Social and Historical Perspective», in HENZE – BOCCACCINI (edd.), *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, 221–235 at 226–229.

<sup>11</sup> STONE, *Fourth Ezra*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> M. HENZE, «*4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*: Literary Composition and Oral Performance in First-Century Apocalyptic Literature», in *JBL* 131(2012), 181–200.

<sup>13</sup> Studies on the *Apocalypse of Abraham* are relatively few, due to its preservation in Slavonic translation (or version) only. See É. TURDEANU, «L'Apocalypse d'Abraham en

1–8 present an idiosyncratic retelling of Abraham’s conversion from idolatry (cf. Genesis 15). Chapters 9–36 contain the apocalypse proper and records, among other things, Abraham’s journey to Heaven, and contains an *ex eventu* review of history with an eschatological climax. As with 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* is a historical-style apocalypse. Yet it also stands apart from them its strong mystical dimension that is more in the tradition of the early Enochic writings such as the *Book of Watchers* (1 *Enoch* 1-36).

The *Sibylline Oracles* consist of twelve books of apocalyptic forecasts<sup>14</sup> that are written in Greek epic hexameters and attributed to an unnamed Sibyl.<sup>15</sup> Most of the oracles were composed by Jews living in Ptolemaic and later Roman Egypt. They were later preserved in Christian communities, where they were often augmented with Christian material. While the earliest oracles date from *ca.* 165 BCE, and the latest from the seventh century CE, only few may be dated with any degree of precision. *Sibylline Oracle 4* and *Sibylline Oracle 5* likely date from the period 66-136 CE.<sup>16</sup> Part of the case for this dating rests on the presentation in each book of the eschatological adversary, *Nero redivivus*, a figure of great moral evil (see below, §3).

Other Jewish apocalyptic works that are sometimes dated to the late-Second Temple era in fact fall outside its chronological limits and/or are Christian in their present forms. These works are listed below by the presumptive date of composition.

The *Psalms of Solomon* consist of eighteen psalms that were composed in Hebrew but now survive only in Greek and Syriac translations. The *Psalms* exhibit a mix of worldviews, but the final two

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slave», in *JSJ* 3(1972), 153-180; R.G. HALL, «The «Christian Interpolation» in the Apocalypse of Abraham», in *JBL* 107(1988), 107-110; and, most recently, A. PAULSEN-REED, *The Origins of the Apocalypse of Abraham in Its Ancient and Medieval Contexts* (BRLJ 61), Leiden 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Two text-groups of manuscripts preserve all or parts of *Sibylline Oracles* 1–8; a third group preserves all or parts of books 9–14. Books 9 and 10 contain text that is duplicated in other books. Modern editions of the *Sibylline Oracles* omit the duplicated material, but retain the numbering of books 11–14, making twelve books in total.

<sup>15</sup> Scholarly interest in the *Sibylline Oracles* has surged recently. Still, the best overview (with English translations) remains J.J. COLLINS, «Sibylline Oracles», in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, New York 1983, 319-472.

<sup>16</sup> COLLINS, «Sibylline Oracles», 381-82 (on the date of *SibOr* 4), 390 (on the date of *SibOr* 5).

Psalms are replete with apocalyptic imagery and expectations.<sup>17</sup> Most authorities date their composition to the middle of the first century BCE, and the final redaction of the collection a few decades later, well before the Great Jewish Revolt.

*Hazon Gabriel* (the *Vision or Revelation of Gabriel*) is a first-person Hebrew revelatory text that is written in ink on a stone tablet.<sup>18</sup> Opinions on its date range from the second half of the first century BCE<sup>19</sup> to the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE.<sup>20</sup> The latter date would place *Hazon Gabriel* within the compass of the present paper. However, paleographic analysis of the text of *Hazon Gabriel* suggests that it is a product of the late first century BCE,<sup>21</sup> if indeed it is not a modern forgery.<sup>22</sup>

The *Parables* (or *Similitudes*) of *Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 37-71) consist of three parables with an introduction (37) and two supplementary chapters (70-71) that were added later. The *Parables* are unlike the other four major parts of 1 *Enoch* in its content and theological ideas.<sup>23</sup> This difference, coupled with the fact that no portion of the text of the *Parables* was discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, has occasioned a wide range of theories regarding the time, place, and historical situation of its composition. At present, the consensus opinion is that the *Parables* were written in the Herodian era (late first century BCE to

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<sup>17</sup> K. ATKINSON, «Enduring the Lord's Discipline: Soteriology in the *Psalms of Solomon*», in D.M. GURTNER (ed.), *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*, London 2011, 145-163, and A.R. KRAUSE, «(Ritually) Slaying the Dragon: Apocalyptic Justification of Historical Violence in *Psalms of Solomon* 2», in *JGRChJ* 15(2019), 173-194.

<sup>18</sup> See the comprehensive treatment of all aspects of the text in M. HENZE (ed.), *Hazon Gabriel: New Readings of the Gabriel Revelation*, Atlanta, GA 2011.

<sup>19</sup> T. ELGVIN, «Eschatology and Messianism in the *Gabriel Inscription*», in *JJMJS* 1(2014), 5-25.

<sup>20</sup> D. HAMIDOVIĆ, «An Eschatological Drama in *Hazon Gabriel*: Fantasy or Historical Background?», in *Semitica* 54(2012), 233-250.

<sup>21</sup> A. YARDENI – B. ELIZUR, «A Hebrew Prophetic Text in Stone from the Early Herodian Period: A Preliminary», in *Hazon Gabriel: New Readings of the Gabriel Revelation*, Atlanta, GA 2011, 11-29, date the script to the Herodian era (from the late first century CE to early first century CE).

<sup>22</sup> J. KLAWANS, «Deceptive Intentions: Forgeries, Falsehoods and the Study of Ancient Judaism», in *JQR* 108(2018), 489-501; and Å. JUSTNES – J.M. RASMUSSEN, «*Hazon Gabriel*: A Display of Negligence», in *BASOR* 384(2020), 69-76.

<sup>23</sup> The other parts are the *Book of Watchers* (1 *Enoch* 1-36), the *Astronomical Book* (or *Book of the Heavenly Luminaries*) (1 *Enoch* 72-82), the *Book of Dream Visions* (1 *Enoch* 83-90), and the *Epistle of Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 91-108).

the early first century CE)<sup>24</sup> or a few decades later.<sup>25</sup> Either way, the *Parables* date from a period before the Great Jewish Revolt and the destruction of the Temple, to which the text does not refer. The implications of this dating with respect to the figure of the «Son of Man» are discussed in §3, below.

*2 Enoch* (or *Slavonic Enoch*) was written in Greek but survives only in two Slavonic recensions and a few Coptic fragments.<sup>26</sup> Its date of composition can be inferred solely on its internal evidence. Many of the theological features of the book imply a date well after the Second Temple period. Some aspects, however, suggest that core parts of *2 Enoch* were written before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, whose existence it seems to presuppose. Either dating – pre-70 or post-136 CE – means that *2 Enoch* falls outside the parameters of our investigation.

Similarly uncertain is the *Testament of Abraham*. Its original language is Greek, in which it is preserved in two recensions, as well as in many versions and translations in other languages.<sup>27</sup> While there are good arguments to locate the origin of *Testament of Abraham* among the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt, the date of its composition remains uncertain. The book's lack of hostility to Gentiles suggests that it was written before the Kitos War, which engulfed the Jewish populations of Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus. But it could have been composed at any time in the 150 years before that event.

More problematic still is the *Ascension of Isaiah*, whose date and compositional integrity have been much debated.<sup>28</sup> An older hypothe-

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<sup>24</sup> G.W.E. NICKELSBURG – J.C. VANDERKAM, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch Chapters 37-82* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 2012, 58-63, among many other studies.

<sup>25</sup> J.J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, New York <sup>3</sup>2016, 221.

<sup>26</sup> This general statement masks a very complicated manuscript tradition. See the papers in A.A. ORLOV – G. BOCCACCINI (edd.), *New Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only* (StJud 4), Leiden 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. D.C. ALLISON JR., *The Testament of Abraham* (CEJL), Berlin 2003.

<sup>28</sup> See esp. J. KNIGHT, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (GAP), Sheffield 1995; P. BETTILOLO ET AL. (edd.), *Ascensio Isaiae: Textus* (CCSA 7), Turnhout 1995; E. NORELLI, *Ascensio Isaiae: Commentarius* (CCSA 8), Turnhout 1995; R. BAUCKHAM, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NT.S 93), Leiden 1998, 363-390 («The Ascension of Isaiah: Genre, Unity and Date»), and the essays in J.N. BREMMER ET AL. (edd.), *The Ascension of Isaiah* (SECA 11), Louvain 2003. Generally speaking, I favour Enrico Norelli's views on the structure, composition history, setting, and purpose of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, but admit that the evidence supports alternative viewpoints. See the conversation between E. NORELLI, «The Political Issue of the Ascension of Isaiah: Some Remarks on Jonathan Knight's Thesis, and Some Methodological Problems», in

sis, now somewhat fallen out of favour, is that the *Ascension* is a Christian writing that contains a reworked Jewish apocalyptic text of the late first century CE called the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*. In its present form, though, the *Ascension of Isaiah* is a Christian text. As such, it is better to regard it as expressing the character of Christian apocalypticism of the late antique period (as discussed in §3, below) rather than reflecting Jewish apocalyptic speculation of the late Second Temple era.<sup>29</sup>

Much uncertainty also surrounds the origin and date of *3 Baruch* (the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*). The text, which was composed in Greek, survives in late manuscripts and in Slavonic translation. As it presently stands, *3 Baruch* is a Christian text. The older view is that it preserves an apocalypse that was composed in the late Second Temple era.<sup>30</sup> But whether this apocalypse was a Christian composition or a Diasporic Jewish text from Egypt is impossible to determine. Martha Himmelfarb argues that *3 Baruch* should be considered a Christian composition that was written towards the end of the fourth century.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, although the notional universe of the Qumran *yahad* (community) was apocalyptic,<sup>32</sup> none of the sectarian writings that were discovered in the Dead Sea caves and other sites falls within the chronological boundaries of our investigation, since the *yahad* did not survive the Great Jewish Revolt.<sup>33</sup>

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D. WARREN – A. GRAHAM BROCK – D. PAO (edd.), *Early Christian Voices in Texts, Traditions, and Symbols: Essays in Honor of François Bovon* (BIS 66), Leiden 2003, 267-279, and KNIGHT, «The Political Issue of the *Ascension of Isaiah*: A Response to Enrico Norelli», in *JSNT* 35(2013), 355-379.

<sup>29</sup> Following R. BAUCKHAM, «How the Author of the *Ascension of Isaiah* Created Its Cosmological Version of the Story of Jesus», in *The Ascension of Isaiah* (SECA 11), Louvain 2003, 23-45 at 24.

<sup>30</sup> D.C. HARLOW, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch) in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* (SVTP 12), Leiden 1996, 77-108.

<sup>31</sup> M. HIMMELFARB, «*3 Baruch* Revisited: Jewish or Christian Composition and Why It Matters», in *ZAC* 20(2016), 41-62. Against this view, see J.J. COLLINS, «Pseudepigrapha between Judaism and Christianity: The Case of *3 Baruch*», in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Fifty Years of the Pseudepigrapha Section at the SBL* (EJL 50), Atlanta, GA 2019, 309-330.

<sup>32</sup> It is likely that there were more than one «Qumran community» in the 150-odd years of existence. This fact does not inform the purposes of the present paper.

<sup>33</sup> Thematic and survey studies of Jewish apocalyptic texts of the Second Temple era often include the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* in their discussion. In their present forms, however, both works are products of late-antique Christianity. Several other late-antique or early mediaeval apocalyptic works are incorrectly dated to the Second Temple period in the first volume of J.H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, New York 1983.

As for the New Testament, all the genuine Pauline letters predate the Great Revolt and so are excluded from our investigation.<sup>34</sup> Included in it are the four Gospels and Acts, assuming that Mark is the earliest Gospel and the eschatological discourse of Mark 13 echoes the destruction of Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. Of the other letters, most significant from the perspective of apocalyptic content are Hebrews, which likely predates the Temple's destruction (and thus is excluded), and 2 Thessalonians, which postdates it (and is included). Most importantly, the Revelation of John, the sole apocalypse in the New Testament and the final book of the Christian Bible, was written around 80-100 CE,<sup>35</sup> and most likely the years 95-96, making it an exact contemporary of the three great late apocalypses, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

None of the earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament can be considered representative of late Second Temple apocalypticism. The *Gospel of Thomas* lacks an apocalyptic horizon. The *Shepherd of Hermas* is apocalyptic, but uncertainty about its structural unity and the composition dates of its parts cloud its place in the history of early Christian apocalyptic speculation.<sup>36</sup> One solution is to consider the *Shepherd* a composite document, with earlier «historical» material now incorporated in a document whose theological vocabulary reflects a time closer to the middle of the second century.<sup>37</sup> If so, the *Shepherd of Hermas* would attest the emergence of late-antique Christian apocalyptic speculation during the first decades of that century, alongside the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the first patristic writers.

## Methodological Guidelines

Having identified the corpus of apocalyptic texts of the late Second Temple era, what can be said about their general character? How are they representative of evolutionary trajectories of the era and prompt-

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<sup>34</sup> 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans.

<sup>35</sup> See the discussion in C.R. KOESTER, *Revelation. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 38A), New Haven 2014, 71-79.

<sup>36</sup> See the discussion in C. OSIEK, *The Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis, MN 1999.

<sup>37</sup> For a recent overview of the issues, see D. BATOVICLI, «Apocalyptic and Metanoia in the *Shepherd of Hermas*», in *Apocrypha* 26(2015), 151-170.



ed by its historical events? Are the New Testament writings of the era representative of this character, and in what ways are they distinctive? This section proposes several guidelines by which these questions may be addressed.

– *Directly or indirectly, every apocalyptic theme, symbol, presumption, and expectation in the New Testament is rooted in the soil of the early Jewish apocalyptic tradition.*

The apocalyptic worldview emerged during the Maccabean Revolt (167-164 BCE) in response to the domestic policies of Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes.<sup>38</sup> The earliest apocalyptic writings date from those turbulent years, including the revelatory visions of Daniel 7-12,<sup>39</sup> the *Animal Apocalypse* (1 Enoch 85-90), and the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (1 Enoch 93,1-10 + 91,1-17). MT Daniel received its final, apocalyptic redaction not long before the Maccabean rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in early 164 BCE,<sup>40</sup> as probably did the *Book of Watchers*. The book of *Jubilees* was written a generation later, while other apocalyptic works, including the *New Jerusalem* text and the *Aramaic Levi Document*, likely date from the same era.

The appearance of the first apocalyptic texts in Judaism during the Maccabean Revolt was a unique event. In no other time or place did apocalyptic literature spontaneously develop. Every apocalyptic text, work of art, or community that has appeared in the twenty-two centuries since the Revolt may be traced back to this unique starting point.

This includes early Christian apocalyptic speculation. Various claims have been made about the «apocalyptic» nature of the biblical

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<sup>38</sup> This statement presumes much, including a definition of «apocalyptic», on which see my thoughts in «Eschatology in the Early Jewish Pseudepigrapha and the Early Christian Apocrypha», 235-249.

<sup>39</sup> Although the main facts are not in dispute, the story of the composition of MT Daniel remains incompletely understood and many of its details are controversial, including the evolution of the book in view of the development of the apocalyptic worldview. Daniel 7 may predate the Maccabean Revolt by a few years. But both it and the visions of Daniel 8 and 9 acquired their full apocalyptic valence only with the addition of the final revelation of Daniel 10-12 and its expectation for post-mortem resurrection and judgment.

<sup>40</sup> This is presumed by the historical allusions and eschatological timetables in the revelatory visions and the integrity of the consonantal text in its Dead Sea manuscript copies, the earliest of which dates from the late second century BCE.

prophetic books, early Jewish wisdom literature, Persian-era Zoroastrianism, Ptolemaic-era Egyptian predictive texts, classical Greek writings, Ancient Near Eastern mantic literature, or the pre-Maccabean versions of the *Book of Watchers* and the *Astronomical Book*, with their revelation of heavenly secrets and the workings of the cosmos.<sup>41</sup> None of these claims withstands critical enquiry.<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence that the apocalyptic character of early Christianity derives from a source other than the Jewish apocalypticism that emerged in the second quarter of the second century BCE.

In short, although the Jewish apocalyptic tradition is not the only source of the ideas that appear in the New Testament books, it is the source of all their *apocalyptic* ideas.

– *The primary reference point of Second Temple apocalyptic texts, including those of the late Second Temple era, is scripture, apocalyptically construed.*

Although the apocalyptic texts of the Second Temple period do not usually quote from earlier writings directly,<sup>43</sup> most contain allusions to such writings or reorient their contents apocalyptically.<sup>44</sup> Examples include the book of *Jubilees*, which recasts the story of Genesis and the first part of Exodus within an apocalyptic framework, and the Revelation of John, which never quotes Daniel but draws heavily on it and on the biblical prophets. For some apocalyptic texts, though, explicit quotations of earlier writings are essential to their purposes and message. Most explicit are the Dead Sea *pesharim*,<sup>45</sup> but the Gospels and

<sup>41</sup> The root issue, and the foundation for these hypotheses, is the many definitions of «apocalyptic». Input generates output – the bird must be seen in one’s mind before it is observed in the bush.

<sup>42</sup> On the claim for the pre-Maccabean Enochic texts and its underlying rationale of equating apocalyptic cosmological speculation, see L. DiTOMMASO, «“Revealed Things” in Apocalyptic Literature», forthcoming in L. DiTOMMASO – M. GOFF (edd.), *Re-Imagining Apocalypticism: Apocalypses, Apocalyptic Literature, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (EJL), Atlanta, GA 2022.

<sup>43</sup> Two exceptions to the rule are Daniel 9, which re-interprets Jeremiah’s prophecy that the Babylonian Exile would last 70 years, and 4 Ezra 12,2-4, which re-interprets the historical identity of the fourth and final kingdom of Daniel 2 and 7.

<sup>44</sup> On the categories «quotations» and «allusions», see G.K. BEALE, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation*, Grand Rapids, MI 2012, 29-36.

<sup>45</sup> Continuous *pesharim* like *Pesher Habakkuk* exegetically interpret a series of sequential citations of a single biblical book. Thematic *pesharim* such as 4QFlorilegium

most other books of the New Testament apart from Revelation also regularly quote earlier writings.

But what are these «earlier writings»? Remarkably, they are almost exclusively the books of the Hebrew Bible (as we know it).<sup>46</sup> The evidence is obvious in quotations and allusions in the *peshtarim*, the *Hodayot*, and other sectarian texts from the Dead Sea; in the *Parables of Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, and the other Jewish apocalyptic texts listed in §1 above; in the New Testament Gospels; in the letters of Paul; and in the Revelation of John. Although *Jubilees* presumes some Enochic themes, the book itself is a re-interpretation of the story of Genesis and the first part of Exodus. Apart from scripture, the only works to which the apocalyptic texts of the Second Temple period occasionally refer are the early Enochic booklets such as *Book of Watchers*, which the Dead Sea sectarians and, to a far lesser extent, the early Christians (cf. Luke 3,37; Heb 11,5; Jude 1,14-15) regarded as authoritative.

The apocalypticists of the Second Temple period almost never cite or allude to the apocalyptic writings of their contemporaries or from their immediate past.<sup>47</sup> This is not to deny the existence of multiple parallels among the apocalyptic texts of the late Second Temple era. But such parallels are more the result of their roots in a common social environment than direct borrowing. For all intents and purposes, the authors of these apocalyptic texts either were unaware of other Second Temple apocalyptic writings or, more probably, did not seem to find them relevant. For them, the sole source of past authority, which they re-interpreted according to their own circumstances, were the books of the Pentateuch, Psalms, and Prophets. It is no surprise that the literary output of the two apocalyptic communities of the Second Temple period, the Qumran *yahad* and earliest Christianity, are in full

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(4Q174) consist of eclectic citations of biblical passages on a single theme or idea. In this respect the *peshtarim* are forerunners to the later Jewish *meforshim* and the Christian commentaries on biblical books.

<sup>46</sup> Not every book of the Jewish scriptures/Old Testament is quoted or cited with equal frequency in the apocalyptic writings of the Second Temple period. Most common are the Pentateuch, the prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the Psalms and Daniel, both of which were considered prophetic works. It is in this context that one should appreciate the relatively high number of manuscripts containing portions of text from the early Enochic booklets (excepting the late *Parables*) that were recovered the Dead Sea caves.

<sup>47</sup> The literary affiliation between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* (above, §1) is one of the rare exceptions to this rule.

dialogue with scripture to the exclusion of other writings, again excepting the earliest Enochic booklets.

– *Whereas the apocalyptic perspective was not universally accepted in Judaism in the Second Temple period, Christianity was an apocalyptic religion from inception.*

A survey of Second Temple Jewish literature that focuses on the apocalyptic texts reveals two cardinal facts. First, the chronological distribution of these texts is not uniform. Most of the robustly historical-type apocalyptic writings of the period were composed or received their final, apocalyptic redaction either during the Maccabean Revolt and its immediate aftermath or in the late Second Temple era. Put another way, the two great periods of Jewish rebellion against foreign rule generated the bulk of these kinds of apocalyptic writings.

Second, the outlook of most Jewish writings of the period is not apocalyptic but Deuteronomistic. The Deuteronomistic worldview, or «pattern», as George Nickelsburg calls it,<sup>48</sup> stresses fidelity to the Torah-observant way of life, with all its covenantal presumptions. Its theology of history positions God in a covenantal relationship with his chosen people, Israel, whose fortunes rise and fall in proportion to their collective fidelity to its laws.<sup>49</sup> In the Deuteronomistic pattern, salvation and divine justice occur within the bounds of history and in the course of human lifespans. Individuals will be rewarded in their lifetimes (cf. the court-tales of Daniel and Esther) and Israel will prosper (cf. the Deuteronomist History) if they remain righteous and keep the Law. This soteriology also underwrites the eschatology of the prophetic books, although late examples such as Joel and Ezekiel 40–48 contain supra-historical expectations that influenced apocalyptic eschatology and its underlying worldview.

The apocalyptic worldview radically differs from the Deuteronomistic. Although it is clearly rooted in a «matrix» of earlier tradi-

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<sup>48</sup> G.W.E. NICKELSBURG, «Torah and the Deuteronomistic Scheme in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha», in M. KONRADT – D. SANGER (edd.), *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und im Neuen Testament: Festschrift für Christoph Burchard zum 75. Geburtstag* (NTOA 57), Göttingen 2006, 222–235.

<sup>49</sup> G. VON RAD, «Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern», in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (TB 8), Munich 1958, 189–204; and J.D.W. WATTS, «Deuteronomistic Theology», in *Review and Expositor* 74(1977), 321–336.

tions including the biblical prophets,<sup>50</sup> the apocalyptic perspective is not merely a fusion of old ideas and traditional expectations. Instead, the first apocalyptic texts such as the revelatory visions of Daniel 7–12 proposed a strikingly new understanding of time, space, and existence that overthrew conventional notions of history, salvation, justice, and human destiny. Divine justice is understood to be retributational in both the Deuteronomic and the apocalyptic perspectives.<sup>51</sup> But apocalyptic eschatology differs from the Deuteronomic-prophetic expectations for the future in its supra-historical and other-worldly dimensions, including the hope for a unique and general resurrection of the dead and a final judgment.<sup>52</sup> In the apocalyptic perspective, justice and salvation occur outside the bounds of history and the limitations of this world, beyond the limits of normal human time and space.

The apocalyptic worldview never superseded the Deuteronomic pattern in the Jewish world during the Second Temple period.<sup>53</sup> The evidence is plain. The pre-Roman (pre-63 BCE) books of the Apocrypha, which constitute the bulk of that corpus, are devoid of apocalyptic ideas or expectations.<sup>54</sup> Apocalyptic speculation outside Palestinian Judaism is rare until the late Second Temple era. Acts 23,8 reports that, in contrast to the Pharisees, the Sadducees «say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit» (cf. Jos., *Ant.* 18.12-17, *BJ* 2.163-166), indicating a plurality of beliefs on this key apocalyptic expectation. These are just a few examples of the enduring plurality of religious ideas throughout Second Temple Judaism. Jonathan Klawans sums up this plurality well: «If all ancient Jews were compatibilists of one sort or another», he asks, «with whom was Ben Sira arguing?»<sup>55</sup> «Arguing» is

<sup>50</sup> On this background «matrix», see COLLINS, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 28-46.

<sup>51</sup> W.S. TOWNER, «Retributional Theology in the Apocalyptic Setting», in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 26(1971), 203-214 at 205: «Like it or not, there is a notion of divine retribution in the Old Testament which presents God as one who intervenes in human affairs to punish those who anger him».

<sup>52</sup> The earliest expressions are Daniel 12 and *1 Enoch* 22–25; cf. C.D. ELLEDGE, *Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism 200 BCE – CE 200*, Oxford 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Although the Deuteronomic and apocalyptic theologies of history are notionally incompatible, the ongoing tension between the centripetal pull of received tradition (Deuteronomic) and the centrifugal push of evolution as a response to change (apocalyptic) prompted several attempts to harmonize them, notably *Jubilees*, the *Psalms of Solomon*, and *2 Baruch*.

<sup>54</sup> L. DiTOMMASO, «The Apocrypha and Apocalypticism», in *The Oxford Handbook of the Apocrypha*, Oxford 2021, 219-252.

<sup>55</sup> J. KLAWANS, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism*, Oxford 2012, 60.

not too strong a word: Daniel 9<sup>56</sup> and 4 *Ezra*<sup>57</sup> are deliberate attempts to convince their audiences of the superiority of the apocalyptic theology of history over the traditional Deuteronomic patterns as a way of understanding the mechanics of divine salvation and justice.

Christianity, by contrast, was an apocalyptic religion from the very beginning. The New Testament books were written by many hands over a span of perhaps six or seven decades, in multiple settings, and are concerned with many topics besides the culmination of history. Yet each book is integrally informed by the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah by the expectation of Christ's imminent return, and by the hope for the general resurrection of the dead and final judgment of individuals. Even though New Testament Christianity embraces far more than apocalyptic speculation, apocalyptic was truly the «mother» of all Christian theology.<sup>58</sup>

– *In its essential character, although not in every characteristic, New Testament apocalyptic speculation is a species of Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic speculation.*

Apocalyptic literature can be approached on multiple levels. On one level, each text may be appreciated as an individual literary artefact with unique literary features. The apocalyptic elements of the Gospel of Matthew are dissimilar from those of the Revelation of John. Even two closely related texts such as 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* disagree in their contents, structure, and purposes. Such diversity stems from the fact that the purpose or «message» of each text is informed by the specific circumstances of its intended audience and driven by its unique requirements.

On another level, apocalyptic literature is an expression of the time and place and in which it was composed. For this and other reasons, Matthew, Revelation, and the other books of the New Testament exhibit a basic similarity in the tenor of their apocalyptic speculation that differs, for example, from that of *Pesher Habakkuk*, the *Hodayot*, and

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<sup>56</sup> L. DiTOMMASO, «Deliverance and Justice: Soteriology in the Book of Daniel» in D.M. GURTNER (ed.), *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism* (LSTS 74), New York 2011, 71-86.

<sup>57</sup> DiTOMMASO, «Who is the ⚭ of 4 *Ezra*?», and GORE-JONES, «Unity and Coherence of 4 *Ezra*».

<sup>58</sup> So E. KÄSEMANN, «Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie», in *ZThK* 57(1960), 162-185.

the other sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In other words, the presumptions, features, and expectations of early Christian apocalyptic speculation identify it as a distinctive species of early Jewish apocalyptic speculation,<sup>59</sup> in the same way that the sectarian apocalyptic literature of the Qumran *yabad* is also a species of the same genus.

On still yet another level, however, the apocalyptic writings of the late Second Temple era – Jewish and Christian alike – display a general homogeneity that differs from the tenor of earlier phases in the history of apocalypticism. The two main causes, which are essentially interdependent, are i) the evolution of apocalyptic speculation during this era, notably with respect to the development of certain themes and expectations, and ii) the historical events and their knock-on religious changes that define the seven decades of the era. It is to this topic that we now turn.

### Apocalyptic Speculation in the Late Second Temple Era and the New Testament

The catastrophic failure of the Great Revolt against Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70 CE was a defining event in Jewish history. An identical sequence of events had occurred six centuries earlier, with the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple, followed by the Exile in Babylon. The historical parallels did not escape the apocalyptic writers of the immediate post-70 era.

As noted, *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra* are set in the Babylonian period. The fictional backdrop is meant to locate their intended audiences in an analogous historical context, one where God's saving hand in history had already occurred. The message of these texts, that God would once again deliver Israel from exile, was reinforced by the pseudonymous attribution to Baruch and Ezra, revered figures from Babylonian times. The Revelation of John likewise deploys «Babylon» as a code-word for Rome. The sequence of Roman Emperors that is implied in the book's sole historical review in chapter 17 is analogous to the sequence of Emperors in the famous «Eagle Vision» of *4 Ezra* 11-12. In addition, the historical review in both texts is immediately followed by a vision of the destruction of the hated, oppressive kingdom.

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<sup>59</sup> The analogy with biological categories is meant to be illustrative; the point does not stand or fall on it.

In 4 *Ezra* (11,38-46;12,10-12), the kingdom is identified as the fourth and final world-kingdom of Daniel's vision (Daniel 2 and 7).<sup>60</sup> In *SibOr* 4.102-151, the Danielic four-kingdom schema was updated by a fifth kingdom, which was again identified with Rome.<sup>61</sup> In his *Antiquities of the Jews* (10.208-210), Flavius Josephus all but explicitly identifies the fourth kingdom with Rome.<sup>62</sup> In both the Jewish and the Christian apocalyptic writings of the era, Rome is depicted as the embodiment of the evil empire. It is corrupt and corrosive, greedy and insatiable, a state whose political and economic power over the world is contrasted with the true power of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is both the external enemy, the vilest oppressor and murderer, and the internal enemy, the source of temptation. The internal threat was typically phrased in terms of turning towards idolatry, as in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *Sibyline Oracles* 4 and 5, and the threat of conversion back to paganism.

The ramifications of the failure of the Great Revolt also transformed the notional universe of the early Christians. Although it remains an open question as to whether it or the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt had the more lasting effect on the «parting of the ways» between Jews and Christians,<sup>63</sup> the loss of the Temple stands behind the Gospel of Mark<sup>64</sup> and other New Testament writings that retrospectively sought to distance the message of Jesus from its Jewish roots. In addition, in uprooting the locus of hieratic worship of YHWH in Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple forever disengaged the gaze of Gentile Christianity from its Palestinian Jewish origins and established the foundation for the budding Christian doctrine of supersessionism.

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<sup>60</sup> See now the most recent study of the four-kingdom schema in the Second Temple period, N. SHARON, «Jewish Literature», in K. BERTHELOT (ed.), *Reconsidering Roman Power: Roman, Greek, Jewish and Christian Perceptions and Reactions* (Collection de l'École française de Rome 564), Rome 2020, 37-60.

<sup>61</sup> See further O. STEWART LESTER, «The Four Kingdoms Motif and Sibylline Temporality in Sibylline Oracles 4», in A. PERRIN – L. STUCKENBRUCK (edd.), *Four Kingdoms Motifs before and beyond the Book of Daniel* (TBN 28), Leiden 2021, 121-141.

<sup>62</sup> L.H. FELDMAN, «Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus», in *JTS* n.s. 41(1990), 386-422.

<sup>63</sup> See the discussion in J.C. PAGET, «Jewish Revolts and Jewish-Christian Relations», in J. SCHWARTZ – T.M. TOMSON (edd.), *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70–132 CE* (CRINT 15), Leiden 2017, 276-306.

<sup>64</sup> One need not agree with J. MARCUS's hypothesis of the origin of Mark in Roman Syria to accept his points on the wide-ranging influence of the Great Revolt on the theology of the Gospel; see «The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark», in *JBL* 111(1992), 441-462.



As George W.E. Nickelsburg states, the «desolation of Zion» after 70 CE was both «a cause for Jewish grief and the grounds for Christian self-rightness».<sup>65</sup>

The calamitous effects of the Great Revolt also signal the first step in the disappearance of the distinctions between the focus of apocalyptic imagination in Palestinian and Diasporic Jewish milieus. In their historical-eschatological focus, identity-maintaining purpose, and messages of consolation and exhortation, the Diasporic *Sibylline Oracles* 4 and 5 of the late first century CE stand far closer to their Palestinian literary contemporaries of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* than the second century BCE *Sibylline Oracles* stand to their contemporaries Daniel and the *Animal Apocalypse*. This is hardly a manufactured comparison: as noted, the revelatory tenor of the Jewish writings of the late-Second Temple era is strongly historical-eschatological and motivated by the same, general kind of external, imminent threat to group identity. The relatively high degree of similarity among the Jewish apocalyptic texts after 70 CE reflects the fact that Judaism had become a wholly Diasporic religion. It also marks the start of the homogenization of eschatological speculation that is a hallmark of Rabbinic Judaism.

One example of this process of loss of eschatological diversity is the anticipation for the New Jerusalem.<sup>66</sup> The hope for a new city of the future is rooted in the prophetic books, where it is expressed along two major axes that often but not always overlapped. The first axis distinguishes between the expectation for the idealised Jerusalem (a repaired and restored version of the historical city, with its irregular walls and historical features) and the ideal Jerusalem or Temple (a monumental imaginary structure, with straight walls, regular gates, and a square or rectangular shape). The second axis differentiates between the New Jerusalem or New Temple that already exists on Earth and a pre-existent heavenly structure that descends to Earth.

The early apocalyptic writers inherited both axes, but after the destruction of the Temple and city in 70 CE the main line of the expecta-

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<sup>65</sup> G.W.E. NICKELSBURG, «A New Testament Reader's Guide to *2 Baruch*: Or a *2 Baruch* Reader's Guide to the New Testament», in HENZE – BOCCACCINI (edd.), *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, 271-293 at 274.

<sup>66</sup> L. DITOMMASO, «La Nouvelle Jérusalem et le nouveau Temple dans la littérature apocalyptique du judaïsme antique», in D. HAMIDOVIĆ – S.C. MIMOUNI – L. PAINCHAUD (edd.), *La "sacerdotalisation" dans les premiers écrits mystiques juifs et chrétiens. Actes du colloque international tenu à l'Université de Lausanne du 26 au 28 octobre 2015* (Judaïsme ancien et origines du christianisme 22), Turnhout 2021, 133-144.

tion became the pre-existent, heavenly cities of monumental stature. As mentioned, 4 *Ezra* anticipates the pre-existent heavenly city. 2 *Baruch*, reflecting the overall attempt of its author to harmonise the covenantal tradition with the apocalyptic worldview, anticipates the pre-existent heavenly Temple (2 *Baruch* 4.3). Hence the great golden city that descends from Heaven in Revelation 21-22 must be understood as part of this developmental trajectory. Although rooted in older expectations such as Ezekiel 40-48, the New Jerusalem of Revelation is representative of the new tenor of extra-terrestrial anticipation for the expected abode of the Elect that were prompted by the events of 70 CE.

Another feature of apocalyptic speculation after 70 CE was an increasing focus on messianic expectation. This is not to insist that the Great Revolt led to a heightened sense of messianic expectation. The hope for a messianic figure, which could be expressed along several lines, is a regular element of both the prophetic and apocalyptic writings.<sup>67</sup> It is also clear that, despite its singular importance in the New Testament Gospels, the eschatological deployment of the term «Son of Man» predates the Great Revolt in both its Jewish (*Parables of Enoch*) and Christological applications.<sup>68</sup> That said, the expectation for a messianic figure gradually became the focus of Jewish apocalyptic speculation by the late Second Temple era. During these decades, the figure underwent a shift to a fully heavenly redeemer character that plays a central role in 4 *Ezra*, *Sibylline Oracle* 5 and Revelation (1,13; 14,14). This shift, coupled with the emphasis on the idealised heavenly New Jerusalem, underscored the conviction that the power of Rome was so overwhelming and universal in this world that justice and salvation could come only from Heaven itself.

The Antichrist is another eschatological figure that was thrust into the foreground in the apocalyptic writings of the late Second Temple era. Debate rages over the origins of the figure and its exact nature in

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<sup>67</sup> On this well-trodden subject, see J.J. COLLINS, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids, MI 2010; D. HAMIDOVIĆ – X. LEVIEILS – C. MÉZANGE (edd.), *Encyclopédie des messianismes juifs dans l'Antiquité*, Turnhout 2017, and M. NOVENSON, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users*, Oxford 2017.

<sup>68</sup> See B.E. REYNOLDS, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John* (WUNT 2.249), Tübingen 2008; L.W. WALCK, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew* (JCTCRS 9), London 2011, and the essays in G. BOCCACCINI (ed.), *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, Grand Rapids, MI 2007.

the Second Temple period.<sup>69</sup> While the fully fleshed, three-dimensional figure of the Antichrist as the eschatological opponent of the persecuted righteous in the last days is a construct of the Christian writers of late antiquity, many of the elements that went into its fabrication became prominent during the late Second Temple era. One element is the trope of the political tyrant of the end-time, which has its roots in the revelatory visions of Daniel 7–12 and other Maccabean-period apocalypses. The trope would later be refined in the eschatological figure of Nero redivivus, which plays a prominent role in the *Sibylline Oracles* of the post-70 CE era (4.119-124, 137-139; 5.28-34, 137-51, 214-227, 361-371). Another element is the idea of antichrist (or antichrists) as an enemy (or enemies) of Christ and thus of Christians and of true Christian doctrine (2 Thess 2,1-10; 1 John 2,18.22, 4,2-3; 2 John 1,7). Standing behind this element is the figure of the «false prophet», which appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospels (Mark 13,22; Matt 24,24).

Questions about the origin of evil as a metaphysical power in the world appeared early in the history of apocalyptic speculation. Several theories soon emerged. One was that evil entered the world through the sin of Adam (and Eve) in the Garden of Eden (cf. Sir 25,34, which is not apocalyptic). Another, which is related in the Enochic *Book of Watchers*, is that evil is the result of the impious actions of the rebellious angels (or Watchers). A third explanation is that God had embedded the spirits of truth and deceit in humans (1QS iii-iv), and that these two spirits or powers governed the world. A fourth interpretation, which is not inconsistent with any of the others, ascribes the existence of evil and its effects to demons<sup>70</sup> or to their monarch, Satan.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> G.C. JENKS, *The Origins and Development of the Antichrist Myth* (BZNBW 59), Berlin 1991; L.J. LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, *The Antecedents of Antichrist. A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (JSJ.S 49), Leiden 1996; G.W. LOREIN, *The Antichrist Theme in the Intertestamental Period* (JSP.S 44), London 2003, and two new studies: M. KUSIO, *The Antichrist Tradition in Antiquity* (WUNT 2.532), Tübingen 2020; and S. MALIK, *The Nero-Antichrist: Founding and Fashioning of a Paradigm*, Oxford 2020.

<sup>70</sup> The parallel interest in angels also intensified during this era; see, K. BENDORAITIS, «Apocalypticism, Angels, and Matthew», in B. REYNOLDS – L. STUCKENBRUCH (edd.), *The Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition and the Shaping of the New Testament*, Minneapolis, MN 2017, 31-51; and, in the same volume, K. PFREMMER DE LONG, «Angels and Visions in Luke-Acts», 79-107.

<sup>71</sup> R.E. STOKES, *The Satan: How God's Executioner Became the Enemy*, Grand Rapids, MI 2019.

By the first century CE, the concept of the «original sin» of Adam became the predominant explanation for the existence of evil in the world, in tandem with the rise of Satan as the avatar of evil. The idea of Adam's sin certainly plays a role in Paul's thought (1Cor 15,22; Rm 5,18). The apocalyptic writings of the late Second Temple era further strengthened the idea, whose centrality later emerged in the patristic writers. Two texts are key. According to *4 Ezra*, Adam's evil heart had opened the door to sin (3,21-22). «O Adam», exclaims Ezra, «what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants» (7,118). These words are paralleled in *2 Baruch*: «O Adam, what did you do to all who were born after you?» (48.42).<sup>72</sup> Its author, though, is more hopeful about the ongoing relevance of human free will in the deterministic apocalyptic system, adding that each person is the Adam of his own soul (54,15).

## Coda

Jeremiah prophesised that the Babylonian Exile would last seventy years (Jer 25,11-12; 29,10). By strange coincidence, this is precisely the length of the late Second Temple era, from the start of the Great Revolt in 66 CE to the end of the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 136. No doubt the Jewish apocalypticists of the era, recalling Cyrus the Great and his famous Edict, which allowed the exiles to return from Babylon (2 Chr 36,22-23; Ezra 1,1-4), hoped that God would once again bring forth a messianic figure and deliver his people from exile. This time, though, God's messianic agent would be heavenly and pre-existent, and salvation and justice would occur not within history but at the end of history.

Things turned out differently, however. The exile did not end after seventy years; in fact, it lasted for another eighteen centuries. In Judaism, the failure of Bar Kokhba Revolt quenched robust apocalyptic speculation for the next four or five centuries. During this period, the Rabbis did not generate a single apocalypse or stand-alone apocalyptic text, nor to our knowledge did they preserve the rich heritage of Second Temple apocalyptic writings except Daniel, which was already

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<sup>72</sup> A.J.F. KLIJN, «2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch», in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, New York 1983, 615-652 at 637.

embedded in scripture. While the eschatological horizon did not vanish in Rabbinic-era Judaism, it was seconded by other concerns and oriented by a general messianic utopianism.<sup>73</sup>

The character of apocalyptic speculation in Christianity also shifted radically during the first decades of the second century. Rome was still the enemy and would remain one intermittently for the next two centuries. But Christians lived in a Roman world and benefitted from its great gifts while fully aware of its great evils. As in Rabbinic Judaism, robust apocalyptic speculation of the historical-predictive kind virtually disappeared in late-antique Christianity,<sup>74</sup> although for different reasons. Unlike Rabbinic Judaism, Christian apocalyptic speculation became almost totally otherworldly in its character, its attention focused on the origin and nature of evil in the world, the fate of the soul after death, and the levels and occupants of the heavenly and infernal realms.<sup>75</sup> This shift in character occurred at different times and in different places, since Christianity had already spread across the vast Empire, and was due as much to profound social changes in Christianity and across the Empire more generally as it was to literary transmission from point to point.

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<sup>73</sup> L.H. SCHIFFMAN, «Messianism and Apocalypticism in Rabbinic Texts», in *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Vol. IV, The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, Cambridge 2006, 1053-1072; J.R. LABENDZ, «Rabbinic Eschatology: Complexity, Ambiguity, and Radical Self-Reflection», in *JQR* 107(2017), 269-296; and J. COSTA, «Littérature apocalyptique et judaïsme rabbinique: le problème de la *bat qol*», in *RÉJ* 169(2010), 57-96 (première partie), and *JAAJ* 6(2018), 83-174 (deuxième partie).

<sup>74</sup> Late antiquity as a historical period is usually taken as extending from the late second century or the Diocletian reforms of the third centuries to the rise of Islam in the seventh and eight centuries. However, the character of apocalyptic speculation underwent another radical shift in the late-fourth and fifth centuries, transitioning into the common mediaeval apocalyptic tradition; see further the papers in L. DITOMMASO – C. MCALLISTER, (edd.), *The Mediaeval Apocalyptic Tradition: From the Twilight of the Roman Empire to the Dawn of Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2023 (expected).

<sup>75</sup> On the distinctive character of late-antique apocalypticism, see my preliminary thoughts in «Il genere “apocalisse” e l’“apocalittico” nella tarda antichità», in *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo* 17(2020), 73-99.

## Parole chiave

Apocalittica – Secondo Tempio – Apocrifi – Nuovo Testamento

## Keywords

Apocalypticism – Second temple – Apocrypha – New Testament

## Sommario

Il contributo discute le caratteristiche della riflessione apocalittica nella fase tardiva del periodo del Secondo Tempio, dalla grande rivolta giudaica (66-73 CE) alla rivolta di Bar Kokhba (132-136 CE). Questo periodo rappresenta il capitolo finale dell'apocalittica nell'epoca del Secondo Tempio e l'ultimo periodo dell'antichità classica in cui gli scritti apocalittici giudaici e cristiani mostrano una relativamente stretta omogeneità.

La prima sezione passa in rassegna il *corpus* degli scritti apocalittici della fase tardiva del periodo del Secondo Tempio. La seconda sezione propone alcune linee metodologiche per valutare questi scritti nel loro insieme, come testimonianze di un comune ambiente culturale, piuttosto che come testi singoli. La sezione finale presenta alcune caratteristiche principali dell'apocalittica del tardo Secondo Tempio, alla luce degli scritti del Nuovo Testamento di quel periodo.

## Summary

This paper discusses the contours of apocalyptic speculation in the late Second Temple era, from the Great Jewish Revolt (66-73 CE) to the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-136 CE). This era represents the final chapter of apocalypticism in the Second Temple period and the last time in classical antiquity when Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings exhibit a relatively close homogeneity. The first section of this paper surveys the *corpus* of apocalyptic writings of the late Second Temple era. The second section proposes methodological guidelines by which these writings may be evaluated in their totality, as expressions of a common cultural environment, rather than as individual texts. The third and final section considers some of the main features of late Second Temple apocalypticism in view of the New Testament writings of the era.