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JEWISH APOCALYPTIC TRADITION:  
THE CONTRIBUTION OF ITALIAN SCHOLARSHIP\*

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1. *The Emergence of a New Approach*

The emergence within Italian scholarship of an original approach to the phenomenon of apocalypticism is the result of many contemporary and convergent events. The year 1979 saw in Italy the publication of the first issue of a new journal of Judaic studies (*Henoch*),<sup>1</sup> the foundation of the Italian Society for the Study of Judaism (AISG),<sup>2</sup> and the launching of the first collection of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha in Italian.<sup>3</sup> Credit goes first of all to Paola Sacchi, a leading figure in

\* This article was written during July 1990 in the course of a six-month stay in the USA as a Visiting Scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary. I would like to thank John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth for the opportunity they offered me to present this contribution on Italian scholarship. Paolo Sacchi, whose work is the main source of this article, was even so kind as to suggest some insights by letter. Michael Thomas Davis, a PhD candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary, helped me to refine language and style and for this I am very grateful.

1. *Henoch. Rivista di studi storico-filologici* is headed by a board of directors formed by the most distinguished Italian scholars in the field of Judaic studies, namely B. Chiesa, G. Garbini, L. Moraldi, P. Sacchi, J.A. Soggin, G. Tamani, and A. Vivian. The editorial board is constituted by G. Boccaccini, P.G. Borbone, and L. Rosso Ubigli. The publisher is Zamorani (Corso S. Maurizio 25, 10100 Torino, Italy). P. Sacchi was the first chief director and maintained that position until last year, when he retired and was replaced by the present director, B. Chiesa.

2. Since 1979, the Associazione Italiana per lo Studio del Giudaismo (AISG) has been the primary society for Italian scholars in the field of Judaic studies. The Associazione sponsors projects of research dealing in particular with the conservation of the Jewish heritage in Italy. Every fall it holds its annual conference which includes Italian and foreign scholars. P. Sacchi was the first president and maintained that position until last year when he retired and was replaced by the current president, F. Parente.

3. P. Sacchi (ed.), *Apocrifi dell' Antico Testamento*.

Judaic studies, professor of Hebrew and Aramaic at the Department of Oriental Studies of the University of Turin.<sup>1</sup> His efforts have been supported by a group of his collaborators, principally Liliana Rosso Ubigli and myself. The purpose of the present study is to focus on the Italian contribution to Jewish apocalyptic tradition.

The starting point is a series of studies, dealing with the pseudepigraphon *1 Enoch*. The publication of the fragment 4QEn<sup>a</sup> by Milik in 1976<sup>2</sup> proved beyond all shadow of doubt that the dating traditionally accepted by modern research was mistaken. As the text of that fragment was written by a scribe living in the first half of the second century BCE, *1 Enoch* did not, as generally thought, date from the first century BCE, using material going back about a hundred years. *1 Enoch* was much older. Studying the *Book of the Watchers*, the first and oldest book of the Enochic collection, Sacchi was able to identify five different strata, including an even older *Book of Noah*.<sup>3</sup> Such a complex stratification implied a very long redactional process, whose beginning had to reach back to the fifth century BCE.

*1 Enoch* revealed itself as an exceptional document for our knowledge of the Second Temple period. It is a collection of five books (six, if we consider the *Book of the Giants*). Through a consistent system of literary connections, allusions, and quotations, each book consciously refers to the preceding one(s). When an editor living towards the end of the first century BCE brought them together into a single volume, he was aware that they belonged to the same tradition of thought, in spite of the often strong theological differences between one book and the other.

The identification of such a long and important tradition, covering five centuries in the history of Jewish thought, raised a series of questions. What is the generative idea of this tradition? Which other documents are related to this tradition? What is the relationship between this tradition and the other traditions of Jewish thought in the Second Temple period? As *1 Enoch* is generally referred to as an 'apocalyptic' document, a rethinking of the meaning of this term was immediately necessary. It became impossible, for example, to speak of

1. Dipartimento di Orientalistica, Università di Torino (via S. Ottavio 21, 10100 Torino, Italy).

2. J.T. Milik, with M. Black (ed.), *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford, 1976).

3. P. Sacchi, 'Il "Libro dei Vigilanti" e l'apocalittica'.

an 'apocalyptic' phenomenon born at the beginning of the second century BCE in the wake of the Maccabean revolt.<sup>1</sup>

Sacchi agreed with Carmignac<sup>2</sup> that the adjective 'apocalyptic' describes the documents that possess the same literary genre as Revelation (named for its *incipit*: *apocalypsis Iesou Christou*). Sacchi also agreed with Collins<sup>3</sup> who sees, in this literary genre, a linkage of a certain complex of ideas. The analysis of frequency of the most recurrent themes in the apocalypses shows that the 'apocalyptic' genre is an expression of a wide cultural phenomenon that was spread well beyond the borders of Israel. The apocalypses witness to not only a form but a content; they are the vehicles of a definitive 'world-view'.

So we can legitimately define and delimit on a formal basis within Jewish literature a literary *corpus* (the 'apocalypses'), and catalogue the themes related to this *corpus*, even the related 'world-view' ('apocalypticism'). What Sacchi stressed, however, was that neither the 'apocalyptic' literary genre, nor the 'apocalyptic' world-view constitute a tradition of thought (or even a family of traditions), which may be compared with 'other' Jewish traditions of thought, such as Pharisaism, Essenism, and early Christianity.

As emphasized in my 'E'Daniele un testo apocalittico?', the presence of certain recurring themes, even the same recurring themes, is not enough for the identification of a tradition of thought. Not only can an identical form be used by different traditions, but identical ideas (even the same 'world-view') can assume a different meaning (a role, a specific weight) in different contexts. It is well put by Sanders when he writes: 'One may consider the analogy of two buildings. Bricks which are identical in shape, color and weight could be used to construct two different buildings which are totally unlike each other.'<sup>4</sup> Two documents do not necessarily belong to the same tradition of thought because they share the same literary genre and the same world-view. An ideological affinity exists only if they have consciously organized and developed their thoughts out of the same generative idea.

1. See D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, 1964).

2. J. Carmignac, 'Qu'est-ce que l'apocalyptique?', *RevQ* 10 (1979), pp. 3-33.

3. J.J. Collins (ed.), *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (Semeia 14; Missoula, MT, 1979). Also see by the same author, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York, 1984); and J.H. Charlesworth, 'The Apocalypse of John: Its Theology and Impact on Subsequent Apocalypses', *The New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (Metuchen, NJ, 1987).

4. E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1977). This quotation from Sanders does not imply agreement with all the aspects of his methodology.

The possibility of a comparative analysis depends on the results of this ideological check. In order to be correct, such an analysis must only be made between commensurable units, that is, between sets defined according to homogeneous criteria. If the apocalyptic phenomenon is only a literary genre (albeit one including its own definite 'world-view'), it can be compared only with other 'forms' of Jewish literature, such as poetry, testaments, halakah, midrash, and hymns, each with its own definite 'world-view'. At the very most we could ask why a certain movement of thought tends to prefer one or another literary genre, that is, one or another 'world-view'. But only an 'apocalyptic' tradition defined according to ideological criteria—if such a tradition does exist—can be compared to other Jewish ideological traditions. Neither Christianity, nor Pharisaism, nor Essenism is a phenomenon defined according to literary criteria.

The study of *1 Enoch* shows that we can also speak of an 'apocalyptic' tradition of thought, which is witnessed first of all by the continuity of the Enochic tradition. The composite and multiform structure of *1 Enoch*, on the other hand, shows how this 'apocalyptic' tradition is expressed historically through different literary genres. The inclusion of a document within the 'apocalyptic' tradition has to be weighed critically according to purely ideological criteria. It should not be taken for granted as the result of a literary affinity. The research on the historical development of the 'apocalyptic' genre (and of its 'world-view'), as well as the analysis of its relationship with the many Judaisme of that time (including the 'apocalyptic' tradition), are both very significant and necessary tasks. Any confusion between the formal (and form-content) level and the ideological level, however, must be carefully avoided.

Sacchi's first contribution on *1 Enoch* was published in 1979 in the opening issue of the journal *Henoch*. The following years were devoted to identifying the inner characteristics of the 'apocalyptic' tradition.<sup>1</sup> The research showed that the 'apocalyptic' tradition is not a homogeneous and static system. We are dealing with a complex and dynamic trend of thought which covers a long period of time, bears developments and deepening, and therefore cannot be fitted entirely into a unitary scheme or a univocal definition. Yet, in spite of all the differences, it is possible to identify its core in a peculiar conception of

1. See the first volume of the *Apocrifi dell' Antico Testamento*; L. Rosso Ubigli, 'Dalla Nuova Gerusalemme alla Gerusalemme Celeste: contributo per la comprensione dell'apocalittica'; P. Sacchi, 'Ordine cosmico e prospettiva ultraterrena nel post-esilio. Il problema del male e l'origine dell'apocalittica', and mostly his 'Riflessioni sull'essenza dell'apocalittica: peccato d'origine e libertà dell'uomo'.

evil, understood as an autonomous reality, antecedent even to humankind's ability to choose. This conception of evil is not simply one of so many 'apocalyptic' ideas; it is the generative idea of a distinct ideological tradition of thought, the corner-stone on which and out of which the whole 'apocalyptic' tradition is built.

After having identified in the history of Jewish thought a very ancient 'apocalyptic' tradition, it became possible to compare this tradition with other Jewish (and non-Jewish) traditions of thought. Two articles by A. Loprieno<sup>1</sup> explored the bounds between the Jewish 'apocalyptic' and some Egyptian traditions of thought. In particular, the research on the Jewish wisdom literature immediately revealed itself rich and interesting.<sup>2</sup> The polemical interlocutors of Job, Qohelet and Ben Sira ceased to be anonymous and indefinite. Facing the apocalyptic tradition, the wisdom authors met the challenges of a contemporary tradition, which was bearer of an autonomous and alternative system of thought. For the team of scholars involved with Sacchi in the Italian edition of and commentary on the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,<sup>3</sup> the 'apocalyptic' tradition has become a familiar and indispensable notion for understanding those ancient documents.

As a result of ten years of research, our understanding of Jewish thought in the Second Temple period has become richer and the debates within Judaism on the eve of the Christian era much clearer. Problems like the origin of evil, the freedom of human will, the sources of knowledge, and the value of the Law for salvation, were not the product of foreign (Hellenistic) influences, but open questions within Judaism itself. Alternative solutions, each deeply rooted in the religious experience of the Jewish people, stood face to face for centuries and would impassion and divide generation after generation, finally leading to the great schism in the late first century CE between Christians and Pharisees.

With the identification of the 'apocalyptic' tradition and of its generative idea, it became possible also to assess the inclusion of other documents within this tradition, according to definitive ideological

1. A. Loprieno, 'Il pensiero egizio e l'apocalittica giudaica'; and 'Il modello egiziano nei testi della letteratura intertestamentaria'.

2. See P. Sacchi, 'Giobbe e il Patto (Gb. 9.32-33)'; L. Rosso Ubigli, 'Qohelet di fronte all'apocalittica'; G. Boccaccini, 'Origine del male, libertà dell'uomo e retribuzione nella Sapienza di Ben Sira'.

3. F. Franco, L. Fusella, A. Loprieno, F. Pennacchietti, L. Rosso Ubigli, and P. Sacchi are the scholars who prepared the first volume. P. Bettiolo, G. Boccaccini, M. Enrietti, M. Lana, P. Marrassini, L. Rosso Ubigli, and P. Sacchi worked on the second volume.

criteria. This analysis led Sacchi to exclude the Christian 'apocalyptic' documents (such as Revelation). Christianity is the expression of a related, yet different, tradition of thought. The interpolation of *1 En.* 71.14, belonging to a very ancient phase of its transmission, shows that the 'apocalyptic' tradition was not only earlier but contemporary to first-century Christianity, maintaining its own autonomy. How is it possible to think of Revelation and the *Book of Parables* as belonging to the same tradition, when for the former the 'Son of Man' is Jesus of Nazareth (Rev. 1.12-18) and for the latter that eschatological figure is Enoch (*1 En.* 71.14)? A detailed check<sup>1</sup> also suggested to me that Daniel could not be included within the 'apocalyptic' tradition, and affirmed the deep shift that may exist between documents sharing the same imagery, and even the same world-view.

On the other hand, since his first attempt at a comprehensive history of the 'apocalyptic' tradition,<sup>2</sup> Sacchi included the *Assumption of Moses*, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, 2 *Enoch*, 2 *Baruch*, and 4 *Ezra*, as the commentaries in the second volume of the *Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento* would agree. The 'apocalyptic' tradition was discovered to be much broader than the Enochic corpus. The field of research became the whole Jewish literature in the Second Temple period.

In the 1980s, this approach to the phenomenon of apocalypticism has played a significant role within Italian scholarship. It has strongly shaped even works not directly linked with the Turin group.<sup>3</sup> Also in the international context the interest (if not the agreement over method) has grown. F. García Martínez has taken up some ideas from Sacchi, and argued a generative role for the apocalyptic tradition in the Qumran movement.<sup>4</sup> J.H. Charlesworth deals extensively with the opinions of Italian scholarship in the Italian edition of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament*.<sup>5</sup> J.J. Collins speaks about Sacchi's attempt at an ideological definition of apocalyptic as the 'most notable and influential attempt in the last decade'.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the Italian bibliography is not easy to find, and the works it

1. G. Boccaccini, 'E'Daniele un testo apocalittico? Una (ri)definizione del pensiero del Libro di Daniele in rapporto al Libro dei Sogni e all'apocalittica'.

2. P. Sacchi, 'Per una storia dell'apocalittica'.

3. See esp. B. Marconcini, *L'apocalittica* (Torino-Leumann, 1985); and C. Marcheselli-Casale, *Risorgere, ma come?* (Bologna, 1988).

4. F. García Martínez, 'Les traditions apocalyptiques à Qumran', in C. Kappler (ed.), *Apocalypses et voyages dans l'au-delà* (Paris, 1987).

5. J.H. Charlesworth, *Gli pseudepigrifi dell'Antico Testamento e il Nuovo Testamento* (ed. and trans. G. Boccaccini; Brescia, 1990).

6. See Collins's article in the present volume.

contains are not translated. Hence, while this body of literature remains almost barred to students of other countries, it is only partially known even by specialists.

The research, of course, is still in the making, and must be assessed in the broader context of an attempt at a comprehensive history of Jewish thought in the Second Temple period.<sup>1</sup> This is the task in which the Italian scholars mentioned are primarily involved. Summarizing the present results of research, we can already speak of four basic periods of apocalyptic tradition. These tentative conclusions are both the framework and the starting-point of our future research.

## 2. *An Outline of the History of Apocalyptic Tradition*

### a. *First period (fifth–end third century BCE)*

The *Book of the Watchers* is the oldest apocalyptic work still extant.<sup>2</sup> The first of its five strata dates back to the fifth century BCE. The author's interest is centered on the problem of the origin of evil, experienced as a reality which involves humankind, but which is metaphysically autonomous. Sin, with all its unhappy consequences, derives from a 'contamination' of nature which involves both human beings and material things (*I En.* 10.7; 12.4; 15.3; 19.1). Some angels, smitten with love for women, decided to come down to earth and take wives for themselves (*I En.* 6.7). The sin of the angels took place at the time of Jared, father of Enoch, and damaged irreparably the whole order of nature. God had given powers of generation only to men because they are mortal (*I En.* 15.4).

According to some unrelated passages present in this stratum, the cause of evil is to be found above all in the fact that the fallen angels taught women those sciences that were celestial secrets, not to be revealed to humankind (*I En.* 8–9.6). This idea is not followed up, however; astrology, which is here condemned openly, will become in the later *Book of Astronomy* the basis of all sound knowledge.

Giants were born of the union between angels and women; these monstrous beings filled the earth with sorrow. Following the suppli-

1. A brief outline of history of Jewish thought in the Second Temple period can be found in P. Sacchi, 'Da Qohelet al tempo di Gesu', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 19.2 (1979), pp. 1-32. See also his 'Introduzione' in the first volume of the *Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento*, and, mostly, his volume *Storia del mondo giudaico* (Torino, 1976).

2. On the *Book of the Watchers* and its relationship with the 'canonical' Pentateuch, see P. Sacchi, 'Il Libro dei Vigilanti e l'apocalittica', and his commentary on *I Enoch* in the first volume of the *Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento*.

cations of humanity and the intercession of the faithful angels, God threw the rebel angels down to hell and killed the giants. These measures were not enough, however, to prevent the spread of evil; the souls of the giants continued to roam freely on the earth (*1 En.* 16.1) in the form of evil spirits, inciting humankind to evil deeds and causing damage of every kind.

This account of the fall of the angels was used also by the author of *Gen.* 6.1-4 in a brief and demythologized summary; this shows he was familiar with the myth but did not agree with its interpretation. The giants were not evil spirits but simply 'the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown'.

Some scholars maintain that the *Book of the Watchers* is a longer version of the Genesis story. But the demythologized and very abbreviated form of the latter makes it obviously of later date; without the text of the *Book of the Watchers* we would not understand the tiny passage in Genesis. The Genesis text can no longer be attributed to J, but rather to a post-exilic editor.

In the vision of things expressed in the *Book of the Watchers*, humanity appears at one and the same time as cause and victim of sin, possibly more victim than cause. In *1 En.* 10.8 it says: 'all sin (or each sin) must be attributed to Asael', that is, to the leader of the fallen angels, who later will be called the Devil.

In the subsequent strata of the *Book of the Watchers*, the angelic sin will be duplicated and pushed further back in time. If the contamination of nature, and therefore the thrust of evil against humankind, was a product of the time of Jared, the sin of Cain is not explained (*1 En.* 22.7). Other angels sinned even before the Watchers sinned by having sexual intercourse with women. On the fourth day of creation, the angels of the seven planets that revolve around the earth carried their planets outside the orbit ordained by God, damaging creation from the beginning. Adam was put into a universe already contaminated. This theme is not touched upon, however, in the *Book of the Watchers*.

Another new element is the concept of the immortality of the soul. The soul of the dead person no longer descends without being judged into Sheol, where the just and the unjust alike live a life that is a non-life, far from the light of the sun and the radiance of God. The souls of the dead gather in a valley to the extreme west of the earth, where the just and the unjust are clearly separated, and the just are sheltered from the attacks of the Evil One. It is from here that the souls will come forth at the time of the Last Judgment, which will ratify for all eternity the state of both the blessed and the damned (*1 En.* 22).



Already in his lifetime the individual lives in a two-dimensional universe. Its real world is not this world, but the one in which his soul will continue to live. This world is dominated by evil and will be destroyed at the end, when God wills it, but the just are already saved in the hands of God, waiting to reach the valley in the west where there is no longer suffering or sin. Given these notions, Qohelet's strong criticism against those who believe in the immortality of the soul can be seen to make good sense.<sup>1</sup>

In the final stratum of the work there is a radical change. The better world is no longer far away in the west, open to the souls of the just, but is placed at the end of history and destined for those just who are there in that moment of time. The concept of immortality of the soul loses importance. God will save humanity in this world and not in a spiritual dimension (*1 En.* 25.6).

In the second book of the Enochic collection, the so-called *Book of Astronomy*,<sup>2</sup> sinfulness comes to coincide with humankind's status as creature ('No one of the flesh can be just before the Lord; for they are merely his own creation', *1 En.* 81.5). The book seems to assign *ab aeterno* to each his own individual destiny, to the extent that Enoch can read it in the 'tablets of heaven' (*1 En.* 81.2). Individual responsibility is gravely compromised, salvation is entrusted to an extraordinary intervention by God, and the idea of the Covenant is emptied of all substance. Ben Sira's reflection on the origin of evil, humankind's free will, and the principle of retribution was directed mainly against the apocalyptic tradition.<sup>3</sup>

#### b. *Second period (second century BCE)*

The *Book of Dream Visions*,<sup>4</sup> written about 163 BCE, presents itself as a story of humankind from the beginning down to the author's own lifetime. History is predetermined and revealed to Enoch in two dream visions.

1. On the relationship between Qohelet and the apocalyptic tradition, see L. Rosso Ubigli, 'Qohelet di fronte all'apocalittica'.

2. On the *Book of Astronomy* see P. Sacchi, 'Testi palestinesi anteriori al 200', and his commentary on *1 Enoch* in the first volume of the *Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento*.

3. On the relationship between Ben Sira and the apocalyptic tradition, see G. Boccaccini, 'Origine del male, libertà dell'uomo e principio retributivo nella Sapienza di Ben Sira'.

4. On the *Book of Dream Visions*, see P. Sacchi's commentary on *1 Enoch* in the first volume of the *Apocrifi dell'Antico Testamento*.

The thought of the *Book of Dream Visions* is more systematic than those of the *Book of the Watchers* and the *Book of Astronomy*. There is a leading rebel angel (he now could be called the Devil), who is the true and proper principle of evil. He is a creature who took advantage of his liberty to rebel against God and to encourage other angels and human beings to do the same. Neither the intervention of the good angels to reduce the rebels to impotence (*I En.* 87–88), nor the Flood is able to eradicate evil from the earth. The three sons of righteous Noah are not the same; only Shem is like his father, while Japheth is violent and Ham is profoundly evil (*I En.* 89.9). History witnesses a continuous expansion of evil, with no way for humankind to oppose its spread. The vision scrupulously goes over the various episodes of the ancient history of Israel, but no reference is made to the Covenant on Sinai. The idea of the Covenant presupposes a recognition of the individual's freedom of choice between obedience and transgression. In the *Book of Dream Visions* the idea that the individual can be responsible for its own salvation is simply unthinkable; only God's intervention can oppose evil. The ideal of the just person who fulfills the Law is replaced by the figure of the elect who is chosen and justified by God.

After the Babylonian exile the situation collapses; the seventy angels, who were entrusted by God to watch over and govern Israel, transgressed in such a way that the entire history of Israel in the post-exilic period unfolds under a demonic influence (*I En.* 89.59ff.).

God limits himself to watching the dramatic succession of events. History has to follow its course until the final catharsis when the divine judgment is pronounced and the world is purified of evil. God's wrath can thus be laid to rest and the Messiah, prototype of a new humanity, is to guide the eschatological reign. There is no further question of the immortality of the soul. The world that is blessed and free from evil is the world to come.

Against this view, the contemporary book of Daniel tries to show that the decline of history is neither the consequence of an angelic sin, nor the effect of an evil force, but the right punishment by God for the transgression of the Covenant. Through the concept of resurrection the author stresses that the Law remains, even in a condemned history, the criterion of an individual's judgment.<sup>1</sup>

1. On the relationship between Daniel and the *Book of Dream Visions*, see G. Boccaccini, 'E'Daniele un testo apocalittico? Uno (ri)definizione del pensiero del Libro di Daniele in rapporto al Libro dei Sogni e all'apocalittica'.

c. *Third period (first century BCE–early first century CE)*

The third apocalyptic period bears witness to a serious internal crisis. The apocalyptic tradition now faces the problem of human responsibility. The *Epistle of Enoch*<sup>1</sup> is peremptory in tone. At least in the form in which it has come down to us, it no longer speaks of fallen angels, but stresses the responsibility of humankind for sin. 'In the same manner that a mountain has never turned into a servant... likewise, neither has sin been sent upon earth. It is humankind who have themselves created it, and those who commit it are destined to be accursed' (*1 En.* 98.4). The author maintains, however, that the whole history is predetermined and that sin is an evil force, and not simply a transgression or the consequence of human freedom. Only in the fourth apocalyptic period will there be an attempt to reconcile the responsibility of humankind for sin and the general contamination of nature.

In particular, the third apocalyptic period develops the theme of mediation. Between God and humankind superhuman figures (such as the Son of Man in *1 Enoch*, or Melchizedek in *2 Enoch*)<sup>2</sup> appear, to whom the apocalyptic writers give functions which were formerly seen as God's prerogatives. The idea that it should be God himself, who at the Great Judgment condemns sinners, seems to be repugnant to the apocalyptic writers of this period. The more the Judgment is seen as terrible and inexorable, the more the function of Judge is taken away from God and given to others. In the *Epistle of Enoch* it will be the Watchers themselves (*1 En.* 91.15) who exercise judgment over humankind. It is in the *Book of Parables*, however, that this theme is most highly developed. Its author abandons the broad outline of human history as predetermined by God that characterizes the *Book of Dream Visions* and the *Epistle of Enoch*, and returns to a vision of things closer to that of the early phase of apocalyptic tradition. Predestination no longer has its place in history but only in the fate of the individual: 'The Lord of the Spirits created the distinction between light and darkness, and separated the spirits of the people' (*1 En.* 41.8). The

1. On the *Epistle of Enoch* and the *Book of Parables*, see P. Sacchi, 'Enoc etiopico 91.15 e il problema della mediazione', and his commentary on *1 Enoch*, in the first volume of the *Apocrifi dell' Antico Testamento*.

2. On Enoch and Melchizedek as superhuman figures, see L. Rosso Ubigli, 'La fortuna di Enoc nel giudaismo antico', and C. Gianotto, *Melchizedek e la sua tipologia*. On *2 Enoch* in particular, see Sacchi's commentary in the second volume of the *Apocrifi dell' Antico Testamento*.

influence of the Essenic doctrine of the two spirits seems apparent here (cf. 1QS 3.15-19).<sup>1</sup>

The attention of the author is drawn to the heavenly world again, where both the faithful angels and the souls of the just dwell. Evil came about by the sin of the angels and, guided by the *Book of Dream Visions*, the author distinguishes the angel who committed the first sin (the Devil) from the fallen angels (*1 En.* 54, 55, and 59); the judgment seems only to look at the latter and never at the former (*1 En.* 61.8). Even this idea probably owes its existence to the influence of the Essene tradition, for which the Devil is created as such by God and, therefore, cannot be judged for what he has done. A new concept of evil appears in the *Book of Parables*. It is linked to an idea that was first expressed in the *Book of the Watchers* but was not taken up again; the cause of evil is not a contamination of nature but rather the disclosure of heavenly secrets, those concerning science and the arts and above all the construction of arms (*1 En.* 64.1-2).

The gaze of the author is above all directed toward the present, and he identifies the wicked as all those who wield some sort of power in the world. Science has given power to some human beings: that is, the ability to oppress other human beings. The powerful of this world are the only sinners and their sin, as is said repeatedly, is above all else a sin of pride (*1 En.* 48.8-10).

The just person is the reverse of the sinner. As the sinner is the one who has the power to oppress, so the just is the one without the strength to defend himself. The fact that an individual lives in either of these conditions does not seem to depend on anything else than God's choice. It is not by chance that the just is usually called 'the chosen one'.

But the climax and most characteristic element in the thought of the *Book of Parables* is the figure of an eschatological savior called the 'Son of Man', which depends obviously on the vision in Daniel 7. The Son of Man has the power to reveal the true justice of God. This evidently does not coincide with what has already been revealed, that is to say, with the Law (*1 En.* 48.1-3). The Son of Man will cast down kings from their thrones, rub the faces of the powerful in the dust, fill them with shame and make their seats into darkness (*1 En.* 46.4-6).

The Son of Man was created before the stars (*1 En.* 48.3), he will be the light of the people and the hope of all who suffer. This Son of Man is also called Messiah (*1 En.* 48.10) and thus the messianic function is

1. On the Dead Sea Scrolls, see L. Moraldi, *I manoscritti di Qumran* (Torino, 1971; 2nd edn, 1987).

welded on to that of the Son of Man. There will be a final and ineluctable Day of Judgment for evildoers and the world to come will be then inaugurated, a world in which 'the Lord of the Spirits will live above humankind and these will live, eat, sleep and rise with that Son of Man' (1 En. 62.14).

This figure of the Son of Man meets the demands existing in Jewish thought and turns them into a fairly coherent system. Already in the book of *Jubilees*, written in the second century BCE and ideologically very close to Essenism and to the apocalyptic tradition,<sup>1</sup> God had foreseen that he himself would dwell on earth with humankind (*Jub.* 1.26). Now, in the *Book of Parables*, God remains in heaven, but his representative will be seen on earth and will dwell for ever among humankind. On the other hand, the Judgment of destruction and condemnation will not be carried out directly by God, as foreseen in the earlier periods of the apocalyptic tradition, but by his representative. Mercy is claimed as the fundamental attribute of God (1 En. 50.4); the violent realization of his justice is the duty of his Messiah.

These ideas are fundamental for an understanding of Jesus and his movement. In particular, the Christian concept of the Son of Man depends strongly on the *Book of Parables*. However, there is a very important development. The eschatological judge of the apocalyptic tradition turns, in Jesus' teaching and in his own self-consciousness, above all into him who 'has the authority on earth to forgive sins' (Mk 2.10; Mt. 9.6; Lk. 5.24).<sup>2</sup>

#### d. *Fourth period (late first and early second centuries CE)*

If the third apocalyptic period shows traces of Essene doctrine, the fourth is explicable mainly in the light of problems arising from the Christian and Pharisaic traditions. We cannot understand the last developments of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition apart from the Pharisaic reaffirmation of the centrality of the Law in the life of Israel on one hand, and the messianic speculations of Christianity on the other hand. In 2 *Baruch*,<sup>3</sup> dating from towards the end of the first century, there is an attempt to clarify the relationship between the idea

1. On the book of *Jubilees*, see Sacchi's commentary in the first volume of the *Apocrifi dell' Antico Testamento*.

2. On Jesus' conception of the Son of Man, see P. Sacchi, 'Il messianismo ebraico dalle origini al II sec. d.C.', *Quaderni di Vita Monastica* 38 (1988), pp. 14-38.

3. On 2 *Baruch* and 4 *Ezra* see P. Sacchi, 'L'apocalittica del I sec.: peccato e giudizio', and the commentaries by P. Bettiolo and P. Marrassini respectively in the second volume of the *Apocrifi dell' Antico Testamento*.

of predestination and the demands of human freedom and responsibility.

Predestination is limited to the plane of history in general, which unfolds according to a divine plan and is divided into twelve periods. The author's concept of history is expressed in ch. 53 through 'the vision of light and dark waters'. According to the usual line of apocalyptic thought, the dark element gets stronger and stronger until the Messiah appears. He has superhuman traits like the Son of Man in the *Book of Parables* and the New Testament. This Messiah appears both at the beginning and at the end of history, but shares neither in creation (unlike the Gospel of John) nor in the Last Judgment (unlike the *Book of Parables*). The idea of *mediation*, which was so important for the third apocalyptic period as well as for Christianity, disappears. The superhuman Messiah limits himself to condemning to death on Mt Zion the last earthly king, prior to the resurrection and the Last Judgment (2 Bar. 3).

With regard to sin, the author knows the myth of the sin of the angels and women (2 Bar. 56.10-13), but is unaware of its implications. He also knows the sin of Adam (cf. Paul), but stresses that Adam was simply a bad model for those who would come after him (2 Bar. 18.2). The angels themselves sinned by following the example of Adam (2 Bar. 56.10-11). The relationship between humankind and angels is reversed: sin began with humankind and not with angels, and it is stressed that the angels sinned 'because they were free' (2 Bar. 56.11); humankind and angels are both free.

The last of the great Jewish apocalypses is that of 4 *Ezra* which, according to most recent research, belongs to the beginning of the second century rather than to the end of the first. It is the most complex of all the apocalyptic works, and its comprehensibility is obscured by the strong emotion displayed by the author.

The work is shot through with a profound pessimism about the fate of humanity. Rather like Job, the author complains to God about his injustice toward humankind in general and the Jews in particular. He does not understand why such a terrible disaster has overtaken Jerusalem, and no more does he understand why all humankind should be enveloped in the catastrophe of sin. The work gives the impression of a meditation on the unhappiness of humanity, but the unhappiness the author has in mind is not that of suffering and death, but rather of the final destiny of humankind which for him, with few exceptions, is eternal perdition.

The angelic sin has vanished off his horizon; the fall of the angels is not even mentioned. The emphasis is on the sin of humanity, but above

all the sin of Adam. The former depends on the latter, in contrast to 2 *Baruch*. At the center of our author's meditation is the Law (4 *Ezra* 8.19-20; 9.31-32). In his justice God offered the Law to all humankind, but only Israel accepted it; such is the meaning of its election. This implies the damnation of all pagans because they have refused the Law. The situation of the Jews is no better, however. They certainly possess the Law, but they transgress it. No one is without sin; this is the recurring idea. No one can save himself because the individual is fully responsible for his evil deeds (4 *Ezra* 3.8; 7.72, 104, 127; 8.56-58).

On the other hand, in juxtaposition with the idea that humankind is entirely free and therefore entirely responsible, the author of 4 *Ezra* places the idea that Adam, besides the gift of free will, had something else even more powerful. According to the Latin text, which is the language in which 4 *Ezra* has come down to us, Adam had a *cor malignum* ('evil heart'), which gave rise to the sin (*cor enim malignum baiulans primus Adam transgressus est*: 'led by his evil heart, Adam first transgressed', 4 *Ezra* 3.21).

The concept of an evil heart corresponds closely with the *yeşer hara'* of the rabbinic tradition, but the idea held by the author differs from it because he considers it a truly evil (if not satanic) power, stronger than the individual's capacity to choose. 'Adam was defeated by it, as were also all who were born of him. It produced an everlasting disease: the Law was in the people's heart along with the evil root. What was good disappeared and the evil remained' (4 *Ezra* 3.21-22). The Flood was useless; even after it the evil heart was still in the world. The gift of the Law on Sinai was unable to bear fruit (4 *Ezra* 3.20, 27). Nothing remains except to curse Adam and in a certain sense also the One (God) who is ultimately responsible for the situation: 'It would have been better if the earth [this term is an euphemism for God] had not produced Adam, or at least having produced him, had restrained him from sinning. . . Adam, what have you done? When you sinned, the fall not only affected you, but also us who are your descendants. What good is it to us, if an eternal age has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death?' (4 *Ezra* 7.117-19).

God's reply does not show a way out, nor give a more realizable hope. 'This is the meaning of the struggle in which everyone born on earth has to engage; if he is defeated he shall suffer the consequences, but if he is victorious, he shall receive what I have promised' (4 *Ezra* 7.116-28).

So, without being able to offer an answer to the questions raised in the course of its long history, the apocalyptic tradition goes downhill.

The success of Christianity and Rabbinitism as the two winning Judaisms of antiquity would depend strongly on their ability to meet the questions of a questioning generation with more coherent and reassuring words.

### 3. Conclusion

This brief outline shows how rich an ideological approach to the phenomenon of apocalypticism can be. We have identified not only a literary genre or a world-view, but also a tradition of thought: that is, one of the Judaisms of the Second Temple period. We do not know what this tradition was called or what it called itself in ancient times. The fact that a large number of the 'apocalypses' belongs to this tradition, not to mention the weight of (ab)use which has given an ideological sense to the term as well, authorizes Sacchi's decision to denote this tradition of thought 'apocalyptic'. Another label might be chosen, of course; VanderKam for example suggests using the term 'Enochic tradition'.<sup>1</sup> The same tradition of thought, however, also continues in documents where the figure of Enoch is not central, or is even missing (*2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*). *2 Enoch* is a case in point. In the first section of the document the protagonist is the revealer, Enoch, while in the final section—where there is no longer a revealer—the leading figure becomes Melchizedek. The changing of protagonist does not disturb the ideological continuity.

While the term 'apocalypse' denotes a peculiar literary genre and 'apocalypticism' the world-view of the apocalypses, the 'apocalyptic' tradition cannot be defined as the tradition of thought of the apocalypses. It is rather one of the Jewish traditions of the Second Temple period, which, like other contemporary traditions, was influenced by apocalypticism and wrote apocalypses.

The fact that most works of the apocalyptic tradition are actually apocalypses does not mean that these two sets are coincident, nor that this tradition is a sort of 'subgroup' of an 'apocalyptic' corpus defined according to literary criteria. The documents belonging to the apocalyptic tradition are neither all, nor only apocalypses; some of the major apocalypses (such as *Daniel* or *Revelation*) belong to different (if not opposite) traditions of thought.

Within the 'apocalyptic' literary genre, the 'apocalyptic' world-view, and the 'apocalyptic' tradition, there is the same relationship as

1. J.C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Washington, DC, 1984).



within the genre 'halakah', the 'halakic' world-view, and the Rabbinic tradition. Although most material of the Rabbinic tradition is 'halakic' in shape and content, we find the genre 'halakah' even in other Jewish traditions of thought (Essenism, Early Christianity, Philo, etc.). On the other hand, the Rabbinic tradition knows (uses and is influenced by) other literary genres and other world-views (including the apocalyptic one).

Perhaps calling a literary genre, a world-view, and a tradition of thought (three distinct and non-overlapping categories) by the same adjective 'apocalyptic' may appear to be a slipshod use of terminology. Yet this choice has had the great merit of making us more aware of the necessity of further specification in the use of the term 'apocalyptic'. It has prevented us from inappropriate comparison between incommensurable sets. We have learned, above all, that using 'apocalyptic' in absolute terms may be today (after at least a century of overuse) radically misleading. We should *always* specify whether we mean the apocalyptic literary genre, the apocalyptic world-view, or the apocalyptic tradition.

The problem is not terminological. It deals with method. Terms may be interchangeable; hermeneutical categories such as literary genre, world-view, and tradition of thought are not. The call to a better methodological clarity in the study of the 'apocalyptic' phenomenon remains valid, whatever the labels we decide to use in cataloguing the different aspects of this complex phenomenon.

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