

THE DIVINE WARRIOR AND COSMIC CATASTROPHE: THE IMPACT OF THE  
SIBYLLINE ORACLES ON INTERPRETATION OF MARK 13:24-25.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Chester for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Susannah Esther McBay.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

All references to ancient texts follow the guidelines found in Alexander, P., *SBL Handbook of Style: for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, Peabody, Mass, 1999.

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
<i>AndRev</i>	<i>Andover Review</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms in Spiegel der neuen Forschung. Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972-</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
APA	American Philological Association
<i>APB</i>	<i>Acta patristica et byzantina</i>
APOT	<i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English. Edited by R. H. Charles. 2 vols. Oxford, 1913</i>
ARCA	ARCA: Classical & Medieval Texts, Papers & Monographs
<i>Areth</i>	<i>Arethusa</i>
<i>AV</i>	<i>Archa Verbi</i>
BCOT	Baker Commentaries on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BDAG	Danker, F. W., W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature</i> . 3d ed. Chicago, 2000
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1907
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BO	Berit Olam
BPJ	Buch des Propheten Jesaja
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>

CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCS	Cambridge Classical Studies
CCSS	Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CGLC	Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
COP	Cambridge Oriental Publications
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CSCP	Cornell Studies in Classical Philology
DDD	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden, 1995
DTTBYML	<i>Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</i>
ECC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> . 16 vols. Jerusalem, 1972
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EPRO	Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain
ES	Emerging Scholars
Études Juives	École pratique des hautes études, Sorbonne 6 section: Sciences économiques et sociales Études juives
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
GAP	Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
GS	Chamberlain, G. A., <i>The Greek of the Septuagint: A Supplemental Lexicon</i> . Peabody, 2011.
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBQ</i>	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHP</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Philosophy</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSJPHRP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>

JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTC	<i>Journal for Theology and the Church</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LJSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, and R. McKenzie. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9 <sup>th</sup> ed. With revised supplement. Oxford, 1996.
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
NBBC	New Beacon Bible Commentary
NIBCOT	New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology &amp; Exegesis</i> . Edited by W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, 1997
NIGTC	New International Greek Text Commentary
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OC	<i>Oriens Christianus</i>
OCM	Oxford Classical Monographs
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983, 1985
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
Scholia	<i>Scholia</i>
SCSS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series
SecCent	<i>Second Century</i>
SJP	<i>Southern Journal of Philosophy</i>
SLLRH	Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History
SP	Sacra Pagina
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SUSIA	Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TPAPA	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT II	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2 Reihe
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>



## ABSTRACT

The meaning of cosmic catastrophe language (CCL) in Mark 13:24-25 is widely contested: both in regards to what type of language is used and to what event it refers, namely the fall of temple at Jerusalem in 70CE or the Parousia of Christ. Recent contributions from Marcus, Shively and Angel have identified the mythological background behind the language, but still interpret this mythology in different ways. In this thesis I elucidate the tradition behind CCL, specifically that of the Jewish Divine Warrior Tradition (DWT), to assess further its development in the Second Temple period and inform interpretations of Mark 13:24-25. Using a historical-critical, criterion-based approach, I demonstrate that the DWT is used in thirteen texts in the *Sibylline Oracles* and that this use expresses divine opinion and judgement upon political entities and spiritual powers that oppose God and his heavenly host. I also show that the DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3-5 incorporates elements from Stoic cosmological imagery, which was separated from the Stoic doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις with the advent and rise of Roman Stoicism. The result of this has various implications for navigating the interpretations of Mark 13:24-27 and I conclude that the cosmic catastrophe of vv.24-25 is best understood as describing the cosmic upheaval and demise of spiritual powers that relate to the temple and its leaders at the coming of the Divine Warrior.

## DECLARATION

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

Signed: 

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> April 2017

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in clouds” with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. (Mark 13:24-27)

Mark 13.24-27 depicts a catastrophe of cosmic proportions: the stars fall from heaven, the sun and moon are darkened, and the Son of Man comes on clouds. The first two verses paint a picture of significant upheaval in the heavens. Even without addressing the complex language of the second two verses, the interpretation of the first half of the saying (vv.24-25) is a matter of ongoing dispute. In the context of Mark 13 the issues surrounding these four verses increase.<sup>1</sup> The cosmic catastrophe language (CCL) of Mark 13:24-25 is generally

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<sup>1</sup> For example, on a first reading, the end of the world language does not appear to fit with Jesus’ opening declaration in v.2 that the stones of the Temple would be brought down. However, the disciples’ question in response to this has been argued to open up the chapter to a wider eschatological purview: “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that *all* (πάντα) these things are about to be accomplished?” (Emphasis added). Mark 13 then appears to be about the conflict in Jerusalem in the late 60s CE from vv.5-23 when the focus changes to Christ’s final return and those events accompanying it.

The word “eschatology” is different ways. While “ἔσχατος” refers to last things, cf. *LSJ*, 699-700, the conflict arises as to the nature and scope of these last things. Do the last things refer to Jewish eschatological hope in the restoration of the temple, arrival of a messiah and re-establishment of the Davidic kingship or, instead, those events which are connected to Christ’s final return and Last Judgement? Alternately, does it refer to those events which occur post-mortem (beyond linear time)? Generally, I try to avoid the term because of such ambiguity in meaning. Where I do use the term, I refer to the anticipated events connected to the second coming and Last Judgement. For the origins of this imminent view of eschatology see Johannes Weiss, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (trans. Richard H. Hiers and David L. Holland; Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: the Secret of Jesus’ Messiahship and Passion* (trans. Walter Lowrie; New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1914), *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (trans. W. Montgomery; London: A. & C. Black, 1910). Although eschatology has been explained in different ways, I use this definition as it is that which is used in reference to the language of Mark 13:24-25. For an overview of the differing views on eschatology see D.E. Aune, “Eschatology,” *ABD* 2:575-609. Against Weiss and Schweitzer, Dodd argued for a view of eschatology that was already realised by the death and resurrection of Christ. C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Glasgow: Collins, 1978). For perspectives on eschatology that contains both realised and imminent elements, see Werner G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus* (23; London: SCM Press, 1957), George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (London: SPCK, 1980), Dale C. Allison, *The End of the Ages has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). Some OT scholars, such as Mowinckel, eschewed the word for its irrelevance to future hope described in OT, while von Rad and others reframed it as hope for God’s saving intervention in the near-future. See Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (trans. G.W. Anderson; New

thought to be about one of two different possibilities. The first concerns events relating to the eschatological era: the CCL describes the end of the world, either figuratively or literally, and/or theophanic signs that accompany Christ's arrival.<sup>2</sup> The second possibility is that the CCL is part of a metaphorical description of an historical event, namely the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70CE.<sup>3</sup> In a number of recent contributions from scholars on both sides of the debate, there has been an increased focus upon the mythological background of this CCL in Mark 13:24-25. Moving away from modern *literal* or *metaphorical* categories, a number of scholars argue that the two verses are mythological, but there is no consensus as to its interpretation.<sup>4</sup> Some argue the mythology points to God's final intervention in human history, others to God's intervention in the first century.<sup>5</sup>

I propose that a way through these conflicting issues, especially those concerning the mythological background of Mark 13:24-25, can be found in the work of Caird, who showed both the importance and value of mythology in biblical texts and also traced the development of language of powers and principalities into the NT.<sup>6</sup> While he did not address Mark 13:24-

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York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 125-154, Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; vol. 2; London: SCM Press, 1975), 114-119.

<sup>2</sup> Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 1997), Adela Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27A; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (COQG 1; London: SPCK, 1992), N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (COQG 2; London: SPCK, 1996). That is not to say it is a new position: it was also proposed by Ezra P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark* (ICC 27; New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1896), Philip Carrington, *According to Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971), R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Hooker, *Mark*, Andrew R. Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man: The Hebrew Chaokampf Tradition in the Period 515 BCE to 200 CE* (LSTS 60; London: T&T Clark, 2006), Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, Elizabeth E. Shively, *Apocalyptic Imagination in the Gospel of Mark: The Literary and Theological Role of Mark 3:22-30* (BZBW 189; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Unless I state otherwise, by 'first century' I exclusively refer to the first century of the Common Era.

<sup>6</sup> G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980).

25 directly with respect to this language of powers, his assessment of NT mythological traditions as emerging from those of the OT, in particular that of the Divine Warrior, is instructive for the Markan debate.<sup>7</sup> The majority of assessments of mythology in Mark 13:24-25 have not sought to understand it within an identifiable and traceable Jewish mythological tradition. However, there is over a century's worth of OT scholarship that traces the myth (from which Mark draws) back to other ancient Near Eastern (ANE) traditions. From Gunkel in 1896 onwards, there have been a wide array of contributions that have noted the OT language of cosmic battle between God and his armies and the forces of chaos which seek to oppose him, such as Rahab, Leviathan, Yam or Mot, and their similarity to the old Canaanite myths in which Baal battles with Yammu, Môtû and Lôtan.<sup>8</sup> This evidence from the OT has received little attention in NT scholarship, although the original myths are sometimes identified as part of the contextual background. In part, this may be because little is known about how the tradition developed into this Second Temple period. The OT has been extensively studied, but texts from the Pseudepigrapha, deuterocanonical literature, Qumran and elsewhere may shed more light on this issue. In short, there is much to be gained from a study of non-biblical texts to illuminate how the DWT developed in the time of the NT.

Two recent works have begun to examine the language found in such texts. Angel's 2006 work examines how DWT developed in this period. He argues that DWT was alive well into the Second Temple period and that a number of NT texts, Mark 13:24-27 included, use the tradition, and most often with reference to non-eschatological events.<sup>9</sup> However, the following year, Adams published a book on CCL in the Second Temple period which

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<sup>7</sup> I use Divine Warrior (DW) myth and Divine Warrior tradition (DWT) interchangeably throughout this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> KTU 1.1-1.6.

<sup>9</sup> Angel, *Chaos*.

presents a challenge to Angel's thesis.<sup>10</sup> With a different focus to Angel, Adams examines Graeco-Roman as well as Jewish texts and argues that the CCL found throughout refers to a real destruction of the physical cosmos in the eschatological age. While Adams does not focus on the DWT, his attention to CCL texts includes passages that Angel focuses upon, as well as those which Angel identifies as possibly containing DW material. Adams' introduction of evidence from Graeco-Roman sources is invaluable, especially given the general absence of Graeco-Roman perspective in Angel's work. One important set of texts which Adams focuses upon as Jewish texts subject to the Graeco-Roman influence is the *Sibylline Oracles* 3-5. These, he argues, draw from Stoic beliefs about cosmology. Yet, as I will argue, Adams' research depends upon a view of cosmology from the early Stoics and does not account for the significant developments that occurred in shift to Roman Stoicism. Michael Lapidge outlines this change and his thesis offers valuable insight for NT scholarship. Lapidge argues that Stoic cosmology, as a philosophical tenet, was on the decline by the first century (although not wholly absent) and that the imagery associated with it was now used for other purposes. Lapidge's thesis is in striking contrast to NT scholarship which generally assumes that Stoic cosmological imagery (SCI) was as strong as it ever was. I will examine the SCI in Lucan's *Pharsalia* and will demonstrate, in support of Lapidge's thesis, how SCI around the late Second Temple period was increasingly used for poetic purposes that do not concern the end of the world. As *Pharsalia* demonstrates, SCI can be used to describe the chaos of political disaster and civil war. For this reason, it cannot be sustained that CCL refers to a real end of the physical cosmos: the evidence from Roman Stoicism actually points in the opposite direction. While I agree with Adams that the *Sibylline*

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<sup>10</sup> Adams acknowledges Angel's work, but it was published too late for him to appraise it in his book. Edward Adams, *The Stars will Fall from Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and its World* (LNTS 347; London: T & T Clark, 2007).



*Oracles* have been influenced by Stoic language, I argue that this influence is one of poetic imagery not philosophical belief or eschatological expectation.

The aim of this thesis is to elucidate the mythological background of the CCL of Mark 13:24-25 and, by so doing, offer a critique of current interpretations of the text. I will do this by assessing to what extent the DWT is present in the *Sib. Or.* 3-5 and how it is used. Not only will this illuminate how this tradition was used in the Second Temple period but it will do so using texts which are often referred to in arguments about the CCL in Mark 13. I will also examine how SCI is used in the handful of texts it appears. I will show that *Sib. Or.* 3-5 does use DWT and does so in association to historical events in the ancient world, frequently (but not only) the Roman Empire and the Emperor Nero. The DWT used shows little concern with eschatological ideas, even where elements of SCI are incorporated. The evidence therein supports the conclusion that, in general, the DWT in the Second Temple period was used as a means of myth-making in response to, or anticipation of, historical events and was unafraid to draw from relevant imagery from the wider Graeco-Roman world. This is the cultural milieu out of which Mark drew his imagery. I will conclude that the mythology of the Divine Warrior in the Second Temple period suggests that Mark 13:24-25 uses it to describe events in the spiritual realm that relate to the fall of the temple and Jerusalem in 70CE. Not only is the CCL used to depict in theophanic terms the arrival of the Divine Warrior, but also the demise of those spiritual powers that are over the Jewish temple and its leaders. This is the more persuasive reading, given the narrative of Mark 13 itself, the mythological background of the DWT in the Second Temple period and the little evidence within the text itself to warrant a novel use of the tradition that would divorce this mythology from current historical events.

## Recent Scholarship on Mark 13:24-25

### *Introduction*

I begin with a review of recent contributions to the debate around Mark 13:24-25 to ascertain the current state of the field (as well as that of G.B. Caird because of his importance referred to above).<sup>11</sup> I will examine them in chronological order to show how different themes have been adopted and developed. This will include arguments about the origin of the sun, moon and stars language, how it should be interpreted (whether in the context of the OT or by another means), as well as addressing for what purpose the CCL is used in the wider context of Mark 13. I will also review how different scholars have engaged with the possibility of mythological interpretations of Mark 13:24-25, including connections to DWT and/or other mythological traditions.

### *Literature Review*

G.B. Caird

Although Caird did not write extensively on Mark 13, nor vv.24-27, the work he did on interpreting biblical language has been drawn on by others and deserves a brief overview. In *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* Caird examines the function of language within Scripture, examining its different forms and meaning.<sup>12</sup> After assessing the difficulty of the language of eschatology and how it has been variously defined,<sup>13</sup> he makes three propositions

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<sup>11</sup> By recent I mean from 1993 onwards. For a review of views on Mark 13 prior to this see G.R. Beasley-Murray's useful book: *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Caird, *Language*.

<sup>13</sup> Caird argues for an understanding of eschatology that argues with Weiss and Schweitzer that it "was central to the understanding of biblical thought," but not that it is end-of-the-world; with Bultmann in that it was "a Jewish form of self-understanding" but not that it was "above all a Jewish understanding of history;" with Dodd that eschatology had been realised in the "beliefs of Jesus and the early church" but not in so far as it inadequately distinguished the events of the gospel from those that followed. Caird, *Language*, 271.

about how biblical writers used end-of-the-world language: (1) biblical writers thought the world had a beginning and end in the future; (2) end-of-world language was used metaphorically to refer to that “which they well knew was not the end of the world” and (3) there may also have been some misinterpretation by the hearers.<sup>14</sup> Within this context he argues that Mark 13 and other passages were not to be understood as eschatology in the sense that it speaks of the coming end-of-the-world anticipated in the near future. Instead he proposes that it is best understood in the light of the question that gave rise to the passage, namely of the destruction of the temple. However, Caird did not conclude that it is therefore not eschatological. While it may not be so by the definitions of Weiss and Schweizer, Caird argued it is eschatological in the sense that it makes known in the present something of God's judgement at the end-of-the-world. This is clarified further in his *New Testament Theology*<sup>15</sup> in which he describes Mark 13 as “bifocal” and thus sees a dual layer of meaning in Mark 13:24-27.<sup>16</sup> This is illuminated in the footnote concerning the frequency with which scholars “have failed to recognize not only that it was a function of prophetic eschatology to present historical crises in the light of God's final judgement of history, but also that to describe any event as eschatological is also to make a statement about the End.”<sup>17</sup>

Caird's work is valuable for its careful evaluation of the different uses of eschatology as well as his attention to the nuances of meaning in the language of the OT. However, his thesis leaves the question of Mark 13:24-25 unexamined. Elsewhere he argues that the language of powers such as *δυνάμεις* in Isa 34:4 refers to real spiritual beings in the DW

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<sup>14</sup> Caird, *Language*, 256.

<sup>15</sup> Posthumously put together and edited by L.D. Hurst, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Caird and Hurst, *New Testament Theology*, 256.

<sup>17</sup> Caird and Hurst, *New Testament Theology*, 256, n.231.

tradition into the NT<sup>18</sup> yet he does not examine the implications of these for Mark 13:24-25, which draws directly from the Isaianic text. This disjuncture between his interpretation of the source texts of Mark 13:24-27 and the passage itself is also seen in his discussion of prophetic hyperbole. He comments that “prophetic hyperbole is seen at its most vivid in passages where the judgement of God on a particular nation is depicted in terms of cosmic collapse” and then examines Isa 13:10, 34:4 amongst other texts, but again does not apply this to his reading of the gospel passage.<sup>19</sup> Caird’s interpretation of Mark 13:24-25 is based on broader attempts to rehabilitate a more sophisticated understanding of eschatology across the NT, rather than deal with the particularities of the text and the mythological language he elsewhere identifies as having continued into the Second Temple period.

N.T. Wright

In contrast, N.T. Wright argues for an explicitly non-eschatological reading of the language of cosmic catastrophe characteristic of Mark 13:24-25.<sup>20</sup> He makes a series of arguments as to why this language should be read historically. First, the language found in Jewish apocalyptic should be read as metaphorical.<sup>21</sup> The language is not depicting actual events

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<sup>18</sup> Caird, *Principalities*, 1-22, esp 11. See also Divine Warrior myth in Gen 1; Job 26:11-14; Pss 74:13-17, 89:8-10; 93:1-14; Isa 27:14; Caird, *Language*, 226-242.

<sup>19</sup> Caird, *Language*, 113-117, 260.

<sup>20</sup> Wright, *People*, 280-338, 390-396, Wright, *Victory of God*, 320-368.

<sup>21</sup> I use “apocalyptic literature” to describe texts which (a) contain a heavenly ascent and revelation of God, usually mediated by an angel and/or (b) employ language and features commonly associated with such heavenly ascents, even if they do not contain an ascent of their own. These features may include, but are not limited to: the language of angels and demons, Yahweh as the divine warrior, a cosmic perspective on human history and empires, as well as language of cosmic collapse and universal judgement. Gruenwald and Rowland rightly argue that apocalyptic is, in its essence, a heavenly revelation that does not have to include events concerning the end of world history. This vertical dimension of apocalyptic is primary, cf. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (AGJU Bd 14; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980). Against this, others argue that apocalyptic came from prophetic literature, beginning as a type of “literature of the oppressed” who had could not see hope for their present situation without God breaking in. This event was usually eschatological. See D. S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, 200 BC - AD 100* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 17, H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic: A Study of Jewish*

which will take place, but rather has borrowed “cosmic imagery”<sup>22</sup> to invest events within history with theological meaning. To read such language literally would do a “great violence” to the text.<sup>23</sup> He argues:

Different manners of speaking were available to those who wished to write or talk of the coming day when the covenant god would act to rescue his people. Metaphors from the exodus would come readily mind; and, since the exodus had long been associated with the act of creation itself, metaphors from creation would likewise be appropriate. The sun would be turned to darkness, the moon to blood. This is to say: when the covenant god acts, it will be an event ... of cosmic significance ... Indeed, it is not easy to see what better language-system could have been chosen to articulate Israel’s hope and invest it with its full perceived significance.<sup>24</sup>

Secondly, Wright argues that the worldview of the disciples and early church did not anticipate the end of the space-time universe. Their concern was not with space, time and literal cosmology, but “the Temple, Land, and Torah, of race, economy and justice.”<sup>25</sup> The anticipated “age to come” often described in apocalyptic literature frequently refers to the return from exile and rebuilding of the temple in Jewish thought. Wright describes it as the “re-betrothal of Yahweh and Israel, after their apparent divorce.”<sup>26</sup>

Wright’s third argument for a non-eschatological interpretation is that the CCL refers to the fall of Jerusalem and coming judgement upon the temple which is evident from the

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*and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963), Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 301-308, Käsemann emphasised the expectation of the Parousia as central to apocalyptic, see Ernst Käsemann, “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 109 n.1 Collins’ follows a similar view, although he argues that although the historical dimension of eschatology is often overemphasised in apocalyptic, there is nonetheless some form of eschatology typically present. If it is not historical, then the eschatology is post-mortem and operates “beyond the bounds of history.” John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 11.

<sup>22</sup> Wright, *People*, 284.

<sup>23</sup> Wright, *People*, 284.

<sup>24</sup> Wright, *People*, 283.

<sup>25</sup> Wright, *People*, 285.

<sup>26</sup> Wright, *People*, 301.

language of Mark 13 as a whole and parallels.<sup>27</sup> As well as his previous arguments about metaphorical language and the ancient Jewish worldview, Wright claims the theological significance of the fall of Jerusalem has been lost, and attempts to rehabilitate it on the basis of Mark 13:2 (as well as Luke 13:1-5) and its parallel with the Mount of Olives as a place of judgement, the coming kingdom of God, and a coming battle against Jerusalem found in Zechariah 14 (cf. vv.4-5, v.9 and vv.1-3 respectively). This interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 hinges on how the similarity of the language of these two verses with texts which speak of judgement on Babylon or other cities, (e.g. Isa 13:6-19; 14:4, 12-15; 34:3-4; Ezek 32:5-8; Joel 2:10-11, 30-32; 3:14-15 and others).<sup>28</sup> Wright draws on a series of texts to justify his position. However, his choice of texts is somewhat selective. As I will show below, there are a number of other texts which suggest alternate interpretations of Jewish apocalyptic that undermines his argument, including passages from the *Sibylline Oracles*. These have constituted a substantial part of the critique of his work.<sup>29</sup>

#### Garland and Hare

Garland and Hare both read Mark 13:24-25 with reference to eschatological events, although they differ in specifics.<sup>30</sup> Garland argues that these verses depict the cosmic confusion that will occur at the coming of Christ.<sup>31</sup> They are not signs predicting it is about to happen, but part of the response to Christ's arrival and thus function as a sign of the glory of the event,

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<sup>27</sup> Wright, *Victory of God*, 343-346.

<sup>28</sup> Wright, *Victory of God*, 354-360.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. also Dale C. Allison, "Jesus and the Victory of Apocalyptic," in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God* (ed. Carey C. Newman; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 126-141, Adams, *Stars*.

<sup>30</sup> David E. Garland, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), Douglas R. A. Hare, *Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Garland, *Mark*, 489, 500-501.

making obvious what is already happening. While Garland notes the imagery's origin in OT texts (Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10; 3:4, 20), he does not give any weight to this body of imagery from which Mark draws.

Hare argues that Mark 13:24-25 refers to a slightly different eschatological event. He sees Mark 13:24-25 as poetry describing the end of time and Christ's return (which fulfils Dan 7:13-14).<sup>32</sup> There is some sense in which it is a Day of Yahweh given the background of vv.24-25 in Isa 13:9-10 and Joel 2:10-11, although Hare notes that "remarkably" Mark removes any emphasis upon vengeance and focuses upon the glory of Christ's coming.<sup>33</sup> Like Garland, Hare gives little attention to traditions around the interpretation of Isa 13 and Joel 2, and does not attend to the DW mythological tradition that connects the texts from Isaiah, Joel and Dan 7 together. He notes the Day of the Lord allusions, but does not examine the traditions from which they emerged.

M. Hooker

Hooker follows a similar line in her interpretation of Mark 13:24-25 and the surrounding chapter. She argues that the first half of Mark 13 focuses on the temple and the second half on the end of history and Christ's Parousia.<sup>34</sup> Within this latter half, vv.24-25 constitute the signs preceding this time.<sup>35</sup> She acknowledges the background of the language in Isaiah, connecting it also to the prophetic tradition of the Day of the Lord and the advent of judgement, taking the argument beyond the metaphorical-literal lines. Here Hooker advances beyond Hare's thesis. She argues that vv.24-25 use the language of myth and as such cannot

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<sup>32</sup> Hare, *Mark*, 175-176.

<sup>33</sup> Hare, *Mark*, 176.

<sup>34</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, 300.

<sup>35</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, 300, 318-319.

be used to answer “commonsense [sic] questions about what will actually happen.”<sup>36</sup> While Hooker reframes the argument in terms of myth and in doing so hints towards the possibility of a more contextualised reading, she leaves the issue hanging. She notes the dependence of vv.24-25 on Isa 13:10 and 34:4<sup>37</sup> and its general similarity to other OT and extrabiblical texts, but these parallels are never explored. She gives no explanation for the quite different events, historical and eschatological, to which they refer. The non-Isaianic OT texts<sup>38</sup> reflect the “horrors of disasters such as wars and earthquakes,” the Isaiah passages depict the Day of the Lord, and the extrabiblical texts (*4 Ezra* 5:4; *1 En.* 80:4-7; *Sib. Or.* 3:801-3), as well as Mark 13:24-25, describe the approaching end.<sup>39</sup>

B.M.F. Van Iersel

Van Iersel argues that Mark 13:24-7 refers to an eschatological, end-of-time event which is described metaphorically, at least in part.<sup>40</sup> It is the event to which the signs point and transcends Peter’s question about the temple to a question about the end.<sup>41</sup> Mark 13:24-25 depicts an actual cosmic catastrophe, although the Graeco-Roman readers would have heard it as a reference to the Greek pantheon and “heavenly bodies” which had “divine power.”<sup>42</sup> It is interesting that van Iersel here diverges from the other scholars who have argued for the literality of CCL on the basis of Graeco-Roman traditions: he argues that the mythological

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<sup>36</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, 319.

<sup>37</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, 318.

<sup>38</sup> Joel 2:10; 3:15; Ezek 32:7f.; Amos 8:9.

<sup>39</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, 318.

<sup>40</sup> B. M. F. van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (JSNTSup 164; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 387-410, B. M. F. van Iersel, “The Sun, Moon, and Stars of Mark 13,24-25 in a Greco-Roman Reading,” *Bib* 77, no. 1 (1996).

<sup>41</sup> van Iersel, *Mark*, 393.

<sup>42</sup> van Iersel, *Mark*, 405.



reading would have come from non-Jewish readers in contrast to the more literal meaning of the Judaeo-Christian text itself.<sup>43</sup> This contrasts with the view of several scholars.<sup>44</sup> Also van Iersel's analysis does not address two important qualifications for his argument: (1) why does Jesus answer a question Peter did not ask, introducing the eschatological perspective, and (2) what are the grounds for rejecting vv.24-25 as a reference to the heavenly host. He notes the antecedents from Isaiah but ignores their implications, especially given the powers language which appears in Isa 34:4 which may refer to angelic powers.<sup>45</sup>

#### C.A. Evans

Evans argues the cosmic catastrophe in Mark 13:24-25 is theophanic language which symbolises the magnitude of God's arrival in judgement.<sup>46</sup> The context of this judgement is eschatological given the introductory ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις in v.24, which parallels eschatological oracles in the LXX of the OT (e.g. Jer 3:16; 5:18; 38:29; Joel 3:2; 4:1; Zech 8:23),<sup>47</sup> and that the cosmic catastrophe images allude to the undoing of creation<sup>48</sup> at the occurrence of a theophany. The latter is indicated by the use of the verb σαλεύω in Mark 13:25 which, although it does not occur in the OT texts used in the passage, appears in other Jewish theophany accounts in the LXX (e.g. Judg 5:5; Job 9:6; Pss 17:8; 113:7; Amos 9:5; Mic 1:4; Hab 3:6; Nah 1:5).<sup>49</sup> Evans rejects the possibility that the verses are concerned with

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Allison, "Victory," 126-141.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Adams, *Stars*, Allison, "Victory," 126-141. They both argue that Graeco-Roman traditions support a real expectation of cosmic catastrophe.

<sup>45</sup> Caird, *Principalities*, 10-11.

<sup>46</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Evans, *Mark*, 326.

<sup>48</sup> Evans, *Mark*, 328. Here he follows Gundry, *Mark*, 782.

<sup>49</sup> Evans, *Mark*, 328.

the fall of the temple because of the inaccurate details in vv.5-23<sup>50</sup> and the “eschatological tenor of v14-23” which indicates a post-70CE date.<sup>51</sup>

Evans’ conclusion that ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις indicates an eschatological oracle does not account for wide usage of the phrase. There are 50 occasions where the phrase is used and the majority of these are not eschatological.<sup>52</sup> Additionally Mark uses the same phrase in two other passages which are not eschatological oracles beyond the occasions he uses it in Mark 13.<sup>53</sup> Also, Evans’ argument that the CCL describes the undoing of creation is problematic as only one aspect of creation is referred to in Mark 13:24-25: the heavens. But not one of the OT texts he mentions refer to a shaking of the heavenly powers. They exclusively focus upon either the shaking of the earth (Amos 9:5; Hab 3:6; Ps 113:7 LXX; Job 9:6) or the shaking of the mountains (Judg 5:5; Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5) or both (Ps 17:8 LXX). This actually raises the question of why Mark focuses only upon the undoing of heavenly bodies and powers and ignores rest of creation.

## B. Witherington

Witherington argues that Mark 13 is Jesus’ take on the “conflicting eschatological interpretations of his time.”<sup>54</sup> The eschatological age, according to Jesus, is already here and

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<sup>50</sup> E.g. The fall of the temple did not include a world-scale suffering and desolating sacrilege.

<sup>51</sup> Evans, *Mark*, 328-329.

<sup>52</sup> Only Jdt 8:1 repeats the phrase exactly as it appears in Mark 13:24. The remaining 49 occurrences vary words order (cf. Gen 6:4; Deut 17:9; 17:12; 19:17; 26:3; Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 20:27, 28; 21:25; 1 Sam 3:1; 4:1; 8:18; 28:1; 1 Kgs 9:9; 2 Kgs 10:32; 15:37; 20:1; 2 Chr 21:8; 32:24; Neh 16:7; 23:15, 23; Jer 3:16-18; 5:18; 27:4, 20; 38:29; Ezek 38:17; Dan 10:2; 11:20; Joel 3:2; 4:1; Zech 8:6, 23; Jdt 1:5; 6:15; Tob (S) 14:7; 1 Macc 1:11; 2:1; 9:24; 11:20; 13:43; 14:13; *Pss. Sol.* 17:44; 18:6). Exodus 2:11 also includes the phrase, but introduces a new word: ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταῖς πολλαῖς ἐκείναις (emphasis added). The only pseudepigraphical use of phrase is in *1 Enoch* which reproduces it exactly in *1 En.* 6:1. Evans’ includes Jer 33:15-16 as an example, but this only occurs in the MT, not the LXX. For an argument which suggests a more general use of ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις see Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 605-606, 611.

<sup>53</sup> Namely Mark 1:9, 8:1.

<sup>54</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 337.

Mark 13 focuses mainly on the temple events, although the second coming is referred to in vv.24-27 and vv.32-37. Witherington argues that v.24 introduces a new subject and that the language of vv.24-25 draws from traditional theophanic language (Isa 13:10; 34:4; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Rev 6:12-14; 8:12).<sup>55</sup> In response to the question of how literal this language is, Witherington (following Hooker) that the language is more metaphor than literal: it describes cosmic phenomena, although it is not an “exact or scientific” description.<sup>56</sup> The Son of Man is the divine Cloud-Rider who comes to rescue, although also to “judge and condemn.”<sup>57</sup> Witherington does not engage in-depth with a mythological background of Mark 13:24-27, but there are glimmers of this thought in his emphasis upon theophany and the Son of Man as the Cloud-Rider, which is an epithet for the Divine Warrior which goes all the way back to the Baal epics themselves.<sup>58</sup>

#### Donahue and Harrington

Donahue and Harrington conclude that the language in Mark 13 is imaginative.<sup>59</sup> From their reasoning, this is necessary due to the subject material of God’s kingdom which, although inaugurated in Jesus’ death and resurrection, is “a divine and future entity.”<sup>60</sup> The ambiguity of the language is because of the “limits of human thought and speech.”<sup>61</sup> This imaginative language is eschatological and does not dwell on mythology, although it is alluded to on

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<sup>55</sup> Witherington, *Mark*, 347.

<sup>56</sup> Witherington, *Mark*, 348.

<sup>57</sup> Witherington, *Mark*, 348.

<sup>58</sup> KTU 1.2 IV:7-27, 28-30; 1.3 III:32-IV:57.

<sup>59</sup> John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP 2; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 381.

<sup>60</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 381.

<sup>61</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 381.

occasion.<sup>62</sup> Donahue and Harrington reject a contextual link between Isa 13 and 34 with Mark 13:24-25.<sup>63</sup> They argue that the CCL describes those cosmic portents that are signs of the coming of the Son of Man, different from the parallel texts.<sup>64</sup> The powers in v.25 may refer to either the same heavenly bodies or the elemental spirits that control them.<sup>65</sup> However the CCL of vv.24-25 does not necessarily need to be separated from the OT texts behind it. Both Isa 13 and 34 use CCL in the context of God coming in judgement as the Divine Warrior. This suggests that the Son of Man takes on the role of the DW in Mark 13:27. This would be consistent with the link they identify between the Son of Man and the Rider on the Clouds as it appears in Ps. 68:4.<sup>66</sup>

J.R. Edwards

Edwards interprets Mark 13:24-25 as a reference to the signs that prefigure the return of Christ.<sup>67</sup> Although he connects a large part of the chapter to the “immediate future,” that is the destruction of the temple, he reserves a large part of it to the “ultimate future,” that of the return of Christ and final judgment.<sup>68</sup> His interpretation of the images in vv.24-25 is two-fold. Primarily they function as the signs of the coming Son of Man<sup>69</sup> because the “plain sense” of the text is eschatological with the stereotypical phrase “in those days” and the shaking of

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<sup>62</sup> For example, with reference to the background of the Son of Man as Cloud-Rider in the Canaanite epics of Baal. Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 374.

<sup>63</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 374.

<sup>64</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 374.

<sup>65</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 374.

<sup>66</sup> Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 374.

<sup>67</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> Edwards, *Mark*, 400.

<sup>69</sup> Edwards, *Mark*, 402-403.

powers in heavens.<sup>70</sup> However, Edwards also recognises that the darkening of the skies in this way also symbolises the downfall of heavenly powers.<sup>71</sup> Although he acknowledges some spiritual dimension to the imagery, Edwards refutes any association of the imagery to pagan deities, namely the Greek pantheon, as “extremely doubtful,”<sup>72</sup> but does not address the possibility they might reflect non-divine spiritual beings.

There are a number of problems with Edwards’ appraisal of Mark 13:24-25. His assertion that an eschatological reading is the simplest sense does not deal with the evidence to the contrary. Edwards uses the reference “in those days” to identify parts of Mark 13 as referring to the ultimate future, but a cursory look at other texts makes clear that it refers to far more than eschatological events.<sup>73</sup> Edwards offers no textual evidence to support the assertion that the shaking of the powers of heaven does not only refer to eschatological events. In Isa 34:4 (LXX, MSS BL), from where Mark gets the “powers of heaven” language, the powers melt in reference to divine judgement upon a city.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Edwards appears to conflate the arguments as presented by France, Hatina and van Iersel: their arguments are quite different from each other.<sup>75</sup> Van Iersel is clear from the outset that his commentary is from the point of view of the Graeco-Roman reader. However, Hatina and

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<sup>70</sup> Edwards, *Mark*, 402, n.442.

<sup>71</sup> Edwards, *Mark*, 403.

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, *Mark*, 402, n.442.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Review of Evans, above p.13. See also the rebuttal of Edwards in Stein, *Mark*, 605-606, 611.

<sup>74</sup> Obviously, in Isa 34 the powers melt and do not shake, but this and Dan 8:10 is the only evidence, outside of Mark 13 and parallels, where the powers do anything that resembles their demise.

<sup>75</sup> Edwards, *Mark*, 402-403 n.442.

France make no such association: they argue that the verses refer to divine judgement upon Jerusalem, not a pagan deity.<sup>76</sup>

R.T. France

France differs from the majority view and argues that Mark 13:24-27 draws on its OT apocalyptic background<sup>77</sup> by setting historical events in metaphorical terms. The events are those of judgement upon a city: in Mark the CCL describes the ultimate sign of the coming fall of Jerusalem.<sup>78</sup> He roots his view of vv.24-27 within Jesus' response to the disciples' initial questions about what signs will anticipate this fall in vv.3-4, although (similarly to Wright) he argues that the "key" to these three verses depends on "our willingness and ability to hear the prophetic imagery as it would have been heard by those in Jesus' day who were at home in OT prophetic language."<sup>79</sup> From his understanding of prophetic language, France argues that vv.24-25 depend on the LXX of Isa 13:10 and 34:4, and should not be read as referring to a literal cosmic collapse, but rather the "imminent downfall of specific nations"<sup>80</sup> as found in the OT.<sup>81</sup> Because of the allusion to Dan 7:13 in Mark 13:26, France argues it depicts the enthronement of one coming before God, as opposed to one coming to earth, thus

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<sup>76</sup> See France, *Mark*, 530-537, Thomas R. Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark's Narrative* (JSNTSup 232; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 325-373.

<sup>77</sup> France uses apocalyptic to refer to soon-to-happen climactic events, not the return of Christ. France, *Mark*, 498.

<sup>78</sup> Although France notably differs from Wright as he argues that Mark 13:32-27 *does* refer to eschatological events. France places a great deal of weight on the change in focus that is inferred by *περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης* in Mark 13:32. France, *Mark*, 501.

<sup>79</sup> France, *Mark*, 531. As opposed to the eschatological connotations of the coming of the Son of Man which reflects the majority of Markan scholarship.

<sup>80</sup> France, *Mark*, 532.

<sup>81</sup> Such nations include Egypt, Babylon, Edom, Israel, and Judah. France admits, however, that the perspective of Joel 4:15 LXX refers to judgement on more than a single nation. He notes also at this point that, "although uncommon" an eschatological use of this language is used in *4 Ezra* 5:4-5, *T. Mos.* 10:5; *Sib. Or.* 3:796-803. France, *Mark*, 533.

inferring that Jesus himself, and by implication “those who acknowledge his sovereignty” are the “true Israel.”<sup>82</sup> However, France does not explain the development of imagery that he identifies in the OT for his argument in Mark 13:24-25 and makes no account for how this tradition developed in the centuries between these times. His conclusions are based on an argument for a comparable socio-political context of the background OT texts, both of which are depicted in metaphor.

T. Hatina

Hatina argues that Mark 13:24-27 should be read primarily from a narrative-critical point of view, rather than by the source-critical approach, which prioritises the context of the source of the allusion rather than the text as a whole.<sup>83</sup> As such, the metaphorical language of Mark 13:24-25 ought to be interpreted as a reference to the fall of the temple, which makes sense of the Markan narrative itself, as well as the OT allusions behind the two verses. Hatina argues the conflict between Jesus and the temple and its leaders is seen throughout the surrounding chapters (Mark 10-12 and 14),<sup>84</sup> and the question from the disciples in Mark 13:4 serves as a structure for Jesus’ answer (vv.5-37), a two part reply about the coming of the temple's destruction and the sign that it’s on its way.<sup>85</sup> The CCL of Mark 13:24-25 itself draws from the “cosmic metaphors”<sup>86</sup> which describe the advent of divine judgement in historical events, primarily Isa 13:10 and 34:4.<sup>87</sup> Hatina, like France, concludes that vv.24-25 are not eschatological in the sense that it depicts the final intervention of God, but only in the sense

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<sup>82</sup> France, *Mark*, 524-525.

<sup>83</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 325-373.

<sup>84</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 345-346.

<sup>85</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 349.

<sup>86</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 359.

<sup>87</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 358-361.

that a “realised eschatology” is spoken of, and the inauguration of a new kingdom that is upon us (which Hatina argues elsewhere is the presence of the community of believers).<sup>88</sup>

The drawback of Hatina’s narrative approach is that although he identifies other texts which he admits “describe an awaited eschatological judgement which precedes the new age of restoration”<sup>89</sup> he is able to leave unanswered the question of how and where the tradition of interpretation of texts such as Isa 13:10 and 34:4 diverged into these two avenues. Furthermore, in his analysis of *T. Mos.* 10:1-10 and *4 Ezra* 5:4-5, Hatina identifies in both an historical context (Roman intervention and domination) accompanied by an eschatological age of God’s rule on earth.<sup>90</sup> If his interpretation of these two texts is correct, they offer a precedent for eschatological language to be included alongside historical events, as part of the future envisaged after the destruction of enemies or desolation of Rome. Yet Hatina does not explore the possibility that such a juxtaposition could be possible in Mark 13. Hatina’s comment that the allusions in Mark 13:24-25 “stem from biblical texts, not pseudepigraphical ones”<sup>91</sup> is accurate, but this does not account for the fact that these texts also draw from the OT and yet are able to do so for an eschatological purpose, at least in part. His contribution is valuable in emphasising the importance of interpreting a text primarily within its own narrative and not assuming that two ancient thinkers have to interpret a text in the same way. Yet the narrative approach may benefit from a more informed understanding of CCL in the Second Temple period and how it has developed from its OT roots. This would give a surer foundation in which to understand the language and imagery in the process of a narrative reading.

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<sup>88</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 353.

<sup>89</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 362.

<sup>90</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 363.

<sup>91</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, 364.



## Malina and Rohrbaugh

Malina and Rohrbaugh contribute to Mark 13 through observations from the field of social science.<sup>92</sup> They conclude the chapter is part of Jesus' departing words to those with him, which involved the sharing of prescient knowledge of the fate of Jerusalem and advice for his followers with respect to the unfolding events.<sup>93</sup> The chapter itself parallels astrological and astronomical documents. The celestial realities and movements were seen as triggers for socio-political events of the day<sup>94</sup> and as such, Mark 13:24-27 operates as the celestial counterpart to the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>95</sup> They identify this relationship as evident also in Josephus' writings on the event<sup>96</sup> and Revelation 16:4-20.<sup>97</sup> The stated nature of their commentary is explicitly not a comprehensive one, but one that considers "the social system in which the New Testament language is embedded."<sup>98</sup> This divorces their conclusions from a fuller engagement with other contributions on offer. Had they done so, it would become apparent that an apocalyptic discourse might actually serve as a better description of the chapter.<sup>99</sup> The events of Isa 34 and 13 depict celestial happenings which parallel the destruction of a city as well as the use of apocalyptic language in this way subsequently

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<sup>92</sup> Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003).

<sup>93</sup> Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Synoptic Gospels*, 361-362.

<sup>94</sup> (1) Wars (2) International strife (3) Famines (4) Earthquakes (5) Persecutions (6) Eclipses. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Synoptic Gospels*, 362.

<sup>95</sup> They do not explicitly connect this to Mark 13:24-27, but the inference is obvious as the only mention of astral beings in the discourse.

<sup>96</sup> They do not offer a reference for Josephus.

<sup>97</sup> Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Synoptic Gospels*, 362 and 206.

<sup>98</sup> Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Synoptic Gospels*, 15.

<sup>99</sup> See Adela Y. Collins, "The Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13 in Historical Context," *BR* 41 (1996).

suggest that apocalyptic is a better fit for the parallel heaven-earth events than a farewell discourse.<sup>100</sup>

R.H. Gundry

Gundry interprets the language of Mark 13:24-25 on a highly naturalistic level: it describes the *literal* collapse of the universe at the end of time.<sup>101</sup> While he recognises that the OT source texts use CCL figuratively he argues that the OT context of any verse “does not determine NT usage,”<sup>102</sup> yet gives no indication of what might do so instead. The stars which “will be falling” in v.25 thus refer to a prolonged shower of meteorites,<sup>103</sup> and the shaking of the powers and darkening of the luminaries create a dramatic effect. Gundry argues vv.24-25 describes the “undoing of the fourth day of creation” in Gen 1:14-19.<sup>104</sup> Continuing this naturalistic approach, the 3rd person plural of ὁράω in v.26 refers to people generally, on the basis that the 3rd person plural elsewhere in Mark has this sense and in Mark 14:62 the Sanhedrin are identified as the ones who will witness these events.<sup>105</sup> Gundry also plays down the Christology of the passage. He argues there is no divine significance to the description of the Son of Man coming “with in clouds” as the noun is used in other ways in

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<sup>100</sup> However, Mark 13 defies strict categorisation. Chapter 13 may function as apocalyptic discourse which is used as Jesus’ departing words, or alternatively a final discourse that employs the language of apocalyptic. However, the category of ‘final discourse’ could also be challenged by the message Jesus’ shares with his disciples at the last supper (Mark 14:17-31). The establishment of the last supper as a practice for his followers (vv.22-25), and the declaration that they will all be deserters (vv.27-30) also fulfils Malina and Rohrbaugh’s categories of advice for his disciples post-death and also prescient knowledge of what is to happen (including Peter’s denial of Jesus). The texts they offer from the OT are all explicitly given with a connection to the impending death of the person (cf. Gen 49:29-33; Deut 31:2, 27-29; Josh 23:2, 14; 1 Sam 12:2; 1 Kgs 2:2). This and the frequent feature of passing on advice to the twelve tribes of Israel (Cf. Gen 49 and Deut 31-34) both make more sense within the context of Mark 14. Jesus explicitly mentions his death (vv.21, 22-25, 27) and he is with the twelve (v.17) to whom he gives a single piece of advice.

<sup>101</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 744-745, 782-785.

<sup>102</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 783

<sup>103</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 745.

<sup>104</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 782.

<sup>105</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 783.

other contexts<sup>106</sup> and in Dan 7 the Son of Man's arrival with clouds could not have implied his divinity as this would encourage polytheism.<sup>107</sup>

Gundry's interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 appears to force these verses into an awkward line of argument that has a number of difficulties. Firstly, although he rejects OT use of CCL as a basis from which to interpret such imagery in the NT, Gundry does not offer an alternate context, other than stating that the language was "surely meant to be taken literally."<sup>108</sup> On this basis he interprets the falling of stars as a prolonged weather event for which he uses Samaritan literature of the medieval age as evidence, but gives no biblical basis for such an interpretation. Secondly, if OT usage of CCL does not offer insight to its use in the NT, why does Mark use the language similarly to describe the arrival of a heavenly figure?<sup>109</sup> In addition, Gundry's analysis also depends on his a priori conclusion that there cannot be any hint of polytheism evident in Dan 7. This approach limits the possibilities of what the evidence itself may suggest.

#### F.J. Moloney

Moloney follows the majority view on Mark 13 that vv.24-27 depict eschatological events when the world as it is currently known will come to an end.<sup>110</sup> Up to Mark 13:23 the focus is the destruction of Jerusalem, but the adversative ἀλλὰ changes the focus to the eschatological

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<sup>106</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 785.

<sup>107</sup> Although Gundry acknowledges that the clouds can be used as a divine means of transport. Gundry, *Mark*, 745.

<sup>108</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 783.

<sup>109</sup> In Mark and Daniel, this figure is the Son of Man. In Isa 13 and 34, it is God as DW with his heavenly hosts.

<sup>110</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 248-272.

age.<sup>111</sup> He identifies the OT roots to Mark 13:24-25 and, in contrast to Gundry, argues the language from Isa 13 and 34 should not be taken literally but ought to be interpreted “in the sense in which they were originally uttered by Isaiah.”<sup>112</sup> Moloney argues this sense is one of apocalyptic symbolism to indicate the world is ending, although the prophecies are not “concrete.”<sup>113</sup> Moloney’s approach to the Isaiah allusions has fewer problems than Gundry’s, but it does not account for the centuries distance between the origin of Isaiah and the traditions of interpretation in the first century CE.

### M. Mullins

Michael Mullins’ commentary on Mark 13 follows a similar path to Moloney, but pays greater attention to contextual details and mythological referents.<sup>114</sup> Mark 13:24-27 constitutes Jesus’ words about the end of the world (in contrast to the first half of the chapter); vv.24-25 describe the portents leading up to Christ’s return in v.27.<sup>115</sup> The origin of the CCL comes from OT theophany and Day of the Lord traditions.<sup>116</sup> Mullins notes the link between the Cloud-Rider in Ps 68:4 and Baal myth to Mark 13:27<sup>117</sup> although he overlooks the presence of this myth in Dan 7.<sup>118</sup> The theophanic imagery in Mark is used to emphasise the significance of the Son of Man’s arrival and although it should not be taken “literally as

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<sup>111</sup> Moloney, *Mark*, 248-249.

<sup>112</sup> Moloney, *Mark*, 266.

<sup>113</sup> For interpretation of the prophecies as not literal and yet indicative, Moloney follows Hooker, Beasley-Murray and others, cf. Moloney, *Mark*, 266 n.251.

<sup>114</sup> Mullins follows van Iersel, *Mark*, 158-170.

<sup>115</sup> Michael Mullins, *The Gospel of Mark: a Commentary* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2005), 361-364.

<sup>116</sup> I.e. Isa 13:10; 34:4; Amos 1:2; 8:9; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Ps 68:4. Mullins, *Mark*, 362-363.

<sup>117</sup> Mullins, *Mark*, 363, n.351.

<sup>118</sup> Mullins, *Mark*, 364.

an exact physical description of the final dissolution” it nonetheless functions as an “imaginative representation of the end of all things as we know them.”<sup>119</sup>

### E. Boring

Boring argues that the CCL in Mark 13:24-25, although not literal, is not only metaphor but refers to real signs in the cosmos when Christ returns.<sup>120</sup> As such it is the answer to the disciples’ question about the Parousia of the Son of Man (v.4b), in contrast to vv.5b-23 which answers the first part of the question about the fall of the temple (v.4a). Boring argues that the CCL in Mark 13 is eschatological, for which he cites a number of examples (*4 Ezra* 5:4; *Sib. Or.* 3:801-803; *1 En.* 80:4-7; 102:2; *T. Mos.* 10:5; Heb 12:26-27; Rev 6:12-13; 8:10).<sup>121</sup> He argues for this reading on the basis of the Matthew and New Testament theology. But this argument relies upon examples which are not paralleled in Mark 13 and ignores those which are actually used in vv.24-25.<sup>122</sup>

### A.R. Angel

Angel, like Wright and France, argues that Mark 13:24-27 refers to the fall of the Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in 70CE.<sup>123</sup> However his argument differs in method: he examines how Mark 13:24-27 employs the imagery of the *Hebrew Chaokampf Tradition* (HCT),<sup>124</sup> one example of a wide array of Second Temple literature that makes use of this

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<sup>119</sup> Mullins, *Mark*, 362.

<sup>120</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 371-373.

<sup>121</sup> Boring, *Mark*, 372.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Isa 13:10, 34:4; Joel 2:10-11.

<sup>123</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 125-134.

<sup>124</sup> Angel uses HCT to describe the mythology I have described as DWT.

imagery for various means. Although Angel describes the HCT at various points as a mythological tradition, he maintains that its usage in Mark 13:24-27 is metaphorical.<sup>125</sup> Angel argues that the CCL of vv.24-25 depicts those heavenly portents that anticipate the theophany of the DW who comes on clouds with a “great army” as opposed to “great power” (v.26 NRSV).<sup>126</sup> Yet Angel also argues the powers of heaven (v.25b) may constitute those who see the Son of Man’s advent from heaven (v.26).<sup>127</sup> The HCT is linked to the ingathering of the elect (v.27), but the wider metaphorical aspect is the historical situation of the fall of the temple in 70CE which Angel argues on three grounds: the context of Mark 13, the allusions to Isa 13 and 34 and that such an interpretation resolves the difficulty of Mark 13:30.<sup>128</sup>

While Angel’s analysis gives greater attention to traditions that Mark might have used, he does not account for one unusual feature in vv.24-25: that the heavenly bodies and powers are the sole portents of theophany. Traditional OT theophany tends to include a mixture of disturbances in creation. These include not only the heavens but also the earth, rivers, mountains and valleys.<sup>129</sup> His account of vv.24-25 does not explain why it is solely heavenly portents that portend the DW’s arrival. For a text that describes a religio-political calamity, in Angel’s words “a punishment of a wicked city... [which] must be Jerusalem,”<sup>130</sup> there is remarkably little focus upon the earth.

## A.Y. Collins

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<sup>125</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 130.

<sup>126</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 127.

<sup>127</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 133.

<sup>128</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 132-133.

<sup>129</sup> E.g. Isa 13:10-13; Joel 2:10; 3:14-16; Hab 3:10-11; Rev 6:12-13.

<sup>130</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 132.

Collins argues that Mark 13:24-25 describes the theophanic signs that accompany the Son of Man in the final stage of a three-stage eschatological scenario depicted in Mark 13.<sup>131</sup> The “cosmic phenomena” are “typical descriptions of theophany in older Scripture” but “have come to function as assigns of the eschatological divine intervention in Jewish apocalyptic literature.”<sup>132</sup> Whether this results in cosmic upheaval or full-scale collapse is not clear, but the implication of her argument suggests the former and nowhere does she state any expectation of the latter. The signs anticipate the Son of Man coming into the world, so the world must still exist subsequently to them in order for the Son of Man to have somewhere in which to become manifest and subsequently gather his elect.

Collins identifies the second stage of the eschatological scenario in the fall of Jerusalem in Mark 13:14-20.<sup>133</sup> This is in contrast to the third stage, the salvation of the elect (Mark 13:24-27). One is direct and enacts judgement, the other mediated and for the purpose of saving the elect.<sup>134</sup> In this latter act of salvation, the CCL of vv.24-25 draws on OT theophany which, according to Collins, was used by the Second Temple period as signs for eschatological divine intervention.<sup>135</sup> Collins’ conclusions regarding Mark 13:24-25 depend to a large degree on Hartman’s work on prophecy and the assumption that the presence of theophanic imagery necessitates eschatology. There are two problems with this argument. First, in the OT this is not the case: theophany is primarily used in association with historical

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<sup>131</sup> (1) The beginning labour pains (13:5-13), (2) the divine judgement manifest in the destruction of the Temple (Mark 13:14-20) and (3) the eschatological divine salvation of the elect after this judgement seen through the appearance of the Son of Man (Mark 13:24-27). Collins, *Mark*, 614-615, Collins, “Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13,” 29-30.

<sup>132</sup> Collins, “Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13,” 29.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Collins, *Mark*, 614.

<sup>134</sup> Collins, “Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13,” 30. Collins, *Mark*, 615. Collins argues that the judgement in Mark 13:14-20 is direct divine intervention. This seems untenable as the judgement was felt through the hands of the Roman Empire, not God’s hand directly.

<sup>135</sup> Collins, “Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13,” 29.

events. Collins follows the conclusion that by the time of the NT it had become so. However, this has not been conclusively demonstrated and evidence has been offered to the contrary.<sup>136</sup> If there is evidence in the Second Temple period that theophany had not been exclusively used for eschatology and had continued to be connected to historical events, then Collins has not addressed why Mark 13:24-27 makes a shift from the second scene of Mark 13:14-20, when the events of 70CE are feasibly the type of events that could be understood in theophanic terms.<sup>137</sup>

#### E. Adams

Adams, in his book on CCL, argues that the language of Mark 13:24-25 does not relate to the destruction of the temple,<sup>138</sup> but rather a “‘real’ catastrophe.”<sup>139</sup> The verses describe the real disaster and upheaval the cosmos will face in the day of Christ's return.<sup>140</sup> This eschatological theme is introduced by the disciples' question (v.4b).<sup>141</sup> Adams prioritises later texts, which use CCL with reference to the end-of-the-world, over the original context of the OT allusions in vv.24-25. In his analysis of similar CCL in the Second Temple period, he concludes “In none of the relevant post-biblical texts examined ... is the reference to the downfall of city or

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<sup>136</sup> E.g. Angel argues vv.24-25 is theophanic but about historical events, and elsewhere in his book he offers evidence for a similarly non-eschatological theme for apocalyptic imagery, e.g. *T. Mos.* 10:1-10. Angel, *Chaos*, 119-125.

<sup>137</sup> Another issue is that although Collins is undoubtedly familiar with cosmic battle she does not address this in Mark 13:24-27, despite the roots of theophany in the storm-god imagery of DWT. As I have argued in the introduction there is a general lack of examination of Second Temple texts with reference to DWT, which includes examination of motifs familiar to theophany. As such, the confidence with which Collins can interpret the theophany of Mark 13:24-27 is questionable without further study.

<sup>138</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 13. Adams responds directly to such arguments by France, *Mark*, Wright, *People*, Wright, *Victory of God*.

<sup>139</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 129.

<sup>140</sup> In response to the (overly-literal) critique that in v.27 the earth is clearly still extant, Adams explains that it could be the “cosmos in the process of collapse” Adams, *Stars*, 160.

<sup>141</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 140.



nation.”<sup>142</sup> Like Gundry, he does not consider the wider context of OT allusions to be relevant to their use in the NT; the key is the specific text quoted. For example, he argues Isa 13:10 is immediately about universal judgement, although this it is particularised in Isaiah with regard to judgement on Babylon.<sup>143</sup> Adams also disregards the “destruction of Jerusalem” argument because it is “contextually inappropriate” on the basis that nothing from the destruction of Babylon in the wider context of Isa 13 is used by Mark.<sup>144</sup>

Adams is right to focus on contemporaneous literature to see how CCL is used in the Second Temple period rather than using the original contexts of the OT allusions as determinative for the NT. This is an important rejoinder to those who would use the OT allusions in Mark as though interpretive traditions around Isa 34 and Isa 13 are invulnerable from development or change. Yet this does not resolve the pertinent issue: both Mark 13 and the antecedent texts similarly discuss the fall of a city or nation. Whether or not the destruction of Jerusalem is obviously the focus of Mark 13:24-27, it certainly is elsewhere in the chapter. This directly challenges Adams’ statement that “There is no indication in Mk 13.24-27 or *anywhere else within the discourse* that the fate of Babylon and Edom is being recalled.”<sup>145</sup> If judgement on a city is prominent elsewhere in Mark 13 then it is reasonable to conclude that Mark’s use of Isa 13 and 34 is because of this contextual appropriateness. Both have a specific judgement described and both use cosmic catastrophe language to depict it.

M. Healy

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<sup>142</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 156.

<sup>143</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 156-157.

<sup>144</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 157.

<sup>145</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 157 (emphasis added).

Healy argues that Mark 13:24-25 refers to a combination of both the end of the temple and that of human history.<sup>146</sup> While the majority of the chapter concentrates on the end of the temple and vv.24-25 functions as a symbolic portrayal of this historical event, Healy argues it also refers to other events, both the crucifixion (due to the reference to darkened skies in Mark 15:33) and the end of world history (given the parallels elsewhere in the NT, such as 2 Pet 3:10 and Rev 21:1).<sup>147</sup> On this interpretation the Son of Man's coming in v.26 refers to the ascension and enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of God and the church as the evidence of that event as well as the eschatological reference to the Parousia and final victory over evil.<sup>148</sup>

#### J. Marcus

Marcus takes and develops the work of Gundry and Evans, who set Mark 13:24-25 in an eschatological scenario, as well as examining the cosmic battle mythology in the text.<sup>149</sup> He argues the verses refer to a coming cosmic catastrophe which will follow the tribulation (Mark 13:5-23) and concurs with Gundry and Evans' argument that v.24 refers to the undoing of the fourth day of creation, drawing on Davies and Allison's comparison of the CCL (in the Matthean parallel) with Jer 4:23.<sup>150</sup> Marcus includes within this reference to creation the fall of the stars in v.25 as they were also made on the fourth day.<sup>151</sup> Yet in

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<sup>146</sup> Mary Healy, *The Gospel of Mark* (CCSS; eds. Mary Healy and Peter S. Williamson; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008).

<sup>147</sup> Healy, *Mark*, 267-268.

<sup>148</sup> Healy, *Mark*, 269-271. Healy likewise sees two levels to the angel-messengers sent out to gather in the elect in v.27.

<sup>149</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 906-909.

<sup>150</sup> Here Marcus also draws on Davies and Allison's comparison of the language with Jer 4:23 in the Matthean parallel. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew III, 19-28* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 358.

<sup>151</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 907.

addition to this interpretation of vv.24-25 Marcus argues there is another important layer of meaning in the imagery: the “passage does not just describe a reversion to chaos; it also hints at a *victory over it*.”<sup>152</sup> This he argues because dimming luminaries are often animate beings in the cosmic battle between evil and God (e.g. Isa 13:10, *Sib. Or.* 3:801-807).<sup>153</sup> The falling of stars in this cosmic picture is to be equated with the “expulsion of Satan and the demons from heaven,” (e.g. Luke 10:18; Rev 12:7-12; *I En.* 16:2-3; 54:4-5; 90:21, 24; *T. Sol.* 20:16-18). The shaking of the powers (*δυνάμεις*) in v.25b thus contrasts with the great power (*δυνάμεως*) with which the Son of Man comes in v.26 with “one supernatural force displacing the other.”<sup>154</sup>

Marcus’ exegesis of Mark 13:24-25 draws attention to the norm in the ancient world of describing spiritual beings in terms of cosmic imagery, a tradition well-attested in Jewish and Christian literature. However, he does not address the problems inherent in Gundry’s work critiqued above, nor does he evaluate the comparison Davies and Allison make to Jer 4:23. This verse comes in the context of the prophetic utterance of the Lord’s grief at the foolishness of his people (Jer 4:22). Neither Marcus nor Davies and Allison note that while the imagery in Jer 4:23 alludes to creation in Gen 1, it is not about a literal undoing of

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<sup>152</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 907 (emphasis added).

<sup>153</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 907-908.

<sup>154</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 908.

creation, or any imagined end which the text itself makes explicit,<sup>155</sup> but rather the verse functions as “prophetic hyperbole” in response to the evil of Israel.<sup>156</sup>

Marcus also does not examine the cosmic battle language in Isa 13:10 which is directly cited in Mark 13:24-25. Despite his argument that there is reference to the cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil behind Mark 13:24-25, he does not look at it in this OT text. He uses the verse as evidence of the darkness imagery in the Day of the Lord language which has been interpreted literally as part of the eschatological events in the “climactic event in the cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil.”<sup>157</sup> However this overlooks the context in which the cosmic battle language is used. The context is of the Divine Warrior coming to bring judgement upon the city of Babylon, the centre of an empire.<sup>158</sup> Marcus’ connection of Mark 13:24-25 to cosmic battle mythology is an important insight that moves beyond the discussion beyond typical of modern linguistic categories, however it is hindered by his choice of texts to support his interpretation, some of which come from very late sources.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Jer 4:27. The ‘end’ here probably refers to the end of the land of Israel rather than the end of the cosmos, which makes the point even clearer. A number of scholars comment on Jer 4:23 as including a parallel to Genesis but without it needing an expectation of a literal return to a pre-creation state. Cf. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 357, William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 163-165, Peter C. Craigie, et al., *Jeremiah 1-25* (WBC 26; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 80-82, J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 229-230, Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 59-61.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 357, Caird, *Language*, 113-114. Brueggemann describes it as “a rhetorical attempt to engage this [i.e. Israel] numbed, unaware community...” Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 61.

<sup>157</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 906-907.

<sup>158</sup> Caird’s chapter on “Hebrew Idiom and Hebrew Thought” is particularly helpful in making sense of Isa 13:10, cf. Caird, *Language*, 109-121, esp. 114. For the DW background to this passage see Patrick D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (HSM 5; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 138, Aleksander R. Michalak, *Angels as Warriors in Late Second Temple Jewish Literature* (WUNT II 330; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 26-27, John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (WBC 24; Waco: Word Books, 1985), 191-200, esp. 195.

<sup>159</sup> E.g. Marcus refers to texts such as *Eccl. Rab.* 1.2.1 and *Gen. Rab.* 4.2. Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 907. The first was redacted in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE and the second is dated to around the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. Moshe D. Herr,

K. Brower

Brower follows Wright's view that Mark 13:24-25, as well as the rest of the chapter, speaks prophetically of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and as such is the visible vindication of Jesus.<sup>160</sup> His commentary as a whole takes a literary approach, focusing upon the text as a literary unit, rather than tracing which words may go back to Jesus or the original form of any discourse or teaching.<sup>161</sup>

Brower summarises his defence of a temple-oriented interpretation as follows. (1) The narrative coherence of this interpretation in Mark 13, (2) the metaphorical nature of the cosmic language and (3) what is evoked by the Son of Man language in v.26 (which draws on Dan 7:13). He concludes that the CCL is cosmic metaphor, based on the use the OT antecedents<sup>162</sup> and states "Wright anchors his reading of the cosmic phenomena *securely on their widespread use in Scripture.*"<sup>163</sup> This overstates the case. As seen in the assessment of his work above, Wright's evidence is selective in favour of his point of view. Furthermore, this does not consider deuterocanonical or pseudepigraphic literature. Brower's argument is based on identifying the CCL as the signs the disciples were asking for. If this is so, then logically they ought to be more than simply metaphors. However, there is little in the text to argue they are the signs, and far greater evidence to conclude that the sign is given earlier in

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"Ecclesiastes Rabbah," *EncJud* 6:90-91, Moshe D. Herr and Stephen G. Wald, "Genesis Rabbah," *EncJud* 7:448-449.

<sup>160</sup> K. E. Brower, *Mark* (NBBC; Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2012), see also K. E. Brower, "'Let the Reader Understand': Temple and Eschatology in Mark," in *'The Reader Must Understand': Eschatology in Bible and Theology* (eds. K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliott; Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 119-143.

<sup>161</sup> Brower, *Mark*, 325.

<sup>162</sup> Following both France and Wright, cf. Brower, *Mark*, 336-337.

<sup>163</sup> Brower, *Mark*, 336 (emphasis added).

v.14.<sup>164</sup> After the description of events which are not signs, this verse indicates a clear shift of gear and that what is seen is to function as a sign: *Ὅταν δὲ ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκόατα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ ... τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη.*

Brower's work takes a narrative-critical approach, but neither his work nor those upon whom he depends offer a substantial and systematic engagement with Second Temple language of vv.24-25 to validate the conclusions he makes about the OT antecedents. Like Wright, Brower does not engage with the possibility of cosmic battle as the wider battle in vision. He limits the horizon to the exchange between human opponents and Jesus, allowing only for the possibility of a cosmic dimension and spiritual battle if the passage is not historical but eschatological.<sup>165</sup>

### C. Focant

Focant follows the majority view that Mark 13:24-25 concerns the eschatological age. He rejects that it could be a metaphorical description of the destruction of Jerusalem<sup>166</sup> on the grounds that it “scarcely agrees” with the timeline in v.24 that it will occur “after that suffering” and also “how it is difficult to identify specific historical events” in Mark 13.<sup>167</sup> Instead, he proposes a three-fold argument for the language as metaphors setting the scene for Christ's theophany in the eschatological age. First (following Gundry) he concludes that vv.24-25 suggests the undoing of fourth day of creation,<sup>168</sup> although he does this on less literal terms and proposes that the images of the end of the celestial bodies, as markers of

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. France, *Mark*, 519.

<sup>165</sup> Brower, *Mark*, 337.

<sup>166</sup> Focant engages with Hatina's defence of this point of view. C. Focant, *The Gospel according to Mark: A Commentary* (trans. Leslie R. Keylock; Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 546.

<sup>167</sup> Focant, *Mark*, 546.

<sup>168</sup> Focant, *Mark*, 543.

days and nights and the rhythm of the calendar, represents the end of time.<sup>169</sup> The third shaking of celestial powers (v.25b) points to theophany on the basis of OT parallels.<sup>170</sup> These metaphors thus place the arrival of the Son of Man (v.26) in an “universal and eschatological background.”<sup>171</sup> Focant’s argument that the CCL indicates the end of time and places the theophany in an eschatological context is unusual. The fall of stars and the darkening of the sun and moon by no means necessarily represent the end of time: they are often used in the OT for other purposes. The immediate allusions to Isa 13:10 and 34:4 in vv.24-25 are classic examples of this. Additionally, this type of CCL is a common feature of OT theophany. For example, Joel 2:10-11 and 3:15-16 set this language in the context of God’s advent as DW. It is to be expected then that the Son of Man’s arrival might be preceded by CCL as it is in Mark 13:24-27. The presence of CCL itself is thus insufficient to maintain Focant’s argument that the passage refers to the end of time.

#### E. Shively

Shively argues that cosmic battle runs throughout the whole gospel of Mark, based on programmatic teaching of Jesus in Mark 3:22-30.<sup>172</sup> Mark 13:24-25, together with vv.26-27, is part of the eschatological piece of her mythological reading of Mark: it depicts the conclusive battle and judgement of God, at the end of time, against terrestrial and cosmic powers.<sup>173</sup> Shively’s rationale for her analysis of vv.24-27 is based on two key points. The first is the context of the OT texts that are used in the passage. In vv.24-25 this is Isa 13:10,

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<sup>169</sup> Focant, *Mark*, 543.

<sup>170</sup> Focant, *Mark*, 546.

<sup>171</sup> Focant, *Mark*, 543. Focant prefers theophany as opposed to judgement or punishment as the key point of vv.24-27. He acknowledges the same imagery can be used in both contexts, but argues the context of Mark favours the former as well as the use of *σαλεύω*. Focant, *Mark*, 543-544, 546.

<sup>172</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 39, 41 and 88.

<sup>173</sup> See chapter 5 in Shively, *Apocalyptic*, esp 203-211.

34:4 and Joel 2:10. Shively demonstrates that these passages incorporate a dual context for divine judgement: that of a particular earthly city (Babylon, Edom and Jerusalem, respectively) as well as the judgement of spiritual/heavenly powers represented by the CCL.<sup>174</sup> Thus in Mark 13:24-25, the heavenly powers are indicated by the sun, moon, stars and powers of heaven, and the counterpart human beings are the out-of-sight audience indicated by the third person ὄψονται in v.26.<sup>175</sup>

The OT allusions establish the cosmic battle rationale for Mark 13:24-27, but Shively's eschatological interpretation of this battle is based on her assessment that in Mark 13 Jesus seeks to "enlarge his followers' vision of the end of all things, for it includes more than the destruction of the temple."<sup>176</sup> Although Shively emphasises the conflict between Jesus and the temple leaders in Mark 11-12, she rejects an interpretation of ch.13 centred around the temple as she argues Jesus only makes one indirect reference to it in the desolating sacrilege (v.14).<sup>177</sup> Instead Shively maintains that the significance between the two sections is the contrast between the *faithlessness* of the Jewish leaders (chs.11-12) and the expected faithfulness of Jesus' followers (ch.13).<sup>178</sup>

Shively's proposal of a sharp change in focus between Mark 11-12 and 13 is not convincing. The faithlessness of the Jewish leaders in contrast to the exhortation to the disciples may be an intended contrast in Mark, but she is clear in her analysis of the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders in chs.11-12 that judgement is an anticipated result of

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<sup>174</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 204-207.

<sup>175</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 208-209.

<sup>176</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 200.

<sup>177</sup> Shively argues the desolating sacrilege is the crucifixion, but that the allusion to Dan 7 indirectly connected it to the temple's destruction. Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 197-198.

<sup>178</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 200.



their faithlessness and at various points she notes Jesus' predictions of this.<sup>179</sup> In her conclusion she states "The temple conflict in chs. 11-12 provides another view of this struggle in its prediction of the removal of a fruitless temple that has been corrupted by satanic worldliness, and its foreshadowing of the formation of another temple community that consists of those who follow Jesus."<sup>180</sup> It is clear that Shively associates judgement upon the Jewish leaders as resulting in the end of the temple. The emphasis in chs.11-12, as well as Jesus' opening prophecy in Mark 13:2 of the temple's destruction and also the disciples' question as to when this will happen (v.4) make it somewhat incongruous for Mark to suddenly change his attitude and attention in the rest of the chapter.<sup>181</sup>

In addition to the above, Shively's division of vv.5-23 from vv.24-27 does not follow her own argument about CCL. Shively's examination of the OT allusions used in vv.24-27 identified that divine judgement is dualistic: it comes upon both cosmic and human powers, both heaven and earth. Yet it is precisely this kind of dualism that results in her division of the two halves of Jesus' speech, the first half describes "worldly upheaval" (vv.5-23) and the second "cosmic" (vv.24-27).<sup>182</sup> Instead, she argues that the judgement on human powers is inferred through the unidentified audience who "see" the Son of Man's arrival in v.26.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> E.g. The story of the withered fig tree, the mountain being thrown into the sea, the parable of the vineyard and the reference to Jer 7:11. Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 191-196.

<sup>180</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 196.

<sup>181</sup> Shively argues that Mark 13:5-23 minimises the fall of the temple within a bigger purview and separates the judgement of vv.24-27 from the temple, despite it being a judgement which the Jewish leaders will see (cf. Mark 14:62).

<sup>182</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 199.

<sup>183</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 209.

### ***Conclusion: Review of Problem***

From this review of the field, it is clear that most scholars maintain that Mark 13:24-25, together with the subsequent two verses, refers to an eschatological age in which Christ is expected to return, although interpretations diverge as to whether this includes the physical undoing of the universe. Others argue that this text is a symbolic reference to the fall of the temple in 70CE. Some scholars from both sides of the argument, have identified possible mythological connotations to the language.<sup>184</sup> Angel, Marcus and Shively have ventured further and discussed in greater detail mythological assessment of the passage, although their conclusions disagree.

In regard to the two interpretations offered of Mark 13:24-25, it is apparent that both sides have made arguments that lack persuasive evidence. On the one hand, Wright proposes a socio-political interpretation which is dependent on his argument that Jews would have read Mark 13:24-25 as a metaphor as they had no actual expectation of the world's end. This is based on parallels to OT allusions and a few Second Temple texts, although there are others that contradict this conclusion. On the other hand, Gundry maintains the language of Mark 13:24-25 ought not to be informed by the OT texts to which it alludes, but does not offer a persuasive alternative. Numerous scholars accredit the CCL to the language of theophany,<sup>185</sup> but this in itself hints at a mythological background which needs further examination in the Second Temple period. Of the analyses of Mark 13:24-27, Adams and Angel have sought to provide substantial, contextual evidence in support of their arguments,<sup>186</sup> and yet their

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<sup>184</sup> Those who have mentioned but not explored myth include: Hooker, *Mark*, Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, van Iersel, *Mark*, Mullins, *Mark*, Witherington, *Mark*.

<sup>185</sup> E.g. Witherington, *Mark*, Collins, *Mark*, Evans, *Mark*, Angel, *Chaos*, Focant, *Mark*, Mullins, *Mark*.

<sup>186</sup> Shively also examines *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch* and a few other Second Temple texts, but it is a somewhat general analysis of the books as a whole, looking at how they use the particular topoi she identifies. Shively, *Apocalyptic*, ch.3.

conclusions differ sharply. It is clear that interpretation of just these two verses of Mark 13 is fraught with difficulty.

The history of DW mythology in the OT and the Second Temple period may offer some of the background that is needed. While Caird assessed DW language and how it progressed into Pauline letters, his review of the DWT is limited<sup>187</sup> and he does not work out the implications for Mark 13. Those who have given space to myth in Mark 13:24-25 have come to differing conclusions, therefore it is necessary to go further back to attend to this gap. For this reason I will now review the main contributions to DWT scholarship from the OT to the Second Temple era in order to establish the state of the field.

## **History of the Divine Warrior Tradition**

### ***Introduction***

In the following review of key contributions of the DWT, I will establish the history of the tradition from its original configuration in the work of Hermann Gunkel in 1896. I will evaluate the contributions each scholar made to knowledge about the use of this mythology in the OT, highlighting the key arguments and developments they offered. This will give a more concrete picture of the history of the DWT at the time of the Second Temple period, from which to consider Mark 13.

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<sup>187</sup> In terms of secondary literature, Caird primarily refers to Mowinckel's *Psalms in Israel's Worship* and briefly the Myth and Ritual school. Caird, *Language*, 230-232.

## *Literature Review*

Gunkel's work *Schöpfung und Chaos* initiated the work of the last century in making connections between the mythology of the ancient Near East and the Bible.<sup>188</sup> He was the first to argue that this mythology had influenced biblical texts. In particular, Gunkel proposed that motifs from the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*, had been adopted. In this myth Tiamat, the primeval goddess, seeks revenge at the death of her husband, Apsu. The young god Marduk offers to destroy her on the condition that he is enthroned as the high god. The gods agree so Marduk goes to battle against Tiamat, kills her and then creates the world from her carcass. Gunkel proposed that motifs from this epic were identifiable in Gen 1 as well as other texts (e.g. Job 40:25-41:26; Ps 74:12-19; 89:10-14; Isa 59:15-20). Although Gunkel gives an exilic or post-exilic date for the texts he assesses, he argues that the sublimation of the myth happened in the earliest period of Israel's history<sup>189</sup> and that this was mediated through the Canaanites. However, although Gunkel launched the exploration of the relationship of this type of mythology with the Bible, his thesis was prior to the recovery of the Canaanite myths at Ugarit. These myths depict the cosmic battles between Baal (and occasionally his sister, Anat) and his enemies, Môtu, Yammu and Lôtan. These Canaanite cosmic battles were subsequently found to show greater similarity to the biblical texts than those which originated in Babylon.

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<sup>188</sup> Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (trans. K. William Whitney Jr.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998).

<sup>189</sup> He argues that late adoption would not be feasible as it would be decried against the later prophetic trend against pagan religion and that the myth as it appears in the Bible has too many loose ends to have been used as a polemic. Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, ch.5.

### ***Early Development: Myth and Ritual***

Mowinckel redeveloped Gunkel's thesis in light of the discovery at Ugarit, particularly with regards to how myth functions within the Psalms, and notably as part of the liturgy of the annual re-enthronement festival which constituted their cultic background.<sup>190</sup> Mowinckel argued that the Psalms had an early date, contra Gunkel,<sup>191</sup> and that they were used within the cult: the central drama of which, was the cosmic battle and advent of Yahweh, the Divine Warrior, who overcomes the forces of evil.<sup>192</sup> This cultic practice came from Canaanite religion in the milieu of ancient Near Eastern mythologies and ritual practice. Mowinckel postulated the existence of an annual re-enthronement festival which re-affirmed Yahweh's victory as DW and celebrated his becoming king once more: this developed from the Canaanite myth in which Baal is enthroned and has a temple built for him.

S.H. Hooke brought together both Mowinckel's proposed New Year festival and the Myth and Ritual theory, as first advanced by James Frazer.<sup>193</sup> Hooke argued that the myth and rituals of the (historically) primitive man were intricately connected to his concern for the "practical and pressing problems of daily life"<sup>194</sup> and that it is possible to identify the transmission of culture patterns across social groups within the ancient Near East, occurring through a process of adaption, disintegration and degradation.<sup>195</sup> For example, common

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<sup>190</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas; 2 vols.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

<sup>191</sup> Contra Gunkel, who argued that they were individual, exilic writings which mimicked earlier psalmography. See Gunkel and Begrich, *Psalms*.

<sup>192</sup> Mowinckel compared this struggle and victory dynamic with that of Marduk, Osiris and Baal Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:19ff.

<sup>193</sup> S. H. Hooke, *Myth and Ritual: Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Culture Pattern of the Ancient East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923).

<sup>194</sup> S.H. Hooke, "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East," in *Myth and Ritual: Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Culture Pattern of the Ancient East* (ed. S. H. Hooke; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 2.

<sup>195</sup> Hooke, "Pattern of the Ancient East," 5.

rituals to the culture patterns of Egypt and Babylon are seen within OT literature and as part of the annual festival, including the re-enactment of divine combat and triumph over enemies.<sup>196</sup> Much of Hooke's work, along with his collaborators, entailed the identification of this pattern in various forms in the ancient Near East. One of the scholars, Robinson, focused on this pattern within Hebrew myth from the time of the Israelite settlement in Canaan and identified the myth in various biblical texts (Gen 1-2; Job 3:8; 7:9; 9:13; 26:12; 40; 41; Pss 74:14; 86:4; 89:11; Isa 14:4-21; 27:1; 30:7; 51:9; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; Amos 9:3).<sup>197</sup>

Engnell developed Hooke's work further,<sup>198</sup> emphasising the sacred ideology of kingship in the myth and ritual of the ancient Near East, including Egyptian, Sumero-Akkadian, Hittite, and Canaanite culture, as well as Israel. He used ancient texts to consider the way in which each different culture understood divine kingship. With respect to Israel, Engnell only offered a brief summary, outlining that Israel's concept of divine kingship is conveyed within the patriarchal characters, then clearly in the historical office of king with Saul and David, and then finally it disintegrated over time, as several features and aspects of its ideology are transferred to the office of high priest.<sup>199</sup>

Both Hooke and Engnell's conclusions were challenged by Frankfort who argued that Egyptian and Mesopotamian ideas of divine kingship were far more distinctive than his predecessors.<sup>200</sup> For example, he maintained that Egypt's understanding of kingship was far

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<sup>196</sup> Hooke, "Pattern of the Ancient East," 8.

<sup>197</sup> See Theodore H. Robinson, "Hebrew Myths," in *Myth and Ritual: Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Culture Pattern of the Ancient East* (ed. S. H. Hooke; Oxford: OUP, 1933), 172-196.

<sup>198</sup> Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967).

<sup>199</sup> Engnell, *Divine Kingship*, 174-175. Engnell also lists a series of points which he argues are characteristic of Israelite ideology of divine kingship and texts that illustrate them. These include its divine origin, the father-son relation to Yahweh, coronation and enthronement of the king, his cultic function as high priest, his role in the enthronement festival, and development of the ideology into messianism. Engnell, *Divine Kingship*, 175-176.

<sup>200</sup> Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society & Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). For a more direct critique see

more static and stable in comparison to the dynamic and variable one found in Mesopotamia. This was reflected, in part, in the different levels of geographic stability of both areas. Within Hebraic culture, Frankfort argued for a distinctly *non*-divine kingship that was essentially profane in character: the king was a concession for the Hebrews who would be a leader in war and not in the cult.<sup>201</sup> While Frankfort may overstate his case that kingship was profane and not divine (as there is evidence in the OT that indicates elements of divine kingship),<sup>202</sup> he raises a significant point by emphasising the differences and distinctions across ancient near eastern thought. While all the different groups may have, to some extent, a divine concept of kingship, that is not to say it was construed in the same way in all groups<sup>203</sup> and there is evidence for quite a distinctive pattern. Frankfort's thesis, though he did not intend it to, redressed the balance of scholarship. Appropriate culture-pattern parallels must not go so far as to negate the integrity and distinctive characteristics of individual cultures. Frankfort went so far as to reject any notion of divine kingship in Hebrew thought, but this may go too far. It could instead lead to a careful and nuanced understanding of divine kingship within Israel that both accounts for the culture-pattern parallels and the evidence that appears to contradict it.<sup>204</sup>

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also Henri Frankfort, *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951).

<sup>201</sup> Frankfort bases his conclusions on assessment of hieroglyphics, the titles given to kings, the various accounts of history, as well as archaeological finds. Frankfort describes the respective kingships in this way: "If kingship counted in Egypt as a function of the gods, and in Mesopotamia as a divinely ordained political order, the Hebrews knew that they had introduced it on their own initiative, in imitation of others and under the strain of an emergency." Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 339.

<sup>202</sup> E.g. Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14 as well as various other psalms.

<sup>203</sup> For Hooke's response to Frankfort, see S. H. Hooke, *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

<sup>204</sup> Mowinckel did this in Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 21-95.

Sandmel also critiqued Hooke and Engnell's work on culture-patterns, identifying a problem he termed "parallelomania."<sup>205</sup> He did not want to deny the existence of literary parallels themselves, but cautioned against exaggeration.<sup>206</sup> A parallel between two texts does not necessitate a relationship between them or direction of influence: correlation is not causation. Sandmel did not reject the Myth and Ritual school insofar as they sought to identify patterns between cultures, but he made an implicit critique of their method. For example, in Hooke's second collection of essays, he argues that the culture pattern can be identified in Jewish-Christian apocalyptic, because of the presence of (a) the relation of the myth and ritual pattern to the outlook of apocalyptic literature, (b) the characteristic symbolism of the literature to the forms and symbols of the ritual pattern of ancient Near East and (c) the conformation of apocalyptic visions to the myth and ritual pattern.<sup>207</sup> But Hooke deals with these similarities on an abstract level, citing various texts as proof, without studying any one text in detail and proposing textual links. While the post-exilic development of Judaeo-Christian apocalyptic may have employed the myth and ritual pattern as found in the ancient Near East, Hooke's method falls foul of Sandmel's critique: he cites numerous passages that he identifies as using the pattern, but does little to examine these texts in detail. Sandmel argued this type of methodology was a core part of the problem:

The issue for the student is not the abstraction but the specific. Detailed study is the criterion, and the detailed study ought to respect the context and not be limited to juxtaposing mere excerpts. Two passages may sound the same in splendid isolation from their context, but when seen in context reflect difference rather than similarity.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81, no. 1 (1962): 1.

<sup>206</sup> Sandmel, "Parallelomania," 1.

<sup>207</sup> S. H. Hooke, et al., *The Labyrinth; Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World* (London: SPCK, 1935).

<sup>208</sup> Sandmel, "Parallelomania," 2.



### *Development of the Field*

After Mowinckel and the Myth and Ritual school, Cross examined DW myth with respect to specific OT texts and explored the relationship of myth to human history.<sup>209</sup> He criticised the Myth and Ritual school for its phenomenological approach which ignored historical development within a given culture and so sought to redress this imbalance.<sup>210</sup> Like those before him, Cross identified the origin of much biblical mythological language to Canaanite myth, which Israel adopted and creatively adapted to reflect their own religious beliefs. He examined the Canaanite myth from its first adoption into Israelite faith and traced various strands of its development within the Israelite ideology of kingship as well as its use in the exile and the later development of apocalyptic language. Cross focused particularly on the “god of the fathers” language in the Pentateuch, Exodus 15 and its origins in the theophanic language of the Baal epics, as well as various other texts.

Cross’ more contextual approach was developed by Miller, who examined DWT as it appeared in the holy war tradition of early Israel.<sup>211</sup> He focused on the language of the ‘host of heaven’ (צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם) as well as features of the Divine Warrior himself and then examined various texts which exhibit this language (e.g. Ex 15; Deut 33; Joel 3; Isa 13; Gen 32). Miller concluded that the Divine Warrior motif was frequently used in historical events of holy war, except for occasional eschatological uses (Joel 4; Zech 14) and that, whatever the specific context, the Divine Warrior motif was a central part of the OT concept of Yahweh.<sup>212</sup>

Hanson began the more thorough-going study of DWT in apocalyptic. In his book he traced the development of apocalyptic eschatology and argued that it grew out of prophetic

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<sup>209</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).

<sup>210</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 82-83.

<sup>211</sup> Miller, *Divine Warrior*.

<sup>212</sup> Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 171.

eschatology, something that was “not an unexpected adventure into uncharted territory” but “a return to some of Israel’s most ancient roots,” namely DW mythology.<sup>213</sup> Hanson argued that the tension between myth and history in biblical literature was broken with the development of apocalyptic eschatology and that in this shift there was a rehabilitation of cosmic myth and a radical break from any historical constraints. The context that brought this about was the social conflict he posited between post-exilic hierocrats and the visionaries, the latter becoming increasingly disenfranchised and alienated in the post-exilic era. Without a voice, their dissatisfaction with the historical reality surrounding them lead to loosing myth from history: Yahweh was sovereign and would restore his people even if it seemed out of human reach. Within this framework, Hanson evaluated Isa 56-66 and Zech 9-14 as examples of proto-apocalyptic that initiated this move. These texts used DW in various places: as part of an appeal for help after lament (Isa 59:9-20),<sup>214</sup> in hymnody about God’s end-time judgment (Isa 63:1-6),<sup>215</sup> as well as a polemic against political adversaries (Zech 10).<sup>216</sup> While the use of DWT was often birthed by the realities of certain historical situations, Hanson argued that as apocalyptic developed, myth became increasingly abstracted from its context and forecast into a dehistoricised future.<sup>217</sup>

Hanson’s thesis demonstrates clearly the presence of DWT in early apocalyptic literature, both in Isaiah and Zechariah. However, his wider contextual framework for his thesis has been subject to some critique for the various ways in which he has oversimplified

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<sup>213</sup> Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 17.

<sup>214</sup> DW mythology begins in v.15. Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 119-124.

<sup>215</sup> Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 203-208.

<sup>216</sup> Peter R. Ackroyd, review of Paul D. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, *Int* 30 (1976): 412-415.

<sup>217</sup> Hanson describes Second Isaiah as “proto-apocalyptic” in contrast to Zech 11-14 which demonstrates the “transition to full-blown apocalyptic eschatology” for this reason. Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 27.

his case.<sup>218</sup> One of these is the number of polarities within his thesis, whether the tension between myth and history or the political tension between hierocrats and visionaries or the significance of myth's presence in apocalyptic in contrast to history's presence within prophetic eschatology.<sup>219</sup> For example, his myth and history polarity obscures the possibility of overlap between the two. However, myth in the ancient Near East was itself a means of interpreting and understanding history and the latter was not averse to the intervention of the gods: myth and history cannot be neatly separated into two categories that are in various degrees of tension with one another.<sup>220</sup> If these categories are not in the tension that Hanson presumes, his history of the two breaks down, as does his proposal of the prophetic—apocalyptic eschatology continuum.

Another issue with Hanson's wider framework for his separation of myth from history is his assessment of the post-exilic social setting (the "contextual" part of his contextual-typological method). The social division he constructs is in part based on the works of Mannheim, Weber and Troeltsch,<sup>221</sup> but this has been challenged for Hanson's uncritical use of their theories.<sup>222</sup> Hanson is also rightly criticised for overstating his assessment for post-exilic hierarchy with a too brief and general an assessment of Ezek 40-48, Haggai and Zech

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<sup>218</sup> E.g. John G. Gammie, review of Paul D. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, *JBL* 95 (1976): 651, Ackroyd, review of Hanson, 412-415, Robert P. Carroll, "Twilight of Prophecy or Dawn of Apocalyptic," *JSOT* 14 (1979), Angel, *Chaos*, 13-16.

<sup>219</sup> Carroll, "Twilight," 19.

<sup>220</sup> Carroll, "Twilight," 20-21. Carroll draws on Albrektson's study of the relationship between myth and history in the ancient Near East. In this study, myth and history are not in tension but part of the same reality and gods act and intervene within history. B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods* (ConBOT 1; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1967), 16-67. Roberts, who admits some tension between myth and history is "self-evident," nonetheless argues that this has been "grossly oversimplified" by Hanson and others leaving the actual contrast between the two as yet unresolved. J. J. M. Roberts, "Myth Versus History," *CBQ* 38, no. 1 (1976): 12.

<sup>221</sup> Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 211-215.

<sup>222</sup> Carroll, "Twilight," 27-28. Carroll argues that the "paucity of data" makes a simple application of these sociological theories difficult and that, for example, Hanson does not address that Mannheim's definition of ideology reflects that of Marxism.

1-8.<sup>223</sup> While these critiques do not undermine the presence of DWT in the post-exilic era, they do question Hanson's thesis as to how it has been used and applied, that is a situation in which history is no longer relevant within mythology.

Hanson's "contextual-typological" methodology was subsequently adopted by others. His method interprets a text through the "context of community struggle discernible behind the material studied" and a four-fold typology.<sup>224</sup> Millar used elements of this, and Hanson's wider thesis, to examine Isa 24-27 with the aim of recreating its historical setting in support of Hanson's thesis, that the city in the passage is Jerusalem.<sup>225</sup> He examined the prosodic style of Isa 24-27 as well as the thematic pattern of the chapters and concluded that certain linguistic and poetic elements are present which parallel apocalyptic and DW Hymns. This led to the Millar dating Isa 24:1-16a, 24:16b-25:9 and 26:1-8 to the earlier part of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE with result that the unknown city is identifiable as Jerusalem.<sup>226</sup> Unfortunately, to the extent that Millar based his research on Hanson's approach to apocalyptic eschatology, following his thesis that there was a recrudescence of myth in the early post-exilic era, he faces the same methodological criticisms. This methodology is fundamental to Millar's conclusion that Isa 24-27 dates to the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>227</sup>

Day furthered research into the DWT in his book which focused on four main areas: (1) creation's relationship to the DWT, (2) the interpretation of the creatures Behemoth and Leviathan and the (3) historicising and (4) eschatologising of the mythological language in

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<sup>223</sup> Ackroyd, review of Hanson, 412-415.

<sup>224</sup> Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 29. The four-fold typology is (1) poetic structure, (2) metre, (3) prophetic oracle type and (4) place on the prophetic eschatology → apocalyptic eschatology continuum.

<sup>225</sup> William R. Millar, *Isaiah 24-27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 1-22.

<sup>226</sup> Millar argues that Isa 26:11-27:6 is a later addition. Millar, *Isaiah 24-27*, 104, 114-115.

<sup>227</sup> The city is Jerusalem because Isa 24-27 shows "excellent" poetry which is comparable to the resurgence of myth seen in Second Isaiah that Hanson dates to the 6th century. Millar, *Isaiah 24-27*, 117.

question.<sup>228</sup> He controversially suggested of the first area a Canaanite rather than Babylonian origin to Gen 1, even though creation does not feature in the Baal epics.<sup>229</sup> With regard to the second point, Day argued that the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan defy identification as natural creatures and instead derive from the sea monsters of DW mythology.<sup>230</sup> In the latter two areas Day argued that the myth was historicised in various ways (e.g. divine judgement on Egypt, Assyria and Babylon as well as divine deliverance of the Hebrews at the Reed Sea) and that it was also recast into an eschatological future in texts such as Isa 27:1 (in the wider context of chs.24-27) and also Dan 7.<sup>231</sup> Although he did not address the CCL in Isa 13:10 and 34:4, he did propose that the comparable fading of the sun and moon in Isa 24:23 was in response to DW theophany in the last days.<sup>232</sup> This language does not depict the end of the physical world, but is in keeping with the previous verses in which the earth trembles at the arrival of Yahweh who comes to punish the wicked (Isa 24:18-21).<sup>233</sup>

Day's work has been subject to criticism for both its association of the creation of the world with cosmic battle mythology as well as his arguments that are based on textual emendation. These critiques have been most notably made by Tsumura and Watson.<sup>234</sup> Both

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<sup>228</sup> John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (COP 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>229</sup> After Day, Gunkel's proposal for a Babylonian origin to Gen 1 was again taken up by Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>230</sup> Day argues that Leviathan comes from the dragon Lôtan and that Behemoth comes from Arišu/Atiku, the calf of Ilu who lives in the sea (KTU 1.3 III:40-41; 1.6 VI:50-52). Day, *God's Conflict*, 62-87.

<sup>231</sup> Day, *God's Conflict*, 141-178.

<sup>232</sup> Day, *God's Conflict*, 147.

<sup>233</sup> Day, *God's Conflict*, 145-147.

<sup>234</sup> David T. Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaokampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005). This is an updated and expanded version of his earlier work, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), Rebecca S. Watson, *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of "Chaos" in the Hebrew Bible* (BZAW Bd 341; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

scholars argued for a significant, although not absolute, rejection of DWT as present in many OT texts. They reject much of DW scholarship because of its over-emphasis upon extra-biblical, non-Israelite material and question whether the parallels drawn have been overplayed to the neglect of the integrity of individual texts themselves.<sup>235</sup>

Tsumura, using comparative philology, argued that the mythological interpretations proposed and the extent to which ancient Near Eastern myth has been used in biblical texts has been overstated. Instead he proposed non-*Chaoskampf* alternative interpretations, such as a more naturalistic reading of Gen 1-2<sup>236</sup> and the alternative Canaanite influences in Hab 3, although there may be mythological remnants in the text. There are a number of reasons for which Tsumura rejected a Divine Warrior reading.<sup>237</sup> He argued that the parallel of נָהָרִים and נְהַרִים (v.8) to the Sea and Judge River in the Baal myths breaks down because of the masculine plural form of נְהַרִים which is not used of the Judge River, although it is used of rivers in a natural setting.<sup>238</sup> Tsumura's solution was to suggest a provenance from a "south Canaanite source unknown to us,"<sup>239</sup> based on even less evidence. While the masculine plural is unusual as a form of נְהַר, <sup>240</sup> that it should (a) be paralleled with נָהָר and (b) they are both personified as the object of Yahweh's anger encourages a mythological reading.<sup>241</sup> Tsumura

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<sup>235</sup> In some ways this reflects a modern version of the critique that Sandmel and Frankfort made of the Myth and Ritual school.

<sup>236</sup> For a current development of this view in comparison to Jon Levenson and others, see Eric M. Vail, *Creation and Chaos Talk: Charting a Way Forward* (PTMS 185; Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2012).

<sup>237</sup> KTU 1.2 IV:7-27, KTU 1.2 IV:28-30, KTU 1.3 III:32-IV:51, KTU 1.3 IV:52.

<sup>238</sup> KTU 1.3 VI:5-6.

<sup>239</sup> Tsumura, *Creation*, 165.

<sup>240</sup> Although a masculine noun, it normally takes a feminine plural ending.

<sup>241</sup> Furthermore, נְהַר may be a singular noun with an enclitic mem. See Horace D. Hummel, "Enclitic mem in Northwest Semitic, Especially Hebrew," *JBL* 76, no. 2 (1957), J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 137-138. For a contrary point of view, see J. A. Emerton, "Are There Examples of Enclitic *mem* in the Hebrew Bible?," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (ed. Michael V. Fox; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbraun, 1996), 321-338. For more recent support for the existence of the enclitic particle see Chaim Cohen, "The

also rejected the connection between the chariots in Hab 3:8 with the Cloud-Rider found in Ps 68:5 or Deut 33:26.<sup>242</sup> He offered the alternative explanation that the horses-chariots are attributes from an earthly king in battle.<sup>243</sup> This would be a suitable metaphor if the enemy was also human, but the Sea and Rivers, even if not mythological, could not be overcome by a human king, moreover the depiction of the warrior in the passage is distinctly mythological.<sup>244</sup> Habakkuk 3:8 and Ps 68:5 may not have a direct relationship, but thematic similarities between the two suggest they are a drawing on a common tradition.<sup>245</sup>

Watson also argued that myth has been overplayed, particularly within biblical poetry. Critical of the use of the language of chaos and *Chaoskampf*,<sup>246</sup> she concluded that too much weight has been placed on Canaanite parallels and proposed that instead the presence of such mythological language is incidental to the literature. She argues this through an extensive study of the Psalms, as well as other relevant biblical texts in Job, Isaiah and Ezekiel.

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Enclitic Mem in Biblical Hebrew: Its Existence and Initial Discovery,” in *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East, Qumran, and post-Biblical Judaism* (eds. Chaim Cohen, et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 321-338. For another non-mythological reading of Habakkuk 3:8 see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990).

<sup>242</sup> Tsumura, *Creation*, 167-168. Contra Day, *God’s Conflict*, 107.

<sup>243</sup> Tsumura, *Creation*, 168.

<sup>244</sup> E.g. Yahweh’s glory “covers the heavens” (v.3), Pestilence and Plague go before and after him (v.5), he shakes the earth (v.6), shatters eternal mountains (v.6b), causes the mountains to writhe (v.10) and Yahweh’s horses are able to trample the Sea (v.15).

<sup>245</sup> It is possible the chariots in Hab 3:8 may relate to those of Ps 68:17. Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 108-109, 239, n.168. Another interpretation of the horses and chariots is that they are in parallel with each other as two images of the same event, see Roberts, *Nahum*, 138. Roberts concludes that the chariot should be in the singular, not plural, as in the Peshitta.

Problems continue with Tsumura’s treatment of the rest of the passage. For the rest of Tsumura’s argument on Hab 3 see *Creation*, 164-181. His has been challenged by Michael L. Barré, “Yahweh Gears up for Battle: Habakkuk 3,9a,” *Bib* 87, no. 1 (2006), Roberts, *Nahum*, 128-158. For translating מַרְיָה as מוֹת on the basis of the Greek equivalent θανάτων in the LXX, contra Tsumura, see W.F. Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (ed. H. H. Rowley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1950), 1-18. Tsumura disagreed with this emendation because of how the verb is used in a range of other texts. Unfortunately, one of his examples, Ps 68:22, contradicts him as it probably draws on the mythological language of Mōtu, Baal’s enemy. cf. John P. LePeau, “Psalm 68: An Exegetical and Theological Study” (PhD, University of Iowa, 1981) 161, Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100* (WBC; Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1990), 181.

<sup>246</sup> i.e. DWT.

One of Watson's key propositions was that the direct context of biblical literature must be within Israel, and that this should be strongly differentiated Israel's neighbouring nations.<sup>247</sup> This is an important qualification, yet Watson's own method here suggests that the cultural lines are not so easily divided. Even a cursory reading of the OT reveals a constant battle of Israel against syncretism, idolatry and jealousy of pagan nations, suggesting a far more ambiguous and complex cultural picture than that which Watson presents.

Watson's work on demythologising biblical poetry also presents some difficulties. In particular, in certain psalms a mythological interpretation is the more natural one on the basis of the text itself and the wider OT. For example, Watson argued that in Ps 74:12-14 the verb פָּרַר (v.13) reflects the "dividing" of the sea in the exodus.<sup>248</sup> However the textual evidence to support this translation is slim and there are several reasons why "shattering" or "breaking" is preferable.<sup>249</sup> First, there are only two other occasions when the verb is translated "divide,"<sup>250</sup> and both are compatible with the regular translation of the verb "to destroy."<sup>251</sup> Secondly, פָּרַר is not used in other texts that describe the exodus (Isa 63:12; Ex 14:16, 21; Neh 9:11; Ps 78:13) but in general the verb בָּקַע is preferred.<sup>252</sup> If "shattering" or "breaking" is preferred this would be consistent with the subsequent lines describing God destroying the heads of dragons and of Leviathan (Ps. 74:13b-14a): the *polet* stem of פָּרַר paralleling the

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<sup>247</sup> For example, see Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 36-37.

<sup>248</sup> Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 152-168. A. Cohen, *The Psalms: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* (Hindhead: Soncino Press, 1945), Elmer B. Smick, "Mythopoetic Language in the Psalms," *WTJ* 44, no. 1 (1982).

<sup>249</sup> Robert Alter, *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), 259, Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 243, 251.

<sup>250</sup> Isa 24:10; Job 6:12.

<sup>251</sup> See Francis Brown, et al., "פָּרַר," *BDB* 830. See also Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 243.

<sup>252</sup> This verb is used by the psalmist in another, non-Exodus, context in Ps 74:15, showing the author was familiar term.



intensive *piel* stem of the next two verbs.<sup>253</sup> This translation is also supported by the LXX which translates the Hebrew as κραταίω, “overpower.”<sup>254</sup>

Tsumura and Watson both offered a helpful critique to the scholarship of the DWT, but went too far in some of their exegesis, seeking a more obscure interpretation when the evidence more easily favours a mythological reading. Their emphasis on seeking biblical, non-mythological parallels to specific words arguably overlooks the larger narratives from which they are drawn.<sup>255</sup>

### ***Recent Developments***

Some scholars working with DWT have referred to Second Temple Jewish texts, but this has generally been to assist the exegesis of biblical passages rather than to engage with the literature itself. Angel began the work of examining such texts on their own terms in *Chaos and the Son of Man*.<sup>256</sup> In this book he surveys 46 texts from four groups of writings: Qumran, Wisdom literature, apocalyptic literature and historiographical texts and examines their use of the Hebrew *Chaoskampf* Tradition (HCT), his term for the DW mythology. This

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<sup>253</sup> I.e. הָרַבָּץ (v.13b) and הָפָצַץ (v.14a).

<sup>254</sup> Gary A Chamberlain, “κραταίω,” *GS* 101. The *LSJ* gives a few options, including “too be too strong for” and “prevail against.” It does not offer “divide.” *LSJ*, 990.

For interpretation of the rest of Ps 74:12-17, in particular the “springs and brooks” in v.15 see Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 250-252, J. A. Emerton, “Spring and Torrent in Psalm lxxiv 15,” in *Volume du Congrès: Genève 1965* (ed. P.A.H. De Boer G. W. Anderson, G. R. Castellino, Henry Cazelles, E. Hammershaimb, H. G. May, W. Zimmerli; VTSup 15; Leiden: Brill, 1966), 122-133, Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II, 51-100* (AB 17; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 205-208, John Goldingay, *Psalms* (BCOT; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 2:520, J. H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 270-271, Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 99-100, W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms: Translated, with Text-Critical and Exegetical Notes* (2vols.; London: SPCK, 1939), 2:348-349, Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 38-41, Levenson, *Creation*, 7-12. For support of Watson’s argument see Cohen, *Psalms*, 239, Artur Weiser, *The Psalms. A Commentary* (trans. Herbert Hartwell; London: SCM Press, 1962), 354.

<sup>255</sup> See Fishbane on meaning and groups of words in *Biblical Myth*, Introduction.

<sup>256</sup> Angel, *Chaos*. Michalak has also looked at the tradition with respect of angelic warriors in *Angels*. Among his conclusions he argues that there is a parallel between heavenly and earthly warriors, and that both are under the command of Yahweh. Michalak, *Angels*, 125.

study of Jewish literature provides a substantial contribution as to how the DWT developed in the Second Temple period. Angel concludes that the DWT was continuing to thrive in this period, and that it continued to be used in connection with historical events. This directly challenges the view that the DWT was eschatologised in the post-exilic era and beyond.<sup>257</sup> Overall, the main body of Angel's contribution offers valuable insight into Second Temple Jewish use of DWT, but a few problems persist. First there are some issues with Angel's definition of terms: he does not define what he means by apocalyptic or eschatology, nor does he explain why he used the term *Chaoskampf* of the imagery when in many of the passages he examines there is frequently no evidence of struggle at all.<sup>258</sup> Beyond definition of terms, there are two main critiques of Angel's work.

One problem is that there remains a number of texts which would challenge Angel's thesis. Angel examines texts from Jewish literature and identifies many more that need further assessment in the latter part of his conclusion. Many of these unaddressed texts are used by other scholars in direct opposition to an historical reading of cosmic catastrophe language. For example, the *Sibylline Oracles* present various texts which are often referred to as clear evidence for a more literal reading of CCL and a real expectation of a cosmic collapse. One could look to *Sib. Or.* 2:196-210, 3:75-90 or 4:171-92, as Allison did in his critique of Wright, texts which seemingly foretell the "unmaking of the physical universe."<sup>259</sup>

The second issue with Angel's work is that he does not engage more fully with the wider Graeco-Roman world. His assessment of possible influences beyond Judaism alone is somewhat limited; where he identifies it as a possibility he only offers a cursory assessment. For example, in his treatment of *L.A.B.* 9:3 Angel notes the possibility of a Stoic

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<sup>257</sup> E.g. Hanson, above, p.46.

<sup>258</sup> John J. Collins, review of A Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man: The Hebrew Chaoskampf Tradition in the Period 515 BCE to 200 CE*, *JJS* 58 (2007): 338-339.

<sup>259</sup> Allison, *Jesus and the Victory of Apocalyptic*, 139.

interpretation, but this is quickly dismissed.<sup>260</sup> Angel's focus on the Jewish provenance of the texts does little to consider the possibility that it may have also been influenced by traditions within the Graeco-Roman world.

Soon after Angel's thesis was published, Adams' work *The Stars will Fall from Heaven* was also released.<sup>261</sup> This monograph did not address the DWT, but it does cover similar texts to Angel's work,<sup>262</sup> looking at CCL as it appears in Graeco-Roman and Jewish sources. However, Adams' conclusions are in direct conflict with Angel's. For this reason, Adams' thesis is worth closer inspection.

Adams, in response to Wright's work on apocalyptic language in the NT, focuses on how CCL was used in the ancient world and whether or not it depicts a literal destruction of the world.<sup>263</sup> Using historical criticism, textual exegesis and comparative analysis, Adams engages with a wide variety of texts to substantiate his argument, correcting Wright who, as Adams' rightly points out, does not do this work.<sup>264</sup> Adams critiques Wright for using proof-texts to establish that CCL was conventionally used for socio-political events.<sup>265</sup> Adams comments that there is insufficient evidence to justify Wright's conclusions and aimed in his book to address the gap and assess more widely how CCL was used.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 163.

<sup>261</sup> Adams, *Stars*. Adams' notes Angel's thesis in the preface but it was published too late for him to be able to incorporate it into his book, Adams, *Stars*, xii.

<sup>262</sup> E.g. *T. Mos.* 10:1-10; *IQH* 11:27-36; Mark 13:24-27.

<sup>263</sup> Adams looks at passages that exhibit the DWT, but goes beyond this also. His focus is upon the particular imagery of cosmic catastrophe not a mythological tradition and its common motifs.

<sup>264</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 10-11.

<sup>265</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 11.

<sup>266</sup> "He does not demonstrate the latter point through a careful analysis of the relevant passages in post-biblical apocalyptic and related writings. Indeed he hardly engages with the material at all ... Wright's failure to substantiate his claim with a body of supporting evidence in post-biblical Jewish sources constitutes a major lacuna in his argument." Adams, *Stars*, 10-11.

The central chapters of Adams' work examine CCL in the OT, Jewish apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple period (e.g. *1 Enoch*, *T. Mos.*, *T. Job*, *4 Ezra*, *Sib. Or.* 3-5), Graeco-Roman sources (e.g. writings of Hesiod, Seneca and Lucan) and applies his findings in an exegesis of NT texts that use CCL.<sup>267</sup> Adams concludes that such language expects a real cosmic catastrophe, even if the language is imaginative in construing how exactly this will happen.<sup>268</sup>

Adams' work is subject to a number of critiques. Where Angel focuses too much on Jewish traditions, Adams does the opposite: he compares language from different cultures and traditions, such as both Jewish DWT and Graeco-Roman sources, but makes no distinction between the sources or how they are used and does not justify why it is legitimate to draw such a comparison. Additionally, in overlooking the differences in sources and different cultural literary traditions, his conclusions are, at times, over-simplified. For example, he argues that the language of destruction of the world by fire is drawn from Stoicism,<sup>269</sup> and he states that "the only certain instances of it [destruction of the world by fire] are passages in the *Sibylline Oracles* in which Stoic influence is at work."<sup>270</sup> This makes no account of the body of material within Jewish literature that sees fire as a weapon or means of divine judgement (e.g. Dan 7:10-11; Pss 18:9; 97:3-4; Isa 66:15-16; *4 Ezra* 13:10-11).<sup>271</sup> These examples do not contain any cosmological expectation and do not have the full universal conflagration that the Stoic doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις had, but this does not mean they

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<sup>267</sup> I.e. Mark 13:24-27 and parallels, Heb 12:25-29; 2 Pet 3:5-13; Rev 6:12-27.

<sup>268</sup> It is important to note, however, that Adams does not see the cosmic catastrophe language as literal but rather an "imaginative construal" of the destruction which itself cannot be literally anticipated, Adams, *Stars*, 17.

<sup>269</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 90-95, 214-215.

<sup>270</sup> I.e. *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92; 4:171-178; 179-183; 5:211-213; 528-53. Adams, *Stars*, 215.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. James Limburg, "Amos 7:4: A Judgment with Fire?," *CBQ* 35, no. 3 (1973), Patrick D. Miller, "Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel," *CBQ* 27, no. 3 (1965), John Proctor, "Fire in God's House: Influence of Malachi 3 in the NT," *JETS* 36, no. 1 (1993).

ought to be discounted. In these texts fire is used to describe a particular judgement in mythological terms and it is no stretch of the Jewish imagination to suppose this imagery could have been extended in the Second Temple period such that universal expectations of judgement might be depicted by a universal fire.

This last point betrays another issue: in his comparison of texts on the basis of the CCL they contain, Adams does what Sandmel warned the Myth and Ritual school of doing: he places too much emphasis upon correlation. While he is careful about demonstrating a relationship between texts, Adams makes a fundamental assumption in his methodology that comparing CCL in Judaeo-Christian material and that of the wider Graeco-Roman world is comparing like for like. This overlooks distinct traditions on both sides, such as the mythology of the DWT which I have shown above is well-attested throughout the OT. From Graeco-Roman sources, Adams has not given due attention to the development in philosophical traditions and changes in the use of language in the Stoic texts he cites.<sup>272</sup>

Although Adams does not address the DW tradition directly, his thesis invites several questions as to the state of DWT in the Second Temple period. Do Judaeo-Christian texts use CCL in a similar way to other Graeco-Roman traditions, such as Stoic cosmology, when they are understood in their mythological contexts? How did Jewish DWT develop in the Second Temple period and was it distinct from its wider cultural and literary milieu? If Angel has argued that Jewish DWT was alive and well into the Second Temple period, how does the presence of similar imagery in different literary traditions affect his conclusions, if at all?

### ***Conclusion***

The above review demonstrates something of the extent of the work that has been done on the DWT in Old Testament texts. From the early days of the Israelite settlement in Canaan to the

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<sup>272</sup> See chapter 2.

rise of post-exilic prophecy, the mythology of the Divine Warrior has been adopted and adapted for varying contexts. It has begun to be identified in the Second Temple period, but the efforts to this end by Angel have made little accommodation for the Graeco-Roman world in which Israel found itself. Adams may over-emphasise its relationship with this wider world, but nonetheless offers an important question as to how DWT was used within the cultural influences of the late Second Temple period. Of particular note is the possible influence of Stoic cosmology and its presence in the Sibylline Oracles, which Angel notes as possibly containing DW mythology, but does not examine.

### **Conclusion**

In my review of scholarship on Mark 13:24-25 I showed how different arguments have been made to make sense of its cosmic catastrophe language. Several scholars identify that the language may draw on myth, although only a few have sought to contextualise it. My review of the literature pertaining to how the DWT has been used in the OT to some extent fills this gap. It is a widely used mythological tradition that uses CCL in those OT texts (Isa 13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:10) that are used in Mark 13:24-25. However, the work that has been done on the DWT has been largely reserved to the OT and, as a result, there are some significant questions and points of conflict about how it developed into the late Second Temple period and the time of the New Testament. Angel has demonstrated that the DWT is used in a number of texts of this period to illuminate historical events, yet Adams's work raised a valuable challenge to his conclusions about how it is used. Adams argued that within Judaeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman literature CCL is generally used to refer to a real cosmic catastrophe.

In this thesis, I will contribute to this area of scholarship by assessing further how the Divine Warrior tradition was used in the Second Temple period, both with respect to changes in its use, as well as how it may have been influenced by Graeco-Roman traditions. In regard to the latter, I will focus primarily on Stoic cosmological imagery because of its relevance to arguments about CCL. My thesis will demonstrate that the DWT continued to be used in the Second Temple period. In the texts I will examine I will show that Stoic cosmological imagery was incorporated within traditional uses of DWT and did not change its context from one of history to the end of history and/or final judgement. Moreover, as I will show in chapter two, Stoicism in itself had largely abandoned its adherence to its ideas about cosmology and that the imagery of Stoic cosmology was often used for poetic purposes in contrast to its former philosophical associations. Without this, I will argue there is little to warrant an eschatological understanding of DW mythology in the Second Temple period. The cosmic catastrophe language from Stoic cosmology expanded the mythological vocabulary of the DWT. This has a number of implications for key arguments concerning Mark 13:24-25 from which I will argue that the CCL is part of the cosmic reaction to the coming of the DW as well as God's judgement upon those spiritual powers associated with Jerusalem and the temple.

To further knowledge of the DWT in the 2TP, I have chosen to examine the *Sib. Or.* 3-5. These three books from the Jewish sibylline tradition serve as an important group of texts for several reasons. First, although the possibility of the use of the tradition has been noted, they have not been reviewed as to their use of the DWT. Secondly, it has been a long-held assumption that the CCL in these books refers to events of the end of time. Thirdly, they have been used by a number of scholars, particularly Adams, to refute historical interpretations of Mark 13:24-25 on this basis, with the claim that they use CCL literally due to the influence of Stoic cosmology.

I will examine the *Sib. Or.* 3-5 with respect to (a) whether the mythological tradition of the Divine Warrior is present, (b) how it is used where it is present and (3) whether Stoic cosmological imagery is used, where appropriate. I will do this by applying seven criteria to the texts which appear to use motifs from the DWT. These criteria will assess whether *Sib. Or.* 3-5 draws on the DWT, assessing the legitimacy and likelihood of any proposed use of the tradition, as well as how it appears to have been used in the present context. Where relevant, I will also apply the criteria to those texts which may have drawn from SCI. The seven criteria I will use are *availability, similarity, historical consistency, thematic coherence, overall integration, recurrence* and *creativity*. These will be examined more thoroughly in chapter two, along with an examination of the misunderstanding that has prevailed about Stoic cosmological imagery. In chapter three and four I will apply the criteria to the *Sibylline Oracles*. In chapter five I will review the results of this work and what the implications are for understanding how DWT was used in the Second Temple period. Then, in chapter six, I will consider how this affects current interpretations of Mark 13:24-25 and propose a reading of these verses, taking into consideration DWT in the 2TP, as well as the narrative context of Mark 13 itself. I will conclude by offering what questions and issues this interpretation might raise in light of wider themes in the Gospel of Mark and the NT.



## CHAPTER 2. STOIC COSMOLOGICAL IMAGERY AND METHODOLOGY

In chapter one I outlined the issues surrounding interpretation of the cosmic catastrophe language of Mark 13:24-25. I identified the mythological tradition of the Divine Warrior as offering a way forward to understanding the imagery of the disturbances of the sun, moon and stars. However, in my review of DWT scholarship, I showed how the use of this mythology in the Second Temple period invites further examination. I concluded that this was an opportunity that might offer a way through the various interpretive issues in Mark 13:24-25, and proposed that an examination of the *Sibylline Oracles* 3-5 would offer relevant material for moving these debates forward. Two questions remain from my proposal: (1) what is the place of Stoic cosmology in these discussions, especially where its imagery may have influenced the *Sibylline Oracles* and (2) what methodology is appropriate for the task of examining *Sib. Or.* 3-5? To these questions I turn in this chapter. With respect to the first, I will demonstrate that although a number of scholars have proposed that Stoic cosmology has influenced the language of the *Sibylline Oracles* and may be used to understand CCL in the NT,<sup>273</sup> this does not take into consideration recent scholarship on the imagery of Stoic cosmology in the Roman era.<sup>274</sup> The imagery of Stoic cosmology in this period had begun to lose its philosophical moorings. I will show that *Pharsalia*, the poetic work of the Roman Stoic, Lucan, supports this thesis and that contrary to popular opinion the use of SCI in a text does not by necessity refer to a real expectation of the world's end by an all-consuming fire. As for the second question, I will outline a methodology that will apply seven criteria to

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<sup>273</sup> John J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism* (SBLDS 13; Missoula, Mont: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974), Allison, "Victory," 126-141, F. Gerald Downing, *Making Sense in (and of) the First Christian Century* (JSNTSup 197; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), Adams, *Stars*.

<sup>274</sup> Michael Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology," in *The Stoics* (ed. John M. Rist; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 161-186, Michael Lapidge, "Lucan's Imagery of Cosmic Dissolution," *Hermes* 107, no. 3 (1979), Michael Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology and Roman Literature, First to Third Centuries A.D." *ANRW* 36.3:1379-1429, P. A. Roche, "Righting the Reader: Conflagration and Civil War in Lucan's *De Bello Civili*," *Scholium* 14 (2005), P. A. Roche, *Lucan: De Bello Civili. Book 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

relevant texts in *Sib. Or.* 3-5. These criteria are built on the work of scholars who seek to answer questions of whether a text or tradition is being alluded to in a NT or other Second Temple text. I will review each of the criteria with a focus on why they are necessary, the types of evidence each criterion offers, and how to best measure this evidence.

## **Stoic Cosmological Imagery in the First Century**

### ***Introduction***

In the study of CCL in Judaeo-Christian literature, a noted point of reference and comparison has been to the expectation of the world's end as described in Stoic cosmology.<sup>275</sup> The Stoics believed in ἐκπύρωσις, the periodic destruction of the world by fire. The imagery associated with this belief has been used to support reading the CCL of Judaeo-Christian literature, such as Mark 13:24-25, as a reference to an actual expectation of the world destruction.<sup>276</sup> These arguments do not always posit a direct relationship between the two, but compare them as contemporaneous examples of similar language used in a similarly literal way<sup>277</sup> and rely upon interpreting Stoic cosmological imagery with reference to this philosophical belief. However, a closer inspection of SCI in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE reveals far more diversity in its use than that which has been assumed in NT studies. Michael Lapidge's work on Stoicism, and in particular Roman Stoic cosmology, outlines this diversity and challenges a number of the arguments made by those in biblical studies.<sup>278</sup> His thesis argues that by first century, Stoic

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<sup>275</sup> Allison, "Victory.," Downing, *First Christian Century*, Adams, *Stars*, Edward Adams, "Historical Crisis and Cosmic Crisis in Mark 13 and Lucan's Civil War," *TB* 48, no. 2 (1997), Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, van Iersel, "Sun, Moon and Stars," 84-92.

<sup>276</sup> Adams, *Stars*, Allison, "Victory," 126-141, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*.

<sup>277</sup> For example, see Adams, "Historical Crisis," 329-344.

<sup>278</sup> Lapidge is supported by a number of other classical scholars. E.g. Roche, "Righting the Reader," 52-71, R. Sklenář, *The Taste for Nothingness: A Study of Virtus and Related Themes in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), Runar M. Thorsteinsson, "Justin and Stoic Cosmology," *JTS* 63, no. 2 (2012): 533-571, Matthew Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement* (OCM; Oxford:

cosmology was actually a philosophical tenet in decline and that Stoic cosmological imagery<sup>279</sup> was in the process of being recycled for other more variegated purposes. This is supported by analysis of pertinent texts from Lucan's *Pharsalia*, which is one of the more frequently referred to works in the above discussions. In the following section, I will evaluate current scholarship on the connection between Stoic cosmology and Judaeo-Christian literature, outline Lapidge's thesis and its inherent challenges to these arguments, and then examine Lucan's *Pharsalia* as an example of this development in SCI. I will conclude with a review of the implications for interpreting the NT and contemporaneous literature. Throughout, I use 'Stoic cosmology' interchangeably with ἐκπύρωσις, as although Stoic cosmology is a far wider system than this tenet itself, it is this aspect of Stoic cosmology that constitutes the focus of my argument.

### ***Current NT Scholarship***

Scholars of the New Testament have largely drawn upon ἐκπύρωσις as it was construed from the early Stoics such as Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus.<sup>280</sup> As part of the belief that the universe is in an infinite pattern of world-recurrence, ἐκπύρωσις refers to the time when the current world is destroyed by fire prior to the next world coming into being.<sup>281</sup> Literally

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Clarendon Press, 1997), Monica Matthews, *Caesar and the Storm: A Commentary on Lucan, De Bello Civili, Book 5, Lines 476-721* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008).

<sup>279</sup> By "Stoic cosmological imagery" I refer to the language that originated from the doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις as opposed to the philosophical belief in itself.

<sup>280</sup> There are no ancient primary sources for these philosophers. For ancient secondary sources of their teaching see A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1, Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (vol. 1 of *The Hellenistic Philosophers*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 274-279, 308-313.

<sup>281</sup> See Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers I*, 274-279, 308-313. That the conflagration is a destruction does not mean it is a negative event: it is part of the natural change of the created world. "On the world's periodic destruction into fire at very long intervals 'destruction' is not used in an unqualified sense by those who hold that the whole world is dissolved into fire, which they call the conflagration. They [The Stoics] use the term destruction in place of natural change." Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.18.2 (Long and Sedley). For the sense in which these worlds are identical, see Hud Hudson, "A Response to A. A. Long's "The Stoics on World-

meaning ‘conflagration’ ἐκπύρωσις returns the world to the creative, divine fire from which it originated.<sup>282</sup> The idea of world-recurrence, or palingenesis, has not been connected to Jewish thought, but some have argued that ἐκπύρωσις is relevant for understanding cosmic catastrophe language within an eschatological framework. This case is most often made by noting ἐκπύρωσις as a parallel example of literal cosmic destruction; although it is occasionally also argued that some texts have directly drawn from Stoic philosophical sources, although in a moderated form.<sup>283</sup>

Three scholars have recently made the case for using Stoic cosmology to interpret Judaeo-Christian texts: Dale Allison, Gerald Downing and Edward Adams. Although their arguments differ in form and depth, a number of similarities can be drawn. Allison, in his rebuttal of Wright’s work on the metaphorical nature of apocalyptic language, questions the argument that Mark 13:24-25 could be taken as anything but literal. He asks why Mark’s language should be considered

less realistic ... than Lucan’s *Pharsalia* 1:72-80, which envisions stars plunging into the sea at history’s end? According to Seneca (*Natural Questions* 3.29), Berosus, the Babylonian astrologer, foretold that “the world will burn when all the planets that now move in different courses come together in Cancer, so that they all stand in a straight

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Conflagration and Everlasting Recurrence”,” *SJP* 28, no. 1 (1990): 149-158, A. A. Long, *From Epicurus to Epictetus: Studies in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2006), 256-284.

<sup>282</sup> Specific examples include the following texts: 46F, 46H, 46K, 52A, 52C and 52F in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers I*, 276-277, 308-310.

<sup>283</sup> In the NT this argument has been made primarily about the language of universal conflagration in 2 Pet 3. For a recent argument see J. Albert Harrill, “Stoic Physics, the Universal Conflagration, and the Eschatological Destruction of the “Ignorant and Unstable” in 2 Peter,” in *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (eds. Tuomas Rasimus, et al.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 115-140. Cf. also Pieter Willem van der Horst, *Hellenism, Judaism, Christianity: Essays on their Interaction* (CBET 8; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1998), 244-251, Tord Fornberg, “An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society: A Study of 2 Peter” (PhD, University of Uppsala, 1977) 67, J. Daryl Charles, *Virtue Amidst Vice: The Catalogue of Virtues in 2 Peter 1* (JSNTSup 150; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 92, 107-108, 155.

This argument has also been made about *Sib. Or.* 2:198-213; 3:72-92; 4:171-178, 179-183; 5:211-213, 512-531. Cf. Harrill, “Stoic Physics,” 126, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 92-93, 103, 112-115, Horst, *Hellenism*, 246, cf. also 238-239. Downing, *First Christian Century*, 178-179, Adams, *Stars*, 90-95. Allison makes this comparison more broadly with *Sib. Or.* 2:196-200 and other texts, in his chapter refuting Wright’s thesis. See Allison, “Victory,” esp. p.138.

line in the same sign.” If this is not metaphor, can we be confident that Mark 13:24 is?<sup>284</sup>

Allison argues that as these Stoic texts are to be read literally, Mark 13 should be read in a similar way and not as some form of apocalyptic metaphor.

Downing makes his argument in his comparison of the eschatologies of the Judaeo-Christian and Graeco-Roman worlds.<sup>285</sup> He assumes from the outset that the CCL in the NT and Stoic cosmology (as well as the Graeco-Roman world more widely) is concerned with the real end of the world: “the Stoics accepted the idea of recurrent conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) or of conflagration and flood, taking place when the planets return to their supposed original alignment.”<sup>286</sup> While he does not suppose that Mark 13:24-25 is using Stoic cosmology, he argues that the imagery of ἐκπύρωσις as it appears in Seneca would be recognised in the images of Mark and parallels.<sup>287</sup> He also argues that Stoic cosmology is used alongside Jewish traditions in *Sib. Or.* 2 and as such reflects “close assimilations of various traditions.”<sup>288</sup>

The third and most comprehensive argument has come from Edward Adams.<sup>289</sup> His 1997 article seeks to address the “problem of the link between the destruction of the temple and the end of the world” in Mark 13.<sup>290</sup> He proposes that Mark 13 finds a parallel in Lucan’s *Pharsalia*: they both link an historical catastrophe with the end of the world and they do so in

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<sup>284</sup> Allison, “Victory,” 131.

<sup>285</sup> Downing, *First Christian Century*, 169-187.

<sup>286</sup> Downing, *First Christian Century*, 173.

<sup>287</sup> Downing, *First Christian Century*, 177.

<sup>288</sup> Downing, *First Christian Century*, 178-179.

<sup>289</sup> Adams, *Stars*, Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 329-344.

<sup>290</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 329.

“broadly similar ways.”<sup>291</sup> He uses the examples of *Phars.* 1.67-80, 1.639-72, 2.289-92 and 7.134-38 to establish three observations about how historical events intersect with those of the world’s end, and he argues these are paralleled in Mark. The observations are that (1) the end of the Republic was a “disaster of cataclysmic proportions,”<sup>292</sup> (2) “linkage does not amount to equation and identification of these events”<sup>293</sup> as though the world-ending catastrophe happened at the same time as the historical disaster and (3) that the “doom of the Republic and the end of the world are causally and sequentially linked, but not chronologically related.”<sup>294</sup> These three points are paralleled in Mark 13 where (1) the fall of Jerusalem is given “eschatological importance,”<sup>295</sup> (2) this event is not one and the same thing as the return of the Son of Man and end of the age, and (3) the two events are not necessarily chronologically linked, but related by a “causal link within a nexus of end-time occurrences.”<sup>296</sup>

Adams’ 2007 work<sup>297</sup> also maintains that Stoic ἐκτύρωσις is alive and thriving in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. By taking a broader look at CCL in both Jewish and Graeco-Roman sources, he undertakes a comparative analysis of a number of texts in order to understand the CCL in the NT. Like Downing and Allison, his use of Stoic cosmology centres around the evidence from 1st century writers Seneca and Lucan.<sup>298</sup> Adams also argues that Stoic cosmology is used in the wider corpus of the *Sibylline Oracles*, taking Downing’s argument further than

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<sup>291</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 329.

<sup>292</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 342.

<sup>293</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 343.

<sup>294</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 343.

<sup>295</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 343.

<sup>296</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 344.

<sup>297</sup> Adams, *Stars*.

<sup>298</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 122-124.

Book 2 alone.<sup>299</sup> He argues that the Jewish use of Stoic cosmology reflects an actual expectation of cosmic collapse in Judaeo-Christian thought.

These three scholars show similar lines of thought that can be summarised as follows. First, they all argue that Stoic cosmology gives evidence of a literal expectation of cosmic catastrophe which is relevant for understanding similar language in the NT. Second, they all draw from either Seneca's writings or Lucan's *Pharsalia* as evidence for this claim.<sup>300</sup> Finally, they all maintain that the CCL in the *Sibylline Oracles* describes an actual cosmic catastrophe, and Downing and Adams explicitly argue that this language makes use of the Stoic doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις.<sup>301</sup>

### ***Michael Lapidge on Stoic Cosmology***

Although Downing, Allison and Adams have used Stoic cosmology to support their arguments in the field of biblical studies, little work has been done to evaluate the source materials and Graeco-Roman context. Yet a closer evaluation of these texts and the secondary work of classical scholarship presents a significant challenge to their claims.<sup>302</sup> The evidence suggests that SCI was used in a far more diverse way than has been assumed, especially given the changes in Roman Stoicism. Lapidge, a key Stoic scholar to whom both Downing

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<sup>299</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 88-96.

<sup>300</sup> Allison and Adams make use of Lucan and Seneca. Downing uses only Seneca.

<sup>301</sup> Downing, *First Christian Century*, 175, 178. Also Adams, *Stars*, 91.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Lapidge, "Lucan's Imagery," 344-370, Lapidge, "Stoic Cosmology," 161-186, Lapidge, *Stoic Cosmology and Roman Literature*, Thorsteinsson, "Stoic Cosmo-Theology," 533-571, Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15.

An opposing view has been presented by Robert B. Todd, "The Stoics and their Cosmology in the First and Second Centuries A.D." *ANRW* 36.3:1365-1378. However Todd bases his argument on dating Cleomedes to the first or second century CE, which is far from certain. Thorsteinsson, "Stoic Cosmo-Theology," 535, n.534, Robert B. Todd and Alan C. Bowen, *Cleomedes' Lectures on Astronomy: A Translation of the Heavens* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2004), 2-4.

and Adams refer,<sup>303</sup> highlights this development from early Stoicism. In his book chapter on the subject,<sup>304</sup> he examines why ἐκπύρωσις was needed, outlines the flawed solutions and concludes it was a problematic doctrine for the Stoics. Part of the conclusion to this chapter is of particular relevance: Lapidge proceeds to argue that because of these problems within early Stoicism it is not surprising that the “*ekpurōsis* theory was one of the first cosmological theories to be abandoned by later Stoics” and that in the shift of the Stoic centre to Rome, cosmology was increasingly abandoned in favour of an “earthier” focus on Stoic ethics, to the degree it was not even taught in Roman Stoicism.<sup>305</sup> In philosophical thought after the early period, some Stoics rejected the doctrine wholesale<sup>306</sup> and Lapidge notably argues that only Seneca gives it “more than a passing nod.”<sup>307</sup> By the 1st century, “Stoic cosmology was ... a dead letter. It passed from the domain of the philosophers to the domain of the poets, where with its copious and intriguing metaphors, it was enthusiastically received and nurtured for centuries to come.”<sup>308</sup> It is this development that he then explores in his two subsequent articles, one which looks at Lucan’s *Pharsalia* specifically<sup>309</sup> and the other a broader range of Roman Stoic literature, including Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Marcus Aurelius and others.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Adams refers to a number of Lapidge’s works, cf. Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 335, 336, 338, 339, 341. This continues in Adams, *Stars*. Downing also draws on Lapidge, cf. Downing, *First Christian Century*, 173. Allison builds on Lapidge indirectly through Adams’ article, cf. Allison, “Victory,” 299 n.220.

<sup>304</sup> Lapidge, “Stoic Cosmology,” 161-186.

<sup>305</sup> Lapidge, “Stoic Cosmology,” 183-184.

<sup>306</sup> E.g. Panaetius of Rhodes, Boethus of Sidon and Diogenes of Babylon (all 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE). Philo writes “Boethus of Sidon and Panaetius ... gave up the conflagration and regenerations, and deserted to the holier doctrine of the entire world’s indestructibility. Diogenes [of Babylon] too is reported to have subscribed to the doctrine of the conflagration when he was a young man, but to have had doubts in his maturity and suspended judgement.” *On the Indestructibility of the World*, 76-77 (Long & Sedley).

<sup>307</sup> Lapidge, “Stoic Cosmology,” 184.

<sup>308</sup> Lapidge, “Stoic Cosmology,” 184-185.

<sup>309</sup> Lapidge, “Lucan’s Imagery,” 344-370.

<sup>310</sup> Lapidge, *Stoic Cosmology and Roman Literature*.



In the article on Lucan's *Pharsalia* Lapidge argues that Stoic cosmology is taken in a new and original direction. He examines how the imagery of ἐκπύρωσις functions as a metaphor for the historical account of the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, rather than as a constituent part of Stoic philosophy.<sup>311</sup> This metaphorical language is used at key points in the narrative up until the climactic final battle of Book 7, after which it no longer appears. He argues that one of Lucan's central themes is to make the point that the "destruction of the state through civil war is a disaster on a scale commensurable with the dissolution of the universe at ἐκπύρωσις."<sup>312</sup> Lapidge is clear on this at a number of points, going so far as to say that "though Lucan's familiarity with Stoic vocabulary gave a cosmic dimension to the image, its recurrence in the poem has little to do with doctrinaire Stoicism."<sup>313</sup>

Lapidge's thesis does not mean that Stoic cosmology was wholly and completely rejected in the 1st century nor that when images of ἐκπύρωσις were used it was always done so without any knowledge of the contents of the Stoic doctrine. However, in terms of philosophical belief systems, it does not say whether Lucan had signed up wholesale to this Stoic doctrine or that the metaphor was illustrative of his complete rejection of it. The only specific mention of an expected cosmic conflagration is in *Phars.* 7:812-815 and is devoid of any of the metaphorical imagery elsewhere in *Pharsalia*. In the aftermath of the civil war Caesar denies the dead a burial and Lucan's explanation to this is that it does not matter: as all will be destroyed at the cosmic event of ἐκπύρωσις.<sup>314</sup> The reference to Stoic

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<sup>311</sup> Similar arguments are made about Lucan's language in Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 146-157, Elaine Fantham, *Lucan: De Bello Civili. Book II* (CGLC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 220, Leigh, *Lucan*, 45, Debra Hershkowitz, *The Madness of Epic: Reading Insanity from Homer to Statius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 202. D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 278 n.127.

<sup>312</sup> Lapidge, "Lucan's Imagery," 362. Micah Y. Myers, "Lucan's Poetic Geographies: Center and Periphery in Civil War Epic," in *Brill's Companion to Lucan* (ed. Paolo Asso; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 403.

<sup>313</sup> Lapidge, "Lucan's Imagery," 363.

<sup>314</sup> Lapidge, "Lucan's Imagery," 370.

cosmological belief is singular in its use: it is a pastoral response to the ignominy of the unburied dead and is even introduced as an idea needing explanation:

But Caesar's rage is bootless: it matters not whether the corpses are burnt on the pyre or decompose with time ; nature finds room for them all in her gentle arms, and the dead owe their end to themselves alone. If fire does not consume this host now, it will consume them hereafter, together with earth and the waters of the sea ; there remains a conflagration which will destroy all the world and bring the stars and dead men's bones together.<sup>315</sup>

Lapidge is not the only scholar to have made this assessment of Stoic cosmology in the Roman Stoic era. Other classicists argue that Lucan uses this imagery to escalate the “catastrophic destruction of political strife to a cosmic scale.”<sup>316</sup> Roche, who follows Lapidge's interpretation,<sup>317</sup> examines the problem of dissonance between traditional Stoic cosmology and Lucan's use of it. He surveys and critiques the main lines of interpretations that have been offered to resolve the conflict that Lucan's ekpyrotic language construes conflagration as a disaster which does not actually conform to Stoic cosmology proper: the latter depicted the universal fire not as a disaster but as the “most perfect expression of life.”<sup>318</sup> Roche's own conclusion follows a moderate version of Robert Sklenář in that Lucan gives a “complication of Stoic conceptions” in his use of conflagration imagery.<sup>319</sup> Sklenář himself argues that Lucan does not simply use limited images from Stoic cosmology, that is conflagration only without the subsequent palingenesis, but instead reverses Stoic cosmology

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<sup>315</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 7:812-815 (Duff, LCL).

<sup>316</sup> Even if they do not attempt to discuss the development and possible disintegration of Stoic cosmology in the Roman era, their arguments about *Pharsalia* strongly support Lapidge's general thesis. Philip R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 381, Feeney, *The Gods in Epic*, 278 n.127, Leigh, *Lucan*, 45, Hershkowitz, *The Madness of Epic*, 202.

<sup>317</sup> See Roche, “Righting the Reader,” 60, Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 148.

<sup>318</sup> Roche, “Righting the Reader,” 62, cf. 64-69. For ἐκπύρωσις as a positive event see also Long's analysis of Chrysippus and others, cf. Long, *From Epicurus*, 269-272, J. Mansfield, “Providence and the Destruction of the Universe in Early Stoic Thought: With Some Remarks on the “Mysteries of Philosophy,”” in *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (ed. M. J. Vermaseren; EPRO 78; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 129-188, esp. p.160. See also the ancient descriptions of Stoic cosmology in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.18.2; Aristocles in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 15.14.2; Plutarch, *Moralia*, 1067A.

<sup>319</sup> Roche, “Righting the Reader,” 68.

so the conflagration is not put in a positive light but becomes an “irreversible descent into cosmic anarchy.”<sup>320</sup> Roche does not say that conflagration is completely reversed nor that it needs to be “cordoned off” from world recurrence.<sup>321</sup> However, whether Lucan uses a truncated or a reversed form of Stoic cosmology (or somewhere in between), this does not affect the overreaching point that he uses it in way that is incongruous with formal doctrine or belief: both in the disastrous terms he uses to escalate<sup>322</sup> the sense of political catastrophe as well as the absence of any subsequent world recurrence. Lucan shows a free ability to use and adapt SCI for his purposes and is evidently not concerned with doctrinal exactitude. The imagery is ultimately used to amplify the devastation of the main event of the book, namely the civil war.

The conclusions made by Lapidge contrast significantly with those of Downing, Adams and Allison. A particular point of conflict with Lapidge’s work is found in Adams’ argument that Mark 13 finds a parallel with *Pharsalia* in juxtaposing the universal and historical.<sup>323</sup> Lapidge’s analysis of the disintegration of Stoic cosmology as it had been traditionally understood challenges Adams’ thesis, which relies on the juxtaposition of two events that are both expected to occur. Adams does not consider that the CCL of *Pharsalia*

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<sup>320</sup> Sklenář, *Nothingness*, 6. Sklenář goes as far to say that Lucan in his use of this imagery “dismantles the Stoic cosmological formulations in order to reveal the nullity behind them.” However he then maintains that despite Lucan’s rejection of *Stoic* conflagration, Lucan does not use his own conflagration as a metaphor alone but that it is also expected as an actual reality. This he argues on the basis of the “future verbs indicated by *sic*.” Sklenář, *Nothingness*, 4, 5, following W. R. Johnson, *Momentary Monsters: Lucan and his Heroes* (CSCP 47; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 18. However this argument cannot be sustained as it is unwarranted to assert that the presence of a future tense necessarily invokes a meaning beyond metaphor alone and Sklenář (nor Johnson) provide any further evidence to substantiate the claim. Roche persuasively disagrees with Sklenář’s wholesale separation of palingenesis from the conflagration, arguing that it may be Lucan’s purpose to invoke in the reader the idea of world recurrence after the described universal fire in order to highlight the subsequent “re-organisation of the Roman Republic.” Roche, “Righting the Reader,” 71.

<sup>321</sup> Roche, “Righting the Reader,” 68.

<sup>322</sup> By ‘escalate’ I mean to put extend or heighten the sense of disaster by putting it in cosmic rather than political terms. See above, p.70.

<sup>323</sup> Adams, “Historical Crisis,” 329-344. This is surprising given Adams’ dependence upon Lapidge at various points in his argument. See above, p. 68 n. 303.

might not represent a real event but is used as part of poetic symbolism that has a literary purpose. This contests Adams' assertion that "Lucan holds to the Stoic doctrine of cosmic conflagration"<sup>324</sup> when this has not been established nor is necessary to understand the language. In particular, Lapidge's work disputes the second and third of Adams' three conclusions that the juxtaposition of universal and historical does not equate these two events and that the doom of the Republic and the end of the world are "causally and sequentially" linked events, but not chronologically.<sup>325</sup> The issue that both conclusions attempt to address becomes irrelevant when the CCL is understood as poetic symbolism. Adams uses four texts from *Pharsalia* in support of his argument, *Phars.* 1.68-89, 638-672; 2:289-292 and 7:134-138. I will now review these passages, in light of Lapidge's thesis and the commentary of classical scholars.

### ***Lucan's Pharsalia: Four Texts***

In his reading of *Pharsalia* 1.68-89, Adams argues that the fate that causes Rome to collapse is the same fate that will "one day cause the universe to dissolve."<sup>326</sup> The text itself reads:

Huge is the task that opens before me—to show what cause drove peace from earth and forced a frenzied nation to take up arms...It was the chain of jealous fate, and the speedy fall which no eminence can escape; it was the grievous collapse of excessive weight, and Rome unable to support her own greatness. Even so when the framework of the world is dissolved and the final hour, closing so many ages, reverts to primeval chaos, then [all the constellations will clash in confusion,] the fiery stars will drop into the sea, and earth, refusing to spread her shores out flat, will shake off the ocean ; the moon will move in opposition to her brother, and claim to rule the day, disdainingly to drive her chariot along her slanting orbit ; and the whole distracted fabric of the shattered firmament will overthrow its laws. Great things come crashing down upon themselves—such is the limit of growth ordained by heaven for success. Nor did Fortune lend her grudge to any foreign nations, to use against the people that ruled

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<sup>324</sup> Adams, "Historical Crisis," 336.

<sup>325</sup> Adams, "Historical Crisis," 343. The first of the conclusions is not problematic. It is widely accepted that Lucan's *Pharsalia* uses the CCL to escalate the devastation of civil war (his first conclusion) and does not rely on an actual expectation of ἐκπύρωσις.

<sup>326</sup> Adams, "Historical Crisis," 337.

earth and sea : the doom of Rome was due to Rome herself, when she became the joint property of three masters, and when despotism, which never before was shared among so many, struck its bloody bargain.<sup>327</sup>

This text from the start of the book is an example of how Lucan used the collapse of the cosmos as an image for the doom of Rome in a surmised form. As Rome will fall and collapse, “unable to support her own greatness,” so the stars will fall from the heavens, the sun and moon be disturbed, and the fabric of the universe shatter. Rome’s fall is captured through the image of the universe’s collapse as “great things come crashing down upon themselves.” This image of the cyclic nature of the universe and its periodic collapse from order into chaos provides suitable and useful language to describe the fall of Rome and political powers, without necessarily invoking actual cosmological concern. To the extent that a picture of cosmic collapse is used to heighten the sense of disaster at the fall of Rome, the text reads as Adams supposes. But it does not compare them as two expected events: the old imagery of Stoic cosmology is used here to serve the description of the severity of the political events to come.

Lapidge argues that *Phars.* 1.68-89 picks up and uses Stoic terminology on the basis of Latin parallels to the early Greek Stoics and that the language of descent into chaos, rather than the traditional Stoic fire, is consistent with the doctrine on the basis of the examples laid down in other Stoic work.<sup>328</sup> Yet despite Lucan's conversance with Stoic cosmological images, Lapidge does not argue that this represents intricate knowledge of and adherence to Stoic theory, as the images of dissolution elsewhere in *Pharsalia* lack the same coherence as they do here.<sup>329</sup> Rather the coherence in the present text shows Lucan establishing his

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<sup>327</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 1.68-69 (Duff, LCL).

<sup>328</sup> Lapidge, “Lucan’s Imagery,” 360-361.

<sup>329</sup> Lapidge, “Lucan’s Imagery,” 362-363. For example, in *Phars.* 1:76-77 (Duff, LCL) the “earth, refusing to spread her shores out flat, will shake off the ocean” in contrast to *Phars.* 7.134-138 in which the shores are overcome by the sea.

metaphorical use of this cosmological imagery. He opens with a consistent use of the images to demonstrate how they are going to be used with respect to the civil war. Having thus set the scene, Lucan is then able to play with the images as the narrative unfolds.

Lapidge is not alone in his interpretation of the CCL in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. Roche describes this section of *Pharsalia* as "an extended simile" which portrays the cause of the civil war "as an event of cosmic scale and significance."<sup>330</sup> As throughout the book, Roche notes that this "universal symbolism of civil war" finds "consistent parallels in the text's presentation of civil war."<sup>331</sup> Roche argues the specific language of this passage seems to imply the necessity of Rome's fall and that the imagery relates to the theme of the survival or downfall of tyrannical empires.<sup>332</sup>

Along with these two scholars, a number of others have made similar assertions about *Pharsalia* 1.72-80. Leigh, Colish, Hershkowitz, Myers and Matthews all see the ekpyrotic language here as a symbol, metaphor or simile for the disaster that was the civil war.<sup>333</sup> Colish in particular notes the lack of consistency with Stoic cosmology, namely the lack of any description of fire consuming all the elements nor any mention of palingenesis, the cyclical renewal of the world.<sup>334</sup> Only Myers assumes that Lucan is referring here to an expected event, despite acknowledging the lack of consistency it has with traditional

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<sup>330</sup> Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 147. Colish also argues that the CCL in *Pharsalia* reflects "Lucan's desire to endow the historical events he relates with a cosmic significance." Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, 1: Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature* (vol. 1 of *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 256.

<sup>331</sup> Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 148.

<sup>332</sup> Although elsewhere he argues that the simile is used beyond the simply parallel destruction, cf. Roche, "Righting the Reader," 52-71.

<sup>333</sup> Hershkowitz, *The Madness of Epic*, 201-202, Leigh, *Lucan*, 45, Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 255-256, Matthews, *Caesar and the Storm*, 135, 169, 209, Myers, "Poetic Geographies," 403.

<sup>334</sup> Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 255-256.

doctrine.<sup>335</sup> He argues that the SCI is a simile for the dissolution of cosmic boundaries that occur in the civil war; “the fundamental parts of the universe” which “alter in their relationship with one another.”<sup>336</sup> This slightly different emphasis to Lapidge and Roche is still consistent with reading SCI as separated from its cosmological origins. Although Myers maintains the simile includes some expectation of an actual event of cosmic catastrophe, this event has diverged from traditional Stoic cosmology with Myers suggesting that Lucan draws also from nihilism.<sup>337</sup> While a different interpretation from other classical scholars, Myers’ argument that the use of SCI as a simile for the boundary violation in civil war (together with the possible additional influence from nihilism) nonetheless continues to demonstrate the creativity and degradation of SCI from its formal philosophical roots.

In *Phars.* 1.68-89 Lucan sets out SCI as his controlling metaphor to describe the reality and calamitous effect of the civil war. As many scholars have noted, it is clear that he uses the parts of SCI that serve his purpose and has no qualms with rending its form to diverge significantly with the features of the old Stoic doctrine. Notably, in contrast to the traditional idea that the event of ἐκπύρωσις was life in its purest form, Lucan depicts it as a disaster. There is also no mention of world renewal. This inconsistency suggests that either Lucan is formulating his own cosmological ideas, as implied by Myers, or he is not concerned with cosmological imagery further than its ability to serve as a metaphor for the civil war, as suggested by Lapidge, Roche and others. Given the title, theme and focus of *Pharsalia*, and the thrust of the narrative in 1.68-89 the latter is a more convincing interpretation.

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<sup>335</sup> For the same reasons as Colish as well as possible influence from nihilism. Myers, “Poetic Geographies,” 404.

<sup>336</sup> Myers, “Poetic Geographies,” 404.

<sup>337</sup> Myers, “Poetic Geographies,” 404.

The second of Adams' four texts is *Phars.* 1.638-672 which recounts the speech of the astrologer Nigidius Figulus who predicts the civil war from the position of the stars.

Figulus also spoke, Figulus, whose study it was to know the gods and the secrets of the sky, Figulus whom not even Egyptian Memphis could match in observation of the heavens and calculations that keep pace with the stars. "Either," said he, "this universe strays for ever governed by no law, and the stars move to and fro with course unfixed ; or else, if they are guided by destiny, speedy destruction is preparing for Rome and for mankind. Will the earth gape and cities be swallowed up? Or will burning heat destroy our temperate clime? Will the soil break faith and deny its produce? Or will water everywhere be tainted with streams of poison? What kind of disaster are the gods preparing? What form of ruin will their anger assume? The lives of multitudes are doomed to end together. If Saturn, that cold baleful planet, were now kindling his black fires in the zenith, then Aquarius would have poured down such rains as Deucalion saw, and the whole earth would have been hidden under the waste of waters. Or if the sun's rays were now passing over the fierce Lion of Nemea, then fire would stream over all the world, and the upper air would be kindled and consumed by the sun's chariot. These heavenly bodies are not active now. But Mars—what dreadful purpose has he, when he kindles the Scorpion menacing with fiery tail and scorches its claws? For the benign star of Jupiter is hidden deep in the West, the healthful planet Venus is dim, and Mercury's swift motion is stayed ; Mars alone lords it in heaven. Why have the constellations fled from their courses, to move darkling through the sky, while the side of sword-girt Orion shines all too bright? The madness of war is upon us, when the power of the sword shall violently upset all legality, and atrocious crime shall be called heroism. This frenzy will last for many years ; and it is useless to pray Heaven that it may end : when peace comes, a tyrant will come with it. Let Rome prolong the unbroken series of suffering and draw out her agony for ages : only while civil war lasts, shall she henceforth be free."<sup>338</sup>

In this text, Figulus begins with a question of astrological interpretation: either the movements of the stars is random and has no meaning or, if they are governed by fate, they indicate that some form of destruction is on its way for Rome. In the subsequent lines, questions are asked as to what kind of disaster is predicted. While four different natural disasters are initially outlined (fire, earthquake, famine and poisoned water) the emphasis is on the possibility of flood (1.651-654) and of fire (1.655-659). However, Figulus is clear that this is not what the heavens indicate (1.658) and, due to the positioning of Mars and other heavenly bodies, concludes that the threat is not natural but political (1.666). In Adams' analysis of this passage, he uses the two natural disasters of fire and flood to conclude that the

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<sup>338</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 1.638-672 (Duff, LCL).



text says cosmic catastrophe would be better than civil war, following Masters' conclusion in *Poetry and Civil War*<sup>339</sup> and he concludes that both disasters were actually expected.

However, Adams' conclusions concerning this text are not wholly consistent with the emphasis within the speech itself.

Adams' argument that any of the other cosmic disasters would be preferable to civil war is stated nowhere in the text. Hannah and Roche argue the opposite: Figulus calms the nerves of his audience by his explanation that the planets are not in their worst possible position, whether it is Saturn causing Aquarius to cause a world-consuming flood or the sun causing a commensurate fire. The planets are not in such a position; it is rather the position of Mars that is relevant and it indicates that the madness of war is on its way. In other words, in the scheme of possible calamities, civil war is a lesser disaster.<sup>340</sup> However, the preference of civil war over natural catastrophe is also nowhere stated. The main question that is at the heart of the passage is stated clearly: "what kind of disaster are the gods preparing? What form of ruin will their anger assume?"<sup>341</sup> It is a question of *kind* not ranking. It may be that Figulus puts the audience's mind at ease that a cosmic catastrophe is not on its way, but he does not say that the war is a better (or worse) alternative. That Figulus is dealing with a question of what type of calamity is coming, as opposed to a value-judgement of which is better, also fits with poetic narrative. In the preceding section Arruns the Tuscan, a seer, foretells from entrails that a great disaster is coming (1.585-638) and the reaction to his

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<sup>339</sup> Cf. Jamie Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (CCS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 65. Referred to by Adams in Adams, "Historical Crisis," 339.

<sup>340</sup> Robert Hannah, "Lucan Bellum civile 1.649-65: The Astrology of P. Nigidius Figulus Revisited," in *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar. Vol. 9, Roman Poetry and Prose, Greek Poetry, Etymology, Historiography* (eds. Francis Cairns and Malcolm Heath; ARCA 34; Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1996), 180, 184, Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 368.

Roche points out the irony that universal catastrophe is ruled out by Figulus "in light of the narrator's ekpyrotic simile of the descent into civil war at 72-80 and the use of the conflagration as a more general symbol for civil war throughout the poem." Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 370.

<sup>341</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 1.649-650 (Duff, LCL).

speech describes his words as “veiling it [the future] with obscurity and hiding it with much ambiguity.”<sup>342</sup> In this interpretive fog, Figulus offers what Arruns does not and elucidates the actual nature of the disaster through his reading of the heavens. It may have given the audience relief that the prediction was not one of natural catastrophe but the response of the audience to the civil war is neither one of calm: “These forebodings [i.e. those of Figulus’ speech] were enough to alarm and terrify the populace.”<sup>343</sup> Nowhere in the passage is it suggested that a natural catastrophe would be preferable to civil war.

Adams’ thesis about *Phars.* 1.638-672 depends on juxtaposing two events: the end of the world by fire and the impending political disaster. However, this interpretation does not address an important point about the passage, namely that ἐκπύρωσις is not the only natural disaster mentioned, so it is problematic to argue there are two particular events juxtaposed. There are a number of different alternatives crises listed in this passage, including events that do not result in an ekpyrotic cosmic collapse, i.e. poisoned water and famine. There is no indication that the fire-disaster should be distinguished from the other natural catastrophes. In the text Figulus interprets the movements of the stars as a sign of a disaster, the political nature of which is not clear until the latter part of his speech (1.658ff). He outlines what astrological positions would be necessary for a fire-disaster and likewise for one of flooding, but the movement of the stars in the heavens indicates neither. Roche says of these lines (1.651-658) that they “feature *hypothetical* results from *unreal* zodiacal configurations: they reprise the exploration of possible catastrophes at 1.645-648, but reframe the examination within more specifically astrologically informed inferences.”<sup>344</sup> These other catastrophes give

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<sup>342</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 1.637-638 (Duff, LCL).

<sup>343</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 1.673 (Duff, LCL).

<sup>344</sup> Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 364 (emphasis added).

an indication of the possibilities of what the stars are able to predict but it is not stated that all or any will occur.

*Pharsalia* 1.638-672 does not focus to any large degree on either Stoic cosmology nor the imagery associated to it. In contrast to *Phars* 1.68-89, the passage does not use ἐκτύρωσις as a metaphor. While a fire-disaster is implied, is it not juxtaposed in the way Adams argues, and in the astrological prediction of civil war there is little SCI. The speech brings clarity to the nature of the impending disaster, that it is civil war that is coming rather than other natural crises, and the prediction of what the realities of this war will involve is a cause of consternation for Figulus' audience.

The third text which Adams highlights is *Phars.* 2.289-292:

Who would choose to watch the starry vault falling down and to feel no fear himself?  
Or to sit with folded hands, when high heaven was crashing down and earth shaking  
with the confused weight of a collapsing firmament?<sup>345</sup>

These lines come at the opening of Cato's response to Brutus' speech about whether Cato will engage in the civil war and thus become guilty by participating in it, making the choice between "abstract wisdom and practical patriotism."<sup>346</sup> Adams cites this passage as an example of his proposed juxtaposition of universal and historical.<sup>347</sup> However, Cato's questions come after the scene-setting opening speech from Brutus which has significant implications for the interpretation of his words.

In his opening speech, Brutus asks, "Are you the champion of peace, keeping your path unshaken amid a tottering world? Or have you resolved to stand with the arch-criminals and take your share in the disasters of a mad world and so clear the civil war of guilt?"<sup>348</sup> It is

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<sup>345</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 2.289-292 (Duff, LCL).

<sup>346</sup> Fantham, *De Bello Civili*, 122.

<sup>347</sup> Adams, "Historical Crisis," 339-340.

<sup>348</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 2.247-250 (Duff, LCL).

clear by the two options Brutus presents that he equates the “tottering world” with the “disasters of a mad world” which is the civil war.<sup>349</sup> They are one and the same in his imagination. Cato’s response in *Phars.* 2.289-292 is to escalate the sense of disaster, the coming war is more than the collapse of the world, but includes the heavens.<sup>350</sup> This heightened sense of disaster is also reflected in the more extreme language Cato uses. As Fantham has observed, where Brutus had connected the civil war with *scelus* (2.249) Cato speaks of it as the *summum nefas* (2.286).<sup>351</sup> The SCI is not used to contrast an historical and universal event so much as to emphasise the seriousness of the disaster and that despite the consequent fearfulness of war that it is still necessary for Cato to fight.<sup>352</sup> As such it serves Cato’s argument in the passage questioning how he could fail to act when such a disaster was occurring: if everything is in a state of collapse, he must act.

*Pharsalia* 2.289-292 does not juxtapose the cosmic collapse and civil war as two events worthy of comparison and extended comment. Cato continues the imagery that Brutus has used (2.247-250) to describe the catastrophe of civil war, increasing its power by extending the collapse it to include the heavens.<sup>353</sup> If Cato is using the CCL as Brutus did, then the cosmic collapse is to be identified with the civil war itself. This rules out the use of cosmic collapse as an event that must be anticipated in the future. Clearly Lucan cannot be envisaging that they are events which will happen at the same time, given he wrote *Pharsalia*

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<sup>349</sup> This is in contrast to the peaceful life which Brutus identifies with the “unshaken courses” of the stars of heaven, Lucan, *Phars.* 2.266-268 (Duff, LCL).

<sup>350</sup> Fantham, *De Bello Civili*, 132. Fantham describes this use of SCI by Lucan as an example of how the language of ἐκπύρωσις “retains its imaginative appeal” from the abandoned Stoic cosmology of his day.

<sup>351</sup> Fantham, *De Bello Civili*, 132. Brutus’ *scelus* has a more generic sense of impious action versus the unmatched wickedness of Cato’s *summum nefas*.

<sup>352</sup> The wider context here is that Brutus, in fear of the civil war, seeks Cato to argue against participating in the war. Cato responds by arguing that action is necessary, despite the extreme wickedness of civil war, as a defence of liberty. For a discussion of their conversation see Fantham, *De Bello Civili*, 122-139.

<sup>353</sup> Cato then uses an entirely different image, that of a father grieving for lost sons, to further illustrate his response. Lucan, *Phars.* 2.297-300.

in the subsequent century to the civil war. The passage does not compare the two events side by side; the CCL is used to emphasise how dire the political situation is, so much so that Cato is compelled to act despite the evils of civil war.

The fourth and last text which Adams uses is in the penultimate book of Lucan's work, *Phars.* 7.134-138. This passage comes at the climax to the epic, the battle at Pharsalus. As the soldiers get ready for the fight, Pompey, in response to Cicero, makes a speech which commences the battle (7.87-123) and the soldiers begin their attack. Lucan describes the fearlessness of the men for their own safety:

[Each man ignores his personal danger, appalled by a mightier fear.] Who that saw the shore covered by the sea and the waves reaching the mountaintops, the sky falling down upon the earth and the sun dashed from his place, could regard with selfish fear such wide destruction? [Men's minds are not at leisure to fear for themselves: they tremble for Rome and for Magnus.]<sup>354</sup>

Adams states that the "doom of Rome is compared to the dissolution of the cosmos" and that it is difficult to know quite what Lucan means: does this comparison reflect the belief that the end of the cosmos is at hand or is it used to show that the soldiers' fear is the same as if the world were about to end?<sup>355</sup> Without deciding either way, Adams concludes this passage "only underlines how tightly tied the historical disaster is to the cosmic disaster."<sup>356</sup>

There is a third possibility for how Lucan uses the CCL in the passage. Adams' hypothesis is that the SCI language always juxtaposes two events. However, this excludes the possibility that there is no comparison being made but rather that Lucan here identifies the civil war *with* the calamitous nature of the imagery as in Cato's speech above.<sup>357</sup> This follows the interpretation of a number of Lucan scholars. Roche as with *Phars.* 1.72-80 sees this as a

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<sup>354</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 7.133-138 (Duff, LCL). I include more than just 7.134-138 to give context.

<sup>355</sup> Adams, "Historical Crisis," 340.

<sup>356</sup> Adams, "Historical Crisis," 341.

<sup>357</sup> See above, p.79.

continuation of Lucan's use of SCI to escalate the language of war.<sup>358</sup> Leigh and Matthews do likewise; the latter stating that in this passage and several others Lucan "describes civil war *in terms of* this universal destruction."<sup>359</sup> The imagery does not depict a separate event to which the civil war is compared, but is used to describe the war itself.<sup>360</sup>

This identification of SCI with the civil war itself is further supported in the surrounding narrative. There are a number of points which explore the cosmic imagery with the coming and effect of the civil war.<sup>361</sup> The most explicit of these is *Phars.* 7.45-47 and 7.91-92. The first sets the scene in the narrative before Cicero's speech to Pompey: "Sunshine had conquered the stars when [*cum*] the soldiery raged with confused muttering and demanded the signal for battle; Fortune was haling the world to destruction."<sup>362</sup> Likewise in *Phars.* 7.91-92 where Pompey uses the language in his acceptance of the need to commence the battle: "At least I call Rome to witness that the day of universal destruction has been forced upon me." There are not two events in either text: civil war is described in cosmic terms emphasising in dramatic terms the extent of the calamity.

### ***Conclusions and Implications for NT Scholarship***

It is evident from my analysis of *Phars.* 1.68-89, 638-672; 2.289-292, and 7.134-138 that SCI has been used in a way that is dramatically different from its philosophical origins. This supports Lapidge's thesis that by the 1st century CE SCI had moved to the hands of the poets, if not fully then at least in part. In *Phars.* 1.68-89 the imagery functions as a metaphor for the

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<sup>358</sup> Roche, "Righting the Reader," 60, Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 33, 148.

<sup>359</sup> Leigh, *Lucan*, 45, Matthews, *Caesar and the Storm*, 135 (emphasis added).

<sup>360</sup> Dilke does identify the language here with its history in Stoic cosmology but does not suggest any interpretation of how or in what way the language is used. O. A. W. Dilke, *M. Annaei Lucani De Bello Civili: Liber VII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 98.

<sup>361</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 7.45-47, 72, 91-92, 197-204.

<sup>362</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 7:45-47 (Duff, LCL).

mighty fall of Rome. *Pharsalia* 1.639-672 uses a fire-disaster as one of many natural disasters that are not about to happen; the catastrophe is that of the civil war. *Pharsalia* 2.289-92 construes the civil war in terms of ἐκπύρωσις to intensify the sense of the disaster and concomitant human reaction that necessitates action. *Pharsalia* 7.134-138 identifies the civil war with SCI for a similar purpose: this time to show that the soldiers must forsake their fear for themselves for fear of calamity coming upon all. It is no surprise that the symbolic use of SCI in these passages shows subtle difference of focus and emphasis, and that even in Figulus' speech it is separated from the civil war itself – such is the creative nature of poetry. What is common throughout these is that nowhere is there a true juxtaposition of two anticipated events: one historical and one cosmic. That is not to say Lucan himself refuted the Stoic cosmological tenet of ἐκπύρωσις,<sup>363</sup> but the breadth of use of SCI in *Pharsalia* provides ample evidence of his ability to use the imagery for creative and imaginative purposes that leave formal Stoic philosophy far behind. Space prohibits a comprehensive study of *Pharsalia*, but there are many other examples in support of this conclusion.<sup>364</sup>

In light of the above, it appears that Lucan's poetry offers as an example of the diversification of the use of the language of Stoic cosmology, specifically ἐκπύρωσις, in the Roman era. As a result, it lays a considerable challenge to the contributions made by Adams, Allison and Downing. I suggest this challenge includes three main critiques of their arguments.

First, on examination of the evidence, it becomes clear that the full nuance of Stoic cosmology has not been appreciated. It has largely been assumed that any use of SCI represents Stoic belief in an end of the world and as such depends on maintaining that belief in ἐκπύρωσις was consistent from Zeno onwards. Adams, Allison and Downing have not

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<sup>363</sup> Lucan's belief in the tenet may be indicated by *Phars.* 7.812-815.

<sup>364</sup> Amongst those that Lapidge identifies are *Phars.* 2:214-218; 4:72-75, 98-101; 5:632-636. Lapidge, "Lucan's Imagery," 363-368. Others may also include *Phars.* 1.231-238, 522b-547; 2:56-58; 7:151-164.

accounted for the changing state of Stoic thought in the first century and the prevalent lack of interest in physics. Secondly, questions must be raised against any argument which relies heavily on Seneca as his work represents a minority concern with ἐκτύρωσις when considered in the context of other Stoic philosophers of the time. This dependence results in a misunderstanding of Roman Stoic cosmology and as no scholar is positing a direct relationship from Seneca to Jewish literature, there is no firm ground to support emphasising his work over others.<sup>365</sup> Lastly, the evidence of Lucan's *Pharsalia* has been used in arguments about NT and other Judaeo-Christian material without full appreciation of its context. This has led to reading his work as an example of literal cosmological expectation when the evidence supports the contrary conclusion that the SCI is used in a highly creative and symbolic way.

This challenge to the arguments made by Allison, Downing and Adams raises an important question. If Roman Stoic cosmology (beyond ἐκτύρωσις alone) did not have the place that it had in early Stoicism and had begun to diversify into the realm of the metaphorical language of poetry, what can be said about how to interpret the influence of SCI in the *Sibylline Oracles* and other Judaeo-Christian writings of the Second Temple period?

First and foremost, it cannot be sustained that Stoic cosmology offers a neat literal parallel to Mark 13.24-25, nor does it offer a straight forward juxtaposition of historical/universal images from the poetic use in Lucan and Mark. The parallels may raise legitimate questions, but compelling answers require further evidence and substantiation, especially when two texts are so far removed from each other.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> In fact, Seneca himself shows some use of SCI in a non-philosophical framework. In *Thyestes* 4.789-884 it is used to illustrate and emphasise the “moral anarchy” of Atreus’ murder of Tantalus and Plisthenes. R. J. Tarrant, *Seneca's Thyestes* (APA 11; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 204.

<sup>366</sup> Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” 1-13.



Secondly, it is possible to legitimately identify SCI in Judaeo-Christian material without having to treat it as a homogenous entity. Texts which offer evidence of a *specific* and *intentional* relationship to Stoic cosmological images, invite the question of what may be therefore inferred from the imagery without presupposing the answer. It cannot be presumed to be a literal interpretation about the end of the world. From the evidence above it appears the language was not used as part of an evolving mythology or tradition like that of the DW. Instead, it seems that by the first century the imagery was in the process of being reused for other purposes as it became disconnected from its philosophical origins. That said, the method by which DWT might be identified may also work with SCI, for both call for an approach which evaluates the parallels between different texts.<sup>367</sup> The difference lies in how they participate in their tradition: the Divine Warrior myth is part of one that has an active past and has been shown to be used to some degree in the Second Temple period. By contrast, the use of SCI in mythological texts or any kind of specific tradition has not been established. Any method must therefore include the possibility of a completely innovative use of the imagery without the expectation that it will conform to Stoic cosmological belief. That is not to say that there is never any influence from Stoic cosmology, but this cannot be assumed. There has to be clear evidence to support such an assertion from the wider narrative of the Judaeo-Christian text itself. For example, if a text appears to draw from SCI and there is other evidence within the narrative to suggest a context of the end of the physical world, then it is more likely that more than the imagery alone is being used and that Stoic cosmology proper may also be part of the author's purview. However, without corroborating evidence from the narrative, a case cannot be made that the text contains a real expectation of cosmic conflagration as found in early Stoicism: SCI by itself does not constitute evidence.

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<sup>367</sup> See my methodology below, p. 86.

I have argued that Stoic cosmological imagery in the Roman era was used in a substantially different way than that which has been supposed by Adams, Allison and Downing. I have shown that Lapidge's work describes a change in the way that SCI was used in the shift to Roman Stoicism, and that texts from Lucan's *Pharsalia* supports his thesis. The imagery was no longer used solely to articulate Stoic tenets about the actual end of the world, but had been adopted for other literary purposes. As a result, it cannot be presupposed that the influence of SCI in Judaeo-Christian literature of the first century suggests a literal concern with the end of the world. A re-evaluation is necessary of such texts, including the *Sibylline Oracles*, in order to determine (from the texts themselves) how SCI was adapted within the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

## Methodology

### *Introduction*

In order to answer the question of whether the Divine Warrior tradition is used in texts that exhibit CCL and other motifs familiar to the tradition, I will examine the texts through the application of seven criteria. These criteria will establish the probability a given text is using the tradition as well as illuminating for what purpose it was employed.<sup>368</sup> The criteria are based on a combination and revision of the methodologies offered by Hays and Angel.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Although this process is not an exact science. Hays says this about his methodology: "Precision in such judgement [i.e. one using his criteria] is unattainable, because exegesis is a modest imaginative craft, not an exact science; still, it is possible to specify certain rules of thumb that might help the craftsman decide whether to treat a particular phrase as an echo and whether to credit my proposed reading of it." This is how I propose to use my criteria. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 29.

<sup>369</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), Angel, *Chaos*. See also Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (BibInt 96; Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2008), Andrew Streett, *The Vine and the Son of Man: Eschatological Interpretation of Psalm 80 in Early Judaism* (ES; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

For a critique of the source-critical approach see Thomas R. Hatina, "Intertextuality and Historical Criticism in New Testament Studies: Is There a Relationship?," *BibInt* 7, no. 1 (1999). Hatina questions the source-critical approach to understanding allusions in their present context, emphasising the priority of narrative

Both scholars use a criterion-based approach to establish how OT sources were used in NT and other texts.<sup>370</sup> Hays' approach focuses on specific, single text allusions whereas Angel deals with whether a text draws on DWT in various sources texts. Hays' approach needs some modification for this thesis: I am dealing with a mythological tradition which is evident in an array of texts, not the singular relationship between a text and its source text.<sup>371</sup> My thesis requires a method more akin to Angel's methodology, as I am dealing with a tradition rather than a single possible source. However, as I am focusing on *Sib. Or.* 3-5, rather than the variety of Second Temple sources Angel focuses on, I will give extra attention to each of the three books as a whole and retain some aspects of Hays' criteria. The seven criteria I will use are *availability, similarity, historical consistency, thematic coherence, overall integration, recurrence* and *creativity*. These criteria will be applied with reference to the DWT and also, where necessary, to the question of whether a text uses Stoic Cosmological Imagery.

### ***The Criteria***

The following criteria cover a number of bases: whether it is plausible that the author of the text was familiar with the DWT, what features of the tradition appear to be used, and whether these features have been adopted intentionally as part of an active and purposeful use of the Divine Warrior mythology.

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criticism to understand such language. This is a necessary caution, given the excessive inferences that could be put upon a singular quotation. While Hatina's cautions are worth bearing in mind, the nature of my thesis necessitates a source-critical approach. My final assessment of Mark 13:24-25 in ch.4 will take into consideration some of these critiques with some integration of narrative-critical exegesis.

<sup>370</sup> In Angel's case he also examines links to other Judaeo-Christian sources than the OT alone.

<sup>371</sup> As I am dealing with a tradition from the outset, Hays' criterion of 'history of interpretation' has already been met.

1. *Availability*.<sup>372</sup> This criterion will consider the date, geographical and cultural origin of the text, to establish that (a) it is a text that legitimately dates to the Second Temple period, that is 515 BCE - 200 CE, and (b) it is from a context which could have plausibly known the Jewish Divine Warrior Tradition. This is one that most likely included Jewish authorship, or that of a Gentile very familiar with Jewish literary and mythological traditions, and one that had a geographical origin within the Graeco-Roman world, especially those places with significant Jewish communities.

2. *Similarity*.<sup>373</sup> This criterion examines the extent to which a given text has used the tradition. It addresses the type of language used, namely the verbal and thematic similarities to the DWT, the number of possible allusions within the passage and the overall syntactical pattern. As the *Sibylline Oracles* are poetry, not prose, and written in a metred form, it follows that there may be less verbal similarity to OT sources than might be found in other works to ensure its poetic form. For verbal parallels, the strength of the similarity is in part dependent on the types of words used: words that are common nouns (e.g. ‘fire’ or ‘sea’) may refer to more than just DW mythology. If the terms are specific to or feature prominently within a tradition (e.g. ἐκτόρωσις or ‘Leviathan’) then the weight of the similarity is greater and more reliable.<sup>374</sup> In addition, the presence of a similar mythic pattern may also reflect dependency on the DWT.<sup>375</sup> The more correlation between the passage and the pattern of the cosmic battle myths the greater the similarity.<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 30-32, Hays, *Echoes*, 29-30, Beetham, *Echoes*, 28-29, Streett, *Vine*, 12.

<sup>373</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30, Angel, *Chaos*, 32, Beetham, *Echoes*, 29, Streett, *Vine*, 12.

<sup>374</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 32.

<sup>375</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30.

<sup>376</sup> There are various forms of this pattern in the DWT of the OT. Cross identified a *battle, theophany, enthronement* and *manifestation* pattern in Ex 15. Miller developed this and identified the essence of the mythic pattern as four-fold: *combat with chaos, victory, temple-building* and *enthronement*. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 162-164, Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 117, Patrick D. Miller, “‘Enthroned on the Praises of Israel’: The Praise of God in Old Testament Theology,” *Int* 39, no. 1 (1985): 17 n.21. See also Hanson who uses the mythic pattern

3. *Historical Consistency*.<sup>377</sup> The use of DWT must reflect an appropriate understanding of the preceding provenance and apply it consistently. It is to be expected that it will show adaptation in order to reflect the author's present context, but there must be obvious points of contact between the two times. The author must have taken the source material and used it knowledgeably for their situation.

4. *Thematic Coherence*.<sup>378</sup> The use of DWT must contribute to the structure and flow of the immediate passage in which it is situated, serving some kind of literary function. This demonstrates the use of DWT is conscious and intentional and not just the result of accidental inference from a quotation or allusion to a text that contains DWT but is referred to for non-mythological purposes.

5. *Overall Integration*.<sup>379</sup> This criterion considers the impact of the underlying sources upon the text more broadly. Does this reference elucidate the material more broadly? How does it impact upon the structure and shape of the text as a whole? This criterion is more applicable to texts which exhibit a clear narrative structure, for example, texts that take the form of a letter or history. Fragments and other texts are more difficult to examine under this criterion, so its provisional nature must be noted.

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widely in assessing Isaiah and Zechariah: often with the pattern *combat of DW, theophany, victory and salvation of Israel*. This varies in different texts, for example sometimes he includes the *threat* as an element of the pattern and also *enthronement in the temple* and *manifestation of universal reign*. Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 292-324. Ackroyd, review of Hanson, 412-415. Fitzpatrick follows a slightly different pattern identified by Forsyth, who evaluates the pattern of the combat plot across a number of texts, identifying a number of different features. Of these, he notes that four are consistently present: *villainy, battle, victory and triumph*. However, Forsyth's version has made the elements so generalised that they could be describing any conflict. Paul E. Fitzpatrick, *The Disarmament of God: Ezekiel 38-39 in its Mythic Context* (CBQMS 37; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2004), 105, Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton University Press, 1987), 446-452.

<sup>377</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30-31, Angel, *Chaos*, 32-33, Beetham, *Echoes*, 30-32.

<sup>378</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 29-30, Beetham, *Echoes*, 34, Streett, *Vine*, 13.

<sup>379</sup> This is like Hays' satisfaction criterion which Beetham sublimates into the criterion of thematic coherence Hays, *Echoes*, 31-32, Beetham, *Echoes*, 34.

6. *Recurrence*.<sup>380</sup> To what extent does a book as a whole use the DWT? If there are a number of different places in which it is used, then it is more likely that there is a purposeful use of the tradition.

7. *Creativity*.<sup>381</sup> This criterion helps identify the presence of the Divine Warrior motif as a tradition. In the case of a verbatim allusion from another text, the reworking of the allusion shows active use of the imagery and not accidental inclusion, especially if the reworking in the present context fits with the traditional usage of DWT.<sup>382</sup> This suggests that the author made an intentional choice to use the imagery. However, given the *Sibylline Oracles* are metred poetry, it is expected that there will be creative use of the tradition, at least verbally. Some discernment will be necessary to distinguish between necessary poetic creativity and that which is a reworking or adaption of the mythological tradition for a specific purpose.

The above criteria cannot be applied without careful consideration of their inter-relationship; this work is not an exact science or mathematical formula such that they can be simply applied. For example, if there is no recurrence within a text and the degree of similarity in the one passage is low, there is good reason to doubt the proposed underlying tradition or allusion. However, if there is no recurrence but the language used in the one passage shows a high level of similarity (e.g. it uses uncommon terms specific to the proposed source and has a high level of historical consistency) then the lack of recurrence may not present an issue. The criteria need to be used positively: in order to include texts, rather than to necessarily exclude them. However, if a proposed similarity in a passage is singular and very low but meets the criterion of historical consistency it can be suggested that

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<sup>380</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 30, Angel, *Chaos*, 33, Beetham, *Echoes*, 33-34.

<sup>381</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 33.

<sup>382</sup> Following Angel, *Chaos*, 33.

the passage still *may* use the tradition but this cannot be definitively concluded without further evidence. Insubstantial evidence does not disprove the use of a tradition.

These criteria will help to carefully filter possible texts as to whether they use DWT and will move any possible parallels to it beyond superficial identification. Although an author might use an allusion, without change, without recurrence, and without being integral to the narrative's argument, this research is based on what can be known with reasonable certainty from the evidence that is provided. Without knowing the mind of the author, concluding that such an allusion is making conscious use of DWT is highly speculative.

I will use these same criteria for those texts which appear to use SCI. Although I have shown in the first half of this chapter that SCI was in the process of reinvention from its philosophical roots, it is still necessary to evaluate the imagery to see whether (a) it is used for poetic purposes, similar to the vivid imagery found in Lucan; (b) it is adopted as an appropriate expansion of the CCL familiar to DWT or (c) it was making a specific, intentional reference to the Stoic doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις. The latter of these needs support from the context that events concerning the end of history are in mind, perhaps in contrast to the establishment of the world in the first place or in response to deliberation about the world's end.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have considered the following questions: (1) what is the place of Stoic cosmology in discussions about CCL, especially where its imagery may have influenced the *Sibylline Oracles*, and (2) what methodology is appropriate for assessing the presence and use of the DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3-5? In respect to the first, more complex, question I have demonstrated that the imagery of cosmic conflagration associated with Stoic cosmology had to a large degree become divorced from its philosophical moorings in the development of

Stoicism in the Roman era. Therefore, if *Sibylline Oracles* and other texts have used SCI it does not mean they are drawing on Stoic cosmology. The evidence from Lucan's *Pharsalia* shows this is the case. Consequently, I have argued that where SCI has influenced a Judaeo-Christian text, this does not mean it is invoking ideas about the end of the world. This type of interpretation needs to be indicated from the text itself as it cannot be argued on the basis of SCI alone. In light of this, where SCI seems to have influenced any text I study, I will examine how it is used on the basis of the narrative in which it is situated. As for my methodology, I will use a criteria-based approach, familiar to the field of intertextuality as well as study of DWT, with some necessary adjustments for the task at hand. The criteria are: *availability, similarity, historical consistency, thematic coherence, overall integration, recurrence* and *creativity*. Where SCI is present, I will apply these criteria with reference to SCI also. The texts I shall study from the *Sibylline Oracles* are as follows: 3:63-74, 75-92, 669-714, 796-807; 4:56-60, 159-161, 171-192; 5:28-34, 155-161, 206-213, 342-359, 414-433 and 512-531. Of these texts, the ones which may have been influenced by SCI are *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, 4:159-161, 171-192; 5:206-213 and 512-531.



### CHAPTER 3. EXEGESIS OF *SIB. OR.* 3-4

In this chapter, I will apply the seven criteria (availability, similarity, historical consistency, thematic coherence, overall integration, recurrence and creativity) from chapter two to *Sibylline Oracles* Book 3, 4 and 5 in order to establish the presence of Jewish DWT in a variety of forms, as well as to evaluate any use and adaptation of SCI. I have chosen thirteen texts (*Sib. Or.* 3:63-74, 75-92, 669-714, 796-807; 4:56-60, 159-161, 171-192; 5:28-34, 155-161, 206-213, 342-359, 414-433, 512-531) which show motifs that may originate from the DWT, as well as those texts which are thought to use SCI. I will group these according to book, taking each book in turn and treating them distinctly from each other. The passages in Book 3 will be addressed in two parts as it is generally agreed to originate from at least two different time periods within Second Temple period (2TP).<sup>1</sup> Also, there may be some relationship between the different sibylline books such that if one uses a tradition it may be that another has also used it. However, this exegesis will focus upon the books individually and connections will only be made between books where it is evident that one book has drawn directly from another. This will allow each to be assessed on its own terms without conflating conclusions. I shall begin with Book 3 as it contains the earliest sibylline material.

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<sup>1</sup> See below analysis of criterion of availability.

## *Sibylline Oracles 3*

### *Availability*

Book 3 of the *Sibylline Oracles* is generally broken up into three sections: (a) 3:1-92,<sup>2</sup> (b) 3:350-488, and (c) 3:93-349 and 489-807.<sup>3</sup> The latter part (c) is the earliest text in the corpus and the majority of scholars date its origin to 2nd century BCE Egypt.<sup>4</sup> Part (a) and (b) date to later within the Second Temple period, but part (b) shows no evidence of DWT so will not be included in this study.<sup>5</sup> I will focus this criterion on parts (a) and (c).

Part (a) 3:1-92 is a later insertion to *Sib. Or.* 3. However it does come under the scope of this exegesis given the pertinent language of 3:63-74 and 3:75-92.<sup>6</sup> Its contents suggests an Egyptian provenance: the polemic against Egyptian idolatry,<sup>7</sup> the expectation that Rome was

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<sup>2</sup> Some argue that the first section finishes at 3:96 not 3:92, cf. John J. Collins in “The Sibylline Oracles, Book 3” in *OTP*, vol. 1, 354-361, Valentin Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle* (Études Juives 9; Paris: Mouton, 1970), 60-66, 195-225, H. C. O. Lanchester, “The Sibylline Oracles,” in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (APOT ed. R. H. Charles; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), 372. However, I follow the argument that the first part ends at 3:92, cf. Rieuwerd Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and its Social Setting* (SVTP 17; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 65-91.

<sup>3</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, John J. Collins, “The Third Sibyl Revisited,” in *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone* (eds. Esther G. Chazon, et al.; JSJSup 89; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3-19, Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle*, Shiu-Lun Shum, “The Use of Isaiah in the Sibylline Oracles, Qumran Literature and Romans: (A Source-Influence Study).” (PhD, University of Glasgow, 1999). For those who argue for the literary unity of the book from 3:93 onwards see Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 124-134.

<sup>4</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, Buitenwerf, *Book III*, Collins, *Third Sibyl*, 3-19, John Nolland, “Sib Or III:265-94: An early Maccabean Messianic Oracle,” *JTS* 30, no. 1 (1979): 158-166, Shum, *Isaiah*, James R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* (JSJSup 105; Leiden: Brill, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Part (b) is not relevant to this study. It includes *Sib. Or.* 3:401-488 which contains material which is likely to be that of the Erythrean Sibylline Oracle and it is distinct from the rest of the section as it lacks any allusions to the Old Testament. The section as a whole is never quoted in any extant early Christian literature, unlike the rest of the book, so it is generally concluded that it was not part of the original corpus. While some of the thematic concerns do suggest that it may originate from within the Second Temple period, none of the passages I am analysing come from this part of Book 3 and as such excludes it from this study. See Collins, *Book 3*, 359 n.339. following Johannes Geffcken, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902), 13. See also Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 84, Davila, *Pseudepigrapha*, 183.

<sup>6</sup> Although these two passages are from different historical time periods, I am addressing them as from one source as it is clearly these similarities in language that resulted in the placement of the two together, although mistakes may have been made in this process that broke up an original passage of *Sib. Or.* 3:46-62 and 3:75-92. See below, p.119.

<sup>7</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:30.

coming to rule over Egypt<sup>8</sup> and the significant focus upon the reign of a female governor who is most probably Cleopatra VII.<sup>9</sup> In light of these two latter conclusions, the text can be confidently dated to no earlier than 30BCE when Egypt became subject to Rome after the battle of Actium and the end of Cleopatra's reign. *Sibylline Oracles* 3:63-74, however, suggests the final form of the text was not produced until the late 1st century CE, and if the female governor is a metaphor for Rome then it is likely all of 3:1-92 originates from this time. The identification of the 'Beliar' figure of 3:63 who is said to come "ἐκ δὲ Σεβαστηῶν" could refer to someone from the people of Samaria.<sup>10</sup> This would fit within the time frame of the text and in the context of *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 it could refer to Simon Magus or an anti-Messiah.<sup>11</sup> However, there is no evidence for an anti-Messiah who would come from Samaria.<sup>12</sup> Collins argues that Beliar ought to be identified with Nero, which is strongly supported by the parallel in the *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4:1 as well as the frequent tradition depicting Nero as a mythological adversary in the *Sibylline Oracles*.<sup>13</sup> The parallels are striking between the Beliar figure in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 and *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4 and the latter

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<sup>8</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:46.

<sup>9</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:74-92 Cf. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 66-70, John J. Collins, "The Development of the Sibylline Tradition" *ANRW* 20.1:421-459, 434-435, George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981b), 163, Martin Goodman, "The Sibylline Oracles," in *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)* (eds. Emil Schürer, et al.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 631 n205. Some scholars have argued the widow is representative of Rome as a symbolic figure concluding, in the case of Gruen, that the "metaphorical bereavement of the superpower may signify the loss of divine support, presaging an imminent demise, which indeed follows shortly thereafter in the passage" Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (HCS 30; Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 280, see also Lanchester, "Oracles," 371. However, the ruler is said to be a widow well before the destruction of the power, contrary to the biblical texts where it marks the desolation of the downfall. It does not use the term prophetically. Cf. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 68.

<sup>10</sup> See Collins, *Book 3*, 360.

<sup>11</sup> Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle*, 138-143.

<sup>12</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 86-87.

<sup>13</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 84-87, Collins, *Sibylline Tradition*, 435.

clearly identifies Nero with Beliar.<sup>14</sup> The reference to Nero is the latest historical referent within *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 so it can be concluded the final form was put together in the late first century CE.<sup>15</sup> The author of *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 is undoubtedly Jewish. Its theology indicates a strong bias towards Judaism, and there are various parallels to the OT.<sup>16</sup> Similar to the rest of the main corpus, the Sibyl's concern with Egypt indicates an Egyptian origin.

This now leaves the question of the provenance of part (c), which constitutes the majority of Book 3. Consensus is fairly wide-ranging as to the exact dating of this section, and a full rehearsal of the arguments is not necessary to establish the text as within the Second Temple period, so I will limit the description to the key points. The date is not earlier than the second century BCE because of the author's familiarity with the Roman Empire. However, it is unlikely to be very late as the Greek empire is still prominent in the book (*Sib. Or.* 3:545-572, 732-740; 635-645). Despite the concern with Rome, there is no mention of Rome's conquering of Egypt in 30BCE, which suggests a pre-30BCE date. This is confirmed by Buitenwerf's observation that a paraphrase of 3:97-107 is used by Alexander Polyhistor (preserved in Eusebius) and the same quotation is also found in Josephus.<sup>17</sup> Part (c) can therefore be dated to no later than the middle of the first century BCE.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> I.e. Nero is the one who has the spirit of Beliar, they are not necessarily synonymous. See Jonathan Knight, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (GAP; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 59-62, Jonathan Knight, *Disciples of the Beloved One: The Christology, Social Setting and Theological Context of the Ascension of Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 48-49, 205-214.

<sup>15</sup> The question of whether Nero was seen as an eschatological adversary aside. While this is so the figure of Beliar occurs frequently throughout 2TJ literature as a deceiving spiritual figure, and as such the emphasis here seems to focus on the cosmic/spiritual dimensions of Nero's reign, rather than his political activity or an eschatological battle. Indeed the description of the figure draws more on his character as a deceiver of men away from worship of God than a political tyrant.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Shum examines the use of Isaiah in *Sib. Or.* 3:1-96, building on observations made by Collins in *OTP 2* in Shum, *Isaiah*, 71-73.

<sup>17</sup> Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 129-130, Davila, *Pseudepigrapha*, 183. See Eusebius' *Chron.*8; *Jos. Ant.* 1.118-119.

<sup>18</sup> In terms of a more precise date, the most likely origin is somewhere in the mid to late 2nd century. *Sib. Or.* 3:188-190 relates to the dividing of Macedonia after the battle of Pydna against Rome and therefore places the text after 168BC. Collins, *Book 3*, 366 n.x. Collins dates the book to 163-145BCE because of the

The main corpus fits within the Second Temple period and the perspective is clearly Jewish. The geographical provenance is indicated from various parts of the book, including the double reference to Egypt (3:158-161) and the likelihood that the “seventh king” (3:192-193, 316-318, 608-610) is a reference to Ptolemy VI Philometer.<sup>19</sup> The only alternatives have still placed the book within the Mediterranean world.<sup>20</sup> It can therefore be concluded that it fulfils the first criterion of availability.

*Sib. Or. 3:1-92*

**(1) *Sib. Or. 3:63-74***

63 And out of Sebastian (ἐκ δὲ Σεβαστηνῶν) Beliar (Βελίαρ) will lead back  
 64 and he will cause high mountains to rise, and the sea to rise  
 65 the fiery sun and the great shining moon  
 66 and corpses he will raise and many signs he will do  
 67 for men. But things will not be accomplished by him  
 68 except deceit and then division of voice, and he will deceive many  
 69 believers and the elect, the lawless Hebrews and also other  
 70 men, whoever has not yet perceived a word of God.  
 71 But when the threatenings of Almighty God draw near,  
 72 also a blazing power will come through a surge to the earth  
 73 and Beliar will be burnt up and all arrogant (ὑπερφιάλους) men:  
 74 as many as all who placed their faith in him.

Similarity

This short oracle about the havoc-wreaking reign and ultimate downfall of the unidentified Beliar exhibits a number of features that are common to the DWT. Beliar himself gains

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enigmatic figure of the “seventh king” whom Collins identifies as Ptolemy VI Philometer, one of the three options of the seventh king after Alexander the Great, because of the “celebrated relations” he had with the Jews, *Book 3*, 355. See also Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 162-165, Goodman, “Sibylline Oracles,” 635-636.

<sup>19</sup> Collins argues that *Sib. Or. 3* comes from the Onias IV group at Leontopolis in Egypt because of the concern with politics and war which is less like the spiritualizing tendencies of the Alexandrian Jews, *Book 3*, 355-356. For arguments against identification the seventh king with Ptolemy VI Philometer (or any other Ptolemy king) see John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 225, Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 126-129.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Buitenwerf suggests an origin in the Roman province of Asia and Goodman a Judean origin, if not Egypt. Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 130-133, Goodman, “Sibylline Oracles,” 638.

power and causes a number of cosmic disturbances (3:64-5), leads many astray (3:68-70) and the Divine Warrior ultimately comes to destroy Beliar and his allies (3:71) using a ‘blazing power’ as his weapon of choice. Although there is no explicit description of a divine combat or fight, the specific designation of the enemy as ‘Beliar’ as well as various similarities indicates the use of DWT.

The designation of the rebellious figure as Beliar connects the sibylline passage to the DWT. The name is frequently used in Jewish literature and often for the spiritual enemy with whom God is at war;<sup>21</sup> Beliar is a satanic figure and a leader of demons.<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew term בליעל itself can have a variety of meanings,<sup>23</sup> but by the Second Temple period Beliar as a proper name was used as personified enemy of God, a mythological dragon who is assisted by the chaos waters.<sup>24</sup> Angel has observed the “torrents of Beliar” in 1QH 11:27-36 as an example of the development of the DW motif of chaos waters from their similarity to 2 Sam 22:5/Ps. 18:5.<sup>25</sup> In Rev 12:15 these are associated with the dragon who spews out water to overwhelm his enemies.<sup>26</sup> Michalak develops this idea, arguing that Beliar is a draconic figure with the chaos waters as his helpers. This is because of the possible background of Rev 12:15 in 2 Sam 22:5/Ps. 18:5, the similarity to Melkiresha (a possible alternative name for

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<sup>21</sup> E.g. *Jub.* 1:20; *T. Reu.* 2:2; 4:7, 11; 6:3; *T. Levi* 3:3; 18:12; 19:1; *T. Iss.* 6:1; 7:7; *T. Dan* 1:7; 4:7; 5:1, 10f; *T. Naph.* 2:6; *T. Ash.* 1:8; 3:2; *T. Jos* 7:4; 20:2; *T. Benj.* 3:3, 8; 6:1, 7; 7:1f; *Liv. Proph.* 4:7, 21; 17:2. Also various places in the Dead Sea Scrolls including 1QM 1:5, 13-15; 4:2; 11:8; 13:4, 11; 1QH 10:22; 11:27-36; CD 4:13, 15-16; 5:18.

<sup>22</sup> For a recent background to this see Michalak, *Angels*, 170-182.

<sup>23</sup> S.D. Sperling, “Belial,” *DDD* 169-171, Theodore J. Lewis, “Belial,” *ABD* 1:654-656.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Bousset and Charles argued that in 2TJ it is used as reference to the cosmic battle with the dragon of Babylonian mythology. Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore* (trans. A. H. Keane; London: Hutchinson, 1896), 153-156, R. H. Charles, *The Ascension of Isaiah* (London: A. & C. Black, 1900), lv-lvii.

<sup>25</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 50-54.

<sup>26</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 141-142.

Beliar<sup>27</sup>) as a snake in 4Q544:1 13 and the connection of the Hebrew בליעל with the act of swallowing.<sup>28</sup> There is no direct reference to Beliar as a serpent in Second Temple literature but there are reasons for supposing such a connection existed. This includes the dominant use of the name as a spiritual being and archdemon in texts such the *Testament of the Patriarchs*,<sup>29</sup> the development of the “torrents of Beliar” language from 1 Samuel and the connection between chaos waters as an ally of the mythological dragon suggests that Beliar is a term for the DW dragon who dwells in the sea.<sup>30</sup> This is supported by later material which continues this identification of Beliar with the Satanic Dragon figure. In the 4th century work, Pseudo-Ignatius’ *Epistle to the Philippians* 11, they are clearly connected: “Thou, O Belial, dragon, apostate, crooked serpent, rebel against God.” Thus, there is reasonable evidence to suggest that in the Second Temple period Beliar was used as an equivalent of the DW dragon, although the emphasis of the term is more on the being as an evil entity at work against God rather than particular draconic qualities.

The specific similarities of the use of Beliar in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 indicates DWT origin also. The passage bears a striking resemblance to one particular story of a figure with this name: that which is found in *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 3:13-4:22.<sup>31</sup> There are several common features between the two. Beliar causes the sun to rise (*Sib. Or.* 3:65-6 / *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4:5), performs signs/miracles (*Sib. Or.* 3:66 / *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4:10-11), deceives believers (*Sib. Or.* 3:68-70/ *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4:7-10) and he/his followers are ultimately burnt by fire

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<sup>27</sup> See Michael A. Knibb in “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah” in *OTP*, vol. 2, 151-152.

<sup>28</sup> Michalak, *Angels*, 176-180.

<sup>29</sup> For a background to Beliar in this work see Graham Twelftree, “Exorcism and the Defeat of Beliar in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *VC* 65, no. 2 (2011): 170-188.

<sup>30</sup> Bousset sums up his assessment of the background to the name Beliar with the statement that “The Dragon who revolts against God is here metamorphosed to a wicked angel who becomes the ruler of the ethereal regions and prince of this world.” Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 155.

<sup>31</sup> See Knibb, *Testament*, 149-150.

(*Sib. Or.* 3:72 / *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4:18).<sup>32</sup> These similarities suggest that both texts are drawing either one from the other or an underlying common tradition. Michalak argues that this tradition is from that of cosmic battle, although no fighting is depicted: instead Beliar and his armies are subject to a “heavenly *Blitzkrieg*” when God destroys them by fire. He connects the language of the Lord coming with “His angels and with the armies of the holy ones” in *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4:14 to a similar description of the advent of Yahweh with his holy ones in *Zech* 14:5.<sup>33</sup> Charles’ translation captures this background well: “the Lord will come with His angels and with the armies of the holy ones from the seventh heaven... and He will drag Beliar into Gehenna and also his armies.”<sup>34</sup> Charles argues that Beliar in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* represents the combination of three mythic themes: (1) the Antichrist, (2) Beliar who is used as a transformation of the draconic monster of Jewish DW mythology<sup>35</sup> and (3) the Nero legend.<sup>36</sup> These combined in this period such that a draconian, spiritual force of evil was personified in Nero. This places the Beliar tradition found in *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* and also in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 as DWT in origin. In further support of this, it is likely the Beliar spirit figure in these two texts comes from the same background as the “torrents of Beliar” (1QH 11:27-36) as in both Beliar is the enemy of God who receives punishment in a context of fiery cosmic upheavals.<sup>37</sup>

There are other more general similarities to DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74. Yahweh’s use of fire as a tool to burn up the enemy is a well-attested part of the tradition found in various

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<sup>32</sup> Knight, *Ascension*, 59-60.

<sup>33</sup> Michalak, *Angels*, 174.

<sup>34</sup> Charles, *Ascension*, 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> Beliar is equated with Satan who is clearly a dragon in *Rev* 12:10. Charles, *Ascension*, lvi.

<sup>36</sup> Charles, *Ascension*, li-lxxiii.

<sup>37</sup> In 1QH 11:27-36 there is a devouring fire which Beliar uses to bring destruction, whereas in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 and *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4 it is God’s means of punishing him.



OT texts.<sup>38</sup> Joel 2:3 explicitly connects the use of fire to the context of the Day of the Lord and the coming of the heavenly army.<sup>39</sup> In *Sib. Or.* 3:71-73 Beliar and his allies are burned up by the fire that accompanies God's threats, similar to the beast burned up by God in Dan 7:11. Beliar himself is not explicitly described as arrogant, but it is implicit as it is the chief characteristic of his followers (3:73). This kind of attitude is a frequent cause of divine intervention and punishment in the DWT. The arrogance of the little horn of the beast in the DWT of Dan 7 is emphasised throughout the chapter (vv.7, 11 & 20) as well as the figure depicted by the beast in Dan 11:35-36. The dragon elsewhere is described in terms of aspiring to be like God in Ezek 29:1-10 and his pride is also emphasised in *Pss. Sol.* 2.25-31.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the Morning Star in Isa 14:12-14 is described as attempting to ascend to heaven and thus aspire to divine status but is ultimately cast low.<sup>41</sup> Thus the implicit pride of Beliar is a theme common to the enemy of the DW. The number of features in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 common to the DWT indicate it is reasonable to conclude it meets the criterion of similarity.

### Historical Consistency

The historical context to *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 is that of fears about the return of Nero, possibly as a symbol of hostile feelings towards Rome.<sup>42</sup> Some have argued that the Beliar figure that

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<sup>38</sup> For fire in DW mythology see Miller, "Fire," 256-261, see also Angel, *Chaos*, 153, Michalak, *Angels*, 34. Miller observes that fire in Canaanite cosmic battle is found in various places: Baal as storm god wields thunder and lightning, the latter which obviously is connected to fire (KTU 1.4 V:71, 1.6 V:7-?), Yammu also has fire as his messengers (KTU 1.2 I:32) and 'Anatu destroys monsters of fire (KTU 1.3 III:45). This is seen in various places in the OT (e.g. Isa 29:6; 66:15-16; Pss 18:7-9; 89:46; 97:3; 104:4; Dan 7:11; Joel 2:3; Zeph 1:1; Nah 1:4-6).

<sup>39</sup> See Joel 2:3 in the wider context of vv.1-11 which describes the coming of Yahweh and his armies.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Angel, *Chaos*, 83-86.

<sup>41</sup> For DWT in Isa 14 see B. F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 160, Day, *God's Conflict*, 132, Caird, *Language*, 225. This feature may trace back to a common origin in the subplot in the Baal epic of 'Attaru's appointment and subsequent downfall as king in place of Baal. KTU 1.6 I:56-66; 1.6 V:1-6.

<sup>42</sup> Knight makes this point about the use of Nero in *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4, Knight, *Disciples*, 207. It is possible a similar idea is used here.

comes ἐκ Σεβαστηνῶν (3:63) is a reference to a messiah figure from Samaria but the evidence for this is not compelling.<sup>43</sup> A more probable interpretation is that it refers to one from Augustus' line, which in addition to the similarity of the passage to *Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4*, makes it clear that Nero is the envisaged figure.<sup>44</sup> It is not clear what the specific historical context is in *Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4* other than the concern with Nero (and possibly Rome), although Knight suggests it was fear of the Roman conflict in Syria.<sup>45</sup> Whatever the specifics, the concern with the Roman Empire and its leaders is consistent between the two.

While *Sib. Or. 3:63-74* shows high consistency with *Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4*, neither text has been firmly established as originating from the DWT, although the Beliar language and cosmic upheavals and conflict suggest the possibility of such an origin. Therefore, it is valuable to consider the historical consistency from the other similarities to the DWT. It has been demonstrated in various texts that the OT frequently uses the tradition in the context of depicting judgment on a foreign enemy and it is particularly relevant that this is true of some of the texts which show parallels to *Sib. Or. 3:63-74*.

The texts which show fire as a means of judgement or destruction are used differently according to their context. For example, Ps 104 describes God's victory over chaos in creation whereas Joel 2 refers to some kind of historical disaster.<sup>46</sup> Daniel shows the highest similarity to *Sib. Or. 3:63-74* with fire used for the divine punishment of a specific, arrogant figure. The context of the mythology in the passage is historically consistent with that found

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<sup>43</sup> It is based on Nikiprowetzky's idea that a messiah from Samaria was a traditional expectation, however the evidence to this dates to the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle*, 138-144, Refuted by Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 86-87, n.96.

<sup>44</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 86-87.

<sup>45</sup> Knight, *Disciples*, 48-49.

<sup>46</sup> Joel 2:3 could refer to a military battle of some kind, but it may also refer to a famine or plague. See John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 15, Day, *God's Conflict*, 28-35.

in the sibylline text: the majority of scholarship interprets Dan 7 with reference to the Greek empire and reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century BCE.<sup>47</sup>

One final comparison is also worth review: the use of Beliar in 1QH 11:27-36. The traditional explanation has been that this passage refers to the future eschatological event of final judgement, at least from v.30 if not v.27.<sup>48</sup> This is argued on the basis that the language changes from a focus on the psalmist's complaint (vv.19-26) to more cosmic language (v.27-36), as well as the reference to eternity in v.36.<sup>49</sup> However, this introduces an unnecessary level of interpretation. If the mythological language can refer to the same event of vv.19-26, then this would be the most natural reading of the text.<sup>50</sup> Yet it remains unclear precisely to what situation the psalmist is speaking. It is possible it may refer to foreign empires or rulers, but the only suggestion of this occurs in the first half of 1QH 11 where three images are used that are typical of the "terror and political defeat ... familiar from the Hebrew Bible."<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to say with certainty that *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 is historically consistent with 1QH 11 as

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<sup>47</sup> See John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 166-170, Norman Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 102-107, André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 132-141. Some have argued that the context is Rome on the basis of the four kingdoms in Dan 2. This is also found in 4 Ezra 12:10 which connect the fourth kingdom with Rome. For this view in Dan 7 see Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1949), 275-294.

<sup>48</sup> Michalak, *Angels*, 176-180, Julie A. Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot* (STDJ 59; ed. Florentina García Martínez; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 207-230, Bonnie Pedrotti Kittel, *The Hymns of Qumran: Translation and Commentary* (Chico, Calif., 1975), 33-98, Carol A. Newsom, *The Self as Symbolic Space: Constructing Identity and Community at Qumran* (STDJ 52; ed. Florentina García Martínez; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 253-261.

<sup>49</sup> For example see Newsom, *Symbolic Space*, 261. For a critique of this view see Angel, *Chaos*, 50-54.

<sup>50</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 53-54. Angel also notes that this observation by scholars that the language may refer to other-worldly, heavenly visions without necessitating an end of time purview. See Angela Kim Harkins, *Reading with an "I" to the Heavens: Looking at the Qumran Hodayot through the Lens of Visionary Traditions* (Ekstasis 3; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 141-147 and 158-172, Russell C. D. Arnold, *The Social Role of Liturgy in the Religion of the Qumran Community* (STDJ 60; ed. Florentina García Martínez; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 218-219. Harkins describes the otherworldly visions as eschatological but his definition of eschatology is not about the end of time. As she says of the anthropologizing of the other images in the hodayah: "As a metaphor in apocalyptic literature, it [the anthropologising metaphors] serves too as a marker of the eschatological *moment or appointed time, such as the enthronement of the chosen one*" (emphasis added). This she subsequently connects to the conflagration language of vv.27-36 which she identifies as deriving from biblical theophany. Harkins, *Reading with an "I"*, 171-172.

<sup>51</sup> Harkins, *Reading with an "I"*, 165.

the latter's context is ambiguous. However, from Dan 7 and what is known of the DWT elsewhere in the OT, *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 shows consistency with one of the common uses of the mythology: to speak of the eventual judgement and downfall of an arrogant foreign ruler or empire.

### Thematic Coherence

The criterion of thematic coherence is not relevant to the placement of *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 in the wider passage because of its later origin and insertion into *Sib. Or.* 3:46-92, which dates to the first century BCE<sup>52</sup> whereas *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 dates to a century later. It may be that the inclusion of the text was because of the judgement language and divine fiery punishment that occurs in both, but I will discuss this below under the criterion of overall integration.

### (2) *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92

75 And then the world under the palm of a woman (γυναικός)  
76 will be ruled and persuaded concerning all  
77 There, when of all the world a widow (χήρη) rules  
78 and she will throw gold and also silver into the divine sea (ἄλα δῖαν)  
79 and copper and iron, for division of men  
80 into sea (πόντον) she will throw it, then indeed all elements (στοιχεῖα) of the world  
(κόσμου)  
81 will be bereft, at what time God, dwelling in the heavens,  
82 shall roll up heaven (οὐρανὸν εἰλίξει), as a scroll is rolled up (βιβλίον εἰλεῖται)  
83 and the whole manifold celestial sky (πολύμορφος ὄλος πόλος) will fall (πέσεται) into  
divine earth (χθονὶ δῖῃ)<sup>53</sup>  
84 and the sea (πελάγει); and a cataract of devouring fire will flow  
85 without tiring. It will burn up the earth, it will burn up the sea (θάλασσαν)  
86 and heavenly sky and day and creation herself  
87 will be melted into one (εἰς ἓν χωνεύσει) and will be gleaned into purity (εἰς καθαρὸν  
διαλέξει)

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<sup>52</sup> See Collins, *Book 3*, 360. The passage before evidently refers to the Roman Empire in Egypt in the 1st century BCE: *Sib. Or.* 3:46 refers explicitly to Roman rule in Egypt and then reference is made to the second triumvirate (Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus) in 3:52. The passage afterwards dates to this era with the focus on Cleopatra's reign. See exegesis of *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 in the next section.

<sup>53</sup> "Divine" here is quite different from Collins' "wondrous," preferring Charles' version which more closely echoes classical Greek traditions found in Hesiod, *Theog.* 866 and Homer, *Il.* 14:347. See "δῖος" as an adjective for nature in *LSJ*, 434-435.

88 and no longer rejoicing will the rounded spheres give light  
 89 no night, no dawn, no constant days of anxiety  
 90 no spring, no summer, no winter, no late autumn  
 91 and then indeed, the judgement of the great God will have come into the midst  
 92 of a great age, when this all comes into being.

### Similarity

*Sibylline Oracles* 3:75-92 demonstrates a strong degree of similarity to the DWT. As with the preceding text, fire is used by God as a means of judgment upon a ruler and their empire: here it is the unnamed woman (3:75). The opening lines (3:75-80a) set the scene with the wasteful ruler who casts precious metals into the sea and then from 3:80b-92 the judgement of God is made known in the destruction of the cosmos: primarily the heavens (3:82, 83, 86, 88-90 and possibly 80-81<sup>54</sup>) but also the sea (3:84-85) and the earth (3:83, 85) and ultimately the whole of creation (3:86) including the seasons (3:89-90). The highest degree of similarity is the allusion to Isa 34:4 in *Sib. Or.* 3:81-83, but there are further motifs that appear to have been used also: the pre-occupation with the sea throughout the passage, the use of fire as God's means of judgement, the judgement context itself and the possible association of στοιχεῖα with the heavens.<sup>55</sup>

The following table highlights the similarity between *Sib. Or.* 3:81b-83 and the LXX of Isa 34:4.<sup>56</sup> Although the forms are different, the verbal similarity is striking. Heaven is rolled up in both (although the word order is inverted in *Sib. Or.* 3:81) and likened to that of a

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<sup>54</sup> If στοιχεῖα refers to spiritual beings.

<sup>55</sup> Some have argued that the description of Cleopatra as a widow depicts her as a mythological enemy of God. Bousset proposed the widow reference identifies her as an embodiment of the "marine monster" in the Dragon myth, especially given *Sib. Or.* 5:18. Collins has argued that the emphasis upon Cleopatra's widowhood is because she should be identified as a form of the goddess Isis, a perennial widow, in this passage. It may also use the widow language traditions of Isa 47:8-9 and Rev 18:17. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 99-100, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 69-70.

<sup>56</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 173. Cross has demonstrated that Isa 34:4 is an example of the "divine warrior [who] goes forth to battle, and the heavens "roll up as a scroll, and all their armies languish,"" also noting its similarity to the battle with the chaos monster Lôtan in KTU 1.5 I:1-5. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 119, n.124. For DWT in Isa 34 see also Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 312-313, Caird, *Principalities*, 1-22, esp 11.

scroll in both.<sup>57</sup> Both have stars falling in the future, middle, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, although the sibylline text omits the iota in the verb and again expands πάντα τὰ ἄστρα into the more imaginative πολύμορφος ὅλος πόλος.<sup>58</sup>

Isa 34:4                      καὶ ἐλιγήσεται ὁ οὐρανὸς ὡς βιβλίον καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄστρα πεσεῖται ὡς φύλλα ἐξ ἀμπέλου καὶ ὡς πίπτει φύλλα ἀπὸ συκῆς

*Sib. Or.* 3:81b-83    ὅπταν θεὸς αἰθέρι ναίων  
οὐρανὸν εἰλίξει, καθ' ἅπερ βιβλίον εἰλεῖται·  
καὶ πέσεται πολύμορφος ὅλος πόλος ἐν χθονὶ δίῃ

The imagery in *Sib. Or.* 3:81-83 appears to adopt Isaiah's language but takes it further. As mentioned above, Isaiah's "all the stars" becomes the more dramatic "whole manifold celestial sky" (3:83). Given the pre-occupation with the heavens within *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, it is reasonable to conclude that this expansion reflects the Sibyl's concerns. The heavens and the stars are mentioned in several different places as well as (3:81-83): the "heavenly sky" is subject to burning (3:86) and the "spheres of light" (3:88) are personified: they no longer rejoice but will become darkened.<sup>59</sup> The Sibyl's focus on the heavens and luminaries may reflect a concern with spiritual battle and the spiritual powers that are against God or deserve judgement. It is well-attested in the DWT that the sun, moon and stars frequently represent angelic beings and rulers who may be for or against God.<sup>60</sup> Examples of this feature of the tradition include Judg 5:20, Dan 8:10 and Isa 14:12 and Rev 12:1-4.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The simile is expanded in *Sib. Or.* 3:81 with the addition of εἰλεῖται.

<sup>58</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 169-173. See also John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 609, Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 89, Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 313-314.

<sup>59</sup> Spheres of light (φωστήρων σφαιρώματα) could be sun or moon specifically given Gen 1:16, but as it is also used generally of lights in Gen 1:14 and elsewhere of stars in Dan 12:3 it is probably that at the least stars are meant as well as the sun and moon. This is all the more likely with the emphasis throughout the passage on the whole of the heavens being darkened or rolled up.

<sup>60</sup> For discussions of stars as angels see Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 90-92, Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 21-23, 66-69, Michalak, *Angels*, 43-54.

<sup>61</sup> For DWT behind Judges 5:20 see Peter C. Craigie, "Three Ugaritic Notes on the Song of Deborah," *JSOT*, no. 2 (1977): 34-38, Peter C. Craigie, "Deborah and Anat: A Study of Poetic Imagery (Judges 5)," *ZAW* 90, no. 3 (1978): 374-381, Barnabas Lindars and A. D. H. Mayes, *Judges 1-5: A New Translation and*

One further place in which heavenly beings are referred to is in the στοιχεῖα κόσμου in *Sib. Or.* 3:80-81. The term στοιχεῖα has several interpretative possibilities,<sup>62</sup> of which the plausible options in this context are: (1) the four components of matter: fire, water, earth and air,<sup>63</sup> (2) heavenly bodies or the twelve constellations of the Zodiac<sup>64</sup> and (3) transcendent powers or spirits,<sup>65</sup> often identified with the physical world, but who were nonetheless objects of worship in the Graeco-Roman world.<sup>66</sup> These three options are not mutually exclusive and each of them offers some insight and is instructive as to what is meant by this phrase in *Sib. Or.* 3:80-81.

The weight of evidence supports that στοιχεῖα primarily refers to (1) the four basic components of matter, especially when followed by (τοῦ) κόσμου.<sup>67</sup> However, as de Boer demonstrates, this was not always the only meaning inferred, as such a meaning would be an inadequate basis for Paul's use of the phrase in his argument in Gal 4:1-10.<sup>68</sup> While it is possible that in the context of the cosmic upheaval in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 that the στοιχεῖα

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*Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 268-269, Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 75. For Dan 8:10 see Collins, *Daniel*, 331-333, Porteous, *Daniel*, 123-124. Lacocque follows this to a degree, arguing that the heavenly army is less a spiritual reality as opposed to humankind Lacocque, *Daniel*, 161-162. DWT in Rev 12 was first identified in Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 174-180. Collins also sees combat myth behind Rev 12, cf. Adela Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (HDR 9; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 57-85. For other analyses see Caird, *Principalities*, 148-150, Angel, *Chaos*, 139-144. Angel argues that although there may some non-Hebraic cosmic battle in the passage it is combined with DWT as it was known in the Hebrew tradition. Other examples of stars as spiritual beings include *1 En.* 18:4-16; 21:3-10; 43:1-4; 46:7; 80:1-8; 86-87; 88:1-3; 90:21-24; *T. Sol.* 7; 20:16-17; *L.A.B.* 15:2; 31:1-2; 32:7; 43:9-10.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. “στοιχεῖον” in *LSJ*, 1647, also William F. Arndt, et al., “στοιχεῖον,” *BDAG* 946.

<sup>63</sup> Such as originated in early Stoic physics. See discussions of this belief in Diogenes Laertius, *Liv. Em. Phil.* 7137; and Stobaeus 1.129,2-130,13 (SVF 2.413, part). Also Philo, *Aet.* 107-110; *Her.* 140.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. Laertius, *Liv. Em. Phil.* 6.102.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20.

<sup>66</sup> See Martinus C. de Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” *NTS* 53, no. 2 (2007): 204-224.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Boer, “τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου,” 204-224, Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 252-257, J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 394-395.

<sup>68</sup> Boer, “τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου,” 208.

κόσμου refers solely to the four basic elements, the context suggests this ought to be questioned.<sup>69</sup> The στοιχεῖα are placed alongside concern with the heavens: “*then* indeed all the elements of the world will be bereft, *when* God, dwelling in the heavens rolls up the heaven...” (3:80-82, emphasis added). The two events are clearly connected. It is possible to argue that the four basic elements may be bereft in response to the destruction of the heavens, but this is doubtful on two counts.<sup>70</sup> The first is that the focus does not turn to non-celestial things or places until the sky falls into the earth and sea and the fire flows in 3:83-84. Up until these lines the emphasis has been explicitly and repeatedly on the heavens: God is one who dwells there (3:81) and yet he destroys the heavens and then the whole expanse of the sky will collapse (3:81-83). Additionally, as Lightfoot observes, it is only in the later *Sib. Or.* 2 and 8 that the elements are connected with the basic principles.<sup>71</sup>

The second possible meaning of “heavenly bodies” has a number of strengths. First, as Lightfoot observes, στοιχεῖα was used in the “then-current sense of heavenly bodies to interpret the δυνάμεις of Isa 34:4.”<sup>72</sup> Lightfoot here refers to Bauckham’s argument about the meaning of the term in 2 Pet 3:10 and 12.<sup>73</sup> Bauckham argues that στοιχεῖα refers to heavenly bodies in this Petrine letter on the grounds that 2 Pet 3:12 uses Isa 34:4 (LXX, B, Lucian) but replaces the δυνάμεις in the LXX original with στοιχεῖα.<sup>74</sup> Given that *Sib. Or.* 3:81-83

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<sup>69</sup> Although de Boer’s argument is based more on *additional* meanings than alternative ones.

<sup>70</sup> Contra Adams who argues that the στοιχεῖα here must by definition refer to these four components and therefore constitutes evidence for a Stoic background. Adams, *Stars*, 91.

<sup>71</sup> *Sib. Or.* 2:206-207; 8:337-338.

<sup>72</sup> J. L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 487. See also Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC 50; Waco: Word Books, 1983), 315-316.

<sup>73</sup> Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 315-316, Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 283-286.

<sup>74</sup> Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 315-316.



likewise draws on Isa 34:4 it is plausible to suggest the author may have used στοιχεῖα in this way.

As mentioned above, reading στοιχεῖα as a reference to heavenly bodies also fits the context of the sibylline passage with the continual reference to the heavens and luminaries in *Sib. Or.* 3:80-83. This is further supported by Wis 7:17-19 in which στοιχεῖα are directly connected to constellations and the effect of the changes of seasons and patterns of the year. This connection is seen in *Sib. Or.* 3:88-90 where the stars are connected to similar calendrical observances.<sup>75</sup> Although they do not appear next to the στοιχεῖα directly, they reinforce the emphasis upon the heavens as opposed to components of matter in this latter part of the passage. Wisdom 13:1-3 may illuminate this further: although the word ‘στοιχεῖα’ is not used, the stars are listed alongside the traditional elements, fire, air and water,<sup>76</sup> and the stars are depicted as similar to them in that all were worshipped as gods that rule the world.<sup>77</sup>

The second meaning fits the context of *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 more closely, but there is one question that is left unanswered: if the στοιχεῖα are to be equated with heavenly bodies why is it that they are bereft or widowed, by the rolling up of the heavens in 3:80-81? The most common meaning of the verb χηρεύω is “to be empty” or “to be a widow.”<sup>78</sup> The inference is that the στοιχεῖα themselves are not utterly destroyed, but that they lose something significant and core to their existence. This suggests some kind of distinction from the luminaries despite a close association to them.<sup>79</sup> The third meaning offers a potential answer to what this loss might be.

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<sup>75</sup> These were created on the basis of the movements of the sun, moon and stars.

<sup>76</sup> Earth is the fourth element but is not present.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Boer, “τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου,” 221 n.266.

<sup>78</sup> William F. Arndt, et al., “χηρεύω,” *BDAG* 1084.

<sup>79</sup> E.g. Compare *Sib. Or.* 2:206-7 (which maintains use of this verb despite identifying στοιχεῖα as the four elements) to the following 2:208-9 in which the elements are described as emptied.

It has been noted by several scholars that στοιχεῖα can refer to elemental spirits, or angelic rulers or false gods. This may be indirectly so as the four elements were worshipped as gods, or alternatively it could be due to a connection between the use of στοιχεῖα and δυνάμεις, as heavenly bodies in ancient Judaism were seen as divine beings or spiritual powers.<sup>80</sup> The latter association is found in *T. Sol.* A 8:2 and 18:2. In response to being asked who they are, the demons say that they are “heavenly beings (στοιχεῖα)... world rulers of the darkness (κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους).”<sup>81</sup> This may explain the slight distinction between the heavens and the στοιχεῖα: the latter will be emptied of their power, as their associated dwelling places are destroyed. To put it another way, the demise of the heavens indicates the end of the reign of certain elemental spirits or heavenly powers.

Does the above mean that the use of στοιχεῖα reflects an association to the DWT? Given the scope of the meaning of the term and the clues from the context, it is plausible the term coincides here with the Divine Warrior mythology. At the very least, it is a legitimate term for heavenly bodies and it is plausibly used as a synonym for the powers of heaven in Isa 34:4 which is an attested DW text used in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92. However, the similarity of στοιχεῖα to Isa 34:4 is not as strong as it is in 2 Pet 3.<sup>82</sup>

One other possible parallel to DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 is that of the Sea as one of the objects of punishment. In the original Canaanite myth, Yammu (the Sea) was the enemy of Baal and was destroyed by him.<sup>83</sup> This can be seen most clearly in OT texts such as Pss 74:12-17 and 77:17-21.<sup>84</sup> These DW motifs continued in Second Temple literature, where the

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Boer, “τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου,” 204-224, Caird, *Principalities*, Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 315-316.

<sup>81</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>82</sup> In 2 Pet 3:12 they melt as they do in Isaiah, whereas in *Sib. Or.* 3:80-81 they are bereft.

<sup>83</sup> KTU 1.2 IV:15-31

<sup>84</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 156-163.

Sea continued to be used as a motif depicting the place of evil and/or the forces of chaos that fought against God.<sup>85</sup> In *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 the sea is referred to four times and each occurrence uses a different Greek term.<sup>86</sup> The sea is mentioned in regards to two different scenarios. The first is in connection with the devastation wielded in Cleopatra's reign (3:78 and 80). The second appears with the sea's destruction through the falling of the stars and a devouring fire (3:83-85). The first possibly reflects an adaptation of a similar motif found in Zech 9:4ab where God casts the wealth of Tyre into the sea. In this DW passage the destruction of wealth is similarly set next to destruction by fire in Zech 9:4c: "But now, the Lord will strip it of its possessions and hurl its wealth into the sea, and it shall be devoured by fire."<sup>87</sup> The second scenario of the sea being burned may possibly have connections to the conquering of the Sea by the DW, but the sea occurs alongside the earth and thus presumably in contrast to it rather than as a force of chaos itself (where it might be coupled with the Deep or River).<sup>88</sup>

Adams has noted some similarities between *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 and Stoic cosmology.<sup>89</sup> While he has argued from this basis that Jewish apocalyptic literature and Mark 13 used it to reflect beliefs about the dissolution of the universe at the end of time, I have shown in chapter two that this does not appreciate how SCI was used in the Roman era. There are possible similarities to SCI in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, but that does not mean it necessarily utilises Stoic doctrine.

The first possible similarity to SCI is the universal scope of the fire and resultant destruction. This is similar to the *ekpyrotic* language in Seneca, *Marc.* 26.6 and Lucan *Phars.*

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. Dan 7:2-14; 4 Ezra 13:6. Cf. Angel, *Chaos*, 100-101, 153. Angel frequently discusses the 'waters of chaos' as a development of this motif in the Second Temple period.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. 3:78, 80, 84 and 85.

<sup>87</sup> For background to this in Zech 9 see Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, especially 318-319.

<sup>88</sup> E.g. See *Sib. Or.* 4:172-191 below.

<sup>89</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 90-91, See also Harrill, "Stoic Physics," 126 n.156.

1.72-89. This latter text has the strongest similarity to the sibylline passage: as well as the dissolution of the world in *Sib. Or.* 3:85-86, there is upheaval in the heavens and the end of luminaries in their conventional setting and work (3:82-84, 88-90) and the stars' fall into the sea (3:83-84). The burning of earth and the sea together is also found in *Phars.* 8:814-815 comparable to the pairing of earth and sea in *Sib. Or.* 3:83-84 and 3:85. This motif of the descent of the stars or sky down to the earth or sea also occurs in several different places in Lucan's work (e.g. *Phars.* 7.134-137; 4.525, 412-415).

The other similarities to SCI that Adams proposes are (1) the στοιχεῖα in *Sib. Or.* 3:80, (2) the “thought that everything will melt ‘into one’ mass (εἰς ἓν)” in 3:87 and (3) the “idea of a dissolution that is pure.”<sup>90</sup> In regards to the first, I have already shown that the context prefers an alternative meaning.<sup>91</sup> The latter two observations are worthy of more comment.

Adams proposes the similarity by comparing the sibylline text to Stoic doctrine generally and the belief that after the cosmic conflagration the world would dissolve into the single element fire before being reformed into a (re)new(ed) world. This state of dissolution is the purest form of reality. While the doctrine may not have been the focus in the Roman era, that is not to say this imagery was never adopted. At the end of Seneca, *Marc.* 26:6-7 there is a reference to the eternal recurrence of the world, although little is said about a state of purity between the two worlds. However, the limitation of connecting *Sib. Or.* 3:87 to SCI is that it overlooks Jewish traditions which show a more favourable connection. While the melting “into one” (εἰς ἓν χωνεύσει, 3:87) is not explicitly found in biblical literature, the idea of melting (χωνεύω) is a familiar one in language of God's judgement upon the earth in

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<sup>90</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 91.

<sup>91</sup> Adams' reasoning here is based on the later sibylline development of the passage in *Sib. Or.* 2:196-213. However, Lightfoot has pointed to the differentiation in meaning between the earlier text from Book 3 in comparison to this and the recension in Book 8. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 487.

the OT. Ezekiel 22:17-22 describes God's judgement upon Jerusalem where the people will be gathered before they are melted by the fire of his wrath. In this passage *χωνεύω* appears frequently as the verb of choice.<sup>92</sup> This occurs also in Mal 3:2b-3 in which God's judgement upon the Jerusalem temple is prophesied (in what also will be an act of cleansing).<sup>93</sup> This Jewish setting is also plausibly connected to the end of *Sib. Or.* 3:87 which states that all will be gleaned "into purity" (*εἰς καθαρὸν*). The Greek *εἰς καθαρὸν* is used in Isa 1:25, a verse in which God's judgement is again described as an act of purifying or cleansing with an implicit sense of eventual renewal,<sup>94</sup> although the verb in the LXX is different, using *πυρόω* and not *διαλέγω*. In summary, there is evidence that the melting and purifying features of the judgement in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 originate from OT oracles of judgment. This suggests that connection of the sibylline's imagery to SCI is only secondary, if present at all. Although there are some general similarities to the SCI in *Phars.* 1:72-80 with the heavenly upheavals and descent of the stars to earth, the motifs find comparable examples in the Jewish tradition. The strength of the similarity to Isa 34:4, the heavenly focus, the *στοιχεῖα κόσμου* language and the presence of the Sea as object of burning all indicate a primarily DW context which may have incorporated echoes of SCI.

### Historical Consistency

The most plausible explanation of the widowed woman ruler who wreaks destruction by casting wealth into the sea (3:78-80) and subsequently brings about divine judgement (3:80-92) is that she is depicting Cleopatra.<sup>95</sup> While it is not explicitly expressed that the judgement

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<sup>92</sup> It appears five times in vv.20-22 in the LXX.

<sup>93</sup> Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC 32; Waco: Word Books, 1984), 328.

<sup>94</sup> John Goldingay, *Isaiah* (NIBCOT 13; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 39.

<sup>95</sup> That Cleopatra is the widow is accepted by most scholars. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 66-70, Goodman, "Sibylline Oracles," 641, W. W. Tarn, "Alexander Helios and the Golden Age," *JRS* 22 (1932): 135-

is the result of the actions of this ruler, it is implicit: that her acts are destructive is obvious, especially when compared with Zech 9:4, and there is no other reason given why God's judgement is necessitated.<sup>96</sup> The specific event that provoked judgement is not clear, but it is probably connected to the fall of Ptolemaic Egypt to Rome at Actium and Cleopatra's subsequent death.<sup>97</sup>

The political locus for divine judgement is consistent with the use of DWT in other texts, including Isa 34:4, the most explicit allusion made in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, although the DWT in Isa 34 concerns a city as a whole whereas the sibylline text focuses upon a political leader. In Isa 34:4 the context is one of judgement upon Edom for her crimes<sup>98</sup> but with the additional dimension of punishment upon the spiritual powers behind them: the LORD's sword executes judgement in the heavens and then moves to earth (v.5).<sup>99</sup> Not only is the Sibyl's use of DWT for judgement upon political spheres consistent with the tradition, but also in this correlation between the political and spiritual, the latter manifest in both passages through the concern with the darkening of the lights in heaven.<sup>100</sup>

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160, Goodman, "Sibylline Oracles," 618-654. Some have argued that the widow should be identified as Rome, e.g. Lanchester, "Oracles," 371. Others have argued that it refers to the collective Messiah or new Jerusalem, e.g. Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle*, 86, 149. For discussion and rebuttal of these see Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 66-70.

<sup>96</sup> Both Adams and Collins assume this in their argument that the use of this disastrous judgement language reflects the "deep disillusionment felt by Egyptian Jews after Cleopatra's defeat." Cf. Adams, *Stars*, 91, Collins, *Book 3*, 360.

<sup>97</sup> The declaration of war from Rome in 32BCE was made on the basis of charges against Cleopatra, although it is unclear what they actually concerned. Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra* (Hellenistic Egypt; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 26, Meyer Reinhold, "The Declaration of War against Cleopatra," *CJ* 77, no. 2 (1981): 97-103.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Isa 34:9, although Watts sees Isa 34:1-4 as a universal judgement with vv.5-8 as a particularisation upon Edom. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 608.

<sup>99</sup> Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 609, Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 89, Caird, *Principalities*, 10-11.

<sup>100</sup> There may be an ironic connection between the description of Cleopatra as a widow (χήρη) and the depiction of the powers as being widowed (χήρευσαι). This mythological picture of Cleopatra is made more profound by the possible association of her with some form of mythological enemy of God. Bousset has proposed the widow reference means she ought to be seen as an embodiment of the "marine monster" in the Dragon myth, especially given *Sib. Or.* 5:18. Collins has argued that the emphasis upon Cleopatra's widowhood

As for the historical consistency with SCI, although *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 does not show direct parallels to a specific text, there are some general observations that can be made. There is little parallel between the cosmic and political context of judgement in the sibylline passage and the pastorally focused apologetic of *Ad Marc.*, in which Seneca counsels a woman over the death of her son and her unresolved grief. But there are closer connections to a couple of the texts from *Pharsalia*. Some of the texts (*Phars.* 7:814-815, 4:525-528, 2:412-415) are quite different from that of *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92,<sup>101</sup> but others (*Phars.* 1:72-89; 7:134-137) depict the fall of cosmos as an analogy to how calamitous the demise of Rome will be.<sup>102</sup> Both texts use CCL to speak of the fall of a political power or empire, although in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-95 this language is not about emphasising the extent of the disaster but has more to do with the effect of God's judgement upon the heavens and heavenly powers. The use of SCI in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 thus has some historical consistency with other sources.

### Thematic Coherence

The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 is plausibly coherent with its wider context, although this context is not the passage that immediately precedes it. The preceding text, *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 is a later insertion (of nearly a century) unlike 3:46-62 which originates from the first century BCE<sup>103</sup> and anticipates the events of 3:75-92. For example, the fiery cataract (πύρινος καταράκτης) that is expected in 3:54 materialises in 3:84 (πυρὸς καταράκτης) and the

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is because she should be identified as a form of the goddess Isis, a perennial widow, in this passage. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 99-100, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 69-70.

<sup>101</sup> *Phars.* 7.814-815 is concerned with the propriety of burning or burying the dead, *Phars.* 4.525-528 is describing the passing of night and coming of dawn and *Phars.* 2.412-415 is recounting the Phaethon myth.

<sup>102</sup> For *Phars.* 1.72-80 see Lapidge, "Lucan's Imagery," 362-363, Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 147, Hershkowitz, *The Madness of Epic*, 201-202, Leigh, *Lucan*, 45, Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 255-256, Matthews, *Caesar and the Storm*, 135, 169, 209, Myers, "Poetic Geographies," 403. For *Phars.* 7.134-137 see Roche, "Righting the Reader," 52-71, Roche, *De Bello Civili*, 33, 148, Leigh, *Lucan*, 45, Matthews, *Caesar and the Storm*, 135.

<sup>103</sup> Collins, *Book 3*, 360.

judgement that is to come (3:55-56) is said to have arrived at the end of these events (3:91-92). For this reason, the criterion of thematic coherence question should be considered with reference to *Sib. Or.* 3:46-62.

Within the context of *Sib. Or.* 3:46-62 the presence of DWT creates a new avenue in which to understand *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92. While the fiery cataract and judgement context is explicit in both, two particular features in *Sib. Or.* 3:46-62 are elucidated by 3:75-92. The reference to the Immortal King and Holy Lord<sup>104</sup> (5:47-48) and the manifestation of his kingdom and his acquisition of power in which he “gain[s] sway over the scepters of the earth” (3:49) becomes more significant as a possible reference to the demise of the political powers which are the counterpart to the spiritual powers of the heavens (3:80-88). With the emptying of the heavens and darkening of traditional cosmic powers a new “most great kingdom” will be established.<sup>105</sup> While the fractured nature of *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 prohibits too strong a dependence on this criterion, the above at least indicates that DWT could be plausibly used in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 so as to help illuminate the surrounding text. The potential SCI in the passage, by contrast, offers little elucidation to the surrounding text and its themes.

### ***Creativity, Recurrence & Overall Integration***

#### **Creativity**

Neither of the two passages under examination have used any source verbatim and so by nature have adapted the text for their purposes. The first passage, *Sib. Or.* 3:65-73, does not

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<sup>104</sup> Collins translates these as “immortal king” and “a holy prince” (emphasis added) but there are a number of reasons to suppose the reference should be capitalised and refers to God (or a possible Son of Man type figure as found in Dan 7). First, in *Sib. Or.* 3:56 God is explicitly described as both the king and the immortal one, and both of these terms Lightfoot identifies as frequent epithets of God in sibylline literature. Thirdly, ‘prince’ is a misleading translation as ἄναξ and βασιλεὺς are used interchangeably in sibylline literature. For example, in *Sib. Or.* 5:1-51 ἄναξ is used frequently to depict the different Roman leaders and Nero is later also described as such (5:143). However he is additionally described as a βασιλεὺς (5:233 and also *Sib. Or.* 4:119). Additionally, God is described as a ἄναξ in *Sib. Or.* 5:352. Cf. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 539-541.

<sup>105</sup> Collins, *Book 3*, 363.



use any particular text. It is very similar to *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4, but they are probably drawing on a similar source than directly dependent on one another. The second passage does clearly draw from Isa 34 in *Sib. Or.* 3:81-83. Although changes in language cannot be pressed too far in metrical poetry, there are some changes that illustrate a concern with background of Isa 34:4 in DWT. It is specifically the heavens and heavenly bodies that are picked up and expanded upon: in Isaiah it is “πάντα τὰ ἄστρα” that fall (v.4) whereas the Sibyl<sup>106</sup> more imaginatively construes this with “πολύμορφος ὄλος πόλος” (3:83). In light of the emphasis upon the heavens throughout the sibylline passage it is no surprise this feature is expanded. However, there is another change the Sibyl makes. In Isa 34 the verb which describes how the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll is in the passive form. In *Sib. Or.* 3:82 this (divine) passive is changed to the active voice, emphasising God as the one who brings about the rolling up of the heavens. The creative choices of the Sibyl, although in part these may be due poetic expression, show a consciousness of use of the imagery in a way that is consistent with her poetry. This use may be further reflected if the reference to the στοιχεῖα (3:80) is seen a synonym to the δυνάμεις in the LXX B of Isa. 34:4. If the Sibyl has used SCI it is with a high level of creativity to adapt it for a context of divine judgement. Thus both passages satisfy the criterion of creativity.

## Recurrence

There is sufficient recurrence of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 to meet the criterion. Although only two texts were examined, there was evidence of the tradition in both. In *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 this is most notable with the divine defeat of Beliar and in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 the allusion to Isa 34 and emphasis on cosmic darkness. It is possible that Tethys in *Sib. Or.* 3:22 may be identified

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<sup>106</sup> Although the *Sibylline Oracles* are Jewish pseudepigraphical writings, I nonetheless refer to the author of the text as ‘the Sibyl,’ who is female, as that is the convention found throughout the writings themselves.

with Tiamat<sup>107</sup> which would give further evidence for DWT. The recurrence for SCI is also moderate, with two features possibly incorporated into *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92: the language of universal fire and also the subsequent purifying of all.

### Overall Integration

*Sibylline Oracles* 3:1-92 when assessed under this final criterion has some strengths but also some weaknesses. As *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 is a later addition there is an inherent problem in that this passage seemingly breaks up 3:46-62 and 75-92 which I have demonstrated are connected to one another. It would make more sense to have put 3:63-74 at the end where it would also fit chronologically. This suggests that the final redactor was not sufficiently acquainted with the tradition to notice the mistake.<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, it seems likely that it was the similarity to the coming of divine judgement upon rebellious figures that brought about the placement of this later insertion in Book 3:1-92 in the first place. It is difficult to propose a solution to this problem as the evidence is slim and inconclusive. The possibility that *Sib. Or.* 3:46-92 was itself separate from the first half as some point in the redaction history makes this criterion even more difficult to apply with any degree of certainty or satisfaction. The SCI in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 may contribute to the overall context of *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 through the universal fire being a type of undoing of creation, in contrast to the opening description of creation as made and ruled by God (3:8-28).

### Conclusion

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<sup>107</sup> Walter Burkert, "Oriental Myth and Literature in the Iliad," in *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation: Proceedings of the Second International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 1-5 June, 1981* (ed. Robin Hägg; SUSIA 30; Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 1983), 51-56, Richard Janko, *The Iliad 13-16: A Commentary* (ed. G. S. Kirk; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 181-182, Albin Lesky, *Thalatta; der Weg der Griechen zum Meer* (New York: Arno Press, 1973).

<sup>108</sup> Or possibly confused the widow with later depictions of Rome in this way.

The two texts considered from *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 clearly draw on a strongly Jewish tradition and demonstrate familiarity with and use of various aspects of the DWT. While the criterion of overall integration was not sufficiently met, this is may be a result of the various problems surrounding the redaction history of *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 as a whole, not to mention its current placement at the start of the rest of *Sib. Or.* 3. The strength of the similarity and historical consistency in particular, especially in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, is indicative that DWT is being used here; albeit with the caveat that it appears the mythological content was misinterpreted when *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74 was included.

The criteria show a plausible but not conclusive use of SCI in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92. There is some similarity to SCI with some historical consistency to its use elsewhere and SCI as a picture of the undoing of creation would offer a contrast to the focus on creation at the start of the book. However, the proposed SCI motifs are also explicable within DWT and OT language of prophetic judgement which is more prominent throughout *Sib. Or.* 3:1-92 and there was also limited thematic coherence between SCI and its immediate context.

### *Sib. Or.* 3: Main Corpus

#### **(1) *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714**

669 And then God in a loud voice, will speak to all  
670 an uneducated, empty-minded people, and judgement on them  
671 will be poured out from Almighty God and everyone will perish  
672 at the hand of the Immortal; but away from heaven will fall  
673 large, fiery swords (ρόμφαῖαι πύρινοι) down to the land; torches and rays  
674 will come, greatly shining into the midst of men.  
675 But the land, mother of all, will be shaken with empty days (σαλεύσεται ἡμασι  
κείνοις)  
676 at the hand of the Immortal, and fish, those down in the sea, (πόντον)  
677 and all the animals of ground and countless swarms of birds  
678 and all human souls and all the sea (πᾶσα θάλασσα)  
679 will shudder at the face of the Immortal and there will be panic.  
680 Both the high peaks of the mountains and the hills of gods  
681 will shatter, and black Erebus will appear in all.  
682 And misty ravines (φάραγγες) in lofty mountains  
683 will be full of corpses: rocks will flow

684 with blood and every channel will fill the plain  
 685 but well-made walls of hostile men will all fall to the ground,  
 686 since they did not know the law  
 687 nor the judgement of the Almighty God, but with foolish minds,  
 688 everyone being stirred up, you cast your spears against the temple.  
 689 And God will judge all with a war (πολέμῳ) and with a sword (ἡδὲ μαχαίρῃ)  
 690 and with fire and torrential rain; and there will be  
 691 brimstone from the heaven, indeed stone and  
 692 much and grievous hail; and death will come upon four-footed creatures.  
 693 Then they will perceive Immortal God, who judges these things.  
 694 A lamentation and even shouting throughout the boundless land  
 695 will come at the perishing of men; and all the unclean  
 696 will be washed with blood; but the land herself will also drink  
 697 of the blood of the perishing, the beasts will satiate from the flesh.  
 698 The everlasting Almighty God himself said to me  
 699 to prophesy all these things, and they will not be without effect -  
 700 nor unfinished - that which he alone puts in the heart,  
 701 for the truthful spirit of God is coming down to the cosmos.  
 702 Then all the sons of the Almighty God around the temple  
 703 will live quietly, rejoicing in those things  
 704 which the Creator, the righteous judge and sovereign, will give.  
 705 For he himself will shelter (σκεπάσειε) them alone, having mightily defended them  
 706 encircling them as though a wall of blazing fire.  
 707 There will be freedom from war in the cities and the country,  
 708 no hand of evil war, but he will ever be with them:  
 709 himself the Immortal fighter (ὑπέρμαχος ἀθάνατος), and the hand (χείρ) of the Holy  
 One.  
 710 Then indeed all the islands and cities will declare  
 711 “How much the Immortal loves those men!  
 712 For all things shares in their struggles (συναγωνιᾷ) and assists (βοηθεῖ) them:  
 713 the heaven, the divinely-driven sun and moon.”  
 714 But the earth, the mother of all, will be shaken in those days.<sup>109</sup>

### Similarity

*Sibylline Oracles* 3:669-688 describes God speaking and pouring out judgement and  
 destruction (accompanied by cosmic upheaval) upon those who would assault the temple  
 (3:688).<sup>110</sup> Then a war ensues in which God himself fights (3:671-672, 689, 705-706, 708-  
 709), assisted by natural elements (3:690-691, 712-713). Peace follows in a time when the  
 sons of God can worship God in the temple and violence ceases (3:715ff). This part of *Sib.*

<sup>109</sup> This line is in different positions in various texts, but I am following Collins who places it here.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. also the lines preceding the oracle, 3:656-668.

*Or.* 3 has a number of different parallels to the DWT, most prominently the examples of the tradition found in Ezekiel.<sup>111</sup> It is accepted that *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 draws extensively from Ezek 38:17-39:8.<sup>112</sup> However there are further similarities to other texts both in Ezekiel and elsewhere that suggest there is a more widely mythological purpose in mind.

Several different passages from Ezekiel are alluded to in this sibylline text (Ezek 32:5-8; 35:7-8; 38:19-22; 39:9-10). The strongest similarity is to the two texts from Ezek 38-39. These two chapters tell of the battle between God and the obscure ‘Gog of Magog’ which culminates in a battle between God and Gog (39:1-6), followed by a peaceful kingdom with no need for weapons (39:9-10). Within this narrative, Ezek 38:19-22 describes the cosmic upheaval as God’s wrath against Gog is aroused prior to going to battle. *Sibylline Oracles* 3:675-688 clearly alludes to these verses. The description of the earth shaking in response to the presence of God is also a traditional feature of DW myth in other texts (*T. Mos.* 10:3-5; *Ps* 18:8; *Nah* 1:5; *Hab* 3:6). However, the Sibyl draws on the motif as it is found in Ezek 38:19-22. The shaking of the earth involves the shuddering or quaking of the ἰχθύες (*Sib. Or.* 3:676/Ezek 38:20), πετεινὰ (*Sib. Or.* 3:677/Ezek 38:20) θηρία (*Sib. Or.* 3:677/Ezek 38:20) and ἄνθρωποι (*Sib* 3:678/Ezek 38:20), as well as the shattering (ρήγνυμι) of the ὄρος (*Sib. Or.* 3:680-681/Ezek 38:20) and the falling (πίπτω) down of the τεῖχος (*Sib. Or.* 3:685/Ezek 28:30). Yet this allusion does make a few changes to the earlier version. In Ezekiel, the birds are birds τῆς θαλάσσης: the Sibyl keeps the sentiment but changes the noun to πόντος. If a DW text, it is possible the Sibyl removes the θαλάσσα as the location of the fish in order to

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<sup>111</sup> For the DWT in Ezek 38-39 see Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 153-167, Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament of God*, Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 456-459.

<sup>112</sup> Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38-39 as pre-text for Revelation 19,17-21 and 20,7-10* (WUNT II 135; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 141-150, Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 277-283, Collins, *Book 3*, 377.

include it in 3:678 as a hint that the mythological Sea, the enemy of God, will shudder at the shaking of the earth.<sup>113</sup>

The chaos that results from the shaking of the earth is not the only parallel between *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 and Ezek 38:19-22. The judgement from God which is meted out in both texts is with a sword(s)<sup>114</sup> and also with fire and brimstone, torrential rain, and hailstone, which are familiar weapons of the Divine Warrior.<sup>115</sup> There is significant verbal similarity, although only the torrential rain matches in case and number:

Ezek 38:22a	καὶ κρινῶ αὐτὸν θανάτῳ καὶ αἵματι καὶ ὑετῷ κατακλύζοντι καὶ λίθοις χαλάζης καὶ πῦρ καὶ θεῖον βρέξω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν
<i>Sib. Or.</i> 3:690-691	καὶ πυρὶ καὶ ὑετῷ τε κατακλύζοντι· καὶ ἔσται θεῖον ἀπ’ οὐρανόθεν, αὐτὰρ λίθος ἡδὲ χάλαζα

The description of the mountains full of corpses, rivers of blood and land saturated with blood in *Sib. Or.* 3:682-684 and 696-697 finds a parallel in Ezekiel 32:5-8.<sup>116</sup> While the similarity is not as pronounced as to Ezek 38-39, there is sufficient likeness to conclude the sibylline passage draws from the imagery associated with this passage. The description of mountain ravines (φάραγγες) full of corpses (3:682-3) and blood filling the plain (3:684),<sup>117</sup> is similar to the language of Ezek 32:5-6. The dragon’s flesh is strewn on the mountains (v.5a), his blood saturates it (v.5b LXX) and the valleys (φάραγγας) will be filled with him (v.6b).<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> For the background of the θαλάσσα as the enemy of the DW, see Day, *God’s Conflict*, 88-140.

<sup>114</sup> In Ezek 38:21, the MT has a single sword (כַּיָּוֶד) and the swords of all men, whereas the LXX has only the latter (μάχαιραι). The sibylline text, like the MT, mentions a single sword (μάχαιρα), but neither the Greek or the Hebrew directly connects the sword to God’s judgement.

<sup>115</sup> See discussion of Wis. 5:20-23 below, p.124.

<sup>116</sup> Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 165-167, Block, *Ezekiel*, 201-207, Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament of God*, 160-163.

<sup>117</sup> This is reiterated later with land saturated with blood (3:696-697).

<sup>118</sup> The MT varies from the LXX in what is envisaged, but the sense of mountains and valleys filled with the carcass and blood of the dragon is consistent in both.

While Ezekiel is a primary source in this section of Book 3, the imagery also draws from other sources of DWT. For example, in the judgement upon Edom in Isa 34 there are a couple of features that suggest that either the Sibyl uses the DWT in Isa 34, or is drawing on a similar tradition beyond that of Ezekiel. The first is the reference to falling swords from heaven. In *Sib. Or.* 3:672-674 ῥομφαῖαι πύρνοι fall from heaven and torches come into the midst of men. Isaiah 34:5-6 describes a scene of a μάχαιρα (although here a singular sword) coming down upon the Edomites having first drunk its fill in the heavens. The perishing of the people because of a heavenly sword is common to both. The Sibyl later refers to God's sword as the singular μάχαιρα (3:689). That God executes judgement with a heavenly sword is found in Isa 66:16: "For by fire will the LORD execute judgement, and by his sword (ῥομφαία), on all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many."<sup>119</sup> The descent of fiery swords from heaven also resembles the more explicit imagery of God dressed in armour with meteorological weaponry in Wis 5:17-23. In v.21, "shafts of lightning will fly with true aim, and will leap from the clouds to the target, as from a well-drawn bow."<sup>120</sup>

There are a number of inferences that God appears as a Divine Warrior in *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714. Everyone will perish at his hand (3:671-672), he is depicted as the defender of his people and as a wall of fire (3:705-6) and he is the one who will be with them as the "Immortal fighter" (ὑπέρμαχος ἀθάνατος, 3:708-709). There is good reason to suppose that the Sibyl here draws on the DWT as it was known to Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>121</sup> In Wis 5:16-23

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<sup>119</sup> Although the LXX uses ῥομφαία here and not μάχαιρα, it is not a problem for them to be used interchangeably: in Isa 65:12 the LXX renders the same Hebrew word (קֶרֶב) with μάχαιρα. Both Isa 65:12 and 66:16 uses the terms to describe the sword which God will use as the means to slaughter people. For the DW in Isa 66:15-16 see Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 161-185.

<sup>120</sup> See Angel, *Chaos*, 89-95.

<sup>121</sup> It is possible that the Sibyl draws from Wisdom itself, especially as both texts likely originate from Alexandrian Judaism in Egypt. However, given that both also date from the mid-second to late first century BC it is difficult to establish this for certain: *Sib. Or.* 3 may have been written first. For this reason, it is more probable they are either drawing on a common source, products of the same community, or are drawing on the same tradition as it developed in the region.

God is similarly described: he is depicted in heavenly armour fighting against his enemies, with various weapons and with creation on his side.<sup>122</sup> While the sibylline passage does not have such an extravagant description of the DW in battle as in Wis 5, there are some common themes between the two texts. God is described as the one who “will shelter [σκεπάζω] them alone” (3:705) and “he himself will ever be with them... the hand [χείρ] of the Holy One” (3:708-709). This is similar to Wis 5:16 in which God’s actions are set alongside his promise that his “right hand [χείρ] will cover [σκεπάζω] them [the righteous]” which itself is a result of his care for them (v.15). The description of God in *Sib. Or.* 3:709 is even more forceful: God is “fighter” (ὑπέρμαχος).<sup>123</sup> This is the implicit description of God in all his armour in Wis 5:15-20, and a term explicitly used to describe God’s hand of protection elsewhere in Wis 10:20.<sup>124</sup> Additionally both texts speak of creation as on the side of God, fighting with him. In Wis. 5:20 and 23, all creation is fighting against God’s enemies, and in vv.21-22 hail and lightning are involved in the battle. A similar inference is made in *Sib. Or.* 3:712-713 in which “all things” are said to work with God in rescuing his people, notably the sun and moon (3:713), as well as the already mentioned meteorological features which are part of the judgement of God (3:690-691).<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Based on Isa 59:15-19, and it is also familiar to Hab 3:8-16 and other passages. For DWT in Wis 5 see David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (AB 43; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979), 148-150, Ernest G. Clarke, *Wisdom of Solomon* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), Angel, *Chaos*, 89-95. Buitenwerf identifies the similarity to Wisdom 5:20b-23 but does not comment on the cosmic battle language, *Book III*, 281. Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 281.

<sup>123</sup> Although the LSJ translates the noun here as “champion” or “defender,” fighter is to be preferred as it correlates more closely to the verb ὑπερμάχέω which translates as “fight for or on behalf of.” See “ὑπερμάχέω” in *LSJ*, 1866 (emphasis added). This is also reflected in Collins’ translation of *Sib. Or.* 3:709: “and the hand of the Holy One will be fighting for them.” Although Collins’ version makes for a smoother reading of the line it does not account for the placement of ὑπέρμαχος prior to and in agreement with ἀθάνατος. Collins divides the two with the latter becoming part of the 3:708 in his translation. Collins, *Book 3*, 377-378.

<sup>124</sup> Winston notes the similarity of Wis 10:20 to *Sib. Or.* 3:708-709. Winston, *Wisdom*, 222. However, the DWT provenance of this verse has not been established, although Angel notes 10:18-19 as possible examples of the tradition. Angel, *Chaos*, 97-98.

<sup>125</sup> As discussed above with reference to Ezek 38-39.



*Sibylline Oracles* 3:712-713 also shows similarity to DWT beyond Wis 5:16-23.

Collins captures the sense of the lines well with his translation “for everything fights (συναγωνιάω) on their side and helps (βοηθέω) them, heaven, divinely driven sun and moon.”<sup>126</sup> Like Buitenwerf, he notes the similarity to Wis 5:17-23 as well as 16:24. However, these two lines demand additional attention as the motifs that are strongly connected to DWT. The Greek verbs, while more circumspect, imply a battle context: βοηθέω and συναγωνιάω are both used to denote military intervention and aid. Συναγωνιάω in its six occurrences in other Greek texts (prior to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE) is used three times to describe sharing in the struggle of an army, fighter or ship in their plight, either by means of favouring, encouraging vocally or actual intervention.<sup>127</sup> One of the common uses of βοηθέω in Second Temple literature is also with reference to military assistance.<sup>128</sup> In 1 Macc 12:15 the military aid (against warring kings) comes “from heaven” (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ), as in *Sib. Or.* 3:712-3. These verbs thus legitimately imply their subject is involved in battle. This is corroborated by the identification of “divinely driven sun and moon” (3:712) as those who assist in this way. The language of luminaries as part of the DW’s heavenly army is well attested in the tradition.<sup>129</sup>

There is a strong similarity in *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 to the DWT. God is depicted as the traditional DW: he goes to battle, along with his traditional mythological allies (meteorological elements, heavenly swords, the sun and moon), in order to execute judgement and rescue his people from those who would threaten his temple, complete with

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<sup>126</sup> Collins, OTP 378 Collins, *Book 3*, 378.

<sup>127</sup> See Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 17.100.4.4, 20.16.6.1 and Polybius, *Histories*, 3.43.8.4. The other three references are to do with building suspense in story-telling (CTesias, *Testimonia*, frag 14a line 216 and Demetrius *De elocutione* 216.3) and the impact of a speech in Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 19.81.4.8).

<sup>128</sup> E.g. 1 Macc 3:2, 15, 53; 7:20; 12:15, 53; 3 Macc 1:4, 16; Dan 10:13, 21.

<sup>129</sup> Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 21-23, 66-69, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 90-92, Caird, *Language*, 233-242, Michalak, *Angels*, 43-54. Although the stars are the more common ally of God, the sun and moon are also often present (e.g. Josh 10:12-14).

resultant cosmic upheaval at his theophany with the shaking of the earth. The Sibyl's description is not as explicit as Ezekiel and Wisdom of Solomon, but the range of different motifs show that the mythological tradition is being used in this passage. Furthermore, the narrative as a whole follows the pattern of other DWT literature. There is a human enemy who is a cause of destruction.<sup>130</sup> The Divine Warrior arrives and overcomes evil: the hand of the Immortal brings about the judgement and perishing of the people,<sup>131</sup> and this is all accompanied by cosmic upheaval and shaking of earth and all that is within it. The enthronement of God and manifestation of his reign is outlined in 3:702-731; a blissful time of peace when the righteous will live around the temple, and transgressors will come to worship God.

#### Historical Consistency

The context of *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 is not readily straightforward and therefore first needs some review before it can be determined whether it fulfils the criterion of historical consistency. This passage is usually interpreted as depicting part of the future events that will be a precursor to the inauguration of God's kingdom and as such are unconnected to any particular historical setting. It is described as the "final period of confusion" which involves a Gentile assault on Jerusalem,<sup>132</sup> the beginning of the final judgement<sup>133</sup> and part of the judgement on the nations.<sup>134</sup> These interpretations are predicated, in part, on the association of the passage with the subsequent vision of a divinely-established kingdom and the peace

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<sup>130</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:657-668. There are many examples of a non-monstrous enemy and object of God's judgement in DWT: e.g. *Wis* 5:17-23; *T. Mos.* 10:7; *Isa* 13; *Isa* 34. This is in addition to the texts where the monster represents a human threat: e.g. *Dan* 7, *Ezek* 32 etc.

<sup>131</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:669-672.

<sup>132</sup> Collins, *Book 3*, 357.

<sup>133</sup> Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 142.

<sup>134</sup> Shum, *Isaiah*, 83.

that will ensue (cf. 3:741-795). This kingdom is described as a kingdom “for all ages” (3:767-768) with the result that the “whole earth” (3:755) will be affected. However, this kingdom is also described as being finite: *Sib. Or.* 3:756-757 says kings will be on friendly terms until the end of the age (μέχρι τέρματος [ἔσται] αἰῶνος) and the rendering of γῆ for the earth is misleading.<sup>135</sup> Another indication that the eschatology may not be clear-cut is Collins’ note that 3:781 is unusual to name the rulers of the end-time kingdom as the prophets.<sup>136</sup> Although it is not without precedent for a ruler to also function in this role,<sup>137</sup> it is redundant for an eschatology which is truly about the consummation of world history. In light of this, it appears that the passage’s “eschatological overtones” are driven less by the expectation of a definitive end of history and universal return to Paradise and more as a hope for the end of foreign rule and the restoration of God’s kingdom in Israel.<sup>138</sup> This would also explain why there is no mention of the resurrection of the dead, such as that found in Dan 12 or *Sib. Or.* 4: the vision in *Sib. Or.* 3 does not concern life after death but life before it. If this is the case, the precise context has yet to be established and one which would give rise to the emphases in such a vision and its hope for a peaceable kingdom.

Two themes that are in the forefront of the vision in *Sib. Or.* 3:657-807 are the restoration of temple worship and the righteous (which is mentioned throughout<sup>139</sup>) and then the impending judgement on a specific race (3:761),<sup>140</sup> namely the Greeks.<sup>141</sup> These two

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<sup>135</sup> While γῆ can mean “earth” it can also simply mean “land” or “ground.” Likewise πᾶσα γῆ can mean “whole earth,” it may also be rendered “every land” or the “whole land.” Both *Sib. Or.* 3:727 and 755 use the identical phrase γαῖαν ἅπασαν, which Collins translates “all the land” in the former and “the whole earth” in the latter. See “γῆ” in *LSJ*, 347, also Collins, *Book 3*, 378.

<sup>136</sup> Collins, *Book 3*, 379 n.c4.

<sup>137</sup> As Collins notes, Collins, *Book 3*, 379 n.c4.

<sup>138</sup> This highlights the difficulty of the term eschatology that it can mean either.

<sup>139</sup> E.g. 3:702-704, 715-732, 772-776.

<sup>140</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:761 declares God will “burn with fire a race of grievous men (χαλεπῶν γένος ἀνδρῶν).” The singular γένος indicates a single people as the focus of divine wrath, even though Buitenwerf identifies them as simply those who are wicked, Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 287. Not only does γένος makes a specific people-

themes can be explained if *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 has moorings in the reign of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV, and the attacks on Jerusalem and the temple during their reigns. This is not least because much of the book dates to this period and therefore makes a natural reading of the text.<sup>142</sup> This is even more likely in light of the frequent words of judgement prophesied against the Greeks at various points in *Sib. Or.* 3<sup>143</sup> and is apparent in the evidence from the passage in question itself. Throughout it is repeatedly reiterated that the judgement is particular: it concerns those who would do Jerusalem and the temple harm (3:660-668, 687-688) and consequently that God's concern is the protection of his people and their temple (3:701-706, 708-709, 711-713). The nature of the threat from foreign kings against Israel, their judgement and punishment and God's protection of his people all plausibly reflect the religio-political events of the mid-second century with Israel under Seleucid rule, especially Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

The first indication of a threat to the temple was during the reign of Seleucus IV, at the suggestion of Apollonius of Tarsus who had seen the temple gold. Seleucus is recounted as sending Heliodorus to confiscate some of the supposedly vast riches of the temple treasury; a plot foiled by the intervention of an angel (2 Macc 3:4-40). Seleucus died in 175BCE and Antiochus IV acceded the throne from his brother. While Antiochus IV

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group more likely, but the same *γένος ἀνδρῶν* is used to speak of single people group elsewhere: of Assyria (3:303) and the Greeks (3:568). The Sibyl surely has the Greeks in mind here in 3:761: not only does the derogatory *χαλεπῶν γένος ἀνδρῶν* resemble the similarly negative *ἄσεβῶν γένος ἀνδρῶν* in 3:568 (although Egypt is also *ὄλοον γένος* in 3:348), but the Sibyl identifies the Greeks as the object of a fiery wrath in her conclusion to the book in 3:810 and the Greeks are the only people-group mentioned throughout the surrounding text of *Sib. Or.* 3:657-807.

<sup>141</sup> E.g. *Sib. Or.* 3:732-740, 761, 762-766.

<sup>142</sup> See criterion of availability above.

<sup>143</sup> E.g. 5:545-561, 632-641, 732-735, 809-810. Sometimes this judgement is envisaged as the direct wrath of God, other times at other times its seen as mediated through the victory of a barbarian people, probably Rome. Collins, *Book 3*, 373. n.q3

Epiphanes may have been exaggerated in Jewish tradition<sup>144</sup> the reality of the assaults on Jerusalem and the temple in the 170s-160s BCE remain undisputed. First, 2 Macc 4:7-8 describes how the high priest Jason increased the temple payment to Antiochus IV in order to secure support in his desire to become high priest. After Jason was ousted and Menelaus replaced as high priest, he attempted to regain his position by force in 169BCE.<sup>145</sup> Antiochus IV responded by sending troops to bring peace to Jerusalem, which resulted in many deaths, enslavements and looting.<sup>146</sup> A third assault on the temple occurred two years later when Antiochus sent Apollonius, a Mysian leader, to launch yet another attack on Jerusalem, successfully looting the temple of its wealth once again.<sup>147</sup>

These attacks on Jerusalem and various assaults on the temple, especially its treasury, correlate well with the events of *Sib. Or.* 3:657-668. The emphasis upon the wealth of the temple (3:657-658) and the identification of envy as the vice underlying the political tensions (3:662) suggests there was envy of the temple's riches: the same reason for the number of temple assaults by the Seleucids.<sup>148</sup> The "abominable kings" (3:667) then would indicate Antiochus IV, Seleucus IV and possibly extend to both Apolloniuses and Heliodorus if βασιλῆες includes other political leaders as well as kings.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 10, Gruen, *Heritage*, 29-30.

<sup>145</sup> 2 Macc 5:5-7; *Jos. Ant.* 12:239-240.

<sup>146</sup> Even though the figures of those killed and enslaved are undoubtedly exaggerated, it is likely the story has some basis in history. 2 Macc 5:11-21; *Jos. Ant.* 12:246-247.

<sup>147</sup> *Jos. Ant.* 12:248ff and 2 Macc 5:23b-26 also recounts the attack, but does not mention stealing from the Temple. Josephus clearly states Apollonius' covetous intentions, contra Grabbe's statement the attack was for unclear motives, Grabbe, *Second Temple Judaism*, 15-16.

<sup>148</sup> 2 Macc 3:6; *Jos. Ant.* 12:249 and also note Antiochus' joy at his looting of the Temple in 2 Macc 5:16-17 and 5:21.

<sup>149</sup> See "βασιλευς" in *LSJ*, 309. Although primarily kings, legitimately also chiefs or those in government.

The description of these leaders as abominable (μιαροί) is also used particular of Antiochus IV in looting the temple in 2 Macc 5:16.

If *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 originates from these assaults on the temple in the 170s and 160s BCE and yet also envisages a future hope that depicts a peace-filled land with God as sovereign, how does this compare to the DW texts identified above as sharing similar motifs and features of the tradition? Ezekiel 38-39 only shows consistency insofar as any evil threat to Israel will be subject to the judgement and punishment of God. Gog of Magog does not represent a particular historical or political figure or situation, other than as a possible parallel as the “metahistorical symbol of chaos or evil” to the historical symbol of the same that is Egypt.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, Wis 5:17-23 also depicts the defeat of evil forces who oppress God’s people, namely the Romans, but this is a post-mortem event.<sup>151</sup> While both Wisdom and *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 both have a political empire (or rulers) that are a threat to God’s people, Wisdom also does not have the same emphasis upon temple activity as the sibylline text (although this may be because the threats to the Jewish people behind Wis 5 did not concern temple worship).

Although Ezek 38-39 and Wis 5 have limited overlap with the context of *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714, the less prominent texts of Ezek 32:5-8 and Isa 34 offer greater consistency in their use of DWT. Ezekiel 32 names its historical context from the outset: the language of the dragon (v.2) that God will catch and destroy (vv.3-6) is used to speak of the time of lament that the Egyptian Pharaoh is to face (v.2a). God’s judgement and punishment of Egypt and the Pharaoh is experienced through the destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon (vv.11-16). The DW motifs are used to speak of God’s wrath against Egypt’s hubris, a desire for God to be acknowledged as the LORD (v.15b) and also places the rise and fall of nations in terms of God’s purposes and design: Babylon’s conquest of Egypt is the expression of God’s

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<sup>150</sup> Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 167.. The defeat of Gog is usually interpreted as the final destruction of evil before the establishment of the temple or a fleeting threat to Israel’s peace when living righteously and faithfully with God. Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament of God*, esp. 194. Block, *Ezekiel*, 488-489.

<sup>151</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 89-85, Winston, *Wisdom*, 32-33.

judgement on the latter.<sup>152</sup> The precise circumstances of Isa 34 are less apparent than Ezek 32, but it is clear that the focus is upon God's wrath against Edom (vv.5, 6 and 9), although the manner in which this judgement is actually experienced is never described. Both these texts use DWT for the fall of a political enemy. In particular, the description in Ezek 32 that the destruction of the pharaonic dragon by God will be felt in real-terms by the Babylonian conquest of Egypt would reflect a similar kind of historical circumstance to *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714. Although the latter describes the foreign kings as destroyed by God, in historical terms Antiochus IV and his forces were defeated by human forces (the Maccabees). *Sibylline Oracles* 3:669-714 thus satisfies the criterion of historical consistency.

#### Thematic Coherence

The proposed use of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 is supported by the coherence it offers to the contents of the passage itself. First, it elucidates the array of images used that don't have an obvious reason to be combined: the fiery swords, the shaking of the earth and its contents, the meteorological disturbances, the description of God as defender and protector of his people and the personification of the sun and moon who fight on his side. The DWT elucidates these obscure motifs. It also supports themes within the wider text. First, it vivifies the extent and significance of the judgement upon the kings who would threaten the temple (*Sib. Or.* 3:657-668). Their actions become an affront to God as well as the people and result in a theophany of cosmic impact. The Sibyl identifies that his means of judgement is with war in 3:689, and the presence of the tradition explains what type of war this is, not least as the text offers no human warrior that will conquer the enemy. God's act of judgement and punishment becomes an event of cosmic proportions (cf. 3:689, 701) with devastating consequences for the enemy. Secondly, the DWT re-emphasises and elevates the message that God is the protector of his people as he brings about justice against those who threaten them: he fights for his people

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<sup>152</sup> Block, *Ezekiel*, 211-212.

(3:705-706, 708-709) and he involves creation to fight in this battle (3:711-713). In sum, *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 clearly shows a coherent use of the DWT as a piece of mythologised history.

**(2) *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807**

796 But a sign for you I will proclaim clearly, to make things plain;  
797 at the time when in the earth the end of all (παντῶν τὸ τέλος) takes place  
798 when the large swords (ρόμφαῖαι) would be in the sparkling heavens  
799 by night they will be seen from evening and to daybreak  
800 and straightaway a dust-cloud (κονιορτὸς) will come from heaven  
801 to all earth and the light from the sun  
802 will fail from the middle of heaven, and the moon's rays  
803 will shine and again come upon the earth.  
804 A sign will appear with blood dripping from rocks  
805 and in a cloud (ἐν νεφέλῃ) you will see a battle of foot soldiers and horsemen  
806 as (οἷα) a hunt (κυνηγεσίην) for beasts as though in a fog (ὄμιχλης):  
807 this is the end of war (τέλος πολέμοιο) that God, who inhabits heaven, is  
accomplishing.

Similarity

This final oracle before the Sibyl's closing words in Book 3 shows several cosmic battle motifs. A number of signs appear including large swords in the sky (3:798-799), the descent of a cloud upon the earth (3:800-801), the disturbances of the sun and moon's activity (3:801-802) and blood which appears from rocks (3:804). The scene culminates with the dramatic image of heavenly soldiers and horsemen in battle, (3:805-806) and the declaration that God is bringing about the end of the war.

One similarity to the DWT found in *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 is the eclipse of the sun by the moon (3:801-803). The motif of luminary disturbance features widely in the tradition, usually in advance of the revelation of God as warrior: often it features both the sun and moon darkening (e.g. Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10; 3:15; Ezek 32:7), at other points they are disturbed with the sun darkening and the moon turning to blood (e.g. Joel 2:31; *T. Mos.* 10:5; Acts 2:20; Rev 6:12), sometimes they are simply disturbed from their normal order and routine (4 Ezra 5:4;



Zech 14:7)<sup>153</sup> and occasionally they are also personified (Hab 3:10-11; Isa 24:23).<sup>154</sup> *Sibylline Oracles* 3:801-803 does not appear to depend on any one of these particular iterations of the motif,<sup>155</sup> but the eclipse is similarly part of the cosmic upheaval prior to the arrival of a heavenly revelation.

The large swords (ῥομφαῖαι) in 3:798 that remain in the heavens have been linked to Jos. *Jwr.* 6:289 which describes a year-long appearance of a sword in the heavens forewarning of a judgement upon earth.<sup>156</sup> While both texts use the heavenly sword as a portent of divine action and intervention, the Sibyl's sword is not related to earthly events or conflict but is a sign of a coming heavenly battle (3:805-807). This is more reminiscent of the motif in Isa 34:5a which describes God's sword as "drinking its fill" in the heavens before descending to earth and executing judgement there also. Either way, the heavenly swords forewarn of some kind of divine judgement and intervention.

Another occurrence in the heavens is a classic motif of cosmic battle: a heavenly army appears in a battle in a cloud (3:805).<sup>157</sup> Traditionally, this imagery has been connected to the heavenly apparitions of warriors and horsemen in 2 Macc 5:1-4,<sup>158</sup> Jos. *War* 6:298-299 and Tacitus, *Hist.* 5:13.<sup>159</sup> In these texts the revelation is seen as an omen for unfolding historical

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<sup>153</sup> Although the DW provenance of these two verses has not been established.

<sup>154</sup> Buitenwerf notes the similarity of 3:800-801 to a number of these examples Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 294, n.141. Geffcken and Collins only note the similarity to Joel 2:10, Johannes Geffcken, *Die Oracula Sibyllina* (GCS; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902), 89, Collins, *Book 3*, 379.

<sup>155</sup> The closest it may come is Ezek 32:7 in which God darkens the sun and moon with a cloud: *Sib. Or.* 3:800-801 also has a dust cloud as the reason for the heavenly darkening.

<sup>156</sup> Nikiprowetzky connects the "glaives dans le ciel" to this verse in Josephus, Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle*, 159.

<sup>157</sup> Although 3:805 has the warriors in the sky and not descending to earth, the heaven to earth movement of the dust-cloud in 3:800 and the movement implicit in the hunt of 3:806 may suggest there is some collective movement of the battling warriors.

<sup>158</sup> There are a number of manifestations of heavenly beings in 2 Macc: 2:27; 3:25-26; 5:1-4; 10:29-30; 11:8; 15:27.

<sup>159</sup> Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 294, Collins, *Book 3*, 380, Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle*, 159-160.

events. It is possible the Sibyl's imagery has been informed by the tradition behind these texts<sup>160</sup> but there are a couple of reasons that indicate an alternate explanation is necessary. First, all three date to much later in the 2TP than the main corpus of *Sib. Or.* 3;<sup>161</sup> if there is a link between the imagery then the sibylline text is the original. Secondly, the Sibyl's battle does not appear alone, but is the culmination of traditional theophanic motifs from the DWT: the heavenly swords, solar eclipse, and the appearance of a dust-cloud. The "blood dripping from rocks" (3:804) also recalls the DWT of *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 with the morbid consequences of God's judgement upon earth.<sup>162</sup> The pattern of these motifs together is familiar to God's arrival as DW as well as his heavenly army (e.g. Isa 13:3-5; Joel 2:1-11). In this context, the revelation of the heavenly battle should be interpreted as the equivalent of the DW's theophany.

That the cosmic portents appear without the DW himself is a legitimate variation of the DW mythology. There is no doubt the heavenly battle (3:805-806) is clearly part of God's purposes: he is the one who brings it to an end (3:807). Moreover, God's intervention is sometimes delegated to his heavenly host. This is seen in Joel 2:1-11, where the divine army is the focus for the ensuing judgement, and the passage shows a number of thematic similarities to *Sib. Or.* 3:696-807. The arrival of the army is a day of darkness and of clouds (v.2) and they are the cause of the darkening of the luminaries (vv.9-10) and the passage culminates with a final reiteration that God is the head of this militia (v.11).

The arrival of the heavenly army in a *cloud* also comes from DWT, and clouds are prominent in *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807: not only is the army is seen in a cloud (ἐν νεφέλῃ) (3:805),

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<sup>160</sup> Although there is no evidence of a firm textual link to 2 Macc 5 and Tacitus' *Histories*.

<sup>161</sup> They both date to the first century CE. 2 Maccabees can be dated to the second century BCE, although some scholars favour a late second or early first century BCE date. Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (CEJL; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 11-15.

<sup>162</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:682-684.

they are described as though coming in a fog (ὄμιγλης) (3:806) and the dust-cloud (κονιορτὸς, 3:800) also has cloud-like properties. The appearance of the DW with clouds goes back to Canaanite combat myths in which Baal is the DW. While sometimes the clouds were the means of divine transport for Baal, the Cloud-Rider, it is more likely that the prominence of clouds in *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 is an accompanying theophanic motif at the arrival of the DW's armies. They are not a form of transport so much as part of the weather events that occur when the storm-god and/or his host appear. Joel 2:2 and Zeph 1:15 both emphasise the Day of the Lord as the 'day of cloud and fog' (ἡμέρα νεφέλης καὶ ὄμιγλης). In Zeph 1:15 this is in reference to God and his wrath, but in Joel 2:2, as in the sibylline passage, it is with reference to his armies.

The concluding description of the battle as “a hunt for wild beasts as though in a fog” (3:806) may reflect a mythological battle and hunt. Whitney argues that the hunt (κυνηγασία) reflects an early use of a motif that developed into “later rabbinic traditions concerning eschatological role of the monsters Leviathan and Behemoth.”<sup>163</sup> The later rabbinic texts<sup>164</sup> describe an angelic hunt (אֲנִיָּהּ) for these two monsters, or an eschatological wild-beast fight (אֲנִיָּהּ) between the two. Whitney connects this rabbinic tradition to 3:806, on the grounds that the angelic hunt (אֲנִיָּהּ) in the rabbinic texts reflects a Hebraic form of κυνηγία,<sup>165</sup> a synonym for the Sibyl's κυνηγασία.<sup>166</sup> Buitenwerf rejects this theory as the Sibyl here is making a comparison – the heavenly host in battle is described as *like* a hunt rather depicting an actual one.<sup>167</sup> Yet this depends on translating οἷα as a comparative particle when it can denote the

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<sup>163</sup> K. William Whitney, Jr., “The Place of the ‘Wild Beast Hunt’ of Sib Or 3,806 in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition,” *JSJPHRP* 25, no. 1 (1994): 68.

<sup>164</sup> The Hebrew noun is found in *b. B. Bat.* 74b-75a, and the traditions associated to it are found in *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* Supplement 2, the poetry of Eleazar be-Rabbi Qallir and *Midr. Lev. Rab.* 13.3.

<sup>165</sup> Marcus Jastrow, “אֲנִיָּהּ,” *DTTBYML* 1392.

<sup>166</sup> See “κυνηγέσιον” in *LSJ*, 1010.

<sup>167</sup> Buitenwerf, *Book III*.

type or kind of what is being described rather than something that is like it.<sup>168</sup> For example, *Sib. Or.* 5:221 describes how God will give Nero “strength to perform things like [οἷά] no previous one of all the kings.”<sup>169</sup> In other words, 3:806a may describe what event the warriors are involved in: a hunt for (mythological) beasts. On the other hand, although the similarity to the rabbinic texts seems quite likely given the etymology of κυνηγεσία and the particularly angelic focus, the parallel is still somewhat tentative as the rabbinic texts which he uses date from several centuries after *Sib. Or.* 3. The simile in the second half of 3:806 describing the heavenly warriors as though in a fog may also originate from DWT: the same simile is used of the heavenly host in 1QM 12:8-10.<sup>170</sup> Both texts recount a vision of heavenly militia, including horsemen, who are part of God’s purposes in a war and both describe them as like mist.<sup>171</sup>

The above analysis demonstrates that the picture of coming cosmic battle found in *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 uses a number of DW motifs. The Sibyl describes cosmic signs portending the arrival of the DW’s army, with an emphasis upon the clouds. The arrival of the army involves a battle in the heavens which is the culmination of the war that is brought about by God (3:807), presumably the same war that he initiates in *Sib. Or.* 3:689. It is possible that vision of the heavenly army in battle is connected to a hunt for mythological beasts, but the evidence for this is uncertain. The passage as a whole shows a number of parallels to *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714, although with some variation: swords stay in the heavens

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<sup>168</sup> See “οἷος” in *LSJ*, 1209.

<sup>169</sup> Other examples include: Job 33:27; Dan 9:12; 12:1; 2 Cor 10:11; 12:20; Phil 1:30. Examples from *Sib. Or.* 3-5 might include 5:332 and 4:111.

<sup>170</sup> “His holy ones are [our] heroes, and] the army of his angels enlisted with us; the war hero is in our congregation; the army of his spirits is with our steps. Our horsemen are [like] clouds and fogs of dew that cover the earth, like torrential rain that sheds justice on all its sprouts.” F. García Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 158-159. For DW background of 1QM 12:8-10 and other Qumran texts see Angel, *Chaos*, 37-40.

<sup>171</sup> ὁμίγησιν ὁμοίην (*Sib. Or.* 3:806) and כ[עננים כעבי טל] (1QM 12:8-10).

rather than fall to earth, the blood is dripping from rocks not filling streams and the sun is now darkened by the moon and not fighting on God's side as they are in 3:712-13. The focus is also different: the locus of action is the heavenly realm.<sup>172</sup> God is accomplishing the end of the war through a heavenly battle, which is portended by cosmic signs that make clear the end is near (3:796-797) and that peace is on the horizon.

### Historical Consistency

The context of *Sib. Or.* 3:797-807 is not immediately clear. The description that the sign will come when "the end of all takes place" (3:797) has led the majority of scholars to conclude that the description here is of the "consummation of history, occurring at 'the end [or fulfilment] of all things'"<sup>173</sup> and the "eschatological restoration of Zion and creation,"<sup>174</sup> which includes the final judgement<sup>175</sup> and/or the time when the "world will revert to paradisiacal peace."<sup>176</sup> However, both Buitenwerf and Nikiprowetzky make some qualification to this: they both argue that the eschatological "end of all [things]" does not concern the end of the physical world, but the end of all evil in the world and the "horrible

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<sup>172</sup> The swords are in heaven (3:798), the dust cloud comes from heaven (3:800) and God is emphasized as the one who dwells in heaven (3:807).

<sup>173</sup> Aaron Sherwood, *Paul and the Restoration of Humanity in Light of Ancient Jewish Traditions* (AJEC 82; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 180.

<sup>174</sup> Sherwood, *Paul and the Restoration of Humanity*, 174.

<sup>175</sup> Goodman, "Sibylline Oracles," 634.

<sup>176</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: a Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981a), 164.

This is also argued on the basis of the paradisiacal world described in 3:741-795 and the envisioned shalom throughout the earth. As far as I can see, this is based on the reading that the peaceable kingdom imagery drawn from Isa 11 applies to the whole earth. However not only is the translation of  $\gamma\eta$  as earth disputable (at the very least 3:772 clearly uses the noun to refer to specific lands), Isa 11 itself draws on mythic language of the peaceable kingdom as a symbolic portrait of divine order and blessing to describe Israel under the reign of a better king than king Ahaz, see J. J. M. Roberts and Peter Machinist, *First Isaiah: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2015), 177-183, Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 88. Hanson and Angel both see a divinely ordered kingdom as part of the DW's reign post-battle, which Hanson notes in reference to Isa 11. Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 308, Angel, *Chaos*, 108.

events” prior to God’s judgement<sup>177</sup> or the end of the present age and the beginning of a time of blessing and reward.<sup>178</sup> Both understand παντῶν τὸ τέλος as it is described by its context which does not mention destruction of the cosmos. The end is clarified in 3:807: the signs signal the event through which God will accomplish (τελέω) the end of the war (τέλος πολέμοιο).<sup>179</sup> The focus of the end of all is the end of the war, an event signalled by the cosmic portents.

The historical context I argued for *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714<sup>180</sup> makes sense of this material: the context of the hardships faced under Seleucid rule, the desecration of the temple and the hope for revolt. The τέλος anticipated in *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 is logically the end of the war which brought judgement on the Seleucid rulers and brought about an end to the evils they committed. The nature of the hope is not the end of history, but a political hope for the future in the face of Antiochus IV and others, reflecting a desire to see national restoration and a divinely-ordered kingdom. *Sibylline Oracles* 3:796-807 functions as a description of the cosmic battle, and accompanying signs, which will mark the end of war and God’s judgement upon the Greeks, which is necessary for the inauguration of this era.

If *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 reflect the final stages in a cosmic battle before the political aspirations of Israel are realised (that the Seleucids are overthrown and that Israel’s independence and temple-worship is restored), this is broadly consistent with some of the uses of DWT. The hope for divine judgement upon a particular nation or ruler has wide precedence (e.g. Isa 13; 34; Ezek 29; 32). Joel 2, by some interpretations, also refers to a

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<sup>177</sup> Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 292-293.

<sup>178</sup> Nikiprowetzky, *La Troisième Sibylle*, 158-160.

<sup>179</sup> However, that does not mean the Sibyl didn’t have the paradisiacal kingdom in mind also: the long section preceding 3:796-807 that focuses on this suggests that both the new time of peace and the end of war and evil are implicit in the παντῶν τὸ τέλος. Indeed a time of peace can only come after the war is ended.

<sup>180</sup> A passage that is part of the same vision from 3:657-807. Collins, *Book 3*, 357.

political threat to Israel.<sup>181</sup> However, in contrast to these texts, *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 and the whole vision from 3:657 spends very little time on the impact that the judgement has upon the enemy: the focus throughout is much more on the end result of the judgement and time of peace that will ensue.

*Sibylline Oracles* 3:796-807 thus satisfies the criterion of historical consistency. The end of all things is the end of the pressing evils of the day as encountered in the Greek emperors and rulers and the concomitant spiritual battle. It is not about an eschatological hope in the sense of the end of human history, cosmic destruction nor a universally established kingdom. The hope is only eschatological in a very Jewish sense: the hope in the renewal of God's covenant with his people in which God's people are restored to their land and live peaceably and faithfully within it. While the context may originate in the anticipated judgement upon Israel's foreign rulers, the central message concerns what will follow this victory and the hopes that will be fulfilled.

#### Thematic Coherence

The use of DWT in this concluding section to Book 3 is perfectly coherent with its theme: the conclusion of the current reign of evil (3:797) through the end to the war God is bringing about (3:807), evident through a vision of heavenly battle (3:805-806). Understood as drawing on DWT this vision of war in the heavens can naturally be tied to God's judgement upon human enemies, and implies the Sibyl envisages a cosmic dualism. The judgement upon human forces of evil (3:669-714) comes to a close with a judgement and battle with spiritual forces of evil (3:805-806). The DWT thus offers an important lens through which to see how

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<sup>181</sup> Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (eds. S. Dean McBride, et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 41-43, Douglas K. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 232-234. Some scholars argue that the divine army in ch.2 is a continuation of the plague of locusts in ch.1. Barton, *Joel*, 44-48, 69-70, Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), 66-76, David Allan Hubbard, *Joel and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 25; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 55-57.

the language of *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 concludes the manifestation of divine judgement. Like *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714, the DWT describes the evil that needs to be overcome, both on earth and in the heavens, for the restoration of God's people and the renewal of his kingdom.

### ***Overall Integration Creativity and Recurrence***

#### Overall Integration

The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 and 796-807 assists with the overall integration of themes in the main corpus of Book 3. A central focus, especially from 3:657 onwards, is the hope for the establishment of God's kingdom, and the resultant peace and reconciliation. The DWT in the two passages shows the means to this end: it frames those who would assault the temple as the current enemy of peace (and the concomitant spiritual powers), describes the divine intervention that will overcome them and bring victory, all in order for God to subsequently manifest his reign through a divinely-ordered kingdom. The emphasis upon divine intervention (or his heavenly delegates in 3:796-807) exhorts trust in God as the one who will act, establish justice and bring about the anticipated kingdom. There are enemies both in heaven and on earth (3:657-669, 688 and 3:805-806) which God and/or his heavenly armies will come and destroy. While more space and attention is devoted to vision of the peaceful kingdom, the DWT reveals how this hope will be realised given the current political struggles and foreign rule. Cosmic battle provides the vehicle for the manifestation of divine judgement that will enable the establishment of God's kingdom.

#### Creativity

The creativity of the Sibyl cannot be in doubt: an array of DW sources are used, working various motifs together. One example of this is the variation in the use of the phrase ἐν νεφέλῃ in *Sib. Or.* 3:805. While traditionally this indicated the coming of the DW as Cloud-



Rider here it is used to explicitly describe neither God nor an advent of a single figure (e.g. Dan 7:13) but a vision of a heavenly battle. The tradition has heavenly sightings of God's armies in advent, but to see the battle (μάχη) itself is another distinct adaptation of the tradition. Creativity is also evident in *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714: the Sibyl draws on Ezek 38-39 yet reapplies the language of God's battle with Gog, an unknown mythological foe, for the known historical enemies of his temple and people. Furthermore, the Sibyl includes other elements of the tradition (such as the sun and moon fighting on his side and language of God as the Immortal fighter) and uses them for her own mythological purposes.

### Recurrence

There are two passages show use of DWT. However, these two passages use the tradition with strong enough similarity and extensive internal recurrence to conclude the tradition is nonetheless present. There are other texts which may be making use of cosmic battle motifs (*Sib. Or.* 3:172-174, 319-322, 326-329, 614-615), but these are not strong enough to meet the given criteria.

### **Conclusion**

The above analysis of *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 and 796-807 has sufficiently satisfied the criteria to conclude that the Sibyl actively made use of the DWT in the main corpus of *Sib. Or.* 3. The strength and range of the similarity in the two texts is wide enough that the low recurrence elsewhere is not an issue. The mythological tradition puts in cosmic and divine perspective the threat of the Seleucids to Jerusalem and the temple. In *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714 this is directly connected to the growing envy and burgeoning threats of the foreign kings, resulting in the emphatic judgement and punishment of God upon the enemy people. In *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807

the DWT is used to describe the final heavenly battle that will take place before Israel is restored, one that is against spiritual enemies.

## *Sibylline Oracles 4*

### *Introduction*

Book 4, like many writings described as apocalyptic, narrates a story of the rise and fall of generations within a ten generation schema, although the Sibyl never advances beyond description of the fifth generation. There are various texts which could fall under the scope of this study, including *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60, 76-82, 97-100, 109-114, 128-129, 130-136, 149-151, 159-161, and 171-192. However, only 4:56-60, 159-161 and 206-213 will be included in this exegesis because they contain the clearest examples of the DWT and/or SCI.

### *Availability*

The most probable origin for *Sib. Or.* 4 is that of a Jewish hand,<sup>182</sup> or a Gentile convert. There are several reasons to suggest this conclusion. The Sibyl expresses a clear allegiance with the Jews and paints them and the temple in a positive light as well as condemning the Romans who attacked them. The eruption of Vesuvius is seen as part of divine judgement on the Romans because of their destruction of the Jerusalem temple (4:115-136), which is conveyed positively as “the great Temple of God” (4:116). In this passage the Jews are praised as the “blameless tribe of the pious” (εὐσεβέων ... φύλον ἀναίτιον, 4:136). This portrayal of the Jews echoes the righteous in 4:24-39.<sup>183</sup> The Jewish provenance to the book is also suggested from the exhortation to repent, seek forgiveness and be washed in the “perennial rivers” (4:165); an obvious parallel to the baptism of repentance practiced by John the Baptist.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Cf. also Lanchester, “Oracles,” 28-29, James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research with a Supplement* (SCSS 7; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1981), 184-186, Goodman, “Sibylline Oracles,” 642.

<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, the righteous in 4:24-39 are those who do not carve idols for themselves, commit murder, cheat others and commit adultery. These are all commandments found in the Decalogue.

<sup>184</sup> John J. Collins in “The Sibylline Oracles, Book 4” in *OTP*, vol. 1, 388. n.e2. Collins argues that the original oracle was not Jewish but it was redacted by a Jewish hand in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Collins, *Book 4*, 381-382.

The book is dated by scholars to the late 1st century,<sup>185</sup> from 80CE or the years soon thereafter. It cannot have been earlier because of the reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70CE (4:115-136) as well as the volcanic eruption at Vesuvius in 79CE (4:130-134), but the concern of the Sibyl with these events suggests that they were not long in the past.

The location of the book's origin is far more difficult to determine. The numerous references to ancient Mediterranean regions could place it anywhere from Italy to Palestine and beyond. The little space given to Egypt or Egyptian concerns suggests a different origin to that of Book 3 and 5.<sup>186</sup> The most frequent geographical references in the book are to areas in Asia Minor (4:65-87) which may indicate its origin in this region. Syria or the Jordan Valley might be preferred because of the reference to baptism,<sup>187</sup> but Asia Minor is the more likely option as it is more frequently the focus of the Sibyl's concern. However, while this may be more likely, it is still a somewhat tentative suggestion. The geographical origin may not be distinguishable from the evidence the text offers: the only certainty is that it originates within the Graeco-Roman world. On this basis, the book meets the criterion of availability.

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<sup>185</sup> Collins, *Book 4*, 382, Lanchester, "Oracles," 373, Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, 184-186, Goodman, "Sibylline Oracles," 641-643. There is an anti-temple and sacrifice sentiment at other points in the book (4:8, 27-30), which would seem to contradict a Jewish origin as it would malign the Jerusalem temple. However, this is evidently not the case as it is more likely a broader reference to pagan temple worship, perhaps in reaction to the fact the Jewish temple was no more, and the latter temple is clearly distinguished from anti-temple sentiment in the account of its destruction by the Romans (4:115-136).

<sup>186</sup> Contra Nikiprowetzky who argued that Book 4 should be considered in the same tradition as these other two books, *La Troisième Sibylle*, 323f. Collins argues against his thesis because Book 4's negative attitude to temple worship is "diametrically opposed" to that of Book 3 and 5. Collins, *Book 4*, 382. However, this overlooks the positive light in which the Jerusalem temple is placed within the book (4:115-136). Nevertheless, the significantly different use of language and the quite different approach to drawing on biblical material makes a different provenance likely.

<sup>187</sup> Collins, *Book 4*, 382.

**(1) Sib. Or. 4:56-60**

56 Dark night will be in the middle hour of the day,  
57 And stars will leave the heavens as well as the circle of the moon,  
58 The earth (γῆ) will be shaken by the turmoil of a great (μεγάλοιο) shaking (σεισμοῖο)  
59 It will bring down (πρηνίξει) many cities and people's fields  
60 And then out from the depths (ἐκ δὲ βυθοῦ) of the Sea (θαλάσσης) islands (νῆσοι)  
will emerge (ὑπερκύψουσι).

Similarity

These five verses appear in the account of the Median empire, specifically the forerunning events to its demise. The passage begins the unfolding of the events that culminate with the fall of the Median empire through the war with the Persians (4:61-64). Three images are present in 4:56-60: the emptying of the heavens, which leaves them in darkness (4:56-57); the great shaking of the earth, which results in the destruction of cities and fields (4:58-59); and the coming forth of islands from the depths of the Sea (4:60). Each of these are motifs can be found in the DWT.

All three motifs from *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 are found in some form in the example of DWT found in *T. Mos.* 10:1-6.<sup>188</sup> In this passage the Heavenly One appears and comes forth to exact judgement in his wrath (v.3). The earth trembles in response to his arrival, which results in the collapse of mountains and hills (v.4), the sun, moon and stars are darkened or turned to blood (v.5) and the sea retreats into the abyss and the rivers dry up (v.6). There is a clear similarity between both passages with the images of darkening heavens, shaking earth and retreating waters. However, in *T. Mos.* it is a cosmic upheaval in direct response to the theophany of the DW and the particular iterations of the motifs differ. In *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 the sun is not explicitly mentioned, the inhabited world is the focus of the earthly collapse and the retreat of the waters is because islands appear in the sea. Yet these variations find precedence elsewhere in the tradition.

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<sup>188</sup> See Angel, *Chaos*, 119-125. The three motifs are also seen in Job 9:6-8 where God shakes the earth, causes the sun and stars to not shine and tramples over the waters.

The first two lines of *Sib. Or.* 4:56-57 focus on the darkening of the skies: night will occur during the day and the heavens are emptied of stars (ἄστρα) and the moon (κύκλα σελήνης). They differ from *T. Mos.* 10:5 in some of the specifics of how the heavenly darkness comes about: in *Sib. Or.* 4:56-57 the sun is not mentioned (although it is clearly implicit through darkness appearing at the midday hour when the sun is at its strongest) and the moon does not turn to blood but simply departs from the heavens. The difference in the Sibyl's version is consistent with the various ways in which the motif is found in the DWT: the sun's darkening is described as darkness at midday (Amos 8:9), the darkening of the moon is depicted in a number of different ways (e.g. Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10; 3:15-16; Ezek 32:7-8) and in these examples the sun, moon and stars are together depicted as ceasing to give their light.<sup>189</sup> Joel 2:10 and 3:15-16 show another similarity to *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60: they also include the shaking of the earth (with the heavens) alongside the cosmic darkness. These two events are cosmic portents that occur at the voice of the Lord. Ezekiel 32:7-8 also has this heavenly darkening but here it is not a reaction to an event or appearance but is part of God's actions in his conquest of the mythological dragon (Ezek 32:2-6).<sup>190</sup> In some examples of the tradition the heavenly bodies represent spiritual powers and their disappearance represents judgement upon such powers (e.g. Judg 5:20; Isa 14:12; 34:4; Dan 8:10; Rev 12:1-4; *L.A.B.* 15:2; 23:10; 31:1). However, it is unlikely that this is the case here as the emphasis is more on the darkening of the heavens than the bodies themselves. This is indicated by the description of the darkening of the daylight with no explicit mention of the sun. The darkening of the

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<sup>189</sup> 4 Ezra 5:39 also shows some similarity, but the DWT background to this text has yet to be examined. For the background of Ezek 32:7-8 see Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 166, Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament of God*, 162, Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48* (Paul D. Hanson and Leonard J. Greenspoon; trans. James D. Martin; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 159-160.

<sup>190</sup> Block, *Ezekiel*, 206, Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 160. The Ezekiel imagery itself is a mythological development of the type of language that appears in Joel 2:10, Block, *Ezekiel*, 206.

heavens is more likely a sign of God's theophany and impending judgement (see *T. Mos.* 10:5; Joel 2:10; 3:15) as it appears a precursor to the ultimate demise of the Median empire. The great shaking (σεισμοῖο μεγάλοιο) in *Sib. Or.* 4:58-59 is more central to the narrative and a more disastrous event than the respective shaking of the earth in Joel 2:11 and 3:16: in *Sib. Or.* 4:58-59 the earth alone shakes and not the heavens (4:58) and it affects the inhabited world (4:59). The earth-bound focus is like *T. Mos.* 10:4, although the Sibyl does not include mountains or hills. The motif of an earthly shaking is often a result of the appearance of the DW (e.g. Ps 18:7-8; Nah 1:5; Hab 3:6-7) and also occurs simply as the form that divine judgement takes (e.g. Isa 13:13; 24:3-20; Ezek 38:18-19; Rev 6:12-17). Sometimes also the shaking of the earth is combined with a focus on human domiciles (e.g. Hab 3:6-7; Isa 24:3-20), although none use the precise pattern of *Sib. Or.* 4:59. It is very unlikely the Sibyl uses the motif as part of a cosmic response to divine theophany as the DW does not appear in *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60. It is more likely that the motif emphasises the divine judgement that will come upon the people themselves as the effect of the great shaking focuses upon the cities and fields.

The third feature of *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 is the emergence of islands from the depths of the Sea. These islands place an obvious limit on the perimeter of the waters and confines them to some degree. In the DWT waters are often found as the enemy of the DW: they are the abode of the mythological sea monster (e.g. Dan 7:3; *Jos. Asen.* 12:10-11; Sir 43:23-25; 4 Ezra 6:49-52; 1 En 60:7) and when evil abounds it is often depicted through the chaos waters breaking their banks and floods overwhelming the people (e.g. Ps 69:2; 4Q437; 1QH 14:22-25; 11:27-36). Frequently the subjugation of chaos waters describes God's judgement and triumph over evil forces (e.g. Isa 44:27; 51:10; Nah 1:4; *T. Mos.* 10:6; *Prayer Manasseh* 3; 4Q381 15:4-5; 4Q416 1:11-12; *L.A.B.* 10:5; 23:10; 4 Ezra 8:20-23). The specific appearance of islands (νησοι) in the waters as a sign of God's power over these chaos waters is found in

two texts, Sir 43:23 and Isa 42:15. In Sir 43:23 God places the islands (νησοι) in the deep (ἄβυσσον) as a sign of his control over them.<sup>191</sup> In Sirach the action is directly the result of God's word in contrast to the sibylline passage where the islands emerge independently from the depths of the Sea. Another difference may be seen in the Sibyl's use of βυθός θαλάσσης (4:60) to speak of the primeval waters, rather than Sirach's ἄβυσσος. However, the noun βυθός is found elsewhere as a valid term for chaos waters, both alone and in conjunction with θαλάσσης (e.g. Ex 15:5; Ps 69:2, 15 and with θαλάσσα in Ps 68:22).<sup>192</sup> The second text which also utilises the appearance of islands is Isa 42:15. Here the same sense of God's defeat of chaos waters is found in a slightly different form: God triumphs by turning the rivers (ποταμοί) into islands (νησοι). Thus, the appearance of islands as a means of confining or defeating chaos waters finds precedence in the DWT.

The three motifs found in *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 show a high similarity to the DWT. The darkening of the heavens functions as a cosmic portent to the impending judgement to come upon the Median empire. This judgement is depicted through the shaking of the earth and the destruction of human dwellings and then through the pushing back of the depths of the Sea, a reference to chaos waters and the evil that opposes God. This precedes the climax of the divine judgement which is culminates with the arrival of the Persians (4:61-64).

### Historical Consistency

The historical context of *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 is readily apparent from the surrounding passage. In the preceding lines (4:54-55) the Medes' ascent to power is described: a probable reference to the Median destruction of Nineveh in 612BCE and subsequent establishment of themselves

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<sup>191</sup> For DW background to Sir 43 see Alexander A. Di Lella and Patrick W. Skehan, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira: A New Translation with Notes* (AB 39; Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1987), 484-496, Angel, *Chaos*, 74-78.

<sup>192</sup> The only occurrence of βυθός in pseudepigraphical literature is in *T. Sol.* 6:5-6 where it is the place in which demons dwell.



as an empire. After *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 the Medes are conquered by the Persians (4:61-64), a reference to the demise of the Median empire when Cyrus the Persian invaded in 550BCE. This places the two generations of the empire in the late 7<sup>th</sup> to mid-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>193</sup> The three motifs of 4:56-60 are part of the events leading up to this decisive judgment (4:55). The heavenly darkening in 4:56-57 is a cosmic sign indicating the coming of God's judgement and with the subsequent two motifs (4:58-60) it begins. The shaking of the earth is the beginning of the judgement upon humankind and the islands pushing back the waters describes judgement upon evil powers through their confinement.<sup>194</sup>

There is some historical consistency between *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 and other examples of DWT identified under the above criterion, although the contexts of each vary. They include a hymn of praise to Yahweh as creator and sustainer of the world (Sir 43:23), the judgement of God upon a particular people or empire(s) through natural or political disaster (Joel 2:10-11) and the description of an anticipated future judgement of the nations (Joel 3:15-16).

Although Sir 43:23 has a strong degree of similarity to *Sib. Or.* 4:60, there is little historical consistency between the two. Sirach 43:23 is part of a hymn of praise to Yahweh, with no particular history in mind other than his actions in creation.<sup>195</sup> It emphasises the ineffable greatness of God in a variety of images, including his power to place a boundary upon the chaos waters and defeat Rahab in the DWT (Sir 43:23-26). In contrast to Sir 43, much more historical consistency is found between *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 and *T. Mos.* 10:1-6. Both are concerned with an event that involves some kind of judgement, namely one upon an empire.

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<sup>193</sup> Collins, *Book 4*, 385.

<sup>194</sup> It is not clear whether the Sibyl uses the Sea to denote distinct spiritual forces of evil or whether the evil is to be identified directly with the Median empire.

<sup>195</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 74-81, Di Lella and Skehan, *Ben Sira*, 491-496.

Traditional arguments have maintained that *T. Mos.* 10:1-6 refers to a universal or final judgement of some kind,<sup>196</sup> but this has recently been challenged.<sup>197</sup> The eagle in *T. Mos.* 10:8 has been interpreted as a reference to the transporting of the people of God to their heavenly exaltation given the biblical parallels (Ex 19:4, Deut 32:11). But this has not explained the focus on the *necks* of the eagle which are not mentioned in the given biblical parallels but are present (as the object of trampling) in Deut 33:29 LXX.<sup>198</sup> On this basis, the eagle is the object of destruction and most likely represents Rome.<sup>199</sup> This coincides with evidence from Josephus which recounts when Herod erected a golden eagle over the gate of the temple.<sup>200</sup> Thus *T. Mos.* 10:1-10 does not depict an eschatological fulfilment that describes post-mortem exaltation of Israel and judgement upon her enemies, but rather the vanquishing of the Roman Empire by the people of God culminating in their exalted status amongst the nations. As such, the historical consistency between *T. Mos.* 10:1-10 and *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 is plain: both describe the fall of an empire at the hands of another. In the former the theophany of DW who defeats the enemy is juxtaposed with the people who trample the

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<sup>196</sup> Charles and Tromp both see in *T. Mos.* 10:1-10 a reference to the exaltation of Israel to the stars and Israel's enemies subject to punishment (and descent into Gehenna). R. H. Charles, *The Assumption of Moses* (London: A. & C. Black, 1897), 41-43, Johannes Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary* (SVTP 10; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 232-243. Wright sees the passage as a metaphor for bodily resurrection on the basis of the parallel exaltation language found in Dan 12. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (COQG 3; London: SPCK, 2003), 157.

<sup>197</sup> Adela Y. Collins, "Composition and Redaction of the Testament of Moses 10," *HTR* 69, no. 1-2 (1976): 179-186, Angel, *Chaos*, 122-124.

<sup>198</sup> A verse which has already been recalled in the first part of *T. Mos.* 10:8: "Then you will be happy, O Israel." See Collins, "Testament of Moses," 184-185. Angel, *Chaos*, 122-123. Furthermore, as Angel observes, Ex 19:4 and Deut 32:11 refer to rescue from political captivity, not ascension into heaven.

<sup>199</sup> Collins, "Testament of Moses," 184-185, Charles, *Assumption*, 42, J. Priest in "Testament of Moses" in *OTP*, vol. 1, 932-933, Tromp, *Assumption of Moses*, 236. Angel continues the this-worldly focus and argues that the exaltation of Israel should be seen as its status amongst the nations and that *T. Mos.* 10:10 describes the eagle fallen dead on the *ground*, rather than the earth, an alternate and possibly preferable interpretation of "terra." Angel, *Chaos*, 123.

<sup>200</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 17:151. Cf. Collins, "Testament of Moses," 186.

eagle's neck and in *Sib. Or.* 4 the DW motifs are the first part of the judgement that culminates with the Persians defeat of the Medes.<sup>201</sup>

Precedence for a context of God's judgement upon a nation or people is found in a number of other DW texts. Joel 2:1-11 describes the coming of an historical disaster which brings judgement upon Israel: possibly a famine, plague or an actual political attack.<sup>202</sup> Amos 8:9 also uses DWT to speak of the Day of Yahweh in which God's punishment comes upon his people, Israel.<sup>203</sup> Isaiah 24:3-20, an extensive description of the destruction of a city, may also refer to judgement upon Israel in the form of judgement on Jerusalem,<sup>204</sup> or possibly an alternative city or nation, such as Egypt, Persia or Babylon.<sup>205</sup> It is clear that the context of *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 is historically consistent with earlier uses of the DWT and thus fulfils the criterion.

#### Thematic Coherence

The DW motifs found in *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 elucidate the surrounding material and its concern with the Median empire. Primarily it indicates that the demise of this empire is to be understood as the result of the judgement and intervention of God. The familiarity of the motifs in contexts of divine theophany and impending judgement indicates that although God may not be explicitly mentioned in *Sib. Or.* 4:54-64, he is nonetheless behind the fall of the Medes. The presence of DWT has implications for the elusive presence of God throughout Book 4: although he appears less vividly than in Book 3 and 5, the DWT suggests that by

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<sup>201</sup> Although both use DWT to depict the demise of an empire, in *T. Mos.* 10:1-10 the Heavenly One comes forth from heaven, whereas *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 has no DW figure. The only mention of God as the originator of judgement is found in *Sib. Or.* 4:42.

<sup>202</sup> Barton, *Joel*, 44-48. Against Wolff, *Joel*, 41-43.

<sup>203</sup> James Luther Mays, *Amos: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 146-147.

<sup>204</sup> Millar, *Isaiah 24-27*, 117-119.

<sup>205</sup> Day, *God's Conflict*, 112, 142-145.

inference he is at work in the rise and fall of empires. Within this framework, the language of islands appearing in the depths of the Sea and the pushing back of the chaos waters connects the Median empire with evil forces that oppose the DW. The Median empire is the first to be described using DWT.<sup>206</sup> This may indicate that in the eyes of the Sibyl it was a more contemptible empire than its predecessor, Assyria. The prominence of the DW motifs in this passage may also establish the lens through which the subsequent oracles in the book should be interpreted with the various references to waters and cosmic catastrophes (e.g. 4:76-82, 97-100, 109-114, 128-129, 130-136, 149-151, 159-161, 171-192).

The evidence from the three criteria all indicate that DWT is used in *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60. The Sibyl draws both on those motifs that were typically used as signs that the DW was either appearing or acting to judge those who had incurred his wrath (4:56-7) as well as those that were used to construe the divine judgement itself (4:58-60). They do not depict the climax of the judgement, which was the overthrow of the Medes by the Persians, but they make clear this overthrow was not simply the Sibyl describing the historical events surrounding the fall of the empire but is part of an important theological statement of God's opinion about the Medes as an empire of chaos in need of destruction.

## (2) *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192

- 171 But if you heedless ones are not persuaded by me (εἰ δ' οὐ μοι πείθοισθε  
κακόφρονες), but  
172 loving impiety you receive all these things with wicked ears,  
173 fire will come (πῦρ ἔσται κατὰ κόσμον) against the whole cosmos and a great sign  
174 with a sword (ρόμφαίᾳ) and a war-trumpet (σάλπιγγι), at the rising of the sun.  
175 All the cosmos will hear a roar of thunder (μύκημα) and a mighty noise (ὄμβριμον  
ἦχον),  
176 he will burn the whole earth and the whole race of men he will destroy (ὀλέσει γένος  
ἀνδρῶν)  
177 and all the cities and at once the Rivers (ποταμούς) and the Sea (θάλασσαν).  
178 He will burn all things, indeed it will be burnt dust.

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<sup>206</sup> Assyria, the first empire, is simply destroyed by the Medes. There is no mention of cosmic turbulence.

179 But when everything has already become dusty ashes  
 180 and God puts the unspeakable fire to sleep, in the same way that he kindled it,  
 181 God himself will form as before the bones and ashes of men,  
 182 he will establish mortal man again, like they were formerly (ὡς πάρος ἦσαν).  
 183 And then will be the judgement, God himself adjudicating as before over  
 184 the judgment of the cosmos. As many as sinned under impiety  
 185 again a heaped up mound of earth will conceal these ones  
 186 As also the dank underworld Tartara and the gloomy nether worlds of Gehenna.  
 187 But as many as show reverence, again they will live upon the earth<sup>207</sup>  
 189 when God gives spirit, life and at the same time also grace to them,  
 190 To the reverent ones; indeed, then all will perceive themselves,  
 191 they will behold the delightful and joyous light of the sun.  
 192 Oh blessed one, whoever in that time is man.

### Similarity

There are several similarities to the DWT in the final passage of *Sib. Or.* 4. A number of these point to the advent of a heavenly warrior, if not army, and the chaos waters appear as an object of his punishment. Fire again is the chief weapon in the DW's arsenal, but in this oracle it takes on a new dimension of power and autonomy. Together these motifs weave a picture of heavenly cosmic warrior(s) coming to bring judgement upon evil on earth.

The reference to both ῥομφαία and a σάλπιγξ found in *Sib. Or.* 4:174 refer to some form of battle that is coming. The terms are frequent features of human swords and war-trumpets in the OT. For example, in Josh 6 the trumpets (σάλπιγξ) are repeatedly sounded as part of the battle charge upon Jericho and after the conquest they devote to destruction all the people and animals of the city with a sword (ῥομφαία).<sup>208</sup> That *Sib. Or.* 4:174 depicts a battle is supported by the occurrence of the sword and war-trumpet at dawn: the apposite time for battle.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> I omit *Sib. Or.* 4:188 following Rzach and Geffcken. Geffcken, *Die Oracula*, 102, Alois Rzach, *Χρησμοὶ Σιβυλλιακοὶ : Oracula Sibyllina* (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1891), 103. The line translates “of great Immortal God and unperishable happiness.”

<sup>208</sup> See also the battle of Judas Maccabeus against Bozrah and Dathema in 1 Macc. 5:28-33.

<sup>209</sup> Judg 9:33; Josh 6:15; 8:14; 1 Macc 6:33; 2 Macc 10:28; Ezek. Trag. 1:218.

It is clear that the *Sib. Or.* 4:174 anticipates military action, but it does not state whether it is a cosmic battle or simply a human one. There is good reason to support the former option. Both the war-trumpet and the sword are in the dative singular: they accompany the fire and sign that are coming against the whole cosmos (κατὰ κόσμον ὅλον, 4:173). They cannot be human in origin as they are against the cosmos.<sup>210</sup> This is further corroborated by the subsequent lines which focus on the fire wielded by God (4:176-179). The sword and war-trumpet themselves may reflect an abbreviated form of Zech 9:13-14 in which DWT is used to depict God who uses Zion as a sword (ρόμφαίαν) and then marches forth at the sound of the war-trumpet (σάλπιγγι).<sup>211</sup> The Sibyl similarly uses the sword and war-trumpet to herald the arrival of the DW, although God's actual weapon of choice is fire rather than a sword.

Another connection to DWT is found in *Sib. Or.* 4:175 with the sounding of a “roar of thunder” (μύκημα) and a “mighty noise” (ὄμβριμον ἦχον), heard by the whole cosmos. Only the word ἦχος appears in biblical literature, but the image of thundering and a heavenly noise suggests the Sibyl is using DW motifs. For example, in *IQH* 11:34-35 God “thunders with the roar (המון) of his strength.”<sup>212</sup> The noun הון is the Hebraic equivalent to the Greek ἦχος.<sup>213</sup> The noun is often used in DWT texts to describe the noise made by the chaos waters (Ps 65:7; Jer 51:42),<sup>214</sup> but in Jer 51:16 it is part of the heavenly noise, specifically the waters of heaven, and the use in *IQH* shows it was also used to describe God as DW.

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<sup>210</sup> The preposition κατὰ here could alternatively be translated ‘down upon’ but this still leaves both motifs as from a heavenly rather than earthly origin.

<sup>211</sup> For DWT in Zech 9 see Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 280-379.

<sup>212</sup> ירעם אל בהמון כוחו

<sup>213</sup> This is evident from comparison of the MT and LXX. E.g. Pss 42:5(41:5 LXX); 65:7(64:8 LXX); Jer 47:3(29:3 LXX); 51:16(28:16 LXX); 51:42(28:42 LXX); Amos 5:23; Joel 4:14.

<sup>214</sup> A tradition used later in Lk 21:25, cf. Angel, *Chaos*, 136.

The primary meaning of μύκημα is in relation to thunder.<sup>215</sup> The term only occurs once in the Pseudepigrapha (*T. Job* 20:9)<sup>216</sup> and once in Josephus' writings (*J.W.* 4:286). In the latter it is used in this primary sense of thundering that accompanies a storm, which Josephus describes as so serious that the people feared destruction (*J.W.* 4:287). The adjective ὄβριμος has similar referent: while it also does not appear in biblical literature, it is commonly used to describe the strength of thunder<sup>217</sup> and in Hesiod's *Theogony* 839 it is used of the advent of Zeus, depicting him as a storm god coming to overthrow the strong and fearful dragon, Typhoeus.<sup>218</sup> It appears that the Sibyl is using familiar thunderous language as part of the scene in which a divinely initiated conflict is to arrive.

There are several possibilities as to the precise origin of the roar and mighty noise of *Sib. Or.* 4:175.<sup>219</sup> The options are that it comes (1) the sound of the war-trumpet,<sup>220</sup> (2) the sound of the fire as it burns and (3) the thundering noise that is associated with the DW himself, either as a feature of DW theophany as storm-god, or the result of his voice (*Isa* 29:6; *Jer* 51:16; *Sir* 46:17).<sup>221</sup> The first option is possible as it would be sounded at the beginning of a battle, possibly reflecting God as DW sounding the trumpet (*Zech* 9:14b), but a single trumpet is a doubtful source of the thunderous sound. The second option is also possible given the emphasis on fire and burning in the preceding and subsequent verses (4:173, 176-179). However, the coupling of the thunderous roar together with the mighty

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<sup>215</sup> See "μύκημα" in *LSJ*, 1151-1152.

<sup>216</sup> Here it is used to describe Job's lamentation.

<sup>217</sup> See "ὄβριμος" in *LSJ*, 1196.

<sup>218</sup> Hesiod, *Theog.* 820-850.

<sup>219</sup> It is clear it is heavenly in origin as the cosmos hears the noise rather than makes it.

<sup>220</sup> E.g. *Heb.* 12:19

<sup>221</sup> The roaring sound could also originate from other heavenly beings (cf. *Rev* 14:2; 19:6) but as there is no mention of any other heavenly beings this unlikely, although not impossible if the battle implies a divine army as well as the DW.

noise to depict DW theophany or the DW uttering his voice has greater precedent in DWT. For example, a similar pairing is found in Sir 46:17:<sup>222</sup> “the Lord thundered (ἐβρόντησεν) from heaven, and made his voice heard with a mighty sound (ἤχῳ μεγάλῳ).” Here the Lord utters this thunderous noise in advance of executing his judgement upon his enemy and the rulers of the Philistines. Both the thunderous quality of God’s voice and its occurrence at the start of battle is found elsewhere in the tradition.<sup>223</sup>

The final similarity to DWT is the inclusion of River (ποταμοί) and Sea (θάλασσα) in *Sib. Or.* 4:177. The two nouns appear together as key names for chaos waters in the tradition. They derive from Judge River and Sea in the Ugaritic myths who seeks to overcome Baal but is ultimately destroyed by him.<sup>224</sup> This is attested in the Jewish interpretation of the myth and the LXX often uses ποταμοί and θάλασσα specifically (Isa 50:2; Nah 1:4; Hab 3:8).<sup>225</sup> In non-DWT, the Greek terms are most frequently used naturalistically and it is therefore possible that the *Sib. Or.* 4:177 refers to the natural waterways. However, there is reason to suppose that is not the case here: the Sibyl mentions only the natural phenomena of ποταμοί and θάλασσα: there are no mountains or valleys etc. This suggests their use may be something other than naturalistic. Given they occur together in *Sib. Or.* 4:177 as the object of burning by divine fire in the context of battle, it is most natural to read them as the mythological enemy of the storm-god from Canaanite and Jewish combat myth. In conjunction with the various other features that show connection to DWT, *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 has sufficient evidence to conclude it meets the criterion of similarity.

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<sup>222</sup> Cf. also Isa 29:6.

<sup>223</sup> For God’s voice as thunderous see Ps 18:13; 29:3; Job 37:4; 40:9. For his voice at the start of battle see Joel 2:11; 3:16.

<sup>224</sup> KTU 1.2 IV:12-13, 14-15, 16-17, 22, 25, 27.

<sup>225</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 135, 170, Day, *God’s Conflict*, 104-108, Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 52-57, Smith, *Micah*, 74.



Connections have also been made between *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 and Stoic cosmology: the former has been argued to draw from the latter due to similar imagery.<sup>226</sup> I demonstrated in chapter two that this makes unwarranted presuppositions about how Stoic cosmological imagery was used in the Roman era: the more accurate question is whether the passage uses Stoic cosmological *imagery* and to what purpose. While there are no direct quotations from Stoic literature there are several features in the passage that indicate a correlation. These include (1) a universal fire that destroys the earth, including humans (4:176-178), (2) the use of fire to punish in contrast to an earlier destruction by a flood (4:49-53) and (3) the recurrence of the world, evident in the (re)new(ed) life which is prophesied to occur after the conflagration, resulting in humans existing “like they were formerly” (4:182 and also 187).

The presence of a conflagration does correlate to the Stoic image of the world destroyed by fire (Seneca, *Marc.* 7.4, 26.4-6; Lucan, *Phars.* 7.812-815).<sup>227</sup> In the first passage, Seneca writes that “Fire [*ignis*] will burn alike people of all ages and of all nationalities, men as well as women.”<sup>228</sup> The fire is not due to divine initiative, but has a universal dimension: all humankind will experience it. The second passage from the same letter describes a cosmic conflagration, although without God’s instigation of the fire: Seneca writes that things will destroy themselves “by their own power” in this ultimate conflagration.<sup>229</sup> The addition of humankind to the fire is indirectly connected to God’s will

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<sup>226</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 92-93, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 103. Though Collins has also suggested a possible Persian background for the passage, cf. John J. Collins, “The Sibylline Oracles,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (ed. Michael E. Stone; Compendia 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 363.

<sup>227</sup> Seneca’s *Natural Questions* also talks about a fire to end the world, but does not speak of the end of mankind specifically, nor of the fire as a destructive event. The passages describe fire as the *changing* of the world into itself and with unimpressive results: “For we say that it is fire which takes possession of the universe and changes all things into itself; it becomes feeble, fades, and sinks, and when fire is extinguished nothing is left in nature except moisture, in which lies the hope of the universe to come.” Seneca, *Nat.* 3.13.1-2 (Corcoran, LCL).

<sup>228</sup> Seneca, *Marc.* 7.4 (Basore, LCL).

<sup>229</sup> Seneca, *Marc.* 26.6 (Basore, LCL).

to renew creation: it will happen “when it shall seem best to God to create the universe anew.”<sup>230</sup> The third passage from Lucan describes human destruction in a fire, again with no divine agency: “there remains a conflagration which will destroy all the world and bring the stars and dead men’s bones together.”<sup>231</sup> *Sibylline Oracles* 4:176 similarly contains a fire which will burn up the whole race of mankind together with the earth, envisioned in the future. However, the proposed use of SCI is limited by the fact the Stoic texts do not envision the fire as occurring at the hand of God but as a natural inevitable event, in contrast to *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 which has the fire as a weapon wielded by God in judgement. If the Sibyl is using SCI then it has been highly adapted and, at the very least, integrated with Jewish traditions concerning judgement by fire.<sup>232</sup>

A stronger case for similarity to SCI can be made with reference to the contrast between the fire in this passage to the flood depicted in the first part of the book (4:49-53) and indirectly referred to in *Sib. Or.* 4:183. The pairing of an earlier flood with an eventual fire was a feature of SCI. For example, Seneca describes a flood on a level similar to that of conflagration and says that “Both [fire and flood] will occur when it seems best to god for the old things to be ended and better things to begin.”<sup>233</sup> Both *Natural Questions* and *Sib. Or.* 4 clearly reference divine initiation at the occurrence of either one of this pair of disastrous events. In *Sib. Or.* 4:180 God “puts the unspeakable fire to sleep, like when he kindled it” and likewise he is responsible for the flood in *Sib. Or.* 4:51-53.

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<sup>230</sup> Seneca, *Marc.* 26.7 (Basore, LCL).

<sup>231</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 7.814-815 (Duff, LCL).

<sup>232</sup> In the OT divine fire is often how God expresses judgment and in places this is universalised onto all humankind (Isa 66:16; Mal 4:1), cf. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 300.

<sup>233</sup> Seneca, *Nat.* 3.27-30 (Corcoran, LCL). Although it is not specifically contrasted with fire, *Phars.* 5:75-76 in a mythic passage also mentions a flood covering all the earth (all except for one of the twin peaks at Parnassus).

*Sibylline Oracles* 4:182 has also been identified as exhibiting similarity to the Stoic cosmological imagery of the recurrence of the earth (and all that is contained therein) after the period of conflagration.<sup>234</sup> Adams notes the description of people “as they were before” (4:182) is “highly suggestive” of a background in Stoicism.<sup>235</sup> Adams does not compare it to any text directly, but the background to his point is found in Seneca, *Marc.* 26:7:

Then [after the conflagration] also the souls of the blest, who have partaken of immortality, when it shall seem best to God to create the universe anew—we, too, amid the falling universe, shall be added as a tiny fraction to this mighty destruction, and shall be changed again into our former elements [*in antiqua elementa vertemur*].<sup>236</sup>

There are similarities between *Sib. Or.* 4 and Seneca: both start with a destruction of the world by fire, followed by God’s renewing of creation and fashioning of humankind as they were before. However, there are a couple of reasons to at least question that the image in *Sib. Or.* 4 finds its origin in SCI. First, the description of mortals as raised “like they were formerly” is quite different in context: they are raised to divine judgement (4:183-184) in which the righteous will continue to live on the earth (4:184-190). This has far more in common with Jewish ideas of resurrection (e.g. Dan 12:2-3, Isa 26:19, 2 Bar 50:2-4 and 4 Ezra 7:32-36).<sup>237</sup> For example, in Dan 12:2-3 “those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall wake” and a judgement shall ensue with some waking to shame and others to everlasting contempt. This is quite different from recurrence in SCI in which humans live in identical form those lives they had in the past.<sup>238</sup> The second reason to question the allusion to SCI is

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<sup>234</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 93.

<sup>235</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 93. The Greek phrase ὡς πρότερον ἦσαν has no direct parallel in ancient Greek literature prior to 4CE.

<sup>236</sup> Seneca, *Marc.* 26.7 (Basore, LCL).

<sup>237</sup> Isa 26:19 also has reference to resurrection, but this is only after a divine judgement, the resurrection does not bring about another judgement as it does in *Sib. Or.* 4:183-192. Caird, *Language*, 246, Day, *God’s Conflict*, 150-151.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. For a background to this precise nature of what recurrence involves see the discussions in Long, *From Epicurus*, 256-284, Hudson, “Response to A. A. Long,” 149-158.

that the resurrection which features in Jewish texts also includes reference to the fashioning of humankind as they formerly were (2 Bar 50:2-4 and 4 Ezra 7:32-36).<sup>239</sup> Of the resurrection of humans as they were before, 2 Bar 50:2 is especially clear: “For the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form. *But as it has received, so shall it restore them.* And as I have delivered them to it, so it will raise them.”<sup>240</sup> This resurrection is also one that is a precursor to judgement: “And it will be that when they have recognized each other... then my judgement will be strong, and those things which have been spoken of before will come.”<sup>241</sup> 4 Ezra 7:32-36 also envisages a judgement after resurrection.<sup>242</sup> While the pattern of world destruction by fire, restoration of creation and renewal of humans is similar to that found in SCI, the type of renewal that is “as they were formerly” is thus more indicative of the type envisaged within Judaism. 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra and *Sib. Or.* 4 all likely draw on traditions about resurrection and post-mortem judgement that developed from Daniel 12. It is possible that the Sibyl utilises SCI within Jewish traditions about resurrection, but this needs further evidence and confirmation.

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<sup>239</sup> Collins notes these parallels, Collins, *Book 4*, 389. If there is a non-Jewish source used it is probably Persian in origin. Collins argues that the language originates from ultimately Persian sources via the now lost oracles of the Cumaean Sibyl. John J. Collins, “The Place of the Fourth Sibyl in the Development of the Jewish Sibyllina,” *JJS* 25, no. 3 (1974): 365-380, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 357-381. He follows Flusser in “The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel,” in *Israel Oriental Studies II* (IOS ed. M.J. Kister; Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Univ, 1972), 148-175. For a critique of this argument see Ernest C. Lucas, “The Origin of Daniel’s Four Empires Scheme Re-examined,” *TB* 40, no. 2 (1989): 184-202.

<sup>240</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>241</sup> 2 Bar 50:4. This judgement theme continues in ch.51.

<sup>242</sup> See also 4 Ezra 14:35: “Or after death the judgment will come, when we shall live again; and then the names of the righteous shall become manifest, and the deeds of the ungodly shall be disclosed.”

## Historical Consistency

Many scholars argue that *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 concerns the end of the world and final judgement, as well as ultimate bodily resurrection.<sup>243</sup> This is based on proposed parallels to Stoicism,<sup>244</sup> although some have done so on argument that the ultimate origins of parts of Book 4 are found in Zoroastrian religion.<sup>245</sup> However, the argument from Stoicism is not quite as compelling as has been previously thought, as other evidence in Book 4 muddies the contextual waters. The traditional argument is that *Sib. Or.* 4:152 onwards is an account of the final call for humanity to repent (4:152-170) before the universal fire that will come (4:171-178), followed by a final judgement and resurrection (4:179-192). These events follow on from one another. Yet this does not account for the call to repentance found (4:152-170) which particularises the judgement to the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. This judgement is conditional on their repentance: if they do not turn back, judgement will follow which is contextualised in the universal reality of judgement at the resurrection.<sup>246</sup>

The first interpretation has much to commend it. Within the passage itself is an indisputable account of bodily resurrection (*Sib. Or.* 4:181-192, esp. 182 and 187) and earlier in the book there is a reference to a similar scene which is designated the last of the ten generation schema in the book (4:40-47). Rome is logically the fifth generation in the author's purview (4:102f) and "ἀλλ' ὅταν" in 4:152 suggests that from this line onwards the focus is upon the final and tenth time period. However, this interpretation is not without its difficulties. As Collins and Adams have observed, the account of the apparent end of the

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<sup>243</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 240, Collins, "Fourth Sibyl," 374, Adams, *Stars*, 92-93.

<sup>244</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 92-93.

<sup>245</sup> Collins and Flusser argue that the Sibyl gets the resurrection imagery from Persian religion. Collins, "Fourth Sibyl," 365-380, Flusser, "Four Empires," 148-175.

<sup>246</sup> Raabe has proposed that universal and particular judgement have a relationship, with the latter as a taste of the former Paul R. Raabe, "The Particularizing of Universal Judgment in Prophetic Discourse," *CBQ* 64, no. 4 (2002): 652-674.

world is novel in that it is set up as conditional on the basis of whether the people repent.<sup>247</sup>

After an introduction to the evils of the generation in question in *Sib. Or.* 4:152-161, the call to repentance from the people's evil ways and an exhortation to baptism occurs in 4:162-170, with the promise that if they do so God will listen and will not destroy them. In *Sib. Or.* 4:171-173 this is made plain: “εἰ δ’ οὐ μοι πείθοισθε κακόφρονες... πῦρ ἔσται κατὰ κόσμον...”<sup>248</sup> This conditionality is difficult to reconcile with the idea that *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 is all about a final judgement that is coming upon mankind. It leaves the awkward question of whether the world could therefore last forever if the people did repent and undermines its rhetorical power as a prophecy concerning the end of the world history when it is founded upon a subjective call for the people to repent.

To further complicate matters, there is some evidence that might suggest that the tenth generation may be identified with a specific political empire. *Sibylline Oracles* 4:86-87 states “But when the race of men comes to the tenth generation there will also be yokes of slavery and terror for the Persians.” This logically refers to a time when another power would be in ascendancy<sup>249</sup> and thus dominant over Persia and shows no concern with the end of the world: there is no mention of final judgement, divinely-wrought fire or resurrection. It is plausible to suggest that the author sees Rome as the political force that will terrorise Persia. Although Rome never successfully conquered Persia, in the middle of the first century CE there was military conflict between the two and again in the early second century when Trajan came close to taking Persia. It is possible that given the late first century date of *Sib.*

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<sup>247</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 92, Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 240-241. Collins suggests the conditional element is part of a later redaction. This would have to be a fairly substantial change given it appears throughout *Sib. Or.* 4:160-170 and raises the question of whether such a confident redactor has made other emendations. However, I am evaluating the text at the level of its final form with any and all redactions that have been made.

<sup>248</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>249</sup> Rather than the Persians, who are the main focus for indictment from *Sib. Or.* 4:65-87.

*Or.* 4 that the author wrote with the hindsight of the first century conflict, believing incorrectly that the Roman Empire would eventually reach Persia.

Another reason the tenth generation may be identified with Rome is the type of sins committed by the unrighteous of this generation in *Sib. Or.* 4:24-47. The righteous are praised in contrast to the unrighteous, noted for their sexual immorality and pederasty (4:33-34): sins typically associated with the Romans.<sup>250</sup> Yet the judgement in this earlier passage only describes the impious as subject to the fire (4:43) and there is no cosmic destruction envisaged. Taken together, this suggests the particular focus is not the arrival of universal judgement, but the fate coming to the righteous and unrighteous in the Roman Empire. Given these factors, coupled with the frequent account of other disasters in *Sib. Or.* 4 which are not always literal but describe judgement upon a particular people,<sup>251</sup> it brings into doubt that *Sib. Or.* 4:172-191 should necessarily be read as an actual expectation of the end of world history and a different generation to the fifth, namely Rome. While the explanation above would account for the other references to the tenth generation in the book and also for the conditional nature of the envisioned end,<sup>252</sup> it does not resolve why Rome is the fifth generation, when the events of 4:171-192 are also clearly connected to the tenth.<sup>253</sup> Nor does it deal with the extensive picture of an indisputably universal judgement by fire and a post-

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<sup>250</sup> *Sib. Or.* 4:33-34. Similar immorality is told of the Romans in *Sib. Or.* 3:185-187 and 5:166-168. Cf. William R. G. Loader, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Apocalypses, Testaments, Legends, Wisdom, and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2011), 64-67, 505-506.

<sup>251</sup> See *Sib. Or.* 4:56-59, 80-81, 60, 112, 129, 151. Although see also *Sib. Or.* 4:130-136 which describes an actual disaster, that of the eruption of Vesuvius and destruction of Pompeii. This is interpreted as part of the wrath of God for their persecution of God's people (4:135-136).

<sup>252</sup> As for the end of *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 which refers to resurrection, this does not mean that the rest cannot be about a non-end of time event. This type of placement of historical events with a view to ultimate resurrection, presumably for the encouragement of those who die, is seen in Dan 11-12 which is primarily about Antiochus IV Epiphanes until the change in focus to the resurrection of the dead in Dan 12:1.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. *Sib. Or.* 4:404-48. It could perhaps reflect confused editing that has simply conflated the two, if indeed the Sibyl draws on Persian schematisation of history via the Cumaean Sibyl.

mortem judgement and resurrection. How can *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 include both a particular judgement upon Rome as well as a universal judgement upon all?

The solution to this contextual conflict is found in Raabe's article on this very problem in prophetic discourse: the presence of localised judgement upon a nation or people group in the same passage as material that speaks of an undoubtedly universal judgement.<sup>254</sup> Raabe reconciles this conflict as a "convention of prophetic discourse" which "grounded the fate of one place of one group of people in a more all-inclusive phenomenon. In contrast to an *ad hoc* accidental occurrence, the particular disaster was shown to be a predictable and understandable instance of a general reality." This had "the effect of emphasizing that a particular place or group is not exempt from what will happen to everyone else."<sup>255</sup> From this understanding of prophetic discourse, *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192's picture of universal judgement is employed to give rhetorical force to the particular judgement upon Rome and root the latter in a bigger narrative: God's judgement will be upon all, even if only experienced by Rome presently. The connection between universal and particular also explains the problem of which generation is envisaged: the tenth is used to illuminate the fifth. It is generally accepted that the Sibyl is writing during the fifth generation, yet elements of 4:171-192 are clearly those anticipated in the last of the ten generations, which is described in 4:40-48.<sup>256</sup> If the Sibyl is here using universal judgement to contextualise the judgement upon Rome, it would make sense that she uses those images she has already associated with the tenth generation.

The resurrection scene in Dan 12:1-4, similar to that of *Sib. Or.* 4:182-192, also offers some overlap with the historical and universal perspective found in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192,

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<sup>254</sup> A number of the passages he uses have been shown to draw from DWT. Raabe, "Universal Judgment," 652-674. Among the DW texts he includes are: Isa 13; 34; Joel 4:1-8.

<sup>255</sup> Raabe, "Universal Judgment," 671.

<sup>256</sup> The elements of the tenth generation described in 4:40-48 are the post-mortem judgement and resurrection, not the all-consuming fire.



although the contrast in Daniel is for different reasons. Chapter 12 concludes with post-mortem resurrection<sup>257</sup> after the previous chapter's focus upon Antiochus IV. While ch.12 is not a wide-angle lens for the particular destruction of Antiochus IV, it still retains a general universal-particular contrast by giving an ultimate perspective on those who were martyred under this idolatrous ruler: the faithful who died are shown to be ultimately victorious through resurrection to everlasting life.<sup>258</sup>

The context of *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 is somewhat complex. The judgement and conclusion to the book is a response to the unrepentant Roman Empire, but the manner in which this is expressed is through a focus upon universal judgement and resurrection; the bigger picture of which Rome's fate is a part. If the historical context is one of a call to repentance and warning of judgement to the lawlessness of the Roman Empire, how does this compare to traditional contexts of DWT and SCI?

Although *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 does not prominently allude to any one text, an examination of the texts which show some general similarity in their use of DWT motifs offer insight as to how the tradition was historically used. One of these is Zech 9:13-14 which is the clearest example of God as a Divine Warrior using a sword and trumpet. It depicts in mythological terms Judah's hope of salvation that would result in freedom from captivity and a return from exile.<sup>259</sup> This includes a word of judgement against the Greeks,<sup>260</sup> but the main emphasis is upon God's faithfulness to deliver his people from captivity. The context is quite

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<sup>257</sup> The judgement is implicit in v.2 with some waking to "everlasting life" while others "to shame and everlasting contempt."

<sup>258</sup> The focus in ch.12 is on resurrection and ultimate fate of faithful martyrs. Collins, *Daniel*, 390-394.

<sup>259</sup> Smith, *Micah*, 259-260, David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1995), 62-64.

<sup>260</sup> Zech 9:13 refers to the Greeks, but this is likely the work of a later redactor and not part of the original and main thrust of the oracle, although Petersen argues for an original anti-Greek setting that is "consistent with the interests of the Persian empire." Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14*, 63.

different from *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192: it is not part of a conditional judgement based on whether or not the people repent.

The other texts likewise do not overlap with the historical context for *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192. Isaiah 50:2 and Nah 1:4 both use DWT in declaring the lordship of God over creation in expressing his power and sovereignty.<sup>261</sup> In Isa 50:2 this is within the context of God's response to the exile, stating that Zion was not abandoned because God is unable to intervene, as his power can be seen in his victory over the forces of chaos. Instead, God chose not to intervene because of the people's sin. In Nah 1:4 the DWT is not directly about judgement: it is part of the "cosmic background" upon which the judgement on Nineveh is predicated.<sup>262</sup> The mythology is used in praise of Yahweh's power and lordship from which a statement is then made that none can survive the power of his fiery wrath (Nah 1:6-7). It is therefore only indirectly connected to a context of judgement.

*Sibylline Oracles* 4:171-192 shows more historical consistency with Hab 3:8. In Habakkuk the hostile powers of the Sea and River are objects of judgment in the context of the punishment of the political power of Babylon.<sup>263</sup> Although there is no invitation to repentance or other possibility to avert God's wrath, there is a similar cause for divine anger in the first place: oppression of God's people. Habakkuk 3:13 speaks of God coming to save his people by crushing the house of the wicked.<sup>264</sup> There is no mention of the need for

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<sup>261</sup> On Isa 50:2 see John Goldingay and David Payne, *Isaiah 40-55 Volume 2* (ICC; London: Continuum, 2006), 180, 203. On Nah 1:4 see Day, *God's Conflict*, 60, Smith, *Micah*, 74.

<sup>262</sup> Day, *God's Conflict*, 60-61.

<sup>263</sup> Day, *God's Conflict*, 104-109, esp. 105, Smith, *Micah*, 116. Smith also includes Assyria as the envisaged enemy as well as Babylon.

<sup>264</sup> Hab 3:16c makes it even clearer: "I wait quietly for the day of calamity to come upon the people who attack us."

deliverance or salvation for God's people in the sibylline passage, but the violent persecution of the godly is among those sins that warrant God's punishment.<sup>265</sup>

The historical context of passages which show similar motifs to *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 vary widely, although all repeat the theme of God's might and ultimate power in the face of whatever evil or difficulty the people are facing. *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 uses the tradition consistently with this: the DWT is used for God's act of judgement upon a particular people, although there is opportunity for repentance. However, in contrast to the other texts which focus more upon explaining God to his people, Book 4 focuses upon the evildoers themselves and offers them the opportunity to repent.

With respect to SCI, *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 shows less consistency with the historical setting of the Stoic passages. There is little parallel between the Sibyl and the context of *Marc.* 7.4 or 26.4-7. Seneca's letter is not a letter concerning human judgement (whether local or universal). It is a pastoral letter to counsel Marcia to stop being awash with her emotions and come to understand death is part of the life and comes to all: whether one lives for a short or long time, in the grand scheme of history every life is insignificant. The SCI offers comfort to Marcia that although "poverty, grief and ambition" may be felt differently,<sup>266</sup> the final state of mankind is common to all and this "common fate can be a solace for your yearning."<sup>267</sup> The conclusion in 26.6 makes clear the purpose of the SCI: "For, if the common fate can be a solace for your yearning, know that nothing will abide where it is now placed, that time will lay *all* things low and take *all* things with it."<sup>268</sup> All will experience the same fate and all will be renewed and life will be again. While the emphasis in

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<sup>265</sup> *Sib. Or.* 4:152-161.

<sup>266</sup> Seneca, *Marc.* 7.4 (Basore, LCL).

<sup>267</sup> Seneca, *Marc.* 26.6 (Basore, LCL).

<sup>268</sup> Seneca, *Marc.* 26.6, (Basore, LCL), emphasis added.

Seneca's reference to SCI is upon the dissolution of the world, this renewal is the final piece and a final word of hope that her son would live again. The context is one of suffering and moving past grief; not judgement or divine punishment. Furthermore, the destruction itself is explicitly self-inflicted and not the act of God.<sup>269</sup>

The same conflict is found between Lucan *Phars.* 7.812-815 and *Sib. Or.* 4:176. The Lucan passage focuses on conflagration as a reminder that all will experience the same fate, even for those who face the ignominy of not having their corpse cremated.<sup>270</sup> The positive emphasis upon conflagration is not echoed in the threat of judgement in the sibylline passage.

The context of Seneca's connection of a flood and conflagration in *Nat.* 3.27-30 is also quite different from that of *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192. Seneca's work as a whole concerns the workings of the natural world and how they can inform reflections upon human nature and the relationship between humans and the divine.<sup>271</sup> Seneca, *Nat.* 3 is concerned with terrestrial waters and in part an all-consuming flood that will wipe out human and animal life in 3.27-30.<sup>272</sup> Seneca explains what is involved in this flood, its causes, its effects and the sequence of events. But while the passage focuses on the physical world, the deluge also has ethical implications.<sup>273</sup> Inwood argues that the flood is "fitting in view of our moral corruption" and draws attention to the "anthropocentric nature of the deluge."<sup>274</sup> Williams also draws from Seneca's flood an ethical purpose: the universality of the catastrophe wipes

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<sup>269</sup> "And when the time shall come for the world to be blotted out in order that it may begin its life anew, these things will destroy themselves by their own power." Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 26.6, (Basore, LCL).

<sup>270</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 7.812-821.

<sup>271</sup> Gareth D. Williams, *The Cosmic Viewpoint: A Study of Seneca's Natural Questions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2, Brad Inwood, *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 159-160.

<sup>272</sup> Seneca, *Nat.* 3.30.7.

<sup>273</sup> Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 157-200.

<sup>274</sup> Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 170.

away any human self-importance.<sup>275</sup> The specific comparison of the flood with the conflagration in *Nat.* 3.29.1-3 is not about different occasions of God's judgement but the inevitability of both events which are pre-determined from the laws of the universe:

“Whether the world is an animated being, or a body governed by nature, like trees and plants, there is incorporated in it from its beginning to its end everything it must do or undergo.”<sup>276</sup>

Both *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 and *Nat.* 3.27-30 have moral inferences that are connected to their respective floods and fires. However, they do so quite differently. The former concerns a warning of destruction by fire, as previously by flood, should Rome not repent from their sin. By contrast, *Natural Questions* does not have a pressing moral crisis, other than Seneca's aim to free the mind from preoccupation with oneself and one's own concerns through the study of nature.<sup>277</sup> In light of this, it must be concluded that *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 does not meet the criterion of historical consistency in relation to SCI.

### Thematic Coherence

The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 builds on and extrapolates themes and motifs within the passage and elucidates the material more broadly. The cosmic and battle images become cogent: the sword, war-trumpet and coming of dawn that indicate a military attack (4:174), the fire coming against the cosmos (4:173, 176-180) which itself is a weapon of God (4:180), the heavenly thundering (4:175), the burning of the earth and peoples (4:176) and with them the specific inclusion of the River and the Sea (4:177). When read in light of the DWT the meaning becomes clear: should the people not repent, then the DW will come in battle against the cosmos, heralded with a sword and war-trumpet (4:174). The thundering (4:175)

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<sup>275</sup> Williams, *Cosmic Viewpoint*, 113.

<sup>276</sup> Seneca, *Nat.* 3.29.2-3 (Corcoran, LCL). See also Inwood, *Reading Seneca*, 172-173. Williams, *Cosmic Viewpoint*, 124-125.

<sup>277</sup> Seneca, *Nat.* 3 Pref 17-18.

storm-god will wield fire as his chief weapon (4:173, 176-180) as he brings destruction on the world (4:173, 176), vanquishing all people, the earth and even his primordial enemy of Judge River/Yammu (4:177). When this burning is complete, he will lay down his weapon and there will be a judgement in which the fate of the dead will be decided: the righteous resurrected to everlasting life and the wicked concealed under the earth. The mythological tradition thus explains motifs that otherwise do not have an obvious connection to each other<sup>278</sup> and places them all within the framework of God's judgement: a theme found through *Sib. Or.* 4.

There are a number of theological themes to which the DWT in the passage gives support and emphasis. In the universal scope of the judgement, the mythology makes clear God is powerful over all evil: powers both human (i.e. Rome as one of many) and spiritual (i.e. the named primordial chaos monsters, River and Sea). God's power is also highlighted in the coming 'battle' anticipated in 4:174: the motifs anticipated with trepidation the events to follow. The Sibyl adapts the mythology with the result that the battle is replaced with a decisively one-sided destruction of all things<sup>279</sup> by the DW who brandishes a weapon of fire. This punishment is also indicative of his orientation towards establishing justice,<sup>280</sup> a logical response to the people who failed to repent after divine warning. The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 thus meets the criterion of thematic coherence.

If Jewish mythology has drawn upon SCI, then the language of ἐκπύρωσις has been neatly incorporated. The Sibyl's fire is no longer one into which all is reduced, and the positive connotations associated to the event in Stoic cosmology, but it is now a divine weapon through which God issues punishment on unrepentant evil. Likewise, if the language

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<sup>278</sup> E.g. Why is there hints of a battle at dawn but no army (4:174)? Why are rivers and the sea included but not mountains and valleys? Why is there a roar and mighty noise without an obvious referent for it (4:175)?

<sup>279</sup> This reflects the Sibyl's general tendency to emphasise God's transcendence and to distance him from his creation.

<sup>280</sup> His justice will not be fully complete until the post-mortem judgement and resurrection.

of world recurrence has been used it has also been similarly sublimated into Jewish ideas of resurrection. The SCI does not elucidate the themes of the passage (and so does not meet the criterion), other than to give universal scope to the fire, which was usually more localised in Jewish tradition, and so give a greater sense of divine power.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the above criteria, *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 shows convincing evidence of DW motifs but only tentative evidence to support the use of SCI. There is sufficient similarity and historical consistency to the DWT to conclude that the focus of the passage as a judgement oracle against Rome (should they not repent) draws on the Jewish mythological tradition for its prophetic force, which includes the expectation of post-mortem judgement and resurrection. With respect to SCI, it is possible that the Sibyl draws on the language of ἐκπύρωσις, particularly with the universal scope of the fire. Yet if this is so, it has been sublimated within Jewish tradition: the fire's function in the text is far removed from the elemental principle of fire found in Stoic cosmology.

### **(3) *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161**

159 Even then know that God is no longer meek,  
160 but gnashing his teeth (βρύχοντα) in wrath and destroying the whole  
161 generation (γενέθλη) of mankind at once by a great conflagration (ἐμπρησμος).

## Similarity

These three verses have a low similarity to DWT. The description of God as “gnashing his teeth in wrath” anthropomorphises him and is used elsewhere as a description of his wrath (Job 16:9) and, as in DWT, his wrath is the motivation for a fiery destruction of people. The motif of God wielding fire as a means of judgement is found throughout the DWT (Isa 29:6; Pss 18:7-9; 89:46; Zeph 1:18; Nah 1:4-6) and goes back to Canaanite gods and their

messengers.<sup>281</sup> However, in contrast to the fire in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 the language here does not describe the conflagration as a weapon God is wielding, although it is clearly an expression of God's power. This may be indicative of DWT, but there are numerous places in OT in which the expression of God's wrath through fire is independent of a wider DW mythological setting (e.g. Ezek 21:31-32; Lam 4:11; Jer 4:4; 7:20; 17:27; 21:12; Ps 79:5). The similarity of *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 to DWT therefore lacks sufficient evidence.

While *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 shows little connection to DWT, it does show some correlation to SCI. The description of fire burning up humankind is central within SCI and accounts of ἐκπύρωσις. The particular focus of fire burning up humankind is seen in *Ad. Marc.* 7:4 and as part of a bigger picture in *Ad Marc.* 26:6-7 and *Phars.* 7:812-814.<sup>282</sup> Although in *Sib. Or.* 4:161 the term ἐμπρησμός is used and not the usual word for the SCI motif, the underlying image is the same. However there is little textual evidence to conclude the Sibyl draws specifically from the three Stoic texts or a shared literary source. It is more likely that she draws from another source or the general Stoic cosmological image of the world's destruction by fire. The latter is more likely as, like *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192, the passage is only similar to SCI insofar as the fire will burn up the whole race of mankind.<sup>283</sup> The fire in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 attributes the fire to God's wrathful expression of his power, a pattern that can be found within the OT itself and is distinct from SCI usage. Although shows no similarity to the text, a less positive picture of SCI is found in, for example, the cosmic collapse in *Pharsalia* 1:62-89 paralleling the fall of the Roman republic.

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<sup>281</sup> See Miller, "Fire," 256-261. See discussion above, fn.38.

<sup>282</sup> Collins notes Lactantius' *De Ira Dei* as a similar text to 4:159-161, but the date of the work is 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE at the earliest and beyond the Second Temple period. Collins, *Book 4*, 388.

<sup>283</sup> See discussion of SCI in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192, above p.149.



## Historical Consistency

The context of *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 is the culmination and result of the passage that precedes it. God's fiery judgement is how he will show himself powerful over the unrighteous and will hold them accountable for their immoral and outrageous behaviours exhibited in 4:152-158. The question then is to what situation this immorality and behaviour refers.

The behaviours themselves include acts of outrage (ὕβρις, 4:155, 158), recklessness (τόλμαι, 4:154), foolishness (ἀφροσύνη/νήπιοι, 4:157), an unwillingness to listen to the godly (4:156) and the committing of arrogant and evil deeds (ἀτάσθαλα καὶ κακὰ ἔργα, 4:155). The passage clearly refers to the same impious group described at the start of the book where there is significant verbal overlap. In *Sib. Or.* 4:30-39, the impious perform arrogant and evil deeds (ἀτάσθαλα καὶ κακὰ ἔργα, 4:39), acts of folly (ἀφροσύνη/νήπιοι, 4:38) and violations (ὕβρις) against males (4:34). This earlier passage offers an explanation to the audience the Sibyl has in mind. While the acts in themselves were common immoralities of the Gentile world, in other texts these crimes (both sexual abuse of males and acts of bloodshed) are specifically focused against the Roman Empire (*Sib. Or.* 3:184-186a; 5:166-167, 386-396, 429-431), suggesting a similar context here.<sup>284</sup> This is corroborated by the date of the book to the late first century as well as the widespread focus on Rome throughout *Sib. Or.* 4.<sup>285</sup>

That the Sibyl describes Roman immorality in *Sib. Or.* 4:152-159 does not necessitate she is therefore talking about Roman destruction. It is possible that she is drawing upon known examples to describe a different time after the Roman period in which she writes, which could be indicated by the adversative ἀλλ' ὅταν in 4:152. Yet this phrase is not used

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<sup>284</sup> See Buitenwerf, *Book III*, 186. Buitenwerf also offers other non-sibylline texts in support of this. Obviously sexual immorality pervaded more than just the Roman Empire, however the focus in the sibylline texts is Roman sexual immorality. See also John J. Collins in "The Sibylline Oracles, Book 5" in *OTP*, vol. 1, 391.

<sup>285</sup> 4:102-151 is explicitly about Rome, roughly a quarter of the whole book.

this way elsewhere. In *Sib. Or.* 4:61 it introduces the means of the Medes' destruction (that is the Persians) after the description of cosmic catastrophe during that same generation. The only time difference inferred is that the passage is reaching the culmination of the judgement on the Medes: it is still within the same generation. The "whole generation of mankind" in *Sib. Or.* 4:160-161 indicates some kind of wide focus, but (a) the nature of its scope is not clear as γενέθλη can connote a specific generation or age<sup>286</sup> and (b) the universal language is used for a particular (and avoidable) judgment in 4:171-192.<sup>287</sup> Given the first century date of Book 4 and the focus on Roman abuses in 4:152-158 as well as the feature within Jewish prophetic literature of universalising judgement upon particular peoples<sup>288</sup> it is natural to conclude that Rome is the Sibyl's focus in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161.

*Sibylline Oracles* 4:159-161 has limited historical consistency with the similar texts from SCI (Seneca, *Marc.* 7.4; 26.6-7, Lucan, *Phars.* 7.812-815). The purpose of the latter is pastoral: to assuage fears of an individual through the fate common to all. As addressed earlier,<sup>289</sup> the passages from Seneca are not concerned with judgement but have a pastoral exhortatory purpose to comfort Marcia through the death of her son. Lucan's passage is a consolation that everyone will experience the same fate, given in order to abate the dishonour of not receiving a proper burial.<sup>290</sup> In both, the conflagrations are framed in positive terms, unlike the sibylline passage in which God is anticipated to act and punish with fire, showing he is not benign in the face of the evils committed in the Roman Empire. The concern is with justice and God's power to act, rather than individual fear and need for encouragement.

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<sup>286</sup> See "γενέθλη" in *LSJ*, 343.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. See discussion above, p.165.

<sup>288</sup> Raabe, "Universal Judgment," 652-674.

<sup>289</sup> See above, p.168.

<sup>290</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 7.812-821.

## Thematic Coherence

The potential use of SCI in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 adds little to the themes of the narrative. As a picture of God's eventual demonstration of his power to punish the unrighteous, the universality of conflagration may be the ultimate expression of this: no one will escape his destructive capabilities. God will show himself to be ultimately powerful over evil. However, SCI is not necessary to gain the same inference. The text itself gives this universal quality with the description that God will destroy the "whole generation of mankind at once"<sup>291</sup> and, as previously mentioned, this universalising quality is found in Jewish prophetic literature. Furthermore, the examples from Seneca and Lucan show conflagration as an inevitable part of the universe: they are not connected to the moral righteousness of humankind (as in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161). The associations of the texts similar to *Sib. Or.* 4 actually conflict with the Sibyl's themes. They focus on a common fate in which SCI is used positively, as a means for encouragement in the face of fear. In contrast, the Sibyl uses the fire to speak of punishment and destruction of the wicked. A novel use of SCI in the first century would be consistent with its diversification, but this nonetheless makes it difficult to establish a clear use of the imagery in preference to Jewish alternatives.

## Conclusion

It is difficult to conclude with confidence that SCI is used in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161. There is some similarity to examples of SCI found in Lucan and Seneca, but they are used for quite different purposes: *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 has significantly reimagined how to apply the imagery if it is present. It cannot be definitively ruled out, but there is insufficient evidence to conclude it was intentionally employed in the text.

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<sup>291</sup> *Sib. Or.* 4:160b-161a.

## *Criteria of Overall Integration, Creativity and Recurrence*

### Overall Integration

The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 and 4:171-192 contributes to the bigger picture of *Sib. Or.* 4. The mythology gives a greater focus on God's judgement which appears throughout the book. Judgement is explicitly mentioned at various points (4:41, 51-52, 135-136, 159-161, 171-192) but when the DW motifs of *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 are identified as references to God's intervention and destruction of enemy forces, it suggests that the other cosmic and earthly disturbances throughout the book are also associated with this judgement theme.<sup>292</sup> They become an indirect reference to God's judgement, whether as a sign of its impending arrival or as a mythological depiction of the judgement itself, and thus carry more theological significance to the narrative. Further analysis of these upheavals is necessary to explore this proposal further. In contrast to the use of DWT, the proposed use of the Stoic image of universal conflagration (4:159-161, 171-192) has little impact on the overall integration of the book.

### Creativity

The use of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 4 fulfils the criterion of creativity. No verbatim quotations are used (so it is unlikely DWT was accidentally used) and various motifs employed are combined to adapt the tradition. *Sibylline Oracles* 4:56-60, shows similarity to *T. Mos.* 10:1-6 yet also incorporates the motif of islands appearing in waters (*Sir* 43:23). The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 likewise demonstrates the inclusion and adaptation of a number of motifs. Most notably, fire occupies a prominent role as the means of punishment. It has frequently been identified as part of the weaponry of God,<sup>293</sup> but here it is his only weapon and

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<sup>292</sup> These cosmic upheavals include the spreading of the waters, burning by fire, earthquakes, thunderings etc. E.g. *Sib. Or.* 4:53, 75, 77, 80-82, 99-100, 109-113, 129, 130, 143, 149, 151.

<sup>293</sup> Miller, "Fire," 256-261. See above, n.38.

widespread means of destruction. If the language of universal fire in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 draws from SCI then the Sibyl has creatively combined Stoic conflagration within DWT. It becomes a tool of God and has an almost independent and autonomous force,<sup>294</sup> although subject to God's instruction. Furthermore, both in this passage and in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161, universal fire has become a means of describing the magnitude of God's judgement when it comes and is a result of his wrath. This is a significant change in how SCI is used in comparison to Lucan and Seneca which both use the language of conflagration as part of a positive event emphasising what is common to all humanity. This creative change in direction reflects the newly expanded and variegated use of SCI in the first century.

#### Recurrence

The evidence for SCI throughout Book 4 is moderate. The only occurrences are in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 and 171-192, yet there are a couple of places in the latter where the motif may be present. Despite this, it is still difficult to ascertain for certain that the motif originates from SCI and is not an independent adaptation of the already familiar DW motif of fire. The evidence for the DWT in *Sib. Or.* 4 is far more widespread. *Sibylline Oracles* 4:54-60 shows use of three distinct images, and *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 likewise employs various motifs from the tradition: those indicating a coming battle, chaos waters as subject to God's wrath and the depiction of fire as a weapon of God.

#### **Conclusion**

*Sibylline Oracles* 4 shows an active and independent use of the DWT in two of the three texts examined. Both *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60 and 171-192 sufficiently meet the criteria to conclude that they intentionally use this tradition to emphasise the Sibyl's account of the demise of various

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<sup>294</sup> *Sib. Or.* 4:176-178.

empires and the exacting of God's wrath. While the DW himself is not actively described in the book, it seems that his presence is mediated through the arrival of his judgement, indicated by cosmic catastrophe and/or fire, and provokes the same response. With respect to the possible instances of SCI, there are similarities in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 and 171-192 to this imagery, but whether this is determinative of a relationship is unclear. In part, this obfuscation is due to the significantly different context: in Book 4 God is anthropomorphised and acts in wrath to judge his people through conflagration, quite different from the pastoral and positive description of cosmic conflagration as a reality found in Seneca and Lucan. If SCI is employed in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 and 171-192 then it may be that the imagery is so diversified in its use that it defies certain identification.

## CHAPTER 4. EXEGESIS OF *SIB. OR. 5*

In this chapter I will examine the textual evidence from *Sibylline Oracles 5* which shows possible imagery from the DWT and assess the plausibility of this mythological background. There are a number of texts in Book 5 which contain imagery that may be using the tradition and a couple of texts which may also use SCI. They are *Sib. Or. 5:28-34*, 155-161, 206-213, 342-359, 414-433 and 512-531. These texts are classified according to common motifs and themes, these are ‘God at War,’ ‘Monstrous Leaders’ and ‘Battling Stars.’ I begin with assessing the availability of the book as a whole.

### Availability

#### Date

There is broad agreement that *Sib. Or. 5* originates from the late first century to the early second century CE.<sup>1</sup> The textual evidence supports the conclusion that the majority of the material dates to this era. There are number of historical markers in Book 5, which include the description of Hadrian,<sup>2</sup> the references to the ruler Nero<sup>3</sup> and the destruction of the temple.<sup>4</sup> To meet the criterion of availability, it is not necessary to rehearse exhaustively the arguments and decide on a precise date, only to establish that the text as it stands falls within

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<sup>1</sup> Lanchester, “Oracles.”, Valentin Nikiprowetzky, “Réflexions sur quelques problèmes du quatrième et du cinquième livre des Oracles Sibyllins,” *HUCA* 43 (1972): 29-76, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, Marcel Simon, “Sur quelques aspects des Oracles Sibyllins juifs,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (ed. David Hellholm; Tübingen: J C B Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983), 219-223, Goodman, “Sibylline Oracles,” 618-654, Barclay, *Jews*, 450-451, Shum, *Isaiah*, Stephen Felder, “What is the Fifth Sibylline Oracle?,” *JSJPHRP* 33, no. 4 (2002): 363-385, Davila, *Pseudepigrapha*, 186-187.

<sup>2</sup> 5:46-50.

<sup>3</sup> 5:28-34, 93-110, 139-154, 214-227, 361-385.

<sup>4</sup> 5:398-413.

the late Second Temple period of 300BC – 200CE. As a result, the following will review the evidence for the main arguments.

Throughout *Sib. Or.* 5 there is a repeated concern with Nero, which coincides with a late first century dating. He appears in 5:28-34, as well as an adversary of God in the pattern found in the four main oracles of the book.<sup>5</sup> This does not limit the date to his death in 68CE as the belief in his return and the construal of him as a threat and adversary of God continued after his death.<sup>6</sup> This frequently occurring theme indicates a date to the years surrounding Nero's reign and the years thereafter, i.e. the late first century.

The second indicator of date is the focus and attitude of Book 5 towards the destruction of the temple, which is similar in this regard to the late first century works of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra.<sup>7</sup> This would place the material to after 70CE when the temple was destroyed and this is corroborated by the past tense used to describe the temple's fall (5:397-413). However, neither this nor the references to Nero provide a *terminus ad quem* to the date of the book, other than the implicit proximity to this period that these emphases suggest. The solution to this is found in the reference to Hadrian in *Sib. Or.* 5:46-50:

...After him another will reign,  
a silver-headed man. He will have the name of a sea.  
He will also be a most excellent man and he will consider everything.  
And in your time, most excellent, outstanding, dark-haired one,  
and in the days of your descendants, all these days will come to pass.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 5:93-110, 139-154, 214-227, 361-385. Collins identifies a common structure in four of the five oracles (52-110, 111-178, 179-285, 286-434) of which Nero is a part. They show the pattern of (1) oracles against the nations, (2) Nero's return, (3) a saviour figure and (4) a destruction. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 73-74.

<sup>6</sup> Collins examines the sibylline use of this legend that Nero would return and conquer the West and the imposters that claimed to be the post-mortem Nero. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 82-87. See also Barclay, *Jews*, 226-227, David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (WBC 52B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 737-740.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Geffcken, *Komposition und Entstehungszeit*, 23, Collins, *Book 5*, 390, Felder, "Fifth Sibylline Oracle," 371.

<sup>8</sup> Collins, *Book 5*, 394.



Such an unmistakably positive description of Hadrian is unlikely to have been written after the events of Bar Kochba in 135CE.<sup>9</sup> Thus the latest plausible date for *Sib. Or. 5* is the early 130s. The only challenge to this conclusion is in the subsequent line (5:51) which appears to refer to Marcus Aurelius and would suggest a later, mid-second century date.<sup>10</sup> However, this line is much more ambiguous about the ruler it describes in comparison to the previous ones in 5:1-47. This suggests it is either an interpolation<sup>11</sup> or some form of astute prediction of the near future.<sup>12</sup>

### Provenance

The geographical origin of Book 5 is generally agreed to be Egypt.<sup>13</sup> There are a number of references which suggest such a provenance. Although the book refers to a number of different cities and nations, Egypt occupies the majority of the Sibyl's focus (5:60-113, 179-99, 458-89, 484-511). Egypt also appears at the opening of the book (5:3), as the chief concern of two oracles (5:52-110, 5:179-285) and the Sibyl self-identifies as the sister of the Egyptian goddess Isis (5:53). The final oracle of the book again refers to Isis (5:484) as well as another Egyptian goddess, Sarapis (5:487), and the holy temple anticipated in 5:501 is to be built in Egypt, although it is subsequently destroyed by Ethiopia (5:503-508).<sup>14</sup> This temple may suggest an origin in Alexandrian Judaism at Leontopolis.<sup>15</sup> The plausibility of

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<sup>9</sup> Lanchester, "Oracles," 373, Simon, "Des Oracles Sibyllins," 223, Nikiprowetzky, "Réflexions," 31, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 75, Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, 185, Barclay, *Jews*, 450-451, Shum, *Isaiah*.

<sup>10</sup> "and after him three will rule, but the third will come to power late in life."

<sup>11</sup> Lanchester, "Oracles," 73.

<sup>12</sup> Simon, "Des Oracles Sibyllins," 223-224.

<sup>13</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 75, Shum, *Isaiah*, 104-105, Goodman, "Sibylline Oracles," 645, Lanchester, "Oracles," 373.

<sup>14</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 75-76.

<sup>15</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 93-94, Collins, *Book 5*, 391.

this is increased by the parallel between the material between Book 3<sup>16</sup> and 5. Although the attitude towards Egypt has changed in the two books, it is clear that Book 5 has used Book 3, for example *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433 shows evidence of having drawn on *Sib. Or.* 3:669-731 and 3:767-808 as I outline below.<sup>17</sup> Therefore the provenance of Book 5 can confidently be identified Egyptian.

### Authorship

Apart from the Christian interpolation in *Sib. Or.* 5:256-259 the authorship of Book 5 is generally accepted as Jewish.<sup>18</sup> As mentioned above, the book is familiar with Book 3, the most Jewish of the Sibylline Oracles, and as such it has probable origins at Leontopolis. In addition to this there are several Jewish concerns that are evident throughout the book: the concern with the temple is similar to 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra, the positive portrayal of the Jewish people, who are spoken of highly and in terms of receiving divine preference (e.g. 5:154, 160-161, 247-253, 281), and also the wide number of allusions to Jewish literature.<sup>19</sup>

One voice of dissent has come from James Davila.<sup>20</sup> He argues against the majority view on the grounds of omission: the book lacks the markers of Judaism to give it Jewish authorship. These include circumcision, the Sabbath and other features of Mosaic law. Instead, he contends that the whole work is either Christian in origin or the work of a devout Gentile “who picked and chose which elements of Judaism to accept and promote, ignoring

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<sup>16</sup> For the origin of Book 3 at Leontopolis, see p. 182 above.

<sup>17</sup> See p. 201, below.

<sup>18</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Tradition*, 436, Barclay, *Jews*, 217-218 & 225-228, Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, 184-185, Goodman, “Sibylline Oracles,” 644, Lanchester, “Oracles,” 373-374.

<sup>19</sup> Many of these will become clear under application of the next criterion, that of similarity. For a recent study looking at different connections to the Old Testament see Shum, *Isaiah*.

<sup>20</sup> Davila, *Pseudepigrapha*.

the more inconvenient and inscrutable ones.”<sup>21</sup> However, the logic of this conclusion does not follow: simply because there may be central markers for Judaism mean their absence indicates a non-Jewish provenance. Firstly, this rules out the possibility that a Jewish author might independently diverge from these markers, say if he was writing for a specific purpose or to a specific people. Moreover, defining Jewishness on the basis Davila proposes overlooks more subtle evidence that may indicate a Jewish origin.<sup>22</sup> Second, the use of central markers of Judaism does not necessitate Jewish authorship. Texts such as Juvenal, *Satires* 14.96-106 mentions Mosaic law and circumcision, but it would be quite absurd to thus claim Juvenal was a Jew. Similarly, Petronius mockingly discusses circumcision and Jewish laws in *Poems*, 24. Even if Davila’s argument is confined to where Jewish markers are put in a positive light and reflected as the beliefs of the author, his thesis is still unsustainable. The opposite of Davila’s thesis is more likely: by their very nature any markers of Judaism would be easier points of reference for a devout Gentile to use than the sophisticated Jewish material that is found in Book 5.<sup>23</sup> Given this, in addition to the relationship of Book 5 to the Book 3 and its similarity to contemporaneous Jewish literature with its concern with the temple, it can be concluded that Book 5 is of Jewish origin.

The criterion of availability for Book 5 has been met. It was written in the historical period under question, somewhere between 70-130CE, it can be geographically located to within the Graeco-Roman world, specifically Egypt, and there are a number of features which indicate its Jewish origin. I will now turn to the texts themselves. This study is limited to the

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<sup>21</sup> Davila, *Pseudepigrapha*, 189.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel 7-12 only twice mentions the law of Moses (9:11, 13), and makes no mention of the Sabbath or circumcision. It is instead concerned with cosmic events and political empires. This does not appear to have shaken belief in its Jewish origins!

<sup>23</sup> For an examination of Judaism in the Diaspora that demonstrates this kind of cultural diversity see Barclay, *Jews*, esp. 82-102.

texts that show the strongest similarity to DWT, although there are others that may benefit from examination in the future.<sup>24</sup>

## The Texts

### Class 1: God at War

#### *Sib. Or. 5:342-359*

342 Thrice-wretched Italy, utterly-deserted and unlamented, you will remain  
343 in the rich earth, a deadly noxious beast (ὄλοὸν δάκος) utterly perishing  
(ἐξαπολέσθαι).  
344 There will be from the sky, from far-reaching heaven above  
345 a noise like thunder (βροντηδόν), to hear the voice of God  
346 and the imperishable flames of the sun itself will no longer appear  
347 nor will there be the bright light of the moon again.  
348 In the following time, whenever God leads in war (ἡγεμονεύση),  
349 all will grow black, and darkness will be over the land  
350 and there will be blind mortals and wicked beasts and woe.  
351 There will be much time in that day so as to perceive  
352 God himself, lord overseeing all before heaven.  
353 Then he will not have mercy on hostile men  
354 who sacrifice herds of sheep and rams, bulls and bellowing oxen  
355 and golden-horned great calves  
356 to lifeless figures of Hermes and to stone gods.  
357 But let wisdom, glory and what is right lead the righteous  
358 Lest ever the imperishable God, when angered, utterly destroy (ἐξαπολέσση)  
359 the whole race of humankind and their shameless clan.

#### Similarity

There are several similarities between *Sib. Or. 5:342-359* and the cosmic motifs found in the DWT. The passage draws on DW theophany traditions but also may incorporate other elements of the tradition as a whole.

In *Sib. Or. 5:344-345* the sounding of God's voice is described as a loud thunder-like<sup>25</sup> (βροντηδόν) noise in the heavens: a typical and prevalent depiction of the DW as

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<sup>24</sup> E.g. *Sib. Or. 5:60-72, 121-136, 298-305, 375-385, 476-483.*

<sup>25</sup> The adjective the Sibyl uses (βροντηδόν) is not found in other Graeco-Roman or Jewish literature. However the simple form βροντή and the related verb βροντάω is much more common.

storm-god.<sup>26</sup> Thunder is a typical feature which accompanies DW theophany (Ps 77:18(76:19 LXX); Isa 29:6) and on numerous occasions the voice of God is compared to or described as thunder (Ps 18:13(17:14 LXX); 29:3(28:3 LXX); 104:7(103:7 LXX); Job 37:4-5; 40:9; Sir 43:17; 46:17; 1QH 11:35). The Sibyl's use of this motif is most like Sir 46:17 in which the God thunders from heaven with an emphasis upon his voice being heard.<sup>27</sup>

The voice of God is prominent not only for its description as thunderous, but also that the Sibyl couples this image with the darkening of the sun and moon (5:346-347, 348). This cosmic darkness is a widespread feature of DWT, often as a portent accompanying theophany. This I have shown in exegesis of other texts from *Sib. Or.* 3 and 4.<sup>28</sup> Its use here is similar to Joel. Both Joel 2:10-11 and 3:15-16 feature the darkening of the sun and moon alongside God uttering his voice.<sup>29</sup> Moreover in both Joel 2:10-11 and *Sib. Or.* 5:344-348 there God is described in a military capacity. Joel explicitly describes God as uttering his voice "at the head of his army" (2:11) and in *Sib. Or.* 5:348 God is described as ἡγεμονεύση, "leading in war."<sup>30</sup> The verbal parallels are not strong enough to posit a direct relationship but it appears the Sibyl draws on a similar tradition to Joel.

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<sup>26</sup> KTU 1.4 VII:25-37

<sup>27</sup> Cf. "ἀκουστήν ἐποίησεν τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ" (Sir 46:17b) and "θεοῦ φωνὴν ἐπακοῦσαι" (*Sib. Or.* 5:345).

<sup>28</sup> I.e. *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, 796-807; 4:56-60.

<sup>29</sup> There is widespread agreement about these passages as referring to the Day of the Yahweh despite the question of whether Joel 2:1-11 is speaking of the same event to ch.1 and what that event is. Cf. Allen, *Joel, Obadiah et al.*, 66-76, 107-121, Wolff, *Joel*, 41-47, 74-75, Barton, *Joel*, 44-48, 69-74, 103-106, Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets* (BO; eds. David W. Cotter, et al.; 2 vols.; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 161-164. For DW in the Day of Yahweh see Patrick D. Miller, "Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," *VT* 18, no. 1 (1968): 100-107.

<sup>30</sup> While the verb can refer to leading in a number of contexts, a prominent use leading in battle, see "ἡγεμονεύω" *LSJ*, 762. Philo in *Spec.* 1:207 uses this to speak of God leading the army of stars. See also the use of the verb with the sun in my exegesis of *Sib. Or.* 5:206-211.

The phrase ὄλοὸν δάκος in *Sib. Or.* 5:343 is ambiguous. δάκος usually refers to a beast with a dangerous bite.<sup>31</sup> Thus ὄλοὸν δάκος refers to such a beast that is deadly, but it is a phrase only used here and in Oppian's *Halieutica* 5.30 and, in the latter, it is a description of both a leopard and an undefined (but more sinister) sea creature.<sup>32</sup> The etymological evidence for the identity of this beast is slim. However, it may be that the Sibyl here uses the phrase to refer to some kind of serpentine or draconic figure, similar to that of the DWT. This is because the related verb δάκνω is used widely in Jewish literature and in every instance it is used of an animal in the OT it is used exclusively to describe either a snake or a dragon (Gen 49:17; Num 21:6, 8, 9; Deut 8:15; Eccl 10:8, 11; Sir 21:2; Amos 5:19; 9:3; Jer 8:17). In Amos 9:3 the verb is used specifically to speak of the bite of the mythological dragon who dwells in the sea and is commanded to bite by God.<sup>33</sup> Although the evidence alone is far from conclusive, more insight comes to light from how this beast functions in the passage.

The ὄλοὸν δάκος “utterly perishes.”<sup>34</sup> No reason is given for its death, but it is possible that it is the result of divine agency, given the appearance of God that follows (5:346-352) and his subsequent identification as the one who could utterly destroy (ἐξαπολέσσει) mankind in 5:358. If so, then this is another example of DWT in the passage: the ὄλοὸν δάκος would be a serpent-dragon figure who perishes at God's theophany. This

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<sup>31</sup> See “δάκος” in *LSJ*, 367.

<sup>32</sup> “πορδαλίων γαίης ὄλοὸν δάκος, ἀλλὰ θαλάσσης αἰνότερον.” Oppian, *Halieutica*, 5.30.

<sup>33</sup> Philo also predominantly uses the verb to speak of a snake's bite. In 23 uses of the verb, 14 refer to a snake bites (*Opif.* 1:157; *Leg.* 2:77, 81, 84f, 94, 99; *Agr.* 1:94, 95, 107; *Ebr.* 1:223; *Sobr.* 1:46; *Migr.* 1:210; *Somn.* 2:88; *Spec.* 3:103), 7 refer to the bite of passion or sin, an analogy based on that of the snake (*Leg.* 2:8, 85, 87, 93f, *Agr.* 1:98, 106f, 109) and 2 times to refer to the bite of a dog (*Contempl.* 1:40; *Gig.* 1:35).

<sup>34</sup> Some translations state that the beast destroys Italy. However, ἐξ-απολλυμι is used in the middle voice which conveys the passive meaning ‘to be destroyed.’ This indicates it is the beast that is utterly perishing. Either translation works as an example of DWT: sometimes the DW destroys the human enemy as a Serpent-Dragon (Isa 27:1; Ezek 32:1-7) and at other times the DW uses the Serpent-Dragon as a means of destroying the human enemy (Amos 9:3; Wis 11:18-19).

would follow the traditional activity of the DW (Isa 27:1; 51:9; Job 41; Ezek 29.3-5 and 32:2-6) which can be traced back to the Baal myths themselves.<sup>35</sup>

In summary, *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 draws on DW theophanic language to describe God's arrival (5:340-350) which is a day of judgement and destruction (5:342-343, 351-356) that will come upon all the righteous as well if they do not remain righteous and incite his anger (5:357-359). This divine appearance may also include the DW's destruction of the Serpent-Dragon (5:343).

There is clearly a strong similarity to the DWT. However, there are also hints within the text of structural parallels, although they are more fragmented than in traditional iterations.<sup>36</sup> There is the declaration of the enemy's *destruction* (5:342) and a description of the *divine advent* when God assumes command (5:344-349). This is followed by divine *recognition of his sovereignty* when humankind acknowledges God as ruler over all things from heaven (5:351-352) and an implied *punishment* on the unrighteous (5:353-354) with the conclusion of the text as exhortation to continued righteous living (5:357-359). The text thus features elements of typical mythic patterns.<sup>37</sup>

### Historical Consistency

There are several points of historical consistency between *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 and the examples from DWT. The sibylline passage states from the outset the context of the judgement: the "thrice-wretched Italy" (5:342). Both DW theophanic motifs as well as

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<sup>35</sup> E.g. Lôtan in KTU 1.5 I:1-5.

<sup>36</sup> The mythic pattern in DWT has been described in different ways. Cross' pattern is *battle, theophany, enthronement* and *manifestation*. Miller identified the essence of the mythic pattern as *combat with chaos, victory, temple-building* and *enthronement*. Miller, *Divine Warrior*, 117, Miller, "Enthroned on the Praises of Israel": The Praise of God in Old Testament Theology," 17 n.21. Hanson reconfigures Miller's pattern as: *combat of DW, theophany, victory* and *salvation of Israel*. Hanson, *Apocalyptic*, 292-324. See also Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament of God*, 105, Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 446-452.

<sup>37</sup> Fishbane argues that this kind of variation is to be expected in mythmaking. cf. *Biblical Myth*, 22-23.

perishing chaos monsters frequently appear in scenes like this of divine judgement on enemy peoples and their rulers: the enemy is often depicted as a draconic chaos monster which is ultimately destroyed by arrival of the DW, an event which brings about cosmic upheaval (e.g. Ezek 29:3-8; 32:37-8; Daniel 7; Isa 27:1). This is the type of theophany found in Sir 46:17: it accompanies God's subdual of his enemies, namely the Philistines. This is a restatement of the theophany and divine intervention found in 1 Sam 7:10-13, but Sirach adapts it slightly to emphasise that God makes his voice heard. The theophany and events of Sir 46:17 are then used as part of a wider eulogy to Samuel as a great prophet within Israel (Sir 43:13-20).

Joel 2:10-11 and *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 both have a focus upon judgement on a historical nation, although in Joel it is not an enemy nation but Judah itself that is to face punishment should they not repent (Joel 2:12-14).<sup>38</sup> The second passage in which God's voice is heard and cosmic darkness appears (Joel 3:15-16) shifts the focus to judgement upon enemy nations who have been gathered to the valley of Jehoshaphat for judgement because of their crimes against Judah (vv.2-3). Again, the voice of Yahweh utters his voice and the luminaries are darkened (vv.15-16) and the nations, Egypt and Edom, are to become a desolation as vengeance for Judah (v.19).

The features of darkness, desolation of the land of the enemy, the voice of God being heard with accompanying cosmic upheavals in *Sib. Or.* 5:344-359 are used consistently with the DWT. The mythological language in *Sib. Or.* 5:344-359 varies slightly from Joel 3 and Sirach 46:17 as the reason for the punishment is Italy's idolatry, not their persecution of God's people.<sup>39</sup> This is found in Joel 2 and also other parts of the DWT (*T. Mos.* 10:1-10; Isa 14; Jer 51). The use of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 is thus historically consistent with the tradition.

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<sup>38</sup> The destruction itself may have been a political attack or a natural disaster or possibly a famine. Barton, *Joel*, 44-48, Wolff, *Joel*, 41-43.

<sup>39</sup> As found elsewhere in the book: *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161; 386-413.



## Thematic Coherence

It is difficult to apply the criterion of thematic coherence to *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 as there is not a distinct linear progression from the poetry before the passage. The preceding lines, 5:333-342, are included in Collins' translation under the same subheading, "Woes for Europe,"<sup>40</sup> but there is a significant shift in geography at 5:342.<sup>41</sup> From 5:333-341 the Sibyl is concerned with the regions of what is modern day northern Turkey, Bulgaria and Macedonia.<sup>42</sup> In addition the events referred to occurred centuries before the Book was written.<sup>43</sup> At 5:342 the focus shifts to Italy, the home of the dominant empire of the Sibyl's day. The lines that follow 5:342-359 show more connection, focusing upon the Roman governor Nero, expanding on the evils and chaos of the Roman empire and envisaging in more detail Nero's role and the war that will ensue (5:361-383). It is the last, and possibly climactic, event before God's intervention.<sup>44</sup> The mythological background of 5:342-359 puts Nero's actions part of a cosmic conflict and call for divine intervention. The last few lines then describe further cosmic disturbances and an ending of the wars (5:377-383). In light of the DWT of the former passage, the actions of Nero become part of the cause for divine wrath (which is consistent with opinion of Nero elsewhere in the sibylline material) and the eventual cosmic upheavals and end to war, part of the reality of divine justice.

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<sup>40</sup> Collins, *Book 5*, 401.

<sup>41</sup> Geffcken separates 5:342-343 from the preceding lines with an indentation in the text, although he also separates 342-343 from the subsequent lines, 344-360. Geffcken, *Die Oracula*, 121.

<sup>42</sup> The Sibyl mentions seven different places in this region.

<sup>43</sup> I.e. From the 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Cf. Collins, *Book 5*, 401 notes q3 and r3.

<sup>44</sup> Evident from its timing at the "waning of the moon" which connects it to the CCL in 5:346-348.

## Conclusion

It is clear from the above discussion that *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 meets the three criteria of similarity, historical consistency and, to some extent, thematic coherence. Italy is depicted as a mythological beast who is subject to destruction from God. The latter leads the way in battle and his arrival is marked with theophanic motifs of cosmic upheaval and darkness. This scene is very familiar in the DWT, which often construes divine judgement upon rebellious peoples with a combination of these motifs.

### *Sib. Or. 5:155-161*

- 155 But when out of the fourth year a great star (μέγας ἀστήρ) shines  
156 which alone will bring down the whole land (πάσαν γαῖαν) on account of the  
honour  
157 they gave first to Poseidon of the Sea (εἰναλίῳ Ποσειδῶνι),  
158 a great star (μέγας ἀστήρ) will have come from heaven into the shining Sea  
(ἄλλα δῖαν)  
159 And will burn the deep Sea (ποντον βαθυν) and Babylon herself  
160 and the land (γαῖαν) of Italy, on account of whom many perished:  
161 holy, faithful of Hebrews and people of truth.

## Similarity

This short passage tells of a coming judgement which will be brought about by a great star. The whole land will be destroyed by this star because of the people's idolatry (5:155-157) which will signal that the destruction of the Sea has occurred (5:158-159). The passage concludes with a reiteration of the destruction of the land, now identified as Italy (5:160), with a further reason for such a judgement (5:160b-161). Several of these features indicate material from the DWT.

Heavenly bodies, including stars, are a frequent feature of DWT and there are a number of reasons to connect the "great star" (μέγας ἀστήρ) of 5:155 as part of this trend. The strongest thematic similarity to the stars is found in *L.A.B.* 31:1-2, where the stars appear

as warriors on the side of the DW. In this passage the stars are instructed by God to destroy the enemy, so they go as commanded and burn them up. Both here and in *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 the star(s) execute judgement through burning upon an enemy threat to God's people. This is consistent with other examples of stars warring on God's side with lightning as their weapon.<sup>45</sup> However stars burning the land is not always indicative of divine purpose.

The great star has a verbal parallel to Rev 8:10, which similarly comes down from heaven, although in Revelation the star falls and poisons a third of the waters. This star is identified as Wormwood (ὁ Ἄψινθος) in Rev 8:11. Both stars are the means of the destruction of the sea and people. However, the star of Rev 8:10 "falls out of heaven" (ἔπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) and has been identified as the angelic representative of Babylon which is subject to destruction, drawing on older themes of the demise of the Morning Star in Isa 14:12-15. In contrast the star in *Sib. Or.* 5:158 advances from heaven with no mention of falling (ἤξει δ' οὐρανόθεν): it is not the subject but the mediator of destruction. Yet the verbal parallel between the two texts indicates they draw on a common tradition, despite their different application of the motif. The same kind of language describes the actions of demons in *T. Sol.* 7:5-6 and 20:16-17.<sup>46</sup> In these two passages it is a demon that is identified with the star and is then depicted burning fields and human dwellings.<sup>47</sup> It is well known in DWT that stars can work either for or against God in cosmic battle. The "great star" of *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 works on the side of God, as it exacts punishment on idolaters and persecutors of the Hebrews.

The repeated emphasis upon the Sea in as the object of judgement (5:157-159) is another motif that shows probable origins in DWT. The εἰναλίῳ Ποσειδῶνι is the idol the

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<sup>45</sup> *L.A.B.* 15:2; 32:7.

<sup>46</sup> Although *T. Sol.* is generally dated in its final form to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE there is a general consensus that much of the book, including the demonology, dates to 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine. D.C. Duling in "Testament of Solomon" in *OTP*, vol. 1, 940-943..

<sup>47</sup> *T. Sol.* 20:16 also describes them as falling from heavens.

people are guilty of worshipping that will bring about judgement on the land (5:156-157), the ἄλλα δῖαν is the star's destination (5:158) and the purpose of the journey is to destroy the 'deep Sea' πόντον βαθύν (5:159). This emphasis upon the enemy sea and object of divine destruction is very similar to the motif of chaos waters in DW mythology.<sup>48</sup> The third phrase in particular (πόντον βαθύν) resonates with the development of the terminology of DWT<sup>49</sup> from the ancient chaos monsters Yammu and Tiamat. The latter of these two is translated in the OT as תַּיַמַת (MT) and ἄβυσσος (LXX)<sup>50</sup> and is often found placed alongside תַּ / θάλασσα, the OT equivalent for Tiamat. One example of this pairing is found in Isa 51:10.<sup>51</sup> Alongside these two terms is a third: that of the "depths of the sea" in the "τὰ βάθη τῆς θαλάσσης."<sup>52</sup> Although this phrase is not a verbal parallel to *Sib. Or.* 5:159, it is plausible they are drawing on a common tradition given the thematic parallel that the waters are overpowered and the etymological link between Isaianic βάθη and the sibylline βαθύς.<sup>53</sup> The "(τὰ) βάθη τῆς

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<sup>48</sup> E.g. Job 3:8; 7:12; 26:16; 74:13; 89:9; Hab 3:8, 15. The sea is also the abode of chaos monsters in Daniel 7:2-3; *Jos. Asen.* 12:10-11; Sir 43:23-24.

<sup>49</sup> Although βαθύν is placed as an adjective rather than in construct with the Sea.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. Gen 1:2; Ps 78:15 (77:15 LXX); 106:9 (105:9 LXX).

<sup>51</sup> ἄβυσσος and θάλασσα appear together in Job 28:14; 38:16; 41:31, Wis 10:18-19; Sir 24:29; 43:23-24; *Jub.* 2:16; *Jos. Asen.* 12:10-12. Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, Collins, *Combat Myth*, 165-166.

<sup>52</sup> Watts argues that 51:10b is a return from myth (if it is myth in v.10a) to Israel's history of the crossing at the Reed Sea but such a dichotomy is unnecessary. The DWT throughout the passage as well as the position of these images next to each other suggests they are to be read together and that mythology underlies the Jewish understanding of the Exodus. For Watts' argument see *Isaiah 34-66*, 207-212. Oswalt argues there is no DW myth in but only literary imagery in *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 341-343. Contrary to this, for DW in Isa 51, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19A; New York: Doubleday, 2002), 329-335, Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 129-130, Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40-55*, 236-238, Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 369-370.

In Ex 15:5 תַּיַמַת is translated to the Greek πόντος to speak of chaos waters but this does not suggest a verbal connection to *Sib. Or.* 5:159 as there is no tradition of πόντος being adopted and developed as a mythological term after Ex 15: this use of the noun is unique in the OT. If *Sib. Or.* 5:159 is mythological it is more likely an independent development separate to Exodus' use of the noun.

<sup>53</sup> See "βαθύς" in *LSJ*, 301-302.

θαλάσσης” are also referred to in other DW texts also: the abode of the sea-serpent in Amos 9:3 and a place of threat in Ps 68:22.<sup>54</sup>

Another link to DWT is the identification of Babylon as the enemy in *Sib. Or.* 5:159-160. The name itself appears throughout many OT texts and is not specific to DWT, but it does often appear alongside other DW motifs (e.g. Isa 13, 21:9; Jer 51:34-36, 42; Hab 3:8-10, 15).<sup>55</sup> If the position next to the depths of the Sea is significant then the reference to the city may connote the identification of Babylon as the mythological dragon in Jer 51:34-36, who is subject to judgement and whose seas and foundations will be dried up (v.36).<sup>56</sup> However there is little to suggest the Sibyl draws on Jeremiah traditions and it is more likely that ‘Babylon’ parallels Rome (‘the land of Italy’ 5:161) given the prominence of the Babylon-Rome symbolism in *Sib. Or.* 5.<sup>57</sup> One further point of similarity is the subsequent desolation the enemy experiences (*Sib. Or.* 5:162-165 and 174-175). A similar post-destruction wilderness is found in Isa 13 and 34, as well as in Joel 3:19 and Ezek 29:9.

The above evidence indicates it is probable that *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 uses DWT. In particular, the prominence of the waters, but also the star as a mediator of God’s judgement. In this picture the great star functions on behalf of the DW to pronounce judgement upon the land and this begins with the destruction of the chaos waters, the depths of the Sea. It appears that the two events are connected: the destruction of chaos waters equates with the destruction of the people’s idol, namely Poseidon of the sea (5:157). This explains the connection of the burning of the depths of the Sea (5:159) with the land of Italy (5:60). The

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<sup>54</sup> Day, *God’s Conflict*, 74-75, 118-119.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. 4Q163 25, 1-3.

<sup>56</sup> Day, *God’s Conflict*, 109-111.

<sup>57</sup> See also Revelation.

great star will exact divine judgement upon both Italy and its gods.<sup>58</sup> The language of chaos waters makes clear the god is an enemy of God and force of evil, emphasised further through the identification with Babylon (5:160).

The language of stars falling into the sea is seen in SCI in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, but the similarity is superficial. First and foremost, the stars in Lucan are falling whereas the star in *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 comes from heaven. In addition, the sky sinks the stars into the sea in *Phars.* 4.525, but this is not for punishment of the sea but because of the illusion of what happens to the stars and the sea at dawn. The starry vault falls down to earth in *Phars.* 2.289-92, as an example of events that might cause fear. Yet there is no sense of the agency of the luminaries in question acting for divine purposes; it is rather an example of the destabilising of creation which would have an impact on human emotion.<sup>59</sup>

### Historical Consistency

A comparison between *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 and Jewish DW literature shows some consistency between their historical contexts. The situation from which this oracle arises is explicitly identified as Italy (5:160): the envisaged object of judgement is upon the homeland of the Roman Empire and the false gods she worships. The reasons for the judgement are stated as

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<sup>58</sup> Although the Sibyl identifies Poseidon as the idol the people worship, this is probably because Poseidon is an aquatic god creatively symbolising the chaos water motif and in a general sense Roman idols not specifically idol worship of Poseidon himself, a Greek god. This is all the more so given the pantheism in the Graeco-Roman world.

<sup>59</sup> The closest similarity is the mythological description of the river Po in Lucan, *Phars.* 2.412-415. It is explicitly a "legend" (*fabula*). Phaethon burns the heavens by means of the sun, which results in the burning up of the waters and the earth. However, this legend is used to describe the prowess of the river Eridanus which has "streams sufficient to match the sun's fire" and the emphasis is on the survival of the river in the midst of accidental burning. Lucan, *Phars.* 4.415 (Duff, LCL). In Ovid's version of the myth, the god Phaethon requests the Sun's chariot for a day and accidentally burns the heavens and then the earth. This results in an intervention by Zeus who kills Phaethon before the destruction is complete. Eridanus is not destroyed but actually becomes the river where Phaethon is buried. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2.227-405.

idolatry (5:156-157) and persecution of God's people (5:160-161) but other wrongdoings are also listed in the surrounding text.<sup>60</sup>

It is a well-documented feature of DW mythology to represent judgement upon a political empire as well as the forces behind them as chaos waters (e.g. judgement upon Assyria (Isa 8:5-6; 17:12-14), Babylon (Hab 3:8-10, 15) and the nations in general (Ps 46:3-6; 18:5-18; 144:5-7)).<sup>61</sup> It is also sometimes the abode from which the political enemy comes (Dan 7; Ezek 29:3; 32:2; Isa 27:1; Jer 51:13). The sea in Rev 8:10-11 differs from the sibylline passage and does not represent the enemy Rome,<sup>62</sup> but elsewhere in Revelation the sea does function in a similar way, as the abode of the Roman Empire which is depicted as a dragon.<sup>63</sup>

In *L.A.B.* 31:1-2 the stars involvement in exacting punishment is also on a Gentile enemy, namely Sisera and his army. The reason for the punishment correlates to that of *Sib. Or.* 5:160-161: Sisera was a threat to God's people and divine intervention was a means of rescuing his people from these assaults.<sup>64</sup> It can be concluded that use of DW mythology in *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 is therefore consistent with the tradition. The rendering of a nation in terms of chaos waters is extensive in DWT, as is the subsequent judgement upon them, as well as the reasons (idolatry and persecution of Israel) for Italy's punishment.

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<sup>60</sup> I.e. sorcery (4:165), sexually immoral (4:166-167), murderous and impious intentions (4:171), pride (4:173) and lawlessness (4:177).

<sup>61</sup> E.g. For analysis see Day, *God's Conflict*, 88-140.

<sup>62</sup> It describes the waters as being poisoned and being the *source* of destruction for the people who drank it.

<sup>63</sup> Rev 11:7; 13:8; 17:8, following Dan 7. G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1984), 137, 215-216, Angel, *Chaos*, 144-148.

<sup>64</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 176.

## Thematic Coherence

The presence of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 contributes to and illuminates the surrounding material. The preceding passage about the return of Nero (5:157-154) and the subsequent elucidation of the downfall of Rome (5:162-178) both come into sharper relief when this cosmic battle mythology is identified.

The description of Nero in *Sib. Or.* 5:137-154 recounts many of his infamous deeds but there is little that shows similarity to the DW mythology. However, the description of judgement upon Italy by the star offers a new context in which to understand it: the actions of Nero become part of the picture of chaos which calls for the divine judgement of 5:155-161.<sup>65</sup> Amongst his various immoral acts, Nero is held responsible for the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>66</sup> As well as these actions, there is also the description of Nero as ἰσόθεος φῶς (5:139) and his rumoured origin from the gods (5:140) which invokes the hubris that is common in the enemies within the DWT. Additionally the cosmic reaction to Nero's presence in 5:152 and the sibylline tradition attests to Nero as a cosmic enemy.<sup>67</sup>

*Sibylline Oracles* 5:162-178 is illuminated in another way by the DWT in 5:155-161. In light of the divine vanquishing of the enemy by means of the great star, the subsequent passage becomes an expansion of the judgement and reasons behind it. The desolation of the land (5:163-4, 174-178) and the arrogance of the widow (5:173) both are motifs of DWT but the overarching effect of the mythological tradition at work here is that the sins of Rome, i.e. practice of magic (5:165), sexual immorality (5:166-7), and her murderous spirit (5:171), all

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<sup>65</sup> As well as idolatry of 4:157 and the reasons outlined in 4:162-178, cf. p.194 above.

<sup>66</sup> As Collins notes this is inaccurate. Collins, *Book 5*, 396 n. k2 It was Titus who captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, but the war began under Nero's reign in 66CE and Nero made Vespasian general in 67CE. Cf. Josephus, *J.W.*, 1:21-26.

<sup>67</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74; 5:28-34. Nero's prominence in the lines following *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 also indicate his prominence in the evils of Rome deserving divine judgement.



become part of the reign of chaos, lawlessness (5:177) and disruption of divine order which is an affront to God.

*Sib. Or. 5:414-433*

414 For (γάρ) a blessed man (άνηρ μακαρίτης) came from the stretch of heavens,  
415 having a sceptre (σκῆπτρον) in his hands, which God gave to him.  
416 And all things he ruled well and rendered what was due to all:  
417 wealth to the good people, which the highest-ranking men took.  
418 And every city from the ground he seized with a great fire  
419 and he burned up the lands of mortal men, the former evil-doers.  
420 And a city, which God desired, this one he [the blessed man] made  
421 to shine more brightly than the stars, the sun and the moon  
422 and he provided holy decorations and made the house  
423 exceedingly beautiful with a beautiful shrine and he formed  
424 a great and endless tower in many stadia,  
425 touching the clouds themselves and all that is seen  
426 in order that all the faithful and all the righteous might see  
427 the glory of everlasting God, the form which had been desired.  
428 East and west sang praises to the glory of God  
429 since no longer are there evil deeds by wretched mortals  
430 nor adulterous acts and unlawful love of boys,  
431 no murder nor uproar, strife, but in all things punishment.  
432 It is the latter time of the holy ones (άγιών) when high-thundering  
(ύψιβρεμέτης) God accomplishes  
433 these things, the Creator of the great temple.

Similarity

This passage from *Sib. Or. 5:414-433* introduces an elusive figure, the “blessed man,” who comes from heaven, enacts judgement and builds the temple.<sup>68</sup> There is some similarity in these images to DWT. The specific phrase used to describe this figure, άνηρ μακαρίτης, has no precise verbal parallel in Jewish literature<sup>69</sup> but the images used certainly show thematic similarities to other texts. It is clear that the figure is a messianic one given his favour with God and that his arrival initiates the coming of a renewed temple and a new kingdom.

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<sup>68</sup> The man here is strikingly similar to the “exceptional man from the sky” (5:256). However, this may constitute part of the Christian interpolation of 5:257 and therefore is omitted from this study.

<sup>69</sup> There are a number of references to μακάριος άνηρ (e.g. Pss. 1:1; 31:2; 33:9; 83:6; Prov 8:34; 28:14; Sir 14:1, 20; 26:1) but these are clearly used in a generic sense of the state of the person who lives righteously as opposed to a specific person.

However, the similar motifs particularly associate it with the DW son of man figure in Dan 7:13-14,<sup>70</sup> as well as features of *Ezek. Trag.* 1:68-82 and *1 En.* 46. Daniel 7 and *Sib. Or.* 5:414-415 share two common motifs.<sup>71</sup> Firstly, the blessed man comes from heaven (5:414) like the son of man who “comes on the clouds of heaven” (Dan 7:13). Second, the blessed man is given authority from God over people (5:415-416) alike to the son of man who is given dominion and kingship from the Ancient One (Dan 7:14). There is no verbal overlap between the two passages, except for the reference to the ‘holy ones’ (ἅγιοι) in the new kingdom (*Sib. Or.* 5:432 and Dan 7:18, 22, 27). The extent of the lack of verbal parallel suggests Daniel 7 is not a direct literary influence but draws on a common tradition of a humanlike figure, coming from heaven with divinely-given authority.<sup>72</sup>

Three such texts, *1 En.* 46, *4 Ezra* 13 and *Ezek. Trag.* 1:68-82, are part of this DW tradition, emerging from the son of man language found in Dan 7:13-14. *Ezek. Trag.* 1:68-82 shows some distinctive similarities. The blessed man comes from the heavens in 5:414, like the first son of man figure in *Ezek. Trag.* 1:69-70 (and also in *1 En.* 46:1-4). In *Sib. Or.* 5:415, he is given a sceptre by God, indicating that he has received divine authority to rule. This resembles the figure’s authority in *Ezek. Trag.* 1:68-82 (as well as the reign of the

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<sup>70</sup> For the DW provenance to Dan 7:13-14 and the surrounding chapter see John A. Emerton, “The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery,” *JTS* 9, no. 2 (1958): 225-242, Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 98-107, Collins, *Daniel*, 286-293, Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 328-329, Day, *God’s Conflict*, 151-176.

For the link between *Sib. Or.* 5:414-5 and Dan 7:13-14 see Russell, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 344-345, E.K.T. Sjöberg, *Der verborgene Menschensohn in den Evangelien* (C.W.K. Gleerup, 1955), 53, John Bowman, “The Background of the Term ‘Son of Man.’” *ExpTim* 59, no. 11 (1948): 286, William Horbury, “The Messianic Associations of ‘The Son of Man,’” *JTS* 36, no. 1 (1985): 48, 51-52. Contra this, Casey argues that *Sib. Or.* 5:414 “belongs to the general category of Jewish messianic belief” and because of the absence of ‘son of man’ language it “should not be used as evidence of a Son of man concept in Judaism.” Cf. also *Son of Man: the Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979), 120, Collins, *Daniel*, 84 n.90. However, Casey makes a methodological flaw in expecting a verbal parallel from sibylline poetry (cf. Ch. 2) and does not explain the shared specific thematic motifs of the figure coming from heaven and receiving divine authority which stand in contrast to messianic texts such as 4Q246, 4Q252 and 4Q369.

<sup>71</sup> Elsewhere in Book 5 there is precedence for use of Dan 7. The language of Dan 7:8 is used when Nero is identified as the little horn of the fourth beast which uproots three earlier horns (*Sib. Or.* 5:222-3). See Collins, *Book 5*, 398. n.a3

<sup>72</sup> Russell, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 344.

human figure in *I En.* 46:3-6 and the man in 4 *Ezra* 13:25-27 described as an agent of the Most High).<sup>73</sup> In Ezek. Trag. 1:68-82 the figure is a human representation of God<sup>74</sup> and uses the poetic form of ἄνθρωπος, i.e. φῶτα, to describe him (1:70). The heavenly man in both *Sib. Or.* 5:415 and Ezek. Trag. 1:71-72 holds a σκῆπτρον; although in the latter it is then given to Moses (1:74-76).<sup>75</sup> Although *Sib.Or.* 5:414-415 separates God from the heavenly man (unlike Ezek. Trag. 1:68-82) – the man is given the sceptre by God - at the end of the passage some ambiguity is introduced regarding who built the temple. While *Sib. Or.* 5:433 clearly designates God as creator of the temple, it is the blessed man who is actually depicted building it (5:422-425). Whether the blessed man is an angelic or human figure is uncertain but he clearly acts as a divine representative.<sup>76</sup>

There are other similarities of the few actions of the blessed man to the passages from *I Enoch* and *4 Ezra*. He brings justice: he brings down high-ranking men (5:416-417) and punishes evildoers with fire (5:418-419) like the man in *I En.* 46:3-7; 48:9-10 and also *4 Ezra* 13:10-11, 37-8, 49.

The text of *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433 also bears a number of parallels to two other DW passages examined from *Sib. Or.* 3: both 3:669-731 and 767-808. As part of the sibylline tradition, parallels between them does not necessarily mean that that *Sib. Or.* 5 is using the DWT, as it may be accidental. However, in the context of the blessed man's origin in DW mythology, it appears the Sibyl is combining different elements from the tradition. The

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<sup>73</sup> He is also described as God's Son in vv.32, 37, 52.

<sup>74</sup> R.G. Robertson in "Ezekiel the Tragedian" in *OTP*, vol. 2, 812. n.b2

<sup>75</sup> Ezek. Trag. 1:74-76.

<sup>76</sup> Daniel 7:13-14 is probably Michael, the angel representing Israel with the angelic holy ones. Rev 14:14-19 also has an angelic son of man figure. However, in Mark 13:27 and Rev 1:7 Jesus is identified with the son of man. The son of man in Rev 14:14 has been argued to be an angel given the context with other angels but is probably Jesus rather than an angel cf. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 770-772. Ezekiel the Tragedian has both a divine son of man initially, but then Moses becomes the ruling man and in *I En.* 71:14 the angelic son of man figure is identified as Enoch himself.

similarities between *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433 and the texts from *Sib. Or.* 3 are illustrated in the table below.

<b><i>Sib. Or.</i> 5:414-433</b>	<b><i>Sib. Or.</i> 3:669-731</b>	<b><i>Sib. Or.</i> 3:767-808</b>
Temple cast headlong by 'you' – a foreign king (5:398-9)	Attempt to destroy the temple by foreign kings (3:687-8, also 663-668)	
Ruler perishes at the hand of Immortal (5:411) <sup>77</sup>	People perish at hand of Immortal (3:671-2, 676 & 709)	(Hand of God protects in 3:795)
Wealth returned where stolen and equality (5:416-7, 431)		Equal wealth in the new kingdom (3:783)
God destroys people/cities from foundation by fire (5:418-9)	God judges with fiery swords (3:669-74) and fire (3:689-90)	God destroys grievous men with fire (3:761)
Temple glorious and people praise God (5:422-428)	People rejoice in temple and praise God (3:702ff)	Great temple is central (3:772-776)
Singing of hymns (5:428)	Singing of hymns (3:715)	
End of immorality and injustice (5:429-431)		End of immorality (3:764-765)
No war (5:431)	No war (3:707-8, 727-731)	No war (3:751-755)
God accomplishes (from <i>περαίνω</i> ) these things - this new kingdom (5:433)	God is means of new kingdom and fights for people (3:702-14)	God accomplishes ( <i>τέλει</i> ) the end of the war and new kingdom (3:807)
God Creator ( <i>κτίστης</i> ) of temple (5:433)		God is Creator ( <i>κτίστης</i> ) (3:704)

*Table 1: Comparison of Sib. Or. 5:414-433 with Sib. Or. 3:669-731 and 797-808*

Another possible similarity is the description of God as high-thundering (*ὕψιβρεμέτης*) in *Sib. Or.* 5:432.<sup>78</sup> In the exegesis of *Sib. Or.* 5:342-359 it was shown that God's thundering can be traced back to DWT and storm god motifs. However, God is never described as high-thunderer (*ὕψιβρεμέτης*) in other Jewish literature apart from *Sib. Or.* 3:1 where it is used alongside the images from Ps 80:1. The title is more commonly found in the

<sup>77</sup> This is from 5:411 which precedes the section. However, its relevance to the similarities to Book 3 necessitate its inclusion here.

<sup>78</sup> 5:433 in the Greek text.

Graeco-Roman world and is frequently used as an epithet of Zeus.<sup>79</sup> It is possible that the Sibyl has incorporated this Graeco-Roman epithet given its similarity to the OT storm god language. As such it may show the Sibyl's reinterpretation of DW mythology within a Graeco-Roman world, if not simply drawing on the earlier use in *Sib. Or.* 3:1, but the infrequency of use of the term and the lack of supporting evidence, at this stage, makes any such conclusion difficult to establish.

There is some similarity to DW mythological motifs in *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433. Not only is there significant overlap with earlier sibylline use of the tradition, but the passage also shows clear use of the son of man traditions in a similar way to their development within the Second Temple period.

#### Historical Consistency

The Sibyl's adaptation of DW images is consistent with previous uses of the tradition. The context of *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433 becomes apparent from the preceding passage, *Sib. Or.* 5:397-413, which describes the destruction of the temple by the Romans and the downfall of Titus at God's hand. The passage in question then envisions a divinely-appointed figure who will execute justice, burn up the cities of evil-doers and re-establish God's temple after the destruction of the one in Jerusalem in 70CE.<sup>80</sup> The opening particle γάρ (5:414) connects this expectation as the currently absent sign that will warn others from launching a similar assault on Jerusalem (5:412-413). On this basis, it is logical to conclude that the punishing of evil-

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<sup>79</sup> E.g. Homer *Il.* 1:354; 12:68; 14:54; 16:121; *Od.* 5:4; 23:331 as well as Aristophanes, *Lys.* 773, Hesiod, *Theog.* 601; *Op.* 8; *Frag.* 204:97.

<sup>80</sup> The aorist tense in the majority of the verbs (5:414-423) is proleptic to emphasise the certainty of the event.

doers refers to a coming judgement upon the Romans. This is reinforced by the type of immoralities listed in 5:429-431 which are elsewhere attributed to Rome.<sup>81</sup>

A comparison of *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433 to Dan 7 reveals a historically consistent use of DWT. Daniel 7 likewise anticipates a judgement upon the ruling empire. In Daniel, it is that of Antiochus IV (who was also a threat to the temple) although the son of man figure in v.13 does not execute judgement but is given dominion and establishes the restoration of Israel. *Sibylline Oracles* 5:414-433 use of the common motifs consistently with the development of the tradition into the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. For example, Rev 13 utilises the image of three of the beasts from the sea (Dan 7:2-8) to depict one great beast which represents the Roman Empire, with one of the heads reflecting Nero's death and believed return.<sup>82</sup> 4 *Ezra* 13 also draws on Daniel with the image from of a divinely-appointed figure travelling in the heavens as figure.<sup>83</sup> This figure burns up Israel's enemies, which include the Romans,<sup>84</sup> and establishes a peaceable people. *Sibylline Oracles* 5:414-433 draws on different motifs in the passage, yet similarly applies the material into a context of those who are the enemies of Israel and, in particular, those of the Roman Empire. As such, it fulfils the present criterion.

### Thematic Coherence

The presence of DW mythology in *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433 shows relevance to and a relationship with the surrounding context. From the preceding words against Rome<sup>85</sup> and the subsequent

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<sup>81</sup> For example, "with you are found adulteries and illicit intercourse with boys" in *Sib. Or.* 5:166.

<sup>82</sup> Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 713-780. Angel, *Chaos*, 144-148. Caird, *Revelation*, 160-164, Beale, *Revelation*, 683-687.

<sup>83</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 205-209, R. J. Coggins, *The First and Second Books of Esdras* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 255-256, Angel, *Chaos*, 152-159.

<sup>84</sup> Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (ed. Frank Moore Cross; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 399.

<sup>85</sup> Immediately this is 5:386-413, but the Roman emperor Nero is the concern in 5:361-385.

oracle against Babylon<sup>86</sup> the DWT in the passage integrates well with the narrative progression. In a similar way to *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161, the passage before depicts a specific danger and cause of chaos by means of threat to the temple and God's people (5:397-413), the passage in question depicts the advent of a heavenly warrior who brings destruction (as well as building a new temple), and the subsequent text depicts the destruction and judgement upon the land (5:434-446). The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433 coheres with the surrounding themes: the blessed man thus takes the role of the DW and comes to exact judgement upon God's enemies (5:418-419). The result is that the destruction of the temple in the preceding section becomes an event that incurs a divine response.

## Class 2: Monstrous Leaders

### *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34

- 28 But whoever obtained a title of fifty, a ruler he will be,  
 29 a fearful serpent (δεινὸς ὄφις) breathing grievous war, who when he has  
 strained  
 30 his hands to his own family, will destroy them and he will stir up trouble in all  
 things:  
 31 wrestling, striking down, slaying and performing countless atrocities  
 32 and he will cleave the mountain in two and he will defile it with blood.  
 (καὶ τμήξει τὸ δίκυμον ὄρος λύθρῳ τε παλάξει)  
 33 But he will be also destructive when unseen; then he will return  
 34 Claiming himself equal with God; but God will prove that he is not.

### Similarity

The opening fifty-one lines of Book 5 recount numerous political leaders from the Roman world, and *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34 focuses upon Nero. It depicts him as fearful serpent, but this language has received little examination as a potential motif from the DWT.<sup>87</sup> More

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<sup>86</sup> 5:434-446

<sup>87</sup> Both Goodman and Collins argue that the figure here is purely historical in contrast to other texts in which Nero is depicted in eschatological terms. Goodman, "Sibylline Oracles," 644, Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 74-75. Bousset does link the figure to the Primeval Dragon as part of the antichrist legend but does not develop his point. Adela Collins also briefly notes the connection between Nero and combat myth. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 151-153, Collins, *Combat Myth*, 178-179.

traditional interpretations of this description of Nero have been based on the legend that as a child Nero's cot was surrounded by snakes or that the appellation was simply a derogatory term for Nero in his infamy.<sup>88</sup> Yet the image from the childhood legend is different from that found in 5:29. In the former, there are numerous snakes which serve as guards to the infant Nero, whereas the snake in 5:29 has a powerful and distinct role: it is a fearful creature which breathes "grievous war" and wields destruction (5:30-33). This vivid and unusual depiction of the serpent has more in common with DWT, possibly merging the childhood association of Nero with snakes into the drama of cosmic battle.<sup>89</sup>

One of the ways in which the serpent's behaviour is like the Serpent-Dragon in DWT is in the Sibyl's account that this creature seeks to be like God (5:34), which is the basis for divine intervention. This manifestation of pride is the chief character trait that is used to describe the Serpent-Dragon in the DWT (*Pss. Sol.* 2:25-26; Ezek 29:3, 9; 32:2; Job 41:34), as well as other enemies of the DW (Dan 7:8, 11; Isa 14). Secondly, the serpent exhibits destructive and violent behaviour throughout the passage (especially 5:30-33) as well as causing widespread trouble (5:30). This kind of destructive activity is seen by the Serpent-Dragon in several places (e.g. Job 41; 1QH X, 27-28; Rev 12; 16:13). The specific description of serpent "breathing grievous war" is reminiscent of the dragon in Rev 12 who first participates in a war and then goes on to make war (v.17) as well as the tradition of chaos and evil coming forth from the dragon's mouth. For example, in Rev 12:15 a river pours out from the dragon's mouth to drown his opponent and in Rev 16:13-16 three frogs come out from the dragon's mouth (as well as that of the beast and the false prophet) which

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<sup>88</sup> As argued by Collins, *Book 5*, 393 n.l. Tacitus, *Annals* 11:11 reads: "Also there was a common tale that serpents had watched over his infancy like warders: a fable retouched to resemble foreign miracles, since Nero — certainly not given to self-depreciation — used to say that only a single snake had been noticed in his bedroom." (Jackson, LCL).

<sup>89</sup> Adela Collins argues the author of Revelation does the same with the myth of Apollo and Leto and cosmic battle in Rev 12. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 101-156.



represent demonic spirits coming into the world to stir up battle. A similar sentiment is found in Wis 11:17-18 where “unknown beasts of rage”<sup>90</sup> breathe fire and smoke and bring destruction upon people.<sup>91</sup> Like *Sib. Or.* 3:28-34, these beasts are described as fearful (δεινός) in nature: they emit ‘terrible (δεινούς) sparks’ from their eyes and then are described as fearful (δεινοῖς) beasts in Wis 12:9.<sup>92</sup>

As well as the serpent’s pride, destructive and chaotic behaviour and the image of him breathing war, the Greek for serpent itself ὄφις is used in various places to speak of the DW Serpent-Dragon (Isa 27:1-2; Rev 12:9, 20:2).<sup>93</sup> In Rev 12:9 and 20:2 the ancient snake is again identified as the great dragon, as well as Satan and the devil.<sup>94</sup> However, the actions of the Serpent-Dragon of Rev 12 show further similarity to the ὄφις of *Sib. Or.* 5:29. Both are creatures involved in war: the snake in 5:29 breathes out grievous war and the Serpent-Dragon in Rev 12:17 wages war. Both feature other destructive actions apart from battle, although the specific actions are different.<sup>95</sup> However, although ὄφις is a familiar term for this DW chaos monster, the precise Greek phrase, δεινὸς ὄφις, is novel within the tradition

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<sup>90</sup> See for their identity as dragons, Angel, *Chaos*, 95. Winston also connects the beast to Leviathan in Job 41, cf. Winston, *Wisdom*, 234.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. also Job 41.

<sup>92</sup> Few commentators have made explicit the connection between 11:17-18 and 12:9, but it is clear given the proximity of the two texts given they both describe creatures of human destruction created by God. Interestingly, Oesterley doesn’t connect Wis 12:9 to the unknown beasts, but links it to the beasts of Deut 32:24 which are clearly snakes: “the teeth of beasts I will send against them, with venom of things crawling in the dust.” W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (London: SPCK), 63.

<sup>93</sup> This language comes from the enemy figure Lôtan in the Baal myths at Ugarit. KTU 1.3 III:32-IV:51; 1.5 I:1-3; 1.5 I:28-30. Day, *God’s Conflict*, 142.

<sup>94</sup> Rev 12:9 reads “καὶ ἐβλήθη ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, ὁ πλανῶν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην ...” The association to Satan and the devil may reflect a development on the tradition associating Nero with the figure of Belial as identified in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-73. Although Belial and ὄφις are not explicitly connected, Beliar is clearly used to represent Satan in the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g. 4Q286 frag 7 col 13, 11Q11 Col 5, 11Q13, 1QM 18:29) and evidence in the later work Ign. *Phil.* 11 makes a direct connection between the two, “Thou, O Belial, dragon, apostate, crooked serpent, rebel against God...”

<sup>95</sup> In Rev 12 the dragon attempts to devour a child (v.4) and deceives the whole world (v.9) in contrast to the intra-familial destruction of the serpent in *Sib. Or.* 5:30 and the generalized description of its destructive and violent behaviour.

and probably comes from the type of language found in Hesiod, *Theog.* 825 where it is used to describe a mythological dragon.<sup>96</sup> Given the parallels to DWT and the verbal parallel to Hesiod, it appears that the Sibyl employs the already mythological phrase from the Graeco-Roman world to illustrate the typical Serpent-Dragon (ὄφις) of the DWT.

The actions of this fearful serpent are developed beyond Nero's violence towards his own family (5:30), general destructive and violent behaviour (5:30-31, 33) and hubris (5:34). In *Sib. Or.* 5:33 the serpent will τμήξει τὸ δίκυμον ὄρος λύθρω τε παλάξει. Collins<sup>97</sup> translates the sentence "he will cut the mountain between two seas and defile it with gore" but this unnecessarily introduces the sea into the sentence from the Ψ and Φ MSS.<sup>98</sup> The earlier Ω manuscript (from *Sib. Or.* 12:84)<sup>99</sup> does not need emending for a coherent translation. Elsewhere in Book 5 Nero is described as responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem which would explain the earliest Greek witness to this verse: the serpent makes an assault on God's holy mountain. This would be a reversal of the picture of the dragon in *Pss. Sol.* 2:25-26, in which the pride of the dragon is turned to dishonour when the insolent one (i.e. the dragon) is killed and left on an Egyptian mountain.<sup>100</sup> It may be that the Sibyl intentionally plays with the mountain image here, perhaps drawing from the mountain splitting in Zech 14:4.<sup>101</sup> The Mount of Olives is cleft in two when God appears as DW in the

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<sup>96</sup> The Greek monster Typhoeus.

<sup>97</sup> Collins, *Book 3*, 393.

<sup>98</sup> This appears to be a combination of the Ω MSS δίκυμον ὄρος and the δίκυμον (δίαμιον Ψ) ὕδωρ of the Ψ and Φ MSS.

<sup>99</sup> This text is used in the two main critical editions: Geffcken, *Die Oracula*, 104, Rzach, *Χρησμοὶ Σιβυλλιακοί*, 105.

<sup>100</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 83-86.

<sup>101</sup> Paul B. Duff, "The March of the Divine Warrior and the Advent of the Greco-Roman King: Mark's Account of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem," *JBL* 111, no. 1 (1992): 55-71 esp. p.58.

city. Thus the image of the serpent splitting the mountain in two would be consistent with the tradition, melding together these different elements.

There is thus reasonable evidence to conclude that *Sib. Or.* 5:38-34 shows a satisfactory similarity to DWT. The fearful serpent breathes war from his mouth, an innovation from other examples of destructive events coming forth from the Serpent-Dragon's mouth, combined with the chaos water motif. He causes trouble and violence and incurs a divine response for his attempt to be like God. The "fearful serpent" itself finds its origin in Hesiod's *Theogony* (or a common background), yet it is effectively adapted into the already extant tradition of the ὄφις as the Serpent-Dragon found in DWT who behaves destructively in the ways outlined above.

#### Historical Consistency

The context of *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34 is without doubt: the fearful serpent is the Roman governor Nero. The "title of fifty" (5:28) and the reference to his matricide (5:30) makes the identification clear.<sup>102</sup> Within this context, Nero is clearly depicted as an affront to God which results in his humbling (5:34).<sup>103</sup> This depiction of Nero is found elsewhere in examples of DWT, but is also consistent with general trends of depicting political enemies as mythological enemies. Nero is often depicted as enemy force in the ensuing cosmic battle, sometimes but not always as a serpent (*Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 4; *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74; Rev 13:3).<sup>104</sup>

The trend of other political rulers as mythological enemies is found in the DWT in *Pss. Sol.* 2:25-26 where the proud dragon is a depiction of the Roman leader Pompey in the

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<sup>102</sup> Lanchester, "Oracles," 398 n.28 and 30.

<sup>103</sup> Collins, *Combat Myth*, 181-182.

<sup>104</sup> Collins notes the prominence of Nero in both Revelation and *Sib. Or.* 5. Collins, *Combat Myth*, 174-190.

first century BCE.<sup>105</sup> He, like the serpent in *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34, receives comeuppance from God (v.27). This political identification of the chaos monster of the DWT is well-attested elsewhere also (cf. Ezek 29:1-10; 32:2-6; Dan 7; Isa 27:1-2; Jer 51:1).<sup>106</sup> The dragon of Rev 12 is not as direct but makes an implicit link to the Roman Empire. The dragon is not a political leader of empire, as in *Pss. Sol.* 2:25 and *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34, but is Satan,<sup>107</sup> who subsequently gives power and authority to the beast (the Roman Empire) in Rev 13 and thus is connected to them.<sup>108</sup> both DWT with Graeco-Roman myth of Apollo and Leto.<sup>109</sup> It must be noted that this political connotation is not found throughout all the texts that show similarity to *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34. For example, in Wis 11:17-18 the beasts are the means of God's punishment of those who rebel against him.<sup>110</sup> However, it is nonetheless evident that the use of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34 is consistent with traditional applications of DWT.

### Thematic Coherence

*Sibylline Oracles* 5:28-34 does not elucidate the themes of the surrounding text. In the catalogue of different Roman rulers from *Sib. Or.* 5:1-51, it is only 5:28-34 that uses mythological motifs to describe its ruler in monstrous terms. In light of the prominence given

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<sup>105</sup> Herbert Edward Ryle and M. R. James, *Psalms of the Pharisees, commonly called The Psalms of Solomon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), 23, G.B. Gray, "Psalms of Solomon," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (APOT ed. R. H. Charles; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), 634, Kenneth Atkinson, *An Intertextual Study of the Psalms of Solomon* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 46-50, Angel, *Chaos*, 86.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Exegesis of *Sib. Or.* 3:28-34; 5:342-359.

<sup>107</sup> Rev 12:9.

<sup>108</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 122-124, Collins, *Combat Myth*, 157-186, Caird, *Revelation*, 147-170, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 660-780. Although Beale argues the dragon is both representative of Rome and Satan because of the parallel to Ezek 29:3 and Dan 7:7, 14. However the text itself identifies the dragon as Satan (v.9). Although the dragon is undoubtedly connected to and behind the Roman Empire (cf. Rev 13), to identify it as Rome is to conflate the dragon with the monster from the sea in the subsequent chapter. Beale, *Revelation*, 633-634.

<sup>109</sup> Collins, *Combat Myth*, 57-145. Aune also sees another combat myth in Rev 12, the Egyptian myth of Isis and Typhon. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 667-676.

<sup>110</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 95-96, Winston, *Wisdom*, 233-236..

to Nero throughout the rest of Book 5 and the additional space given to describe him in comparison to the other rulers,<sup>111</sup> this may be the Sibyl's intent. By using DWT for Nero and not for the other rulers, the Sibyl draws attention to his notoriety, not simply describing elements of his reign but casting him as the chaos monster that provokes God's intervention.

### Class 3: The Battling Stars

#### *Sib. Or. 5:512-531*

512 I saw the shining Sun's threat against the stars,  
513 and the Moon's terrible wrath against the flashes of lightning (στεροπήσιν):  
514 stars travailed in battle (μάχην); and God allowed them to fight (ἐπέτρεψε  
μάχεσθαι).  
515 For against the Sun the long flames were at odds  
516 and the two-horned rushing of the moon moved position.  
517 The morning star (Φωσφόρος) engaged in battle (μάχην), having mounted the  
back of Leo  
518 and Capricorn struck the foot of young Taurus  
519 and Taurus stole away Capricorn's day of return  
520 and Orion stole away Libra, no longer to remain.  
521 Virgo changed Gemini's destiny in Aries  
522 and the Pleiads were no longer appearing; and Draco disowned its belt  
523 Pisces went down into the girdle of Leo,  
524 Cancer did not remain fast, for he feared Orion;  
525 Scorpio's tail invaded right through terrible Leo  
526 and the Dog-Star fell because of the flame of the Sun  
527 and the force of the mighty Shining One burned up Aquarius.  
528 Heaven was himself stirred up, until he shook (ἐτίναξε) the warriors  
(μαχητάς)  
529 and having been angered, he cast them downwards to earth.  
530 Indeed having been swiftly struck into the baths of the Ocean  
531 they burned the whole land (γαῖαν ὅπασαν); but heaven remained starless.

#### Similarity

This passage of the battle of heavenly lights shows similarity to DWT, yet also incorporates SCI language. There is no single text which appears to have been specifically used by adapted but there are several thematic similarities to DWT and SCI. These include the

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<sup>111</sup> Nero has seven lines devoted to him, whereas the other rulers have between one and five lines about their reigns.

depiction of stars as warriors in battle, God's wrath, intervention and overthrow of the warriors who are struck down into the sea and burn the whole land.

The prominent focus throughout *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 is the vivid depiction of the battle between the sun, moon and stars (and their constellations). These bodies are explicitly described as warriors (μαχηταί, 5:528), engaged in battle (μάχη, 5:514, 517) who have divine permission to fight (μάχομαι, 5:514). This finds a strong precedent in DWT: there are numerous occasions in which the sun, moon and/or stars are depicted as part of a heavenly army and engaged in battle (Judg 5:20; *L.A.B.* 15:2; 23:10; 31:1-2; 32:7; Sir 43:8-10, Rev 12:1-9; *Sib. Or.* 3:712-713). In 1QH XI, 36-7 the DW's army, the host of heaven, are explicitly described as "warriors (of heaven)" (גבורי שמים)<sup>112</sup> the equivalent of the Sibyl's μαχηταί (5:528).<sup>113</sup> However in the sibylline passage the sun, moon and stars do not fight on the side of God (as in the aforementioned texts) or because of his will. Their fighting is only because of divine permission (5:514) and they eventually rouse his anger (5:528).

In Collins' translation of *Sib. Or.* 5:514 God "bade them [the stars] fight."<sup>114</sup> However, there is reason to prefer my translation that God "allowed them to fight." The Greek verb ἐπιτρέπω more frequently means "permit" or "suffer" with the infinitive<sup>115</sup> and this use is attested in Judaeo-Christian literature.<sup>116</sup> In Jos. *J.W.* 5:334 this translation is made of the same two verbs: Titus gave "permission" (ἐπέτρεψεν) to the seditious to fight (μάχεσθαι).<sup>117</sup> Moreover the battle in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 is also evidently not the will of God

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<sup>112</sup> See Angel's analysis Angel, *Chaos*, 50-54.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Joel 2:7; 4:9; Obad 1:9; Amos 2:14; Zech 9:13; 10:5, 7.

<sup>114</sup> Collins, *Book 5*, 405.

<sup>115</sup> See "ἐπιτρέπω" in *LSJ*, 667-668.

<sup>116</sup> cf. Matt 19:8; Mk 5:13; 10:4; Lk 8:32; Jn 19:38; Acts 27:3; *T. Job* 10:4; 22:1; Philo, *Leg.* 3:213.

<sup>117</sup> Josephus, *J.W.* 5:344, (Whiston). Thackeray translates it slightly differently in the Loeb volume, and translates ἐπέτρεψεν "offered" as well as "allowed." This is close to Whiston's version although "offered" has less precedence as a translation of the verb.

given their fighting is the reason he punishes them later in the passage. Initially God is incited to shake the warriors (5:528), but then he becomes sufficiently angry to strike them all down to earth (5:528-529). Not only is “allowed” a more common translation of the verb which is found alongside the same infinitive in Josephus, but it also makes better sense of the passage than Collins’ translation which suggests that God both instructed the luminaries to fight and then became angry with them for their obedience.

Although the positive depiction of the sun, moon and stars fighting alongside the DW is more common in the DWT, the negative picture also finds a history in the tradition. The DW intervenes in the actions of the heavenly host who fight on his side yet have autonomy and need intervention (*L.A.B.* 23:10, 31:2) and there are also a number of places in which the stars are in direct opposition to God: rousing his wrath and punishment (Isa 14:12; 24:21; 34:4; *1 En.* 17:3; 18:13-16; 21:1-7; 80:6-8; 86-88).

God’s judgement upon the battling stars, sun and moon comes in the following sequence: he shakes them (5:528), he casts them down to earth (5:529-530)<sup>118</sup> and as a result they burn the land (5:531). The shaking and falling of heavenly powers because of divine judgement is found in Isa 34:4 LXX B, which is followed by judgement upon earth (v.5).<sup>119</sup> In *T. Sol.* 20:16-17 the connection between stars and spiritual beings is directly explored: it is demons not the stars that fall from heaven and burn cities and fields. These examples demonstrate the variety of ways in which luminary battles are construed; these include the demise of these warriors at divine initiation, as well as their downward trajectory to earth.

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<sup>118</sup> The brief visit to the baths of Ocean should be understood as an idiomatic reference to the disappearance of luminaries. The phrase Ὠκεανοῖο λοετρά is used in Homer (*Il.* 18:489; *Od.* 5:275) who believed the sun and constellations rise and set in the ocean (Strabo, *Geog.* 1.1.6) and is thus a means of describing when their disappearance (when they are setting). The Sibyl presumably uses it here to describe in Homeric terms the conclusion of the descent of the heavenly warriors to earth beginning in 5:529. The warriors are only ‘swiftly’ in the baths of Ocean before their concluding act: burning the whole land (5:531).

<sup>119</sup> See also Rev 6:12-13.

Despite the similarities to DWT, there is still a substantial amount of material in the passage that is left unexplained: the specifically named constellations and the graphic description of the battle. Although ancient Jewish literature was no stranger to the signs of the Zodiac<sup>120</sup> they are never used to describe battle as they are here. These features find more in common with SCI literature found in the works of Lucan, Manilius and Seneca the Younger.<sup>121</sup> The similarities include the activity of the stars as well as the general interaction of the Zodiacs as independent entities that make war with one another. Some of these are only similar at a surface level. For example, Lucifer is said to flee in *Pharsalia* and the Pleiads grow dim (to describe nightfall)<sup>122</sup> and the sky is said to tilt the stars into the sea on another occasion (about the shortness of night).<sup>123</sup> However, a more developed parallel to *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 is evident in Lucan, *Phars.* 1.651-666:

If Saturn, that cold baleful planet, were no kindling his black fires in the zenith, then Aquarius would have poured down such rains a Deucalion saw, and the whole earth would have been hidden under the waste of waters. Or if the sun's rays were now passing over the fierce Lion of Nemea, then fire would stream over all the world, and the upper air would be kindled and consumed by the sun's chariot... But Mars—what dreadful purpose has he, when he kindles the Scorpion menacing with fiery tail and scorches its claws? For the benign star of Jupiter is hidden deep in the West, the healthful planet Venus is dim, and Mercury's swift motion is stayed; Mars alone lords it in heaven. Why have the constellations fled from their courses, to move darkling through the sky, while the side of sword-girt Orion shines all too bright? The madness of war is upon us...<sup>124</sup>

The mention of personified constellations in conflict with the result of upheaval is resonant with the images in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531. In addition, the burning of the sun is a threat to the world as it is to the stars in *Sib. Or.* 5:112, the constellations leave their courses as Libra does

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<sup>120</sup> E.g. Capricorn, Scorpio and Taurus (*Jub.* 3:9), Orion (*Job* 9:9; 38:31; *Amos* 5:8), Virgo (*T. Sol.* A 2:2), Draco (*T. Sol.* A 5:4) and Aquarius (*T. Sol.* A 2.2).

<sup>121</sup> i.e. Lucan, *Pharsalia*; Manilius, *Astronomica* and Seneca, *Thyestes* and *Consolatio Ad Marciam*.

<sup>122</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 2.723-735.

<sup>123</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 4.525-528.

<sup>124</sup> Lucan, *Phars.* 1.651-666 (Duff, LCL).



(5:520), as well as Draco (5:522) and Cancer (5:524). However, in the sibylline text, the constellations fight each other and one is pitted against another (5:517-527). This is absent in *Phars.* 1:651-666 and the only direct antagonism in the heavens is from the god Mars who incites the constellation Scorpio.

Another example is *Phars.* 1:68-89.<sup>125</sup> As the stars are cast into the sea by God in *Sib. Or.* 5:529-530, so in *Pharsalia* the dissolution of the world results in the fiery stars dropping into the sea. As well as this, the moon is personified and attempts to rule the day instead of “her brother,” i.e. the sun. The overthrow of natural laws is similar to the luminaries abandoning their posts, although the scope of *Pharsalia* is more than the stars alone. There is also a possible similarity between *Sib. Or.* 5:514 and *Phars.* 1.72. In the latter the constellations “clash” (*miscēo*) and this can have the sense of engaging in battle<sup>126</sup> seen in some translations,<sup>127</sup> however the more common translation is “to mix” or “intermingle” which better fits the context of creation dissolving into chaos.<sup>128</sup>

Manilius, a Stoic poet of the first century, also uses the images of the warring Zodiac signs in *Astronomica*. Like Lucan, he does so with respect to how it affects human relationships, although his emphasis is on astronomy. In *Astronom.* 2.385-432 he outlines the pattern of Zodiac relations: those which form more natural allies and those which have more antagonistic relationships based on their sex, relationship to seasons and the passing of day and night. He also notes the possibility of war between allied signs in *Astronom.* 2.471-484. All of this is a part of the God’s ordering of the world. Manilius ties these Zodiac relationships to human life: the ordering and interactions of the Zodiac affects human nature

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<sup>125</sup> See analysis of passage on p.72, above.

<sup>126</sup> See C. T. Lewis, et al., “*miscēo*,” 1149-1150.

<sup>127</sup> E.g. Lucan, *Civil War* (trans. Susanna M. Braund; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>128</sup> See Lewis, et al., *Latin Dictionary*, 1149-1150.

depending on “the stars that gave them [the humans] birth.”<sup>129</sup> In this pattern of astral relationships and their concomitant effect upon humankind, the signs and their offspring are later described as warring with each other (*Astronom.* 2.541-578). Opposition amongst the stars correlates to opposition between people: Manilius uses the imagery to elucidate how the general state of the cosmic order affects human interaction.<sup>130</sup> The names of the signs in the latter passage overlaps with some of those used in the *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531<sup>131</sup> and both texts have them in battle with one another although the Sibyl does not follow Manilius’ of which signs would fight with which nor does she explicitly connect the signs of the Zodiac to humans born under their star.

Seneca’s *Thyestes* also uses the signs of the Zodiac in yet another way. The signs appear in the chorus’ reaction to the darkness brought about by the horrific murder of Tantalus and Plisthenes by Atreus.<sup>132</sup> As part of the darkness that falls on the land after the murders, the chorus fears the end of the world.<sup>133</sup> This is expressed in the description of the signs of the Zodiac falling from the heavens, with a final destination the abyss (4:843) or the sea (4:820), similar to *Sib. Or.* 5:530 in which the stars are struck into the ocean. A number of the signs named in the chorus’ ode overlap with those used in the sibylline passage,<sup>134</sup> although they are not described as engaging in battle but only in their descent to the sea.

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<sup>129</sup> Manilius, *Astronomica* 2.484 (Goold, LCL).

<sup>130</sup> E.g. “The seed of Capricorn vexes those begotten under the Crab, and so do the children of the Balance, those produced by the Virgin’s sign, and those that are mustered under the constellation of the Bull averse” and later “From so many configurations of signs come beings opposed to each other, and thus variously and thus often is enmity created.” Manilius, *Astronom.* 2.547-549, 579-580 (Goold, LCL).

<sup>131</sup> E.g. Scorpio, Taurus, Leo, Pisces and Gemini.

<sup>132</sup> Seneca, *Thy.* 4. Tarrant notes that “the notion of a universe on the point of collapse is a potent metaphor for moral anarchy, both within the play and also in the Roman world to which the play implicitly relates.” Tarrant, *Thyestes*, 204. See also P. J. Davis, “The Chorus in Seneca's *Thyestes*,” *CQ* 39, no. 2 (1989): 421-435.

<sup>133</sup> Seneca, *Thy.* 4.789-884, esp. 875-884.

<sup>134</sup> All but the Dog-Star, Orion and the Pleiads.

The idea of battling stars is found in Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 26:6-7. In his picture of the world's end he describes a flood and then a fire which burns all things. As part of this "stars will clash with stars, and all the fiery matter of the world that now shines in orderly array will blaze up in a common conflagration."<sup>135</sup> Although less illustrative than the sibylline text, Seneca describes a conflict in the stars which results in the burning of the earthly realm. There are not enough precise parallels to constitute a direct relationship; for example, *Ad Marciam* does not have the same personification of the stars nor reference to them by their Zodiac names. Furthermore the "clashing" is more likely a natural collision as a result of the collapse of the cosmos, rather than a reference to battle.<sup>136</sup>

In conclusion, it appears from this review of similarities from Jewish and Graeco-Roman literature that *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 has drawn from both imagery from SCI as well as the DWT. No text has the specific orientation of the sun and moon against the stars (5:512-516), nor the precise interplay of zodiac signs in combat (5:517-527), nor the intervention of God in the midst of warring signs. The stars, sun and moon in combat and God's punishment of the stars features widely in the DWT. In contrast, the developed use of Zodiac signs is far more common in SCI although they do not account for God's involvement permitting the conflict and ultimately punishing them for it.

### Historical Consistency

Although *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 does not make direct use of any one text, the historical consistency can be evaluated in the general trend of how different motifs are used in DWT as well as SCI texts. With regards DWT, there are sufficient correlations which support the plausibility of the sibylline text drawing from this tradition. I will first address the historical

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<sup>135</sup> Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 26.6 (Basore, LCL).

<sup>136</sup> C. T. Lewis, et al., "incurro," 930-931.

setting and context of the sibylline passage itself as a basis from which to evaluate the Sibyl's use of older motifs, then review the context in comparison to the DW mythology and ultimately assess the relationship to the similarities in the SCI material.

Collins interprets *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 as referring to an eschatological event.<sup>137</sup> He argues that “the collision of the stars and resulting conflagration is found in late Stoicism, at least in Seneca”<sup>138</sup> and that this follows Jewish apocalyptic tradition, giving examples to support this (Isa 34:4; 13:10; Mark 13:24-25; Isa 14:12).<sup>139</sup> The problem with this, as has been addressed in chapter two, is that Stoic cosmology was not in the state that Collins presupposes, and he, like others, has fallen foul of using Seneca alone and not alongside the more diverse picture offered by other Roman Stoics. Stoic cosmology does not give Collins the necessary evidence to conclude the text is eschatological and without it, there is little evidence to sustain this point of view. I propose that the context of the passage is part of the Sibyl's direct concern with the land of Egypt for which the primary evidence comes from the preceding passage of *Sib. Or.* 5:486-511, especially 5:504-511.

The first reason to suppose a relationship to the land of Egypt is the term γῆ and its cognate forms which are used throughout *Sib. Or.* 5:484-531. While Collins translates γαῖαν ἅπασαν in 5:531 as “the whole earth”<sup>140</sup> there is good reason to prefer “the whole land” as a more suitable alternative. The preceding passage (5:484-511) is primarily concerned with Egypt, evident from the mention of two Egyptian goddesses (5:484, 487), as well as numerous explicit references to Egypt (5:488, 489, 501, 505, 507). Of these, two refer to the

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<sup>137</sup> “The sibyllist was not trying to portray an occurrence in Ethiopia, but was trying to describe the end of the world.” Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 92.

<sup>138</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 92.

<sup>139</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 92-93.

<sup>140</sup> Collins, *Book 5*, 405.

land of Egypt<sup>141</sup> (γαῖαν, 5:505 and γῆς, 5:507) as well as ‘that land’ (χθονὶ κείνῃ) (5:510) which can be identified as Egypt on the basis of the demonstrative pronoun. Given its parallels to the preceding and following lines the “down on earth” (κατὰ γῆς, 5:508) also, therefore, must refer to Egypt.

Given this overwhelming concern with Egypt, and especially its land, it follows that the γαῖαν ἄπασαν in 5:531 can be legitimately taken to refer to the same. This is even further likely when *Sib. Or.* 5:504-511 is placed alongside 5:529-531. The former reads:

<sup>504</sup> But (ἀλλ’ ) when the Ethiopians leave the shameless tribes of the Triballi  
<sup>505</sup> and are about to till the land (γαῖαν) of Egypt,  
<sup>506</sup> they will launch on a course of wickedness, so that all the later things  
 may come to pass,  
<sup>507</sup> for they will destroy the great temple of the land (γῆς) of Egypt.  
<sup>508</sup> God will rain down on them a terrible wrath, down on the land,<sup>142</sup>  
<sup>509</sup> so as to destroy all the wicked and all the lawless.  
<sup>510</sup> There will no longer be any sparing in that land (χθονὶ κείνῃ),  
<sup>511</sup> because they did not guard what God entrusted to them.<sup>143</sup>

While the first part of the oracle (5:484-503) describes how Egypt abandons worship of her goddesses for worship of the Jewish God and establishment of his temple, a new theme is introduced in 5:504: the destruction of Egypt’s temple will have the result that God will punish the Egyptians.<sup>144</sup> Repeated three times (5:505, 508, 510), the conclusion to the narrative supposes destruction of the wicked in a specific land. God’s punishment happens in a specific place, and his wrath comes downwards from above (5:508). These features are

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<sup>141</sup> Αἰγυπτιάδος γῆς in 5:507 and reading Αἰγυπτιάδος γαῖαν for Αἴγυπτον ἐγὼ in 5:505, cf. Collins, *Book 5*, 405 n.i4.

<sup>142</sup> “Land” is my translation of γῆς for Collins’ “earth.”

<sup>143</sup> Collins, *Book 5*, 405.

<sup>144</sup> Egypt should be taken as the subject to those who “will launch on a course of wickedness” and “destroy the great temple” (5:506-507), although the subject is not specified. Egypt is clearly the focus throughout and is evidently at fault for not guarding the temple (5:510-511). On this basis the reference to Ethiopia in 5:504-505 is the event that will be the precursor to Egypt going down this path to destruction. This is corroborated by Josephus who documents that it was the Egyptian governors, Lupus and Paulinus, at the instruction of Vaspasian, who brought about the destruction of the temple (*J.W.* 7:433-436).

comparable to 5:529-531: God's anger results in the destruction of the land, albeit by fire, from a heavenly source.

It may be argued that the above is undermined on the basis that the *γαῖαν ἅπασαν* (5:531) finds a verbal parallel in *Sib. Or.* 5:486 and this latter example Collins translates as "the whole earth." However this is founded on an unnecessary conflict as 5:486 can likewise be translated as "whole land." The emphasis given to Egypt and the land in particular as outlined above seems to prefer this translation.<sup>145</sup> I therefore conclude that Collins' translation in 5:486, like 5:531, imports a universal reading which the context does not necessitate.

The context of the *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 shows the events in Egypt and, given the focus on the fall of a temple, probably also the destruction of the temple at Leontopolis in 73CE.<sup>146</sup> Although the Egyptians went through a phase of true worship of God (5:489-503), ultimately their sin was so great they were not spared and ultimately perished (5:504-511). It is against this scenario that the cosmic conflict is set, and to this context that 5:512-531 ultimately resolves in 5:529-531 with the return to a description of the burning of the land.<sup>147</sup> From this point of view, what can be said of how the text uses motifs from the DWT, as well as the use of SCI?

The various parallels (1 *En.* 18:13-16; 21:1-10; Judg 5:20; Isa 14:12; Rev 12; *Sib. Or.* 3:669-731) are all set alongside a situation of divine judgement upon wickedness, whether angelic or human in origin.<sup>148</sup> This is consistent with the picture in the sibylline passage

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<sup>145</sup> *Sibylline Oracles* 5:213 also suggests that a local area is envisaged: with similar language it describes the ὅλην γῆν of Ethiopia. See below, p. 223

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 7.433-436.

<sup>147</sup> For burning of land as a feature of divine judgement see Joel 2:3; Isa. 1:7; 9:19; 34:9; Jer 43:12-13; Wis 16:18-19. In Joel 2:3 and Isa. 34:9 the context is the advent of the Divine Warrior.

<sup>148</sup> *1 En.* 80 also describes sin, from the moon and the stars, although divine judgement upon them is absent.

which also presents a picture of divine judgement. Like other use of DW mythology,<sup>149</sup> Isa 14:12-21 is concerned with divine judgement upon a particular ruler of a land. In the passage the Day Star is the object of God's wrath and is cast down. This correlates to the king of Babylon's eventual demise after an attempt at ascendancy. Although the specific king to which it refers is not certain, the culprit is accepted as the king of Babylon on the evidence of v.4 and v.22.<sup>150</sup>

A number of other texts have stars as the object of God's judgement without a human dimension. *I Enoch* 18:13-16 and 21:1-10 both have the star-angels as a development in an eschatological direction of the oracles of judgement against the Watchers<sup>151</sup> with *I En.* 86-88 also as an "extensive elaboration" of the material of Gen 6:1-4 and *I En.* 6-8.<sup>152</sup> Likewise Rev 12 has no human sphere in which God is executing judgement, but depicts the spiritual battle that undergirds the evils of Rome. It cannot be argued that the depiction of stars under divine judgement necessitates divine judgement on any segment of humanity. It is clear that there are places in which star-angels alone are judged and also texts in which humans are judged as well in a different sphere, as found in *I En.* 80 in which the both stars and humans will be destroyed because of their sinful ways.

Within the different strands of the DWT there is evidence to support the conclusion that the imagery in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 serves as a counterpart to the judgement envisioned

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<sup>149</sup> E.g. Isa 13 describes judgement upon Babylon and Isa 34 upon Edom, for other examples see above p.189 and 197. Isa 34:4 LXX MSS B and L includes τακίησονται πᾶσαι αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν which demonstrate a similar line of thought to Isa 14 that the stars and their fall are to be associated with the fall of political powers, either as a direct representation or as the fall of the associated spiritual powers.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 281-288, Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 128-132, Otto Kaiser and Dick Wilson, *Isaiah 13-39: a Commentary* (BPJ; London: SCM, 1974), 30-31. Goldingay argues it is about the fall of Babylonian power more than a particular moment Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 102.

<sup>151</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg, *I Enoch 1* (2vols.; vol. 1; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 2001), 278-289, 298-299.

<sup>152</sup> Nickelsburg, *I Enoch 1*, 372-373.

upon Egypt in the preceding passage. DWT is used widely to describe a coming judgement upon a people or land or the spiritual powers that are behind it. Given the parallels to SCI, I now address whether there is historical consistency between the sibylline passage and the texts that use this imagery.

The context of the two passages from Lucan's *Pharsalia* have been demonstrated in chapter two.<sup>153</sup> Both *Phars.* 1:68-89 and 1:651-666 use SCI to emphasise the calamity of civil war and the fall of Rome. It is unclear whether Lucan envisions the stars as deities or spiritual beings or whether he anthropomorphises them within a description of cosmic collapse to emphasise the political situation. The representation of astral images as a counterpart to or representation of human activity is nonetheless evident, whichever way it is read. As such it is consistent with the proposal that *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 relates the heavenly realm to the human activity described in 5:486-511.

This use of SCI in relationship to human events is also found in the parallel to Seneca, *Thy.* 4.789-884 and Manilius, *Astronom.* 2:385-432. In the latter Manilius proposes a counterpart relationship between the activity amongst the stars and the human relations on earth, although his focus is not on the fall of empire or divine judgement on a rebellious nation. In *Thyestes* Seneca uses SCI to emphasise the seriousness of a tragedy, the double homicide of Tantalus and Plisthenes. The historical setting of both texts in comparison to *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 is consistent in connecting the imagery to human activity although not the specific type of activity itself. *Thyestes* focuses on the actions of a single man rather than a whole people-group or nation and the language is used not as a direct parallel to the events of the tragedy but rather describes what the chorus expects to occur because of scale of the atrocity of the crime.

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<sup>153</sup> See ch.2.



Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 26:6-7 is the only Stoic text which shows no historical consistency with *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531. The SCI in Seneca's letter is clearly used to exhort Marcia to stop grieving the death of her son. He uses Stoic cosmology to explain how death is part of the process of life and that all things come to an end in order that life may ultimately begin anew. This usage is clearly a reference to the formal Stoic doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις and is not used for poetic or dramatic purposes. The clashing stars are part of the envisaged demise of the world that occurs at the end of every cycle of its existence, and may not even be warring but simply colliding in the cosmos' collapse. This does not affect the credibility of the Sibyl's use of SCI as the comparison to the other texts show a sufficient historical consistency.

From the evidence above, it appears that the *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 draws on and develops the DW language of luminaries engaged in battle as a counterpart to human activity, specifically the judgement due to Egypt. Although SCI may not connote the philosophical beliefs of early Stoicism, it has nonetheless been incorporated to expand the vocabulary of this cosmic conflict.

### Thematic Coherence

The evidence for this criterion has been demonstrated to a large extent under the argument for historical consistency. When *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 is removed from an unsuitable eschatological reading and understood as using DW mythology it sheds new light on the preceding passage and its focus upon in Egypt in 5:484-511. The latter describes Egypt's alleged conversion to worship God rather than Egyptian gods, their practice of faithful worship but their ultimate failure to guard what was entrusted to them with the consequence of a divinely issued wrath and ultimate destruction of the land by God. *Sibylline Oracles* 5:512-531 then serves as a parallel to this judgement upon Egypt with its depiction of the

spiritual chaos that is permitted to ensue through the imagery of stars in battle<sup>154</sup> concluding with God's eventual intervention and destruction of all and the darkness that will ultimately remain.

*Sibylline Oracles* 5:512-531 acts as the heavenly counterpart to the preceding narrative (5:484-511) which largely focuses upon human activity.<sup>155</sup> From an earthly perspective the Egyptians' lack of faithfulness with the temple and permitting its destruction is the cause of the judgement. From a cosmic point of view it is the persistence of the star-angels in battle and the chaos wrought from abandoning their divinely appointed order.<sup>156</sup> Chaos is permitted to reign for a time, both with the Egyptians' failure with the fall of the temple at Leontopolis as well as the cosmic collapse in the heavenly realm, but ultimately God intervenes and brings judgement.

***Sib. Or. 5:206-213***

- 206 Indians and high-minded (μεγάθυμοι) Ethiopians, do not be over-bold (μὴ  
θαρσεῖτε),  
207 for at the time when the circle of the arched axis,<sup>157</sup> Capricorn  
208 and Taurus, with Gemini, wind round the middle heaven,  
209 Virgo, having got to the top, the Sun around the front  
210 having fixed the celestial sphere around the axis, shall lead the way  
(ἡγεμονέσση).  
211 There will be a great burning high in the air down to earth<sup>158</sup> (κατα γαῖαν)  
212 And from stars in warring (ἐν μαχίμοις) will be a new nature (καινὴ φύσις) so  
that (ὥστ') the whole land  
213 of Ethiopia is utterly destroyed by fire and with wailings.

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<sup>154</sup> From an earthly perspective this may be seen outworking in the destruction of the temple brought about by the Roman Empire.

<sup>155</sup> Apart from the opening woes against Isis and Sarapis, cf. 5.484-488.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. especially 5:522-524.

<sup>157</sup> Here I adopt Lanchester's translation which emends κυρτοῦ for τούτου. Lanchester, "Oracles," 402, Collins, *Book 5*, 398.

<sup>158</sup> I translate κατα γαῖαν as "earth" as a contrast to the air above, rather than the as a reference to the planet as a whole.

## Similarity

With a striking resemblance to the previous text, *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 uses images of the movement of the constellations and stars at battle as part of the build up to the fiery destruction of the land of Ethiopia (5:212-213). It shows similarity to motifs in the DWT as well as SCI, like the that which is found in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531.

One main similarity to the DWT in *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 is the description of stars in battle (ἐν μαχήμοις). There are a number of examples of stars functioning in this way in the DWT (Judg 5:20; Dan 8:10; Isa 14:12; *L.A.B.* 15:2; 23:10; 32:1-2, 7).<sup>159</sup> In Judges 5:20, the stars are fighting on the side of God, albeit against kings not their land. I have shown how this motif was utilised in *Sib. Or.* 3:711-713 and 5:155-161; the latter clearly displays a star burning the land of “Babylon” (Rome) as the means of divine judgement in a similar way to *Sib. Or.* 5:211-213.<sup>160</sup>

As discussed in the analysis of *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531, the stars were often on the side of God but in other instances they oppose him. It is unstated whether the star in *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 fight with or against God in this passage. On the basis of the strong parallel to *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531, it is possible that the stars have similarly been given divine permission to engage in battle as he does in 5:514, especially as their warring is ultimately the means of Ethiopia’s punishment. God’s use of the stars for his purposes is not conditional on their allegiance to

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<sup>159</sup> Collins notes these parallels along with a number of non-DWT texts, i.e. Seneca, *Ad Marc.* 26:6, *Herc. fur.* 944-952, and Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 38.347-409. Collins, *Book 5*, 398 y2

For DWT behind Judg 5:20 see Craigie, “Three Ugaritic Notes,” 34-38, Craigie, “Deborah and Anat,” 374-381, Lindars and Mayes, *Judges 1-5*, 268-269, Niditch, *Judges*, 75. For Dan 8:10 see Collins, *Daniel*, 331-333, Porteous, *Daniel*, 123-124. Lacocque follows this to a degree, arguing that the heavenly army is less a spiritual reality as opposed to humankind Lacocque, *Daniel*, 161-162. For Isa 14:12 see p.224 above.

<sup>160</sup> See above, p.191f.

him,<sup>161</sup> but it is likely that stars' battle is permitted by God, given the strong similarity to 5:512-531.

The descent of the stars to earth, often to burn the land, is another similar motif in DWT (Isa 34:4 LXX B; Dan 8:10; *T. Sol.* 20:16-17; Rev 8:10; *I En.* 21:3-6; 54:5-6; 88:1; *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161). There is no explicit description of the stars falling (as is in *Sib. Or.* 5:528-531), but it is implicit in the events of 5:211-213. The "great burning" (5:211) which comes down to earth is best understood as correlating to the warring stars in the subsequent line (5:212) and an alternative description of the same event. Both the great burning and the stars are described in relation to the burning of land. The battle of the stars results in a new nature with the result that the land is destroyed by fire: the stars are the means of the destruction of Ethiopia. On this basis it is plausible to conclude the "great burning" is the new nature made from stars.

This use of stars as a means of fiery destruction is a feature of DWT and a virtue of their role as part of the host of heaven.<sup>162</sup> In Rev 20:9 fire also comes from heaven, not explicitly from the sun or stars, but as part of the divine destruction of the Dragon's army, namely Gog and Magog.<sup>163</sup> In *L.A.B.* 32:1-2 the stars burn up the enemy Sisera and his army and in 15:2 they are depicted with weapons of lightning.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> As in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 where the stars anger God yet are the means of destruction and judgement on the land of Egypt.

<sup>162</sup> See p.191ff.

<sup>163</sup> A number of points link this text to DWT. The context of cosmic battle between God and Satan who is identified as the dragon. The passage also bears a number of allusions to Ezek 38-39, not least the reference to Gog and Magog in v.8. The destruction of Gog and Magog by fire combines the imagery of their fate in Ezek 38:22 with other material, cf. David Edward Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1079-1099. For DW mythology in Ezek 38-39 see Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament of God*.

<sup>164</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 169-171.

One further possible link to the DWT is found in *Sib. Or.* 5:206 and the imperative to μὴ θαρσεῖτε and the description of Ethiopians as μεγάθυμοι.<sup>165</sup> In the DWT the cause of punishment is frequently the same as it is here: the arrogance and pride of his enemy. The arrogance of the little horn of the beast in Daniel is repeated emphasised (Dan. 7:7, 11, 20)<sup>166</sup> as well as the figure depicted by the beast, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Dan 11:35-36). The Dragon in Ezekiel 29:1-10 is also described in arrogant terms in aspiring to be like God.<sup>167</sup> Likewise the Dragon's pride is again emphasised in *Pss. Sol.* 2:25-31.<sup>168</sup> It is also a feature of non-serpent enemies of the DW: the Morning Star (Isa 14:12-14) is described as attempting to ascend to heaven and thus aspire to divine status but is ultimately cast down. A number of these texts have been traced to have a common origin from the subplot in the Baal epic of ʿAṭṭaru's appointment and subsequent downfall as king in place of Baal.<sup>169</sup>

One potential issue with this proposed similarity is the translations of the terms θαρσεῖτε and μεγάθυμοι to imply pride or arrogance. Collins prefers a more neutral translation with “have no courage” for μὴ θαρσεῖτε and “great-spirited” for μεγάθυμοι. The verb θαρσέω generally means “to be of good courage,” but when it is used in a negative context, as it here, the translation “over-bold” may be preferred.<sup>170</sup> Likewise μεγάθυμοι, which is translated as “great-spirited” by Collins,<sup>171</sup> may also have the sense of having too much spirit. While this would be a less common translation of the term, it is a viable one and

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<sup>165</sup> The term μεγάθυμος occurs in 17 additional places, *Sib. Or.* 1:293; 11:38, 68, 99, 119, 195, 211, 226; 12:19, 115, 210; 13:79, 82; 14:53, 78, 152, 173.

<sup>166</sup> For DWT in Dan 7 see n.70, above.

<sup>167</sup> For DWT background here see Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament of God*, 152.

<sup>168</sup> Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 50-51, Angel, *Chaos*, 83-86.

<sup>169</sup> KTU 1.6 I:56-67, KTU 1.6 V:1-6.

<sup>170</sup> See “θαρσέω” in *LSJ*, 784-785.

<sup>171</sup> Collins, *Book 5*, 398.

the context of the passage, with the subsequent destruction of Ethiopia, would prefer this translation. Lanchester captures this sense in his version “You Indians, be not overbold, and you stout-hearted Ethiopians.”<sup>172</sup> On this basis, the terms show similarity to the typical enemies found in the DWT.

Like *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531, *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 also exhibits some features that are found in SCI, namely the interaction of the signs of the Zodiac, their warring and the description of a destructive fire. *Sibylline Oracles* 2:206-213 envisions the Zodiac constellations moving in different ways and to some extent personifies the astral bodies.<sup>173</sup> However, unlike the conclusion to Book 5, this shorter text does not vividly describe the battle between the stars. There are movements and interactions between the signs of the Zodiac (and the Sun) in 2:207-210 and then a simple statement that the stars are warring (5:212). The former are a portent of something, it is “at the time when” these things take place (5:207) that the Sun “shall lead the way” (5:210). This perhaps indicates the beginning of the stars’ battle, as the Sun’s initial leadership as ἡγεμονεύω can refer to leading as a commander in war.<sup>174</sup> The “stars warring” is the culmination of what is waited for from 5:207-210 and it is the event that results in the burning of the land. However, the battle is not extrapolated further than this and thus does not correlate to SCI in the same way as *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531.

The imagery of Seneca’s *Ad. Marc.* 26:6-7 resembles *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 with a new nature anticipated from the battle of the stars and conflagration. Both passages have stars clashing with stars and a conflagration and there is some kind of renewal in each, although the picture in *Ad Marciam* is clearly universal and not limited to Ethiopia (*Sib. Or.* 5:213).

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<sup>172</sup> Lanchester, “Oracles,” 401. Similar sentiments may be seen in other passages in *Sib. Or.* 5, e.g. 5:90, 173, 184-5, 228. This is followed more recently by Craig A. Evans, et al., trans., *The Pseudepigrapha (English) (OPE)* (n.p.: OakTree Software, 2008), BibleWorks, v.8. The only difference in this more recent translation is the exchange for ‘Ye’ with ‘You.’

<sup>173</sup> E.g. the sun leading the way in 5:209-210.

<sup>174</sup> See “ἡγεμονεύω” in *LSJ*, 762.

There are three common motifs although they differ in order. *Ad Marciam* has (1) stars clashing, (2) a conflagration (involving all matter) and (3) the subsequent (re)new(ed) nature.<sup>175</sup> By contrast, *Sib. Or.* 2:212-213 has (1) an astral battle, (2) new nature and (3) resultant conflagration (of the land). The new nature in the latter is a direct result of the stars warring and occurs prior to rather than as a result of the conflagration itself. One other drawback to the similarity is that the stars clashing in *Ad. Marc.* 26:6 is more likely the inevitable collision of cosmic collapse than autonomous beings at war.<sup>176</sup> That said, there are sufficient examples from elsewhere (Manilius, *Astronom.* 2.471-484, 541-578; Lucan, *Phars.* 1.68-89, 651-666) for the stars' battle to have some connection to SCI.<sup>177</sup>

In conclusion, *Sib. Or.* 2:206-213 uses images and motifs that are similar to those found in both DWT and SCI. The burning of a land from a heavenly origin, particularly the result of a star warring with God's permission and as a means of his judgement, is found in the DWT. Unusually, there is no appearance of the DW himself and the stars that battle are probably not acting on his behalf so much as the means of his judgement, as they are in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531. The similarity to SCI is not as prominent as in the this latter passage also. The Zodiac signs are present but function as a sign before the destruction of Ethiopia and are distinct from the warring stars. In summary, *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 show similarity to both traditions, although the evidence is not as vivid as it is in other depictions. This may in part due to the short and specific nature of the oracle which does not follow as part of a poetic narrative on Ethiopia.

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<sup>175</sup> The specific phrase *καινή φύσις* does not appear in any Greek literature but the motif resembles the renewal of the world after the cosmic conflagration: the ultimate result of the conflagration is a renewed world where matter is recreated after the destruction of all by the fire and this state is referred to in a number of descriptions of Stoic cosmology. This is seen in Eusebius' description of Stoic cosmology which describes a "natural change" (*Evang. Prep.* 15.18.2). Aetius also speaks of "alterations of [the] matter" (1.7.33) and Plutarch describes the fire as condensing into water, then earth and ultimately a bodily nature (*On Stoic Self-Contradiction*, 1053B). All translations found in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers I*, 274-276.

<sup>176</sup> For the background on the clashing of stars in this text see p.216 and Lewis, et al., *Latin Dictionary*.

<sup>177</sup> See p.213 above.

## Historical Consistency

The parallels in *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 to the DWT and SCI shows some consistency in how they have been used. The historical context is clearly one of judgement that is to come upon Ethiopia, most explicitly for their arrogance (5:206) but possibly also for Ethiopia and India's role in the downfall of Syene and Teuchira.<sup>178</sup> The Ethiopian destruction of Syene may refer to the events of 24BC when Ethiopia attacked the city and therefore *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 refers to an historical event after that time when Ethiopia herself experienced some kind of demise or the desire to see it happen. This focus upon a specific nation correlates with *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 which describes the disastrous fate to befall Egypt as a result of the stars' battle and ultimate descent to burn the land. I have already shown the historical consistency of using DWT in this way in the analysis of *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 above.<sup>179</sup> The only variation in how the imagery is applied between the two sibylline passages is that in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 the judgement is on both the stars and the land of Egypt where 5:206-213, it is Ethiopia alone. This suggests the former focuses upon judgement in the cosmic realm as well as the earthly one, whereas the latter focuses more exclusively on the earthly realm.

The historical consistency with SCI as it appears in Seneca's *Ad Marc.* 26.6-7 is low. While the sibylline stars battle and a new nature emerges, which might be seen as a reference to ἐκπύρωσις and world recurrence, the images here are out of order. The stars war with the result of a new nature (5:212), but this is the *cause* of the destruction of Ethiopia, not the *outcome* (5:212-3). Moreover the focus is upon the land of Ethiopia not a universal conflagration and the implications for grieving well as in Seneca. However, there are other examples of SCI in Lucan's *Pharsalia* that show some correlation to the use in the sibylline text. Although Lucan does not use SCI to elucidate God's judgement on a nation, it is still

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<sup>178</sup> 5:194-195.

<sup>179</sup> See above, p.213f.



used as a metaphor to describe the disaster coming to the Roman Republic. This consistency of use of SCI I demonstrated in the exegesis of *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531.<sup>180</sup>

The imagery of *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 is historically consistent with the traditions to which it shows similarity. The consistency was greater in its use of the DWT, which often uses the mythology to speak of judgement upon nations and peoples, but nonetheless also consistent with the use of SCI in Lucan's *Pharsalia*. It must also be noted that while the passage does have similarity and historical consistency with the DWT, it bears the greatest similarity to the sibylline development of it as its greatest parallels are with other sections of Book 5.

#### Thematic Coherence

In the passages surrounding *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 there are various prophetic messages that are discrete and separate to this oracle of judgement on Ethiopia. The previous passage outlines troubles to come upon the Britains and Gauls (5:200-205) and the one that comes afterwards describes the return of Nero and troubles to come upon Corinth (214-227). Neither passage continues the imagery, themes or focus of 5:206-213 although both maintain the Sibyl's negative attitude towards the nations and proclamation of destruction or disaster upon them. Given this distinctiveness in language and difference in context, the criterion of thematic coherence is an unsuitable tool for this text. That said the presence of DWT in 5:206-213 may invite further investigation of allusions in the surrounding material,<sup>181</sup> but it does not fulfil the criterion.

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<sup>180</sup> See above, p.221f.

<sup>181</sup> E.g. The presence of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 may illuminate some of the language in the subsequent passage (5:214-227) which alludes to Dan 7:8, noted by Collins, *Book 5*, 398. In 5:222-224, Nero cuts off the roots from the previous three heads, like the little horn in Daniel which uproots the three previous horns (Dan 7:8). This parallel suggests that here is another example in which Nero is considered an enemy of the Divine Warrior. However this argument is based upon one allusion to Daniel 7:8, does not explicitly mention a horn but only roots and the rest of the text does not appear to make use of any other mythological

## Overall Integration, Recurrence and Creativity

### Overall Integration

The next step is to evaluate the overall integration in *Sibylline Oracles* 5: what does the use of the DWT offer the reading of the text as a whole? Understanding Book 5 in terms of the Jewish combat myth illuminates the book in two ways: both in terms of the structure of the book and a number of prominent themes and content, including Egypt and Nero.

Collins argues that there are six oracles in *Sib. Or.* 5 and that the middle four of these<sup>182</sup> show a pattern which includes (a) “oracles against various nations,” (b) the return of Nero as “an eschatological enemy,” (c) the “advent of a savior figure” and (d) a “destruction, usually by fire.”<sup>183</sup> Although elements of these are present through the book, Collins overstates how they structure the book. His assertion this six-fold division is based on the Sibyl’s self-reflection in introducing the middle four oracles (5:52, 111, 179, 286). However not only is this absent in the sixth oracle, by Collins’ own admission, but there are several other occurrences of self-reflection and self-reference by the Sibyl that do not fit within this pattern.<sup>184</sup> The four-fold structure to the central oracles may be present, but it is not sufficiently self-evident to warrant a simple assertion of its existence.<sup>185</sup> For example, the saviour figure in the second oracle (5:51-110) is a king identified in 5:108-109 and the judgement is only a single line with no mention of fire (5:110). Some features are present that are not part of the pattern: the fourth oracle (5:179-295) includes a description of a peaceful

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material. Further evidence is required to sustain this argument fully and propose a connection between the two passages.

<sup>182</sup> Collins argues the six oracles are (1) 5:1-51, (2) 5:52-110, (3) 5:111-178, (4) 5:179-285, (5) 5:286-434 (6) 5:434-531. See also Goodman, “Sibylline Oracles,” 644.

<sup>183</sup> See Collins, *Book 5*, 390.

<sup>184</sup> The most obvious self-reflection Collins overlooks is in 5:333, but the Sibyl also includes some reference to herself in 5:151, 236, and 398.

<sup>185</sup> Collins does this in *Sibylline Oracles*, 74.

land post-destruction. Also the four elements also occur at other points in the oracles, for example divine punishment appears in the middle of the oracles against the nations in 5:298-305.<sup>186</sup> While the four oracles Collins identifies do have the structure he proposes, it is evident it to some extent oversimplifies the text.<sup>187</sup> I suggest then, that the opening and the close to the book are 5:1-51 and 5:484-531, but that the content in-between the two is not easily divisible into a linear pattern, although the elements of Collins pattern do have a repeating prominence in the material.

The use of DWT integrates well with the above argument about *Sib. Or. 5* and it also assists in elucidating aspects of Collins' proposed structure and some of the issues that it brings up. The recurring presence of an enemy who brings destruction and chaos, frequently but not always Nero; the repeating anticipation a saviour of divine origin; and the ultimate destruction of the enemy are all dominant features of DWT and particularly within the OT prophetic literature.<sup>188</sup> However the presence of DWT takes it further and explains the water and abyss language that recurs through the text<sup>189</sup> and the fiery form divine judgement often takes.<sup>190</sup>

The presence of DWT in two particular passages support and elucidate certain emphases in Book 5. In the opening section, 5:1-51, Nero is mentioned and given more attention to than any other in the list of rulers.<sup>191</sup> It has been argued above that the description

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<sup>186</sup> As well as this, at a number of points destruction by water is envisaged (5:59-60, 115-117, 126-135) and falling in the abyss or sea (5:121, 293-294).

<sup>187</sup> Although it is a helpful counter argument to those that propose that there is no pattern to *Sib. Or. 5*. Cf. Lanchester, "Oracles," 373, Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, 186-187. Both divided Book 5 into two: 5:1-51 and 52-531.

<sup>188</sup> Notably Ezekiel, Joel, Isaiah and Daniel.

<sup>189</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:121, 126, 132, 157, 294, 447, 449.

<sup>190</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:9, 84, 118, 159, 177, 213, 274, 299, 369, 377, 399, 418.

<sup>191</sup> Specifically 5:28-34.

of him as a fearful serpent (5:29) and the havoc he wreaks (5:29-34) draws from the mythological Serpent-Dragon of DWT. This depiction of Nero construes him not simply as a wicked human in either literal or metaphorical language, but as a mythological enemy of God and a threat to the fabric of divine order. This opening picture brings into sharp relief Nero's prominence throughout the rest of the book. This is not someone who is simply a threat to faithful believers or local people groups. He is not only a human enemy, but an embodiment of evil who attempts to usurp authority from God himself (5:34-35).

The second particular passage that has an impact on the integration of the themes of the book as a whole is *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531. Under the criterion of availability it was noted that Egypt receives more attention than any other geographical location, so much so that Book 5 can be confidently identified as Egyptian in origin. Within this context it is fitting that the climax of the Book, *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531, concludes not with reference to universal destruction, but to the cosmic dimension of the destruction and judgement upon Egypt which includes a cosmic battle in which God ultimately intervenes. Whether or not 5:1-51 is a later addition, the focus from the outset of Book 5 is upon Egypt<sup>192</sup> and so it is fitting that it conclude with judgement upon Egypt and the powers behind it. It is not necessary that this is so, but such an interpretation conforms neatly to the Egyptian themes in the book.

The criterion of overall integration is thus satisfied with respect to DWT, both in terms of form and content. The pattern of the book which includes evil forces that cause chaos, saviours (both human and divine) who come to intervene, and the ultimate destruction of the enemy, often by fire, all fit within DWT and incorporate motifs which have yet to be accounted.<sup>193</sup> Likewise the themes are illuminated with Nero construed as a mythological Serpent-Dragon, which explains his prominence throughout the book, and the stars warring

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<sup>192</sup> i.e. either at 5:1 or at 5:52.

<sup>193</sup> I.e. prominence of waters as agents of destruction.

and rousing God's wrath, an apt counterpart to the focus and ultimate judgment Egypt receives.

In contrast to this, SCI bears little relationship to the overall integration of the book. If it were drawing on the Stoic doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις this would not elucidate the judgement language and dynamic conflict that permeates the book and its structure as it is concerned with the final fate of the world, rather than specific kingdoms, human enemies and saviour figures.<sup>194</sup> Nor are the themes of the book expanded by the type of use of SCI found in *Pharsalia* where it is used to exaggerate the disaster of an impending civil war. It may emphasise and give weight to the immediate contexts of *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 and 512-531, but it does not appear consistently enough throughout the book to suggest a significance to the overall themes. Given the frequency of use DWT in Book 5, it makes more sense that SCI has been sublimated into this mythology to expand the already present language of cosmic conflict involving the heavenly host.

### Recurrence

The recurrence of DWT throughout Book 5 is high. All six texts show use of DWT in various forms. It is possible that there are other texts which use this mythology which would increase the recurrence even further, but space has prohibited a study of these.<sup>195</sup> The recurrence of the SCI in the book is lower. Of the six texts examined, two (5:206-213, 512-531) show use of this imagery. However, given the strength of similarity in these two occurrences, the lower recurrence still sufficiently meets the criterion.

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<sup>194</sup> Perhaps only insofar as making other fiery judgements a foretaste of the ultimate one.

<sup>195</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:60-72, 121-136, 363-385, 476-483.

## Creativity

The use of DWT and SCI in the *Sib. Or.* 5 is highly creative. None of the six passages quote verbatim from earlier examples in the traditions. The DWT motifs used draw from a range of different texts and do not show a reliance on one particular source. However, the opposite question might be asked: is there some degradation in the Sibyl's use of the mythological tradition because of the range of sources she has used?

The Sibyl draws on a range of DW motifs (i.e. Serpent-Dragon, DW theophany, chaos waters, hubris of DW enemy, stars as the heavenly army and burning as a means of punishment) as well as showing similarity to the tradition as it has been used in a range of different sources (e.g. Isa, Ezek, Dan, Psalms, *Pss. Sol.*, *L.A.B.*, Wis, Sir, Ezek. Trag., Rev). However the motifs are all used consistently with earlier examples of the tradition, usually depicting political rulers or empires as the arrogant enemy of the DW, with judgement coming from the heavens, by means of God himself or a heavenly ambassador. Into this milieu the stars appear both on God's side (5:155-161) and against him (5:512-531), reflecting their personified role as spiritual beings in DWT. Although the Sibyl introduces some changes, including the adoption of SCI language to describe the cosmic battle and generally preferring divine representatives rather than the DW himself, the motifs are all used consistently and coherently, which indicates the mythology has not been subject to degradation. The introduction of SCI into the DWT actually attests to the sophistication of the Sibyl's mythopoeic mind. She draws from an emerging body of imagery to expand the vocabulary of cosmic battle and specifically the actions of the heavenly powers.

The introduction of SCI into the DW mythology is a particular novel turn but not one that is inconsistent with the nature of DW mythology nor the context of SCI in and around the first century CE. As has been extensively reviewed, DW mythology frequently incorporated cosmic language of stars as part of the heavenly host and at war with the enemy

of God and the language of fire as a means of judgement and the language of the shaking if not undoing of creation is well attested in this tradition. Within this context the language of SCI offers a neat new trajectory, expanding and further reimagining the cosmic conflict with the motifs descended from Stoic cosmology. In this way the Sibyl shows herself to be truly participating in a mythmaking tradition, astutely observing and incorporating new yet relevant imagery to her mythpoeism.

The Sibyl's use of SCI is also highly creative, yet here she differs as her adaption of this imagery shows greater diversity to its origins. While there are examples of SCI being used in relation to particular human activity (Seneca, *Thy.*, Lucan, *Phars.*, Manilius, *Astronom.*), only one relates to political empires and leaders (Lucan, *Phars.*) and none use it within the context of divine wrath and execution of judgement and punishment. The criterion of creativity is therefore fulfilled for both SCI and DWT.

## Conclusion

The six texts studied from *Sib. Or.* 5 show diverse use of the DWT and incorporation of SCI. They all meet the criteria of similarity and historical consistency. Two texts do not meet the criterion of thematic coherence (5:28-34 and 206-213) because of the type of passage in which they appear: the distinctiveness of *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34 is the point, the DWT illuminates the passage as more significant from the surrounding material.<sup>196</sup> The criterion was not met for *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 because it is a separate oracle from those that surround it. The DWT is used throughout to depict the Nero, Rome, Ethiopia, Egypt and the powers behind them as enemies of God who, in various ways, rouse his wrath and intervention. This sometimes is direct (5:28-34, 342-359, 512-531) and sometimes is mediated through a heavenly figure or burning star(s) (5:155-161, 411-433, 206-213). SCI is used within the tradition to expand the vocabulary of stars at battle. The mythological background illuminates both the passages in question and the pattern of cosmic conflict found throughout the book.

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<sup>196</sup> This corroborates with Nero's portrayal and role in the rest of the book.



## CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DWT.

In chapter three and four I examined thirteen different texts from *Sibylline Oracles* 3-5 that exhibited possible occurrences of the DW tradition. Using the methodology outlined in chapter two I applied seven criteria to the texts: three to each text individually (similarity, historical consistency and thematic coherence) and four to the texts grouped by the book in which they appeared (availability, overall integration, creativity and recurrence).<sup>1</sup> I also used the methodology for those texts where SCI may have been used.<sup>2</sup> Having undertaken this work of exegesis, I now turn to the task of summarising its results in order to return to the original problem of how to understand the mythological language of Mark 13:24-25. The *Sibylline Oracles* were selected as a valuable group of texts for addressing this for two reasons. The first was because no-one had yet asked the question of whether the Divine Warrior mythology is present in the Oracles nor how it might have been used therein. Given the modest attention given to the DWT in the Second Temple period generally, such a study would bring further light into this field of study. The second reason the *Sibylline Oracles* were chosen was because they are one of the key works used by some Mark scholars as evidence of language of literal cosmic catastrophe in Jewish literature. However, little attention had been paid to the Oracles themselves (beyond a superficial reading) that would substantiate the assertion that the language was literal and had derived from Stoic cosmology and the doctrine of ἐκπύρωσις.

In this chapter I shall summarise and review the results that emerged from applying the seven criteria to the *Sibylline Oracles*; looking at the extent to which they use DWT, the

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<sup>1</sup> The first two texts from Book 3 were separated from the rest of book 3 as they are a much later addition, at least a century apart in origin.

<sup>2</sup> These are *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, 4:171-192, 159-161, 5:206-213 and 512-531.

particular emphases of the different books as well as how they have used Stoic Cosmological Imagery within the tradition. I will then consider how these conclusions affect and develop the current picture of the DWT in Second Temple Judaism, both in respect of common motifs and imagery as well as primary referents and themes. Then, in chapter six, I will consider what this means for Mark 13:24-25 and re-assess its interpretative issues and what the above offers to current arguments and understanding of the field.

### Review of Conclusions

#### (1) DWT in the *Sibylline Oracles*

The first question that needs to be answered with respect to the exegesis of the Sibylline Oracles is this: do the texts studied meet the criteria sufficiently to conclude that the DWT is being actively employed? Of the thirteen texts studied, it is evident that twelve sufficiently meet these criteria and that all three books therefore are using the Divine Warrior Tradition. The following table summarises whether the criteria were met:

	Availability	Similarity	Historical Consistency	Thematic Coherence	Overall Integration	Creativity	Recurrence
<b>Book 3.1-92</b>							
63-74 75-92	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✗ ✓	✗	✓	✓
<b>Book 3.93-end</b>							
669-731 797-808	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Book 4</b>							
56-60 159-161 171-192	✓	✓ ✗ ✓	✓ ✗ ✓	✓ ✗ ✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Book 5</b>							
342-360 155-161	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓	✓

414-433		✓	✓	✓			
28-34		✓	✓	✗			
512-531		✓	✓	✓			
206-213		✓	✓	✗			

Table 2: Overview of the sibylline texts and their fulfillment of the criteria

All texts fell within the criterion of **availability**, originating from a Jewish hand in the Mediterranean world between the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Books 3 and 5 came from Egypt, most probably the Jewish priestly community at Leontopolis. Book 4 probably came from somewhere within the Roman Empire of the first century, most likely Asia Minor. Books 3-5 all showed strong thematic **similarities** to the tradition which recurred throughout (**recurrence**), although precise verbal parallels or quotations from earlier texts within the tradition were less common. In terms of **historical consistency**, the *Sibylline Oracles* used the tradition in a way common to OT usage, with a frequent focus upon a political empire or ruler. The presence of DWT within the oracles contributed to the thematic context of the majority of texts specifically (**thematic coherence**) as well as the rhetoric and prevailing themes of the Oracles as whole (**overall integration**): the concerns of the Sibyl were supported and developed by the presence of DWT. At no point do any of the texts quote verbatim from their sources: they all show independent adaptation of the traditions from which they draw (**creativity**).

There are two criteria which were not met on several occasions. Three texts did not meet the criterion of thematic coherence (*Sib. Or.* 3:63-74, 5:28-34, 206-213). This does not significantly affect the conclusion that, overall, they sufficiently meet the criteria to conclude they use DWT. Two of these passages (3:63-74; 5:206-213) are discrete oracles that to some extent distinct from their surrounding context. Broader themes may persist (e.g. general tone of judgement), but the specific focus dramatically shifts which makes this criterion obsolete as there is not an obvious wider thematic picture in which to understand the oracle and use of DWT. There one remaining text, *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34 does not function in this way. Yet the

similarity is sufficiently high with the serpentine depiction of Nero to suggest that perhaps the obscurity of the reference in the more mundane description of other leaders is the point. The opening sequence of *Sib. Or.* 5 may be deliberately contrasting Nero's notoriety from the other political leaders through using DW mythology. This emphasis is corroborated by his dominant appearance elsewhere in Book 5<sup>3</sup> and his identification as Beliar elsewhere in the Egyptian sibylline tradition.<sup>4</sup>

The second place in which the criteria was repeatedly not met was *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161. In it God demonstrates divine fury that leads to a fiery judgement, which could originate from DW mythology, but the similarities were not strong enough and consequently the related criteria of historical consistency and thematic coherence were not met. That is not to say DWT is definitely not present, but rather the evidence is insufficient to make a firm conclusion either way. Another possibility is that it uses SCI as there are some similarities to *Pharsalia* and *Ad Marciam*; yet the criteria of historical consistency and thematic coherence were not met with regard to SCI and it is therefore difficult to make a conclusive statement as to the origins of the conflagration language in this passage. Given the diversification of SCI in the Roman era, it is possible the Sibyl is using the imagery in an entirely new way. However, either way the conflagration is part of the more vivid description of this fiery expression of God's wrath (*Sib. Or.* 4:171-192) in which fire is God's chief weapon to judge the people should they not repent. Other than this, the texts studied show a strong participation in the Divine Warrior Tradition, although each sibylline book does so with different emphases. I will now examine the dominant DW motifs used by the Sibylline Oracles and summarise my findings as to how each book employs them for its own purposes.

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<sup>3</sup> For Nero's prominence in *Sib. Or.* 5 see Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 80-86.

<sup>4</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74.

The following table charts the use of DW mythological motifs employed within the Sibylline Oracles:<sup>5</sup>

	Stoic Cosmological Imagery	Arrogance	Beliar	Cosmic shaking	Darkness	Divine battle	Fire / Fiery swords / Burning	God as warrior	Heavenly army	Judgement	Nero	Sea / River	Serpent / Dragon	SM figure	Stars falling	Stars/sun/moon battle	Temple hope	Temple threat	Time of peace	Weather disturbance
<b>Book 3</b>																				
63-74		✓	✓				✓			✓	✓									
75-92	✓				✓		✓			✓					✓					
669-714				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
767-807					✓	✓			✓				✓			✓	?	✓	✓	?
<b>Book 4</b>																				
56-60				✓	✓					?		✓								
159-161	✓						✓			✓										
171-192	✓					✓	✓	?		✓		✓							✓	
<b>Book 5</b>																				
342-360				✓	✓		✓			✓		✓							✓	
155-161		?				✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		
414-433							✓	✓		✓			✓			✓	?	✓	✓	
28-34		✓									✓	✓								
512-531	✓						✓			✓		?		✓	✓			✓	✓	
206-213	✓	✓					✓			✓					✓				✓	

Table 3: Occurrence of DWT motifs in sibylline texts<sup>6</sup>

Book 3 consisted of four texts which originated from two different periods, although both from Egypt. The earliest, the main corpus from *Sib. Or.* 3, consists of two long passages both of which exhibit several similarities to the DWT. There is a wide range of such imagery used in these two passages. Particularly prominent, and in contrast to the other sibylline books, is that God himself appears as a warrior in battle.<sup>7</sup> There is no delegation of this role to star-angel or messiah figures. In line with the focus on God's presence, the reaction of the cosmos

<sup>5</sup> There are a number of places where certain motifs are *possibly* present but the evidence is not conclusive; these I have marked with a question mark. Also, although this table shows the occurrence of the motifs, it does not show the frequency or extent of their appearance within in each text.

<sup>6</sup> Question marks indicate that a motif may be present, but the evidence is not as strong as other motifs.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Sib. Or.* 3:671-2, 689, 705-6 and 708-9.

is more strongly attested to here than in Book 4 and 5. In addition to these themes, it also has more unequivocal battle language.<sup>8</sup> There is also explicit reference to the sun and moon fighting on the side of God, picking up on DW motifs,<sup>9</sup> but this is devoid of any Stoic cosmological influence and is not extensively used. One major theme reflected in the use of DW mythology in the main corpus of Book 3 is that of the temple. Judgement and divine action centre upon attitudes and actions against the temple and an anticipated peaceful era of temple worship is envisioned for the future. This is no surprise given its context of the Book in the period in which the Jerusalem temple was threatened by Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his assistants. The passages from Book 3 express in mythological terms the judgement to come upon those who would threaten the temple and articulate the victory of God over them.

The later material at the start of Book 3 uses DWT also, but its emphases show more similarity to the contemporaneous Book 5. The cosmic threat of Beliar (incarnate in the figure of Nero) is the most prominent motif with the use of this specific name of the common enemy of the DW in the Second Temple period. It is still God who brings punishment upon the enemy and not a star-angel or messiah, although there is no description of God in battle himself. His means of destruction is fire and with this feature there may be some incorporation of SCI within the tradition, but it cannot be confirmed. The DWT is used here to speak both of the divine judgement at work in the fall of enemy leaders, namely Nero and Cleopatra, as well as the spiritual powers at work behind them.

*Sibylline Oracles* 4 also meets the criteria, but it uses the DW tradition somewhat differently from the Egyptian Sibylline Oracles. Here God's presence is elusive: little direct action comes from God himself, or even a representative. The advent of a heavenly army may be implied from the *Sib. Or.* 4:174-175, but it never materialises: much more space is devoted

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Sib. Or.* 3:805-807 and also 689, 705, 708-9, 712-713.

<sup>9</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:71.

to fire as God's far-reaching weapon of judgement.<sup>10</sup> It is common throughout the book for explicit occasions of divine wrath to then be described through some kind of cosmic upheaval or catastrophe. If SCI is used within the DWT of Book 4, it only employs the cosmic conflagration aspect of the imagery, not the star-battle language. The context of this judgement is the 'tenth generation' of *Sib. Or.* 4:86, which is subsequently shown to be a time of extreme evil subsequent to the late first century with the references to Nero, the fall of the temple and eruption at Vesuvius in 79CE.<sup>11</sup> The language of *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 moves from a particular focus on a given unrepentant people, to the image of universal fire, judgement and resurrection. However, the prophecy is not about an imminent expectation of the end to world history or the end of the physical world: this is apparent from the contingency of the wrath to come which could be averted if evildoers would repent. The universal language is a prophetic trope used to contextualise particular instances of God's judgement.<sup>12</sup>

*Sibylline Oracles* 5 shows a diverse use of DWT, reflected in part in the exegesis by the grouping of the texts according to their common features. Book 5 uses the tradition quite differently from Book 3.93-end: while both have an extensive array of similarities to the tradition and God is frequently present or referred to, Book 5 also has God's judgement and punishing activity frequently mediated through other heavenly figures. To speak of it another way, the tradition begins to shift from God as a man of war to his angels as warriors on his behalf.<sup>13</sup> One feature that Book 5 re-appropriates from Book 3 is the focus upon the temple. However, the later Book 5 speaks from after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70CE.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. both *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161 and 171-192.

<sup>11</sup> *Sib. Or.* 4:119-122, 118 and 130, respectively.

<sup>12</sup> Raabe, "Universal Judgment," 652-674.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. For this phenomenon in Second Temple angelology see Michalak, *Angels*, 4.

Some judgement is executed because in part of the Roman destruction of the temple, but also the failure of the Egyptian Jews in guarding their replacement temple. Presumably because of these failures, the book therefore anticipates a new, divinely-established temple.<sup>14</sup>

Another trend in Book 5's development of the DW tradition is the dramatic construal of star battles which combine features of SCI within DW motifs of the sun, moon and stars as part of the cosmic battle, whether for or against God.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the enemies of God continue to be put in terms typical of the DWT: Nero and Rome are described as serpentine monsters,<sup>16</sup> and the latter also appears as the enemy Sea.<sup>17</sup>

The exegesis of the *Sibylline Oracles* 3-5 meets the criteria proposed to establish whether DWT is present. It has been shown that the books actively use this mythological tradition with specific emphases and themes pertinent to their different contexts. While the books employ it in different ways, there is one consistent theme throughout: the context of divine judgement and punishment.<sup>18</sup>

## (2) SCI in the *Sibylline Oracles*

Having addressed the question of whether DWT is present in the *Sibylline Oracles*, the second question to be asked is how within this DW mythology has SCI been used and appropriated? I made the argument in chapter two that Stoic Cosmological Imagery was far more diverse in its use in the Roman world than has been acknowledged in New Testament scholarship. Adams and others argued that the use of such CCL from the Graeco-Roman

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<sup>14</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:414-433

<sup>15</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161, 206-213 and 512-531.

<sup>16</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:28-34 and 342-360.

<sup>17</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161.

<sup>18</sup> Although Book 4 is the only place where the impending judgement is avoidable should people repent.



world involves reference to the Stoic beliefs about the end of the world, but I have shown that this conclusion needs revision. Lapidge's work on Stoicism in the Roman era shows a greatly diversified picture of the use of CCL and my exegesis of relevant texts from Lucan's *Pharsalia* supports his position. As SCI in the Graeco-Roman world has separated from its cosmological roots, no specific interpretation of the imagery in the *Sibylline Oracles* can be assumed. To argue that cosmic catastrophe language in the Sibylline Oracles is necessarily about eschatology or the end of the world because of its similarity to SCI is unsustainable. The question then is how is SCI used in the Oracles? From my exegesis I identified and examined four passages that might use such language (*Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, 4:159-161, 171-192; 5:206-213, 512-531). Only the two passages from Book 5 show a demonstrable use of SCI. Because it is hard to delineate exactly what is SCI and what may simply be a creative use of prominent features of DWT itself, I will summarise how the star battle and fire judgement language is used, with particular reference to the SCI features. I will take each applicable book in turn<sup>19</sup> to summarise and review what it does with this language.

There is possibly some overlap in Book 4 with the SCI of world conflagration, both in *Sib. Or.* 4:159-161, 171-192. The first is a short prophecy concerning the judgement that comes in the second text: God in his wrath will punish with a consuming fire. The evidence points to a DWT provenance for the second passage. Whether the texts definitely use SCI is to ask for more information than the text offers. The fire is the means of judgement, extending and extrapolating from the two DW motifs of (1) fire as a weapon of the divine warrior in earlier DW material and (2) the cosmic catastrophe language described in advance of the Divine Warrior's arrival.<sup>20</sup> The fire itself is thus a weapon by which God punishes, a tool in the midst of the implied battle, and it is all the more impressive for its universal reach.

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<sup>19</sup> Apart from Book 3.93-end as it shows no use or knowledge of SCI.

<sup>20</sup> For fire as judgement cf. Miller, "Fire," 256-261.

SCI may well be in the background to this text but there are no details that DWT could not supply from its own tradition.

*Sibylline Oracles* 3:1-92 has more evidence of the use of SCI than those texts from Book 4 and an SCI influence cannot be ruled out. In this text, fire is God's means of punishment but it is not portrayed as a tool directly used by God. His judgement comes upon the powers of heaven who are themselves the source of the fiery judgement upon earth. Of the SCI parallels, this shows the most similarity and historical consistency to *Phars.* 1.72-80. As the stars fall from their position they burn the earth. It has also been proposed that there may be echoes of SCI in the subsequent dissolution the cosmos will experience after the burning,<sup>21</sup> however this must be considered secondary influence to the purifying language found in OT in association with God's judgement.<sup>22</sup> In contrast to Book 4, which concludes with the resurrection and renewed life, 3:75-92 ends with all merging into one and dissolving into a purity or ultimate dissolution with no hint of restoration. This envisaged emptiness and resultant darkness heightens the sense of finality to the judgement of God which shall come upon spiritual powers and upon the earth.

*Sibylline Oracles* 5 shows a more substantial use of SCI in the two texts that potentially employ it (5:216-213 and 512-531). The universal fire language is no longer central; instead the language of stars battling in the midst of the conflagration comes to the fore. Although DWT has a well-attested history of luminaries as part of the heavenly host or as spiritual beings against God, the manner in which the battle in Book 5 is innovatively depicted comes from SCI, with a number of references that describe stars battling in vivid terms with reference to Zodiac signs and constellations (*Phars.* 1.72-80, 651-666; *Astronom.* 2.385-432, 471-484; 2:541-578 and *Ad. Marc.* 26.6). Two separate narratives use the stars

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<sup>21</sup> Adams

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Mal 3.2b-3.

battling in connection with judgement upon a particular place, namely Egypt and Ethiopia.<sup>23</sup> In *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 the star-angels are at war with one another and eventually arouse God's wrath.<sup>24</sup> In his punishment he strikes them to earth, resulting in an earthly judgement, similar to the sequence in 3:75-92. In *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 the stars also battle with some reference to the idea of a new nature which may have connections to SCI, but the prevailing context is one of God's punishment of Ethiopia by fire and it is unclear whether the stars do so here because they were punished first (as in 5:512-531) or are more positively fighting on the side of God.

The above summary reviews the different ways in which SCI may have been used in the *Sibylline Oracles* 3-5. These features are the universal fire, its purifying effect and the vivid depiction of stars at war. Yet it is only in *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213 and 512-531, with the motif of battling stars, that a confident conclusion can be made that SCI is present. The other passages did not sufficiently meet the criteria to be able to make the same assertion: there is simply not enough evidence. Where it is used within the *Sibylline Oracles* it expands and develops the coinciding motifs that occur in the DWT. The battling stars language from SCI increases the vocabulary possible for describing spiritual battle and disorder in the heavenly realm as well as offering a more dynamic identity for the stars as warriors for or against God's purposes. They refer to God's judgement upon enemy spiritual forces and earthly empires or rulers, whether Egypt or Ethiopia. The star battles focus particularly on the judgement warranted on the spiritual beings and their arrogance. This feature of SCI serves the Sibyl's theology in conjunction with overlapping DW motifs not the introduction of Stoic philosophical ideas.

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<sup>23</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 and 206-213 respectively.

<sup>24</sup> Comparable to God's destruction of the Day Star in Isa 14:12.

## Implications for DWT in Second Temple Judaism

With the conclusions outlined above, I now turn to the question of what impact does this have upon current ideas about how DWT was used in the Second Temple period? As I discussed in chapter one, although greater attention has been paid to earlier OT developments of the tradition, there are a couple of contributions that have been made to understanding how it progressed in the inter-testamental era; primarily Angel's *Chaos and the Son of Man*, but also to some extent the work of Aleksander Michalak in *Angels as Warriors*. Where Angel's work addressed the tradition itself, Michalak contributes some relevant insights into understanding the Jewish DWT in the Second Temple period, although the main focus of his thesis lays elsewhere. Before surmising how my exegesis of the *Sibylline Oracles* might affect the picture of the field as it is presently known, I will first briefly review what these contributions have shown about the picture of DWT in Second Temple Judaism. Then I will suggest what the Sibylline Oracles add to this picture, both with respect to general or 'traditional' DW motifs as well as with regards to novel and foreign elements that are newly incorporated within the tradition.

Angel's main contribution to the DW field in Second Temple Judaism was his examination of a number of different texts and conclusion that the tradition was alive and well.<sup>25</sup> He lists a number of motifs that recur in the texts as well as making a more general conclusion as to its use in this period: that it was not divided from history but still connected to it.<sup>26</sup> The prominent features Angel identifies include fire, either as a weapon, or coming from the mouth of the DW himself; the frequent accompaniment of the DW with heavenly

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<sup>25</sup> One does not have to agree with Angel's argument with respect to every text to agree with this broader conclusion. Cf. Marcus Throup, "Mark's Jesus, Divine? A Study of Aspects of Mark's Christology with Special Reference to Hebrew Divine Warrior Traditions in Mark, and in Relation to Contemporary Debates on Primitive Christology" (PhD, University of Nottingham, 2014) 80-81.

<sup>26</sup> Although in his analysis of 1QM 12:8-10 Angel admits "there is nothing in this passage that suggests a particular historical situation is in view" which begs the question of what *is* going on here. Angel, *Chaos*, 40.

armies; and the persistence of forces of chaos as the enemies of God, often through the motif of chaos waters in various forms, though also as dragons and the specific names ‘Leviathan’ and ‘Behemoth.’<sup>27</sup> The range of meanings of the motifs used include the advent of the DW as part of God’s purpose to rescue his people from whatever historical crisis they are facing; the chaos monsters often representing Gentiles or their rulers or occasionally spiritual powers, though the monsters are sometimes also themselves a means of judgement; and the battle language of the conflict between the DW and his enemies is used to refer to a number of different things: the establishment of God’s people, defeat of the Gentiles or establishment of the Law.<sup>28</sup>

Michalak examined how angels function as warriors in this period. While his focus is not on the DWT itself, but rather the emerging angelology, there are some relevant conclusions he makes given the pattern of warrior angels finds its origins in the mythology of the OT.<sup>29</sup> Broadly he concludes that earthly warriors have a heavenly counterpart in angels<sup>30</sup> and that angels were forces with military power, possible instigators of war and certainly involved in battle, albeit subordinate to God. They are sometimes represented by stars, they are opposed to Beliar/l, are able to send fire and lightning and on occasion assist in earthly wars. Michalak argues that the language of angels is used in three different contexts.

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<sup>27</sup> See Table 6.2 in Angel, *Chaos*, 193-194.

<sup>28</sup> See Table 6.3 in Angel, *Chaos*, 195-196.

<sup>29</sup> These origins are the language of the Divine Council and the language of the ‘angel of Yahweh’. Michalak, *Angels*, 16.

<sup>30</sup> Michalak, *Angels*, 25.

Sometimes they correlate to earthly events,<sup>31</sup> other times they are part of God's theophany<sup>32</sup> and at other times eschatological war.<sup>33</sup>

Given the above review, what of this picture changes in light of the evidence from the Sibylline Oracles? Are they consistent to other texts in their use of the DWT? Do they emphasise other motifs? Is their use of this tradition consistent to that which appears elsewhere in Second Temple Judaism? What novelties do they introduce through their approach to using this mythological tradition? To these questions I will now turn and approach the answers under three main headings: (1) the inclusion of SCI in the mythology, (2) particular motifs and their developments as seen in the SOs and (3) primary referents and themes for which the tradition is used.

#### (1) The Inclusion of SCI in the mythology

One significant feature that the *Sibylline Oracles* add to the picture of DWT is the incorporation of Stoic Cosmological Imagery within the tradition. This is a novel development in itself, but the use of this SCI has also brought about an increased prominence of certain motifs and themes and shapes how it might be understood if present elsewhere.

The first is the significant expansion of the astral battle imagery, somewhat distinct from Angel's work which identifies texts that primarily feature chaos waters (or monsters). The increase in astral imagery is particularly noticeable when the earlier material from *Sib. Or. 3* is compared with the material in Book 5. In the earlier book only one brief reference (3:712-714) is made to the heavenly bodies fighting (in which there is no use of SCI), but in

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<sup>31</sup> E.g. Dan 7, Michalak, *Angels*, 105-107.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. *L.A.B.*, 11, cf. Michalak, *Angels*, 222.

<sup>33</sup> Michalak interprets texts such as 1QH as a reference to an eschatological battle Michalak, *Angels*, 176-180. However he does not substantiate this assertion against non-eschatological setting for the text despite frequently engaging with material that includes it. For non-eschatological setting for 1QH see Angel, *Chaos*, 55-56. Michalak engages with Angel's work in various points in his work, e.g. Michalak, *Angels*, 179, 247, 223.

Book 5 the language of stars fighting has become much more vivid (*Sib. Or.* 5:206-213, 512-531). This is not to say SCI in the DWT is solely responsible for the increase in astral imagery. It does appear without SCI in the NT (e.g. Rev 12:1-4) and even within the *Sibylline Oracles* themselves (e.g. *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161). However, the involvement of the stars in a vividly depicted battle with each other, bringing about the wrath of the DW and their subsequent destruction, is a relatively new feature of DWT in the Second Temple period.

The second contribution that the Oracles add to the picture of DWT in 2TP is the expansion of fire imagery, notable in Book 3:75-92, 4:159-161 and 172-191. Although fire and a universal purview is not significantly different to what is already known of the tradition, either in the OT or the 2TP, the universal fire present in the Oracles becomes more deliberately articulated with the use of SCI. The fire is more vividly construed and the destruction it brings about is more comprehensively described: in *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 the fire is anticipated through the signs of a coming battle<sup>34</sup> and then several verses are devoted to the objects of its burning<sup>35</sup> with a final description of the fire being quenched by God.<sup>36</sup>

The use of SCI in the Oracles may also help illuminate certain interpretative conflicts elsewhere. It has been shown how the imagery in the Oracles is not simply a question of ‘SCI vs. DWT’ or ‘Graeco-Roman vs. Jewish:’ there is a more sophisticated use and integration of imagery that is going on. That SCI is used within DWT helps with other arguments. For example, in Angel’s work on *L.A.B.* 9:3<sup>37</sup> he favours a background in HCT over Jacobson’s Stoic cosmology. Angel says, in response to Jacobson’s argument that the picture is “Stoic-

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<sup>34</sup> 4:173-175.

<sup>35</sup> 4:176-179.

<sup>36</sup> 4:180.

<sup>37</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 162-166.

like”<sup>38</sup> that “there is reason to believe that the origin of these images is actually HCT.”<sup>39</sup>

There is not the space here for a lengthy exegesis of *L.A.B.* 9:3, but even without it the point remains that the context to the passage does not have to set HCT against Stoic imagery as implied in Angel’s work. Rather it may be that the text is using something of SCI within a DWT/HCT context.

Finally, the *Sibylline Oracles* show that creativity in the mythopoeic mind was not strictly Jewish without any other influence. Innovation in use of DWT was not solely a result of working with the Jewish mythology but allowed for the incorporation of other elements.<sup>40</sup> SCI is the main example of this, but other minor traditions may also be present in the Oracles. One example from the texts studied is the use of the Greek epithet of Zeus as ‘Thunderer’ (ὕψιβρεμέτης) which is given to God in *Sib. Or.* 5:433.<sup>41</sup>

## (2) Particular Motifs and their Development

There are a number of ways the *Sibylline Oracles* use the DWT consistently with its use elsewhere in Second Temple Judaism and yet take the tradition in new directions. Those of particular note are: the increasing mediation of DW’s actions through a delegate, the prominence of the temple and Nero as a mythological enemy.

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<sup>38</sup> Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, with Latin Text and English Translation* (AGJU 31; 2 vols.; vol. 1; Leiden: Brill), 404.

<sup>39</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 163.

<sup>40</sup> This is not unusual, especially given DWT’s ultimate origin in Canaanite religion.

<sup>41</sup> And also *Sib. Or.* 3:1.

For examples of Zeus as Thunderer see Homer’s *Iliad*, 1.354, 14.27, 16.112; *Odyssey* 5.4, 23.310 or Hesiod’s *Theogony*, 585.

For background to Zeus as Thunderer and storm god, see F Graf, “Zeus,” *DDD* 934-940. Also, Andrew Angel, “Angry Gods and Thessalian Witches: What Virgil, Horace, Petronius and others in the Greco-Roman Literary Gang can teach us about the Son of Man” (paper presented at Chester TRS Research Seminars. Chester, 13th May 2015).



One feature that is given more frequent attention in the *Sibylline Oracles* than elsewhere in the DWT is the temple. While the temple is part of the historical context to non-sibylline DWT texts such as, for example, Ps. 2:25-26,<sup>42</sup> and at least part of the wider concerns of the chapters surrounding Mark 13:24-27 and Luke 21:25-28,<sup>43</sup> it is not explicitly part of the mythology to the extent that it is in the Oracles. In Book 3.92-end and Book 5 the temple is a frequent concern: it is the target for destruction, it is lamented in its downfall and those who brought it about, a new temple is hoped for as part of God's restorative action and even the replacement Egyptian temple is doomed because of failures to protect it. In sum, the temple and its fate is a central theme for the Sibyl's mythology: both as the cause for rousing God's judgement and punishment as well as part of the DW's restored cosmic order.

The DW's presence in the main corpus of *Sib. Or.* 3 is much more obvious and involves direct divine involvement in battle in contrast to the later material in 3:1-92, Book 4 and 5. In *Sib. Or.* 4 God is increasingly distant and upheavals in creation are frequently the means of his divine punishment or it is mediated through the use of fire. In *Sib. Or.* 3.1-92 and 5, although God is still present in most of the scenes, his acts of judgement are mediated through the hands of another figure. Although this alone is not unusual, what is unique to the Oracles is that it provides evidence within its own corpus of an increasingly transcendent God from the early (i.e. Book 3:92-end) to late (i.e. Book 5 and 3.1-92) Second Temple period. However, there is a distinction that needs to be made at this point: although God often mediates his judgement through another, this is *not* so when the object of judgement is heavenly beings. In *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531, 3:75-92 and possibly 5:206-213, God directly punishes the stars (which in turn brings about destruction on earth). The beast of *Sib. Or.* 5:342-360, the fearful serpent of 5:28-34 and likewise Beliar in *Sib. Or.* 3:63-74, are all

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<sup>42</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 83-86.

<sup>43</sup> For DW background to these texts see Cf. Angel, *Chaos*, 125-134, 135-139.

subject to God's punishment without a mediator, but the punishment they experience is still not directly from God's hand. The DWT in the Oracles evidently shows a range of ways in which the DW intervenes, which depends to some extent upon the object of his wrath: heavenly beings are punished by God himself, the serpentine monsters and Beliar implicitly so, but other punishments are mediated through a heavenly delegate.

Finally, although Nero's prominence within the Sibylline Oracles has been well attested, it is significant to the picture of DWT in the 2TP that he is a frequent character in this myth, occurring as a political leader, chaos monster and as the satanic figure, Beliar. The identification of Nero with a chaos monster or spiritual foe is found elsewhere in the DW tradition, although not to the same extent nor with the mythological force it has here.<sup>44</sup> One clarification that needs to be made as to how the prominent figure of Nero functions within the Oracles. While he has been previously called an "eschatological adversary"<sup>45</sup> of God, especially in Book 5, it is more appropriate to describe him as a "mythological adversary" as this reflects the nature of the text and his role more accurately with bringing in unnecessary ambiguity.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> E.g. As one of the ten heads on the beast from the sea in Rev 13, cf. Angel, *Chaos*, 146-147.

<sup>45</sup> Collins, *Sibylline Tradition*, 437. See also, Goodman, "Sibylline Oracles," 644.

<sup>46</sup> Collins does identify the passages in *Sib. Or.* 5 about Nero as "part of an eschatological *mythical* scene" [emphasis mine]. As such "the events which take place are on a universal cosmic scale. Yet they are firmly tied to the historical expectation of Nero's return." He argues that the Book has a more emphasised cosmic dimension, in contrast to the historical emphasis in the non-Jewish Nero legend. He states that "There is no implication of the end of the world or any such cosmic consequences" in *other* sibylline books (i.e. 4 and 8), but argues that "The oracles of Sib. V go beyond this [pagan accounts of Nero legend] by emphasising Nero's wickedness and locating his career in the mythical eschatological end-time." Depending on his definition of eschatology, I might agree with him, but this lack of definition means the above is subject to misinterpretation. *Sibylline Oracles*, 84-87.

### (3) Primary Referents

The third contribution that my study makes to the present understanding of DWT in 2TP is with regards to context and referents. For what purpose is the DWT used in the Oracles? Clearly the overriding theme through the texts is one of judgement, but what are the particularities of this impending divine intervention? In other words, to what do the prominent motifs refer?

Frequently, when it comes to the enemies of God who are deserving punishment, the object is a political figure or nation. The draconic monsters<sup>47</sup> and chaos waters<sup>48</sup> are either representative of Nero or Rome/Italy. In *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, the judgement is on a particular nation, probably Egypt, and thus continues to use the OT imagery of Isa 13 and 34 with respect to judgment upon a nation or empire. Often this judgement is with respect to their arrogance and attempts to be like God (*Sib. Or.* 3:34, 73; 4:54; 5:177,<sup>49</sup> 5:206) which may be manifest in several ways, frequently their threats against or assault of the temple (*Sib. Or.* 3:667-668, 5:150, 5:507) and persecution of the people of God (5:161 and 3:667-668). In the main corpus of Book 3 the primary focus is Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his persecution of the Jewish people and threat to the temple and Book 5 largely focuses upon Egypt and Rome, although Ethiopia is also subject to judgement. Book 4 has a judgement upon the Medes, but the judgement in (4:171-192) is upon the unrepentant during the Roman Empire for their evil atrocities, violence and bloodshed, and most emphatically, abandonment of godliness.

The stars, sun and moon represent spiritual beings, some of whom mediate God's judgement or fight alongside him, but many of whom are subject to God's judgement and are

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<sup>47</sup> 5:28-34 and 5:342-360.

<sup>48</sup> 5:155-161.

<sup>49</sup> Part of the explanation of the reason for the judgement in 5:155-161.

in some way representative of, or connected to, earthly peoples, namely Egypt and Ethiopia.<sup>50</sup>

The punishment of one realm correlates to punishment in the other. While punishment of earth and heavens is attested elsewhere in the DWT, the connection between the two has more force in the Oracles.

Finally, the prominent motif of the temple in the Oracles refers to two specific time periods that were significant in the temple's history. The first is the desecration of the temple and ultimate triumph of the Jews in Maccabean revolt in the second century BCE, found in Book 3. The second, in Book 5, is the destruction of the temple in 70CE by the Romans, framed within a hope for a new temple when God's restores after he brings judgement (despite the failure of the short-lived temple in Egypt).

## Conclusion

The DWT in the Second Temple period is further elucidated by what I have shown of the tradition in the *Sibylline Oracles*. There is not a single, uniform trajectory in which the Books take this mythology, but a number of key themes and creative moves appear. These occur both with regards to a reflective yet innovative use of the Jewish DW tradition according to its own mythological history but also with respect to other Graeco-Roman imagery and language that corresponds to particular themes of Jewish DWT. The Books provide evidence for a more developed astral focus in the tradition than has been shown so far.<sup>51</sup> Fire is featured elsewhere in the tradition but takes on a greater prominence in the Oracles. There are shifts and changes in the way traditional motifs are used, especially with the centrality of the temple hope and identification of Nero as a force of chaos. In terms of interpretation, the Oracles have little within them that pertain to a real, perceived end-time reality that is coming

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<sup>50</sup> 3:75-92 and 5:512-531 about Egypt and 5:206-213 for Ethiopia.

<sup>51</sup> I.e. In Angel's *Chaos and the Son of Man*.

soon. In *Sib. Or.* 4 there is some eschatological material that anticipates a post-mortem judgement and resurrection, but this is not an event anticipated imminently (nor linearly) but is used as a description of ultimate judgement to give a broader context to the warning of particular and avoidable judgement upon the Roman Empire, should the people not repent. Although eschatological material is present, the passage is concerned with covenant politics and historical realities.

The primary concern throughout the *Sibylline Oracles* is God's intervention in present-day realities, whether in the earthly realm or that of the heavens: not the ultimate fate of the whole world. However, although political empires and rulers are prominent throughout when the Sibyl uses DWT in this way, I am not arguing that the context is primarily socio-political.<sup>52</sup> It was observed that the evils that bring about divine judgement are primarily ones that relate to behaviour towards God, his people and his house. The mythology is one of cosmic order, rebellion against that order and ultimate divine re-ordering through judgement and punishment. The political and spiritual powers rebel against God in their arrogance, but are ultimately held to account and cast down. This framework is not socio-political, but rather focuses more on covenant-politics within both the earthly and cosmic realms. The fate of political empires become a constituent part of a much bigger cosmic drama between God and his allies and various forces of evil, both physical and spiritual.

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<sup>52</sup> E.g. Wright who argues that passages like Mark 13:24-25 use "categories of cosmic disaster" to give "coming socio-political disaster... its full theological significance." Wright, *Victory of God*, 323.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that my exegesis of the thirteen texts from the *Sib. Or.* 3-5 sufficiently meet the criteria to conclude that DWT is present in each of the books. They make use of the tradition in a variety of ways, drawing on the traditional language of enemy forces of chaos (e.g. Sea, River and Serpent), theophanic features of cosmic upheaval through shaking of the earth, cosmic darkness, storm motifs and the use of fire as a weapon.<sup>53</sup> God sometimes appears as a warrior, but often his actions are mediated through the actions of nature or an intermediary figure. The sun, moon and stars feature prominently within the tradition, sometimes mediating God's judgement or fighting on his side but at other times warring amongst themselves and subject to divine wrath. It is in this focus upon the stars that the Sibyl draws on SCI, though it cannot be definitively ruled out that it influenced the universal conflagration language in Book 4 also. I have shown that the dominant use of the tradition in *Sib. Or.* 3-5 is to depict God's intervention in response to rebellious political empires or rulers (e.g. Egypt, Ethiopia, Media, Rome and Nero) and corresponding spiritual powers in the heavenly realm and frequently the human actions that rouse divine wrath are those threaten the temple's life and worship.

These conclusions support the thesis that DWT in the Second Temple period continued to be used to speak of God's intervention and judgements in response to historical events. However, it also developed it in different ways: elevating Nero as an enemy of the DW, increasingly using an intermediary to effect the punishment of the DW, emphasising the centrality of the temple and incorporating applicable imagery from other traditions (SCI).

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<sup>53</sup> Sometimes as fire, other times as fiery swords or burning.

## CHAPTER 6. THE DIVINE WARRIOR TRADITION IN MARK 13:24-25

In chapter one I argued that the debates surrounding the interpretation of the CCL of Mark 13:24-25 would benefit from a greater understanding of how mythological traditions developed in the Second Temple period, namely the DWT. In order to do this, I examined thirteen texts from *Sib. Or.* 3-5 and assessed whether and how they use this tradition (chapters three and four). I also assessed whether the texts draw from SCI, as this imagery has often been part of the conversation about CCL in this period although, as I argued in chapter two, it had become used in more diverse ways than has been previously construed. In chapter five I concluded that DWT is present in twelve of the thirteen texts from *Sib. Or.* 3-5 and that SCI has been incorporated in two texts from *Sib. Or.* 5. The DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3-5 uses established motifs found within the tradition, including the frequent construal of the enemy as the mythological Sea or Dragon and the depiction of spiritual beings as luminaries fighting for/against God. These motifs are used primarily to speak of impending divine judgement upon political and spiritual powers that rebel against God, threaten his temple and/or persecute his people. This way of using the DWT is broadly consistent with how it is used in other texts in the 2TP.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I return to Mark 13:24-25 and consider its interpretative issues in light of these conclusions as well as draw attention to some of the wider tensions and questions that come up when this is set alongside the theology of Mark's gospel and the rest of the NT.

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<sup>1</sup> Although different in emphasis, similarities are evident between *Sib. Or.* 3-5 and various other Second Temple texts. See Angel, *Chaos*.

## **The Original Problem: Interpreting Mark 13:24-25**

The opening question of this thesis concerned how Mark 13:24-25 uses the mythological language of cosmic catastrophe. I now turn to this question by considering the results of my exegesis of *Sib. Or.* 3-5 and the effect this has upon the picture of DWT in the 2TP. What does the development of the mythological tradition in this period indicate about the cosmic catastrophe in Mark 13:24-25? To examine the answer to this question and the impact of this thesis upon current scholarship, I will briefly review the main schools of thought, consider the effects of my exegesis upon these arguments and then offer a reading of Mark 13:24-25 based upon these conclusions.

### Review of the Major Interpretations

The most common interpretation of Mark 13:24-25 is that it is eschatological, although there is a significant minority that has argued for a historical, or socio-political, explanation. Despite this division, the underlying arguments of both schools of thought vary somewhat. While those who argue for the minority view do so from the basis of saying the language is metaphorical, those who support the dominating eschatological position do not all claim the language is literal. The following five categories loosely classify the main arguments with regards to both how the language functions as well as to what it refers. The CCL: (1) actually describes tangible realities about the end of the physical world and second coming of Christ; (2) symbolically describes events about the end of time, although this may or may not include the full destruction of the physical world; (3) symbolically depicts other earthly events, namely the fall of the temple and the events leading up to 70CE; (4) the language is mythological, reflecting eschatological beliefs similar to (1) and (2), and finally, (5) the language is mythological but with regards to the fall of the temple.



The first category reads the text of Mark 13:24-25 as literally depicting a collapse of the universe that will occur at the end of time, and is best reflected by the works of Allison and Gundry. However, their conclusions are justified somewhat differently. For Allison, if Jesus is an apocalyptic prophet, his message must be eschatological as Jewish apocalyptic elsewhere is also eschatological and examples from literature in Graeco-Roman world show further evidence for the literal interpretation of CCL.<sup>2</sup> Gundry, starting from the text itself, dismisses any interpretative influence from the OT texts that are used in the passage<sup>3</sup> and reads it naturalistically as an undoing of creation in which the fall of the stars, for example, is explained as a reference to meteorites.<sup>4</sup>

The second category, which has garnered the most support, argues that Mark describes similar events as the first group, but uses symbolic language.<sup>5</sup> Not all see this cosmic catastrophe language as world-ending: some scholars argue it depicts some sort of cosmic upheaval at the coming of Christ.<sup>6</sup> The most substantial contribution has been made by Adams. Although he interprets the texts as anticipating, at least, the destabilizing of the cosmic order,<sup>7</sup> like Allison he argues that Mark 13:24-25 ought to be understood on the basis of contemporaneous parallels, not those from the OT and in all these other Jewish texts he

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<sup>2</sup> Allison, "Victory," 126-141.

<sup>3</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 783.

<sup>4</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 745.

<sup>5</sup> Or metaphorical. Gray differentiates the two, arguing that metaphor rules out any literality, so symbolism is to be preferred as it allows for both metaphor and literality. However, for present purposes it doesn't matter: the point is that these scholars argue that the language does not represent closely what will happen. Timothy C. Gray, *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark : a Study in its Narrative Role* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010), 135-137.

<sup>6</sup> Hare, *Mark*, Evans, *Mark*, Witherington, *Mark*, Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, Edwards, *Mark*, Moloney, *Mark*, Mullins, *Mark*, Boring, *Mark*, Adams, *Stars*, Collins, *Mark*, Focant, *Mark*.

<sup>7</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 20-22.

examines none are about the fall of city or nation,<sup>8</sup> including *Sib. Or.* 3, 4 and 5.<sup>9</sup> The point is not that Mark uses any of these texts directly, but rather in 13:24-25 he conforms to their eschatological pattern and that what is envisioned is the world in the process of some kind of collapse.<sup>10</sup> Adela Collins, like many, argues that Mark 13:24-25 is part of the third stage of the eschatological drama in Mark 13, using OT theophanic language in its new common context: as signs accompanying the Parousia of Christ.<sup>11</sup>

The third category, like the second, reads the language symbolically (or metaphorically) but for a different referent: the destruction of the temple and fall of Jerusalem in 70CE.<sup>12</sup> This is based on the understanding of similar language in Jewish apocalyptic language as a metaphor or prophetic imagery for the fall of a city or nation, a kind of ancient equivalent to describing an event as “earth-shattering.”<sup>13</sup> In Mark 13, this is with particular reference to the examples found in the OT allusions in the text. The case for this referent behind the text has also been made through a narrative reading of 13:24-25, supporting the observations about the two verses in question with the wider setting and temple-focus in Mark more widely.<sup>14</sup> Caird also maintained Mark 13:24-27 was about the destruction of Jerusalem, but with an important qualification: it was so in the “bifocal” sense that it was a

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<sup>8</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 156. Although Adams is clear at the start that he does not read the text literally but as an “imaginative construal” of cosmic catastrophe, Adams, *Stars*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Notably *Sib. Or.* 3:673-681, 80-92; 4:171-178, 5:211-13, 5:346-352 and 5:528-531, Adams, *Stars*, 88-96.

<sup>10</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 160.

<sup>11</sup> Collins, “Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13,” 29-30, Collins, *Mark*, 614.

<sup>12</sup> Caird, *Principalities*, Caird, *Language*, Caird and Hurst, *New Testament Theology*, Wright, *People*, Wright, *Victory of God*, France, *Mark*, Hatina, *In Search*, Gray, *Temple in the Gospel of Mark*.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, *Victory of God*, 362, Cf. also France, *Mark*, 533.

<sup>14</sup> Hatina, *In Search*, Gray, *Temple in the Gospel of Mark*.

foreshadowing of the ultimate end of the world as the language of eschatology itself was a metaphor system.<sup>15</sup>

The fourth and fifth categories emphasise the mythology of the passage more fully than the second or third. The fourth interprets the mythology as depicting the cosmic battle at the time of Christ's second coming. Marcus, for example, although on one level takes vv.24-25 to be a reference to cosmic catastrophe and the undoing of creation, also identifies the dimming luminaries as a reference to animate beings that are vanquished in the cosmic battle between God and evil, emphasising the fall of Satan and demonic beings from heaven (using *Sib. Or.* 3:801-807 as one example of several). Shively also interprets Mark 13:24-25 as part of the depiction of the final and decisive victory of God in the cosmic battle between God, along with his heavenly armies, and the forces of evil, although she bases this on her interpretation of the OT texts actually used in the passage. The resulting cosmic darkness is not simply a reaction to the presence of the Son of Man, but the result of his active punishment of the spiritual powers in an eschatological judgement.

The final category argues the mythology in Mark 13:24-25 refers to the earthly reality of the fall of Jerusalem or temple's destruction in 70CE. This view has been argued by Angel.<sup>16</sup> The mythological language of stars falling and powers being shaken reflect OT descriptions of heavenly portents which will occur in the event of the DW coming with a great army to rescue his people. He proposes that the language refers to the rescue of God's people in the face of the destruction of the temple, the most natural context from both the chapter as a whole and the OT allusions. Although it is a creative use of the Divine Warrior

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<sup>15</sup> Caird and Hurst, *New Testament Theology*, 256.

<sup>16</sup> Although Angel interprets Mark 13:24-27 as metaphor, his definition of this term clearly overlaps with mythology. For example, he states "The fact that Mark uses stock images of the tradition to build up a picture typical of the HCT suggests that he is working within this [mythological] tradition. Consequently, it is natural to read Mark's use of this imagery as metaphorical." Angel, *Chaos*, 130.

traditions it draws upon, it is not unique: Angel cites earlier examples in which Jewish authorities are identified with forces of chaos.<sup>17</sup>

### Contribution of this Thesis to Current Scholarship

If the above represents the range of interpretations of Mark 13:24-25 in recent years, where do these arguments now stand given the conclusions that have emerged about DWT from my exegesis of the Sibylline Oracles? What can be made of the language in Mark? What is happening in the mythological picture of the two verses: to what do they refer and how do they fit in the context of the chapter as a whole? Are vv.24-25 cosmic signs? Are they the beginning of the full collapse of the cosmos? Are they spiritual powers falling from their position?

Before any specific nuance of an argument or interpretation is addressed, there is one category that cannot be sustained: the first group that reads the language literally. The state of SCI in the first century in the Graeco-Roman world, let alone in Judaism, cannot be maintained as evidential proof of literal expectation of cosmic catastrophe. The evidence from the period shows that the language of SCI no longer necessarily implied a real cosmological end. Secondly, I have shown the use of SCI in the *Sibylline Oracles* is an example of the incorporation of congruent images for the DW mythology used within the book rather than part of an end-of-world purview. A literal interpretation of the images in Mark 13:24-25 is therefore unsustainable given what is currently known of both the Jewish DWT and its use of SCI.

Adams' arguments likewise do not stand up under this scrutiny. While his arguments about Stoic cosmology were refuted earlier in chapter two, his conclusion that Mark 13:24-25 has a real reference to a cosmic catastrophe (even if this is not exactly represented in the text)

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<sup>17</sup> E.g. *T. Jud.* 21:6-9. Angel, *Chaos*, 134.

is also based on Jewish texts. He surveyed sixteen texts showing CCL in Jewish literature and concludes that “in all these texts, more than a socio-political change... is in view; the scenario is one of eschatological, universal judgement”<sup>18</sup> and in many cases, primarily within the *Sibylline Oracles*, this involves the “notion of the total dissolution of the cosmos by fire” which “most likely entered into the Sibylline tradition by way of Stoic influence.”<sup>19</sup> Adams is right to identify the Stoic influence upon the sibylline tradition, but he has mistaken early Stoic cosmology for Roman SCI and in doing so introduces an unwarranted interpretation on the text. This thesis has shown that from the evidence in the *Sibylline Oracles* themselves the CCL is not about the end of the world but part of the mythological tradition of the DW developing the language of spiritual powers in battle, spiritual powers mediating God’s punishment, the finality of a particular act of divine judgement and also the power of a weapon-wielding DW.

The next category to consider in light of my conclusions in this thesis is the third: those who read some symbolism in the language to an historical referent: the fall of Jerusalem. It is clear from my research that language which depicts a universal catastrophe can be doing so in order to represent other events or concerns: it is a legitimate possibility that Mark 13:24-25 could be referring to historical events, i.e. the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Despite this, I would argue that in light of my research there are some drawbacks as to how they contextualise the language itself. The language of stars falling elsewhere in the DWT indicates the demise of spiritual powers in the face of judgement. This has been corroborated by similar imagery in the *Sibylline Oracles* which presses the motif further: stars are depicted as animate beings who war with each other but ultimately fall in the presence of God’s judgement. However, neither Caird, France nor

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<sup>18</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 98.

Wright deal with these details of Mark 13:24-25. In parallel with the powers which are shaken in v.25b, it is particularly surprising Caird did not make this observation himself, especially given his work elsewhere on the identification of δυνάμεις as a term for angelic beings and spiritual powers, present in passages which are themselves directly used in Mark 13:24-25!<sup>20</sup>

The argument that Mark 13:24-25 represents signs traditionally associated with theophany but now ascribed to the second coming of Christ at the end of time also comes under question in light of my conclusions.<sup>21</sup> I addressed in my first chapter the difficulty with this argument which is primarily based on ascribing interpretive force to the presence of the verb σαλεύω in Mark 13:25b. As it is commonly used in OT theophanies to describe the earth's reaction to God's presence, it is argued that using σαλεύω to describe the actions of the powers of heaven infers that vv.24-25 are signs of a theophany, despite the difference in subject.<sup>22</sup> While the revelation of the heavenly figure in v.26 undeniably has a theophanic element to the verses,<sup>23</sup> the cosmic catastrophe is specifically heavenly: nothing in the two verses suggests an earthly location for God's appearance. That the cosmic portents are all located in the heavens indicates something specific is going on which cannot be explained by OT theophany alone. Evidence from the DWT in the *Sibylline Oracles* suggests that the language of luminaries is frequently about spiritual beings who have agency and can act both in align with or against God's will. The fall and demise of heavenly bodies at the presence of God is not necessarily about theophany, but rather the fall of spiritual powers as part of the

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<sup>20</sup> Caird identifies this development of cosmic language in Isaiah 13 and 34. Caird, *Principalities*, 10-12, see also *Language*, 114-115 and more generally, 219-242.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Evans, *Mark*, Collins, "Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13," 5-36, Collins, *Mark*, Witherington, *Mark*, Mullins, *Mark*, Adams, *Stars*, Focant, *Mark*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Evans, *Mark*, Adams, *Stars*. See also review of Evans above, p.13.

<sup>23</sup> When theophany is understood in the general category of an appearance of God rather than a specific literary phenomenon.

act of judgement God is exacting. This would explain the exclusive focus on heavenly theophanic elements in Mark 13:24-25.

My conclusions also have implications for the fourth category: they affirm the identification of cosmic battle mythology behind Mark 13:24-25, but reject the contextual analysis offered by proponents of this view. The evidence from my exegesis and its effect on the DWT shows further evidence to support the assertion that CCL was primarily used to articulate non-eschatological realities. Marcus argues that the luminaries in Mark 13:24-25 represent animate spiritual beings who are part of the losing side in the cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil. The stars falling from heaven is consistent with the “expulsion of Satan and the demons from heaven,”<sup>24</sup> and as such is part of the “eschatological dimming”<sup>25</sup> of the heavens consistent with the cosmic battle language found in Isa 13:10 and *Sib. Or.* 3:801-807 (amongst others). The conclusions from this thesis support Marcus’ conclusions at the mythological level: the fall of stars is connected with cosmic battle and the victory of God who vanquishes the rebellious powers of heaven.<sup>26</sup> At the interpretative level, my conclusions challenge Marcus’ argument: the context of cosmic battle in Jewish mythology of the Second Temple period is not eschatological. This is explicitly the case in Marcus’ use of *Sib.Or.* 3:801-807 as a text in support of his interpretation. Indeed, it is part of the cosmic battle drama of the DWT but I have shown the evidence prefers a context which does not connect the text to eschatology: it is better suited as envisioning the impending divine conquest and victory in the face of a current crisis,<sup>27</sup> and this is consistent with the other texts in the *Sibylline Oracles*.

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<sup>24</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 908.

<sup>25</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 907.

<sup>26</sup> *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531.

<sup>27</sup> Namely that of the events leading up to the Maccabean revolt.

A similar conflict emerges when Shively's argument is reviewed in light of my conclusions. Her contention that "In light of the OT background, and Mark's symbolic world and narrative context, it is likely that the appearance of the Son of Man refers to more than just the destruction of the temple" is supported to the extent that it is more than metaphor and that, like Marcus, the luminaries are powers in heaven which are overcome by the superior power of the Son of Man, but there is no reason why this cannot be a spiritual battle that is connected with the destruction of the temple and fall of Jerusalem: a cosmic more than eschatological picture. The evidence from the Sibylline Oracles shows the validity of connecting cosmic battle with worldly events in DWT: the presence of cosmic battle in and of itself does necessitate the conflict as one that occurs at the end of time. Shively notes this dualism in vv.5-23, the "worldly upheaval," versus vv.24-27, the "cosmic upheaval," but uses this as grounds to disconnect the two from each other.<sup>28</sup> In light of her acknowledgement that cosmic battle was used with respect to worldly conflicts like Babylon, Edom and Jerusalem in Isa 13, 34 and Joel 2 respectively, her focus on the conflict between Jesus and the temple leaders in ch.11-12 and her general thesis from 3:22-30 that Jesus is God's warrior to overcome supernatural and human opponents, there is little to support this chronological division of ch.13. In addition, her contention that more is going on than simply the destruction of the temple is correct insofar as she means it to refer to cosmic battle.<sup>29</sup> But this does not mean the temple's destruction is not implicated in the conflict. As I have established, the temple is a recurring theme in the DWT of the Sibylline Oracles: it is legitimate theme for the first-century Jewish mythopoeic mind. While to speak of Mark 13:24-27 as *solely* about the temple would trivialise a much more evocative and multivalent

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<sup>28</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 199-200.

<sup>29</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 208.



mythological tradition, to say that this mythology cannot have come from the context of a significant moment in the life (or death) of the temple is unsustainable.

The final category for review is that represented by Angel. From a general perspective, his interpretation that Mark 13:24-27 is concerned with a non-eschatological setting, and one based around events relating to the temple, is supported by my study of the *Sibylline Oracles*. The use of DWT in the Oracles is not about the end of the world or the end of time, and the tradition is used in relation to the temple on some occasions. However, unlike Shively and Marcus, Angel's reading of the mythology does not identify the CCL in vv.24-25 as representative of spiritual battle so much as the "heavenly portents" that "herald his [the DW's] approach."<sup>30</sup> This is similar to those above who argued that the darkness and falling of the luminaries came from traditional OT theophany.<sup>31</sup> Angel argues that these features are "often associated with the DW"<sup>32</sup> noting *Sib. Or.* 3:801-806 as one of four examples. But I have demonstrated that the use of DWT in the *Sibylline Oracles* has shown that the falling and darkening of sun, moon and stars does not only accompany the advent of the DW but more regularly reflects divine punishment on these bodies as representative of spiritual powers. One sibylline text uses Isa 34, also used in Mark 13:24-25, along these lines: *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92 uses the Isaiah verses to speak of the end of the reign of certain spiritual beings as part of God's judgement upon Egypt. In *Sib. Or.* 5:515-516 the sun and moon battle, along with the stars, and in *Sib. Or.* 3:712-713 the sun and moon explicitly fight alongside God. Angel's interpretation of the sun, moon and stars does not sufficiently explain their presence in Mark 13, especially when in parallel with the shaking of heavenly powers and devoid of other theophanic portents.

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<sup>30</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 129.

<sup>31</sup> Albeit in an eschatological context.

<sup>32</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 127.

My research into DWT in the *Sibylline Oracles* elucidates and develops the current picture of this tradition in the Second Temple period which also, as a result, has implications for how the cosmic catastrophe language of Mark 13:24-25 should be understood. The main lines of argument that have been previously put forward have much to commend them and offer valuable insight into certain contextual issues but each present difficulties when evaluated in light of my conclusions. Therefore I now turn to the task of proposing a more persuasive reading of Mark 13:24-25 which takes a fuller account both of the Second Temple context as well as making sense to the wider text itself.

#### A Proposed Reading for Mark 13:24-25

From my foregoing research I propose the following reading of Mark 13:24-25. Firstly, I will review why a mythological reading is the most appropriate for the passage, which is to be preferred over the linguistic categories of literal or symbolic. Secondly, I will turn to the task of looking at what is unfolding in this mythological scene: as a story on the heavenly plane, what exactly is going on? As I have shown in the *Sibylline Oracles* DWT motifs are used in different ways, so I will evaluate the options within what is known of this tradition in the Second Temple period and propose that the best scenario for the CCL in vv.24-25 is one of the demise of spiritual authorities in the face of the advent of the true heavenly authority: the DW, the Son of Man messianic figure of vv.26-27. Thirdly, I will argue that the context to which this mythological picture speaks is one of the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple and the promise of salvation for faithful believers who are undergoing persecution. Finally, I will offer a brief review of how Mark 13:24-27 thus fits within the surrounding narrative in ch.13. On the basis of the available evidence this is the most satisfactory

explanation for the language of Mark 13:24-25 given the DWT in this period and wider context of Mark itself.<sup>33</sup>

The language of Mark 13:24-25 is best understood as mythological. In chapter one I outlined the difficulties of the literal vs. metaphorical interpretations and proposed how understanding the text as mythological may help explain the text, despite the need for further understanding of how DW mythology was used in the Second Temple period. Although mythology has been described as a “metaphor system” in itself,<sup>34</sup> it is worth distinguishing this from the description of the language as metaphorical for while there is overlap between the two, mythology invokes something of the truth of divine being. Myths only verge towards metaphor when the cognitive claims and presuppositions behind these “real fictions” are weakened.<sup>35</sup> The DWT through the OT attests to this kind of mythological inheritance and the presence of DWT in the *Sibylline Oracles* supports the thesis that the tradition was alive and present in Second Temple period. While there have been arguments that language is more literal or metaphorical they are ultimately unsatisfactory. Literal arguments depend on the false assertion that the *Sibylline Oracles* describe an end of the world scenario as well as reading SCI as connected to Stoic ideas about the end of the world(s). This I have shown to be erroneous as it does not account for the diversifying developments from Early Stoicism into the Roman era. Metaphorical or symbolic arguments, while they offer a more nuanced analysis of Mark 13, do not do justice to the extent of the tradition throughout biblical and other Jewish literature.<sup>36</sup> It is possible that Mark is doing something novel, but the particular

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<sup>33</sup> I will not apply the criteria from my methodology to Mark 13:24-25 as Angel has done this already and several scholars have argued for cosmic battle mythology as the background to this text (Angel, Marcus, Shively). What is at issue is not *whether* Mark 13:24-25 uses DWT, but *how* it was likely to have been used.

<sup>34</sup> Caird, *Language*, 219.

<sup>35</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 81.

<sup>36</sup> In addition, a symbolic or metaphorical argument tends to underplay the significance of the imagery itself and to return too quickly to the question of to what it refers. As mythology the question of what is

texts upon which Mark draws (Isa 13:10, 34:4 and Dan 7:13-14), which are all part of the DW mythological tradition, suggest Mark is doing something similar.<sup>37</sup> In addition my conclusions from my exegesis support the understanding of these verses as mythological.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, recent contributions to scholarship attest that this genre of material is more wide-reaching in this gospel than previously thought.<sup>39</sup>

Given the arguments for mythology as the key to understanding Mark 13:24-27, what is happening in the mythological picture of the sun and moon being darkened, the stars falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens being shaken, prior to the theophany of the Son of Man and ingathering of the elect?

The descent of stars (13:25) from the heavens features in DWT in various ways. In some sibylline texts they are sent in judgement upon a land or sea,<sup>40</sup> but in Mark 13 there is no reference to an earthly object of destruction. The stars are evidently not used as a *means* of divine judgement. Likewise, there is nothing to suggest that the luminaries are working in alliance with God in battle similar to the sun and moon are described in *Sib. Or.* 3:712-713. There are two plausible options for what the falling stars and darkening sun and moon represent: they are cosmic portents or upheavals at the Son of Man's advent in vv.26-27, or they function in the text as representative of spiritual powers and thus their disappearing from the skies represents judgement upon them. I propose that both are implied through the use of these motifs.

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envisaged as happening in the heavenly realm is an important and central one before the connection is made between these spiritual realities and those upon the earth.

<sup>37</sup> I.e. Isa 13:10 and 34:4, cf. Angel, *Chaos*, 126-127. Angel uses similar criteria to the methodology I employ to identify the presence of the DWT in Mark 13:24-27.

<sup>38</sup> The fourth and fifth categories, as represented by Marcus, Shively and Angel. See above, p. 265.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Shively, *Apocalyptic*, Throup, *Mark's Jesus*.

<sup>40</sup> Like the Sea in *Sib. Or.* 5:155-161 or Ethiopia in *Sib. Or.* 5:206-213.

The fact that the cosmic collapse of vv.24-25 precedes the Son of Man's advent in v.26 offers an important clue as to what is happening. As others have noted, the darkening skies are often connected with OT theophany and the coming of the God as the DW to bring judgement, as found in the texts which Mark quotes (Isa 13:10 and 34:4). A variation on this kind of motif is found in the *Sibylline Oracles* where the arrival of the heavenly army is heralded by cosmic portents (3:801-806). Likewise, in *Sib. Or.* 4:56-60, God's judgement on the Medes is anticipated through the darkening of the luminaries, even if (as is typical of *Sib. Or.* 4) the DW does not explicitly appear. In Mark 13:24-25 the darkening of the sun, moon and stars are signs of God's coming in judgement, made all the clearer by the advent of a heavenly figure immediately following in v.26.<sup>41</sup> However, as I discussed above in critique of the second and fifth categories, this is not a wholly satisfactory explanation given some of the idiosyncrasies of Mark's use of the tradition. First, there is no mention of other features common in this context, such as the shaking of the earth (e.g. Isa 13:13, Joel 2:10, 4:16) or blood flowing from mountains or rocks (e.g. Isa 34:3, *Sib. Or.* 3:804): the focus is exclusively on things in the heavens.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, the significance of these events is also emphasised by the focus on the *powers* (δυνάμεις) that are shaken (Mark 13:25b) rather than the earth, in parallel to the fall of the stars (v.24a).<sup>43</sup> As many have shown, the language of powers is suggestive of spiritual beings that can oppose God.<sup>44</sup> Thirdly, if the luminary disturbances are related to DW theophany, then this typically involves the arrival of judgement. However, no

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<sup>41</sup> While it could be argued that the sun, moon and stars disappear before the DW/SM arrives, this depends on perspective. From a human point of view the luminary disturbance may be seen before the DW comes but the luminaries may have been the first to see the DW and reacted before he could be seen from earth.

<sup>42</sup> I do not expect all or even the majority of theophanic signs to be present, the significant point is that Mark only chooses those which centre around the heavens.

<sup>43</sup> Mark 13:25b reads “αἱ δυνάμεις αἱ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς σαλευθήσονται” this draws on Isa 34:4 as it appears in LXX B: “καὶ τακῆσονται πᾶσαι αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν” which is closer to the Hebrew of the MT than other MSS. For more on this see France, *Mark*, 532, Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 915-916.

<sup>44</sup> Caird, *Principalities*, esp. 1-22, Caird, *Language*, 219-242. For this in Mark 13, see Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 204-205, esp n.279, Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 906-908, Edwards, *Mark*, 403.

judgement is described in the subsequent verses of Mark 13 and the events of vv.24-27 are distinct from the fall of Jerusalem (vv.14-23): “ἀλλ’ ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν ἐκείνην” (v.24a, emphasis added).<sup>45</sup> For these reasons I suggest that vv.24-25 cannot refer to cosmic portents alone but Mark here has an additional purpose to this imagery.

While the luminaries function in part as theophanic motifs in advance of the Son of Man’s arrival, I suggest the exclusivity of focus upon the sun, moon and stars is due to their use in the mythology as rebellious spiritual powers.<sup>46</sup> This association between luminaries and spiritual powers is one of the main way in which luminaries are used in DWT of the Second Temple period, especially in the *Sibylline Oracles*.<sup>47</sup> Mark specifically focuses upon the heavenly lights and δυνάμεις and not the earth, mountains or blood because the former are representative in DWT with spiritual forces that can work with or oppose God. The use of Isa 34:4 in v.25 has this allusion in its background with its reference to the stars as δυνάμεις in Mark 13:25b and the LXX B and Lucian MSS of Isa 34:4.<sup>48</sup> Isaiah 34:4 is used in a similar way in *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92: the heavens are repeatedly the focus of divine judgement and their disappearance from the heavens is part of divine judgement on spiritual powers behind Egypt and Cleopatra. In a similar way in Mark 13:24-25, the darkening of the sun and moon, the fall of the stars and shaking of heavenly powers reflect the fall of rebellious spiritual powers or rulers. The nature of the rebellion is connected with the conflict between Jesus and the temple and its leaders throughout Mark’s gospel.<sup>49</sup> When the luminaries are understood in this way it

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<sup>45</sup> The earthly judgement has already occurred in vv.14-23.

<sup>46</sup> That they are rebellious is made evident through their subjection to judgement.

<sup>47</sup> Stars as spiritual powers is most prominently seen in *Sib. Or.* 5:512-531 and 206-213, but also evident in 3:713-714, 75-92 and 5:155-161.

<sup>48</sup> Caird argued that the heavenly host of Isaiah 34 ought to be understood in terms of angelic rulers who will be defeated and traced the use of δυνάμεις as spiritual beings of this kind in the Septuagint and Paul’s letters of the NT. Caird, *Principalities*, esp. 1-22, Caird, *Language*, 219-242.

<sup>49</sup> Especially Mark 11-12. Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 190-196.

becomes natural to identify them as the subject of the 3<sup>rd</sup> personal plural of those who “see (ὄψονται) the Son of Man coming in clouds” (v.26a). It also makes sense of Angel’s argument that the great power (μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς) with which the Son of Man comes should be translated as a “great army.”<sup>50</sup> the sun, moon and stars leave the sky and the δυνάμεις are shaken and in this cosmic re-ordering they witness a new power: the DW coming with a δυνάμεως πολλῆς: one set of heavenly rulers are exchanged for another whose commander-in-chief is the Son of Man. This sequence might be similar to Daniel 7 in which the Beast of the Sea is destroyed by the Ancient of Days before the “one like a Son of Man” comes in Dan 7:13-14, which would explain the gap between the fall of powers and the arrival of the Son of Man. However, it may be that a cosmic battle is implicit: the powers in heaven are shaken, then they see the Son of Man coming with his army to finally triumph over them. It may also be that the powers are simply sacked from their posts with the Son of Man as taking a position of authority and coming to rescue his chosen ones. This third option is unlikely if Angel is correct that the DW comes with a great army which is more indicative of a cosmic battle. Whichever is meant the result is the same: the spiritual powers that reigned in heaven do so no longer and the Son of Man as DW has come.<sup>51</sup> Understood in this way, the exclusive focus on the heavens in Mark 13:24-27, the shaking of heavenly powers and the absence of an earthly judgement are all resolved: the sphere of judgement in these verses is a cosmic one focusing on the spiritual powers in heaven.

If Mark 13:24-25 describes in mythological terms the fall of the spiritual powers from heaven prior to the theophany of the Son of Man as DW in v.26, to what does it all refer? I have made clear that the CCL of vv.24-25 is insufficient to establish an eschatological interpretation of the passage, whether the second coming of Christ, destruction of the

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<sup>50</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 127.

<sup>51</sup> The lack of a vivid battle is consistent with the development of DWT across the sibylline tradition and especially in Book 4 where the DW’s judgement is seen but he is conspicuously absent.

physical world and/or final judgement. But without the CCL as denoting eschatological cosmic collapse, there is little in Mark 13 that points to such a referent for the mythology itself. The most logical conclusion for these verses is that they refer to the cosmic events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem and the temple. This is based on what is known about DWT in the Second Temple period, including the evidence from my exegesis of the *Sibylline Oracles*.

In the *Sib. Or.* 3-5, I have shown DWT was commonly used to depict divine judgement and punishment of particular people groups or emperors and the spiritual powers associated with them. This is consistent with other work done on the DWT in this period.<sup>52</sup> Only *Sib. Or.* 4:171-192 engages with eschatological hopes for universal judgement, but even then, it is with a view to present evils that were perpetrated and an exhortation to the unrighteous to repent. In addition, *Sib. Or.* 3-5 shows evidence of astral motifs gaining a greater prominence in DWT in a variety of contexts,<sup>53</sup> and when this is one in which the luminaries themselves are judged this is invariably connected to judgement upon historical empires.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, in the *Sibylline Oracles* the temple frequently features in the historical context for the use of the tradition.<sup>55</sup> Given these features, and what is already known about DWT in the Second Temple period,<sup>56</sup> it is reasonable to suggest the judgement of the sun, moon and stars in Mark 13:24-25 describes events in the spiritual realm that are the counterpart to the fall of Jerusalem and the temple in vv.14-23. This is corroborated by the narrative context in which Mark 13:24-27 is found.

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<sup>52</sup> Angel, *Chaos*.

<sup>53</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, 669-714; 4:56-60, 5:155-161, 206-213 and 512-531.

<sup>54</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:75-92, 5:206-213 and 512-531. In *Sib. Or.* 3:796-807 this spiritual conflict serves as the final victory and defeat of historical powers.

<sup>55</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3:669-714, 796-808, 5:155-161, 414-433, 512-531.

<sup>56</sup> Angel, *Chaos*.



Mark 13 begins with Jesus prophesying the destruction of the temple (v.2). When his disciples question what will be the sign that this is about to happen (v.4),<sup>57</sup> Jesus outlines a sequence of events that culminates with the scene in Mark 13:24-7. He begins with a description of those things that are *not* the sign of its imminent fulfilment, including a period of persecution (vv.5-13), followed by a description of the sign itself (the desolating sacrilege in v.14) and the subsequent suffering and destruction that is to befall Jerusalem including the temptations that will come to be led astray (vv.15-23). The sequence concludes with the ultimate re-ordering of powers within the cosmic realm (vv.24-27). The spiritual powers that correlate to the temple and its leaders will ultimately lose their position of power (vv.24-25) and then they (the spiritual powers) will see the Son of Man's triumph over them and his subsequent gathering in of the elect (vv.26-27), those who faced persecution and suffering but are now vindicated for their perseverance.<sup>58</sup> The remainder of the chapter (vv.28-37) addresses the timing of these events in relation to the sign, as well as the disciples' readiness and alertness about that which is to come.

The use of DWT in *Sib. Or.* 3-5 offers valuable insight into the development of the tradition in the Second Temple period, which in turn has an impact on the interpretations that have been offered regarding the use of this tradition in Mark 13:24-25. I have shown that literal interpretations of the text cease to be plausible, both in light of DWT and also the ambiguous state of SCI in this era. Metaphorical or symbolic arguments also do not do justice to the prominence of DWT in the first century and its active use in *Sib. Or.* 3-5 and other

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<sup>57</sup> Scholars have argued that "all these things" (ταῦτα ... πάντα) v.4b introduces eschatological ideas in to the disciples' question. However, other examples of its use in the NT show it is often used to refer to things that have just been stated. In Mark 10:20 the rich young man uses it to speak of keeping all the laws that Jesus mentions in v.19 and in John 15:21 it is used to refer to the persecutions Jesus' followers will face which Jesus describes in the preceding verses, vv.19-20. See also Mark 7:23, 1 Cor 12:11. I suggest that here it is similarly used in reference to the prophecy of the temple's destruction in v.2 as well as a connection point to the conclusion of Jesus' answer in Mark 13:30.

<sup>58</sup> This fulfils v.9, "But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

contemporaneous works. DWT was used to depict mythological events in conjunction with historical realities, focusing upon God's judgement, the temple, cosmic order and rebellion against God and persecution of his people. In light of this, as well as the narrative of Mark 13 itself, the mythological interpretation of vv.24-25 is best understood as a depiction of the fall of the spiritual powers that correlate to the temple at Jerusalem (and its leaders), powers which have been emptied through divine judgement upon the temple, ultimately seen in the advent of the Son of Man as the Divine Warrior to take their place.

### **Wider Considerations in Mark and NT Studies**

In the above, I considered the impact of my research on interpretations of Mark 13:24-25 and proposed a reading of the text that takes into account the insight into the DWT offered by *Sib. Or.* 3-5. However, the rest of the Gospel of Mark as well as the wider NT raise some interesting questions and considerations concerning these conclusions and how further work in this field might progress.<sup>59</sup> With respect to the rest of the Gospel of Mark, there is eschatological material which appears to conflict with my proposed reading of Mark 13:24-25 (e.g. Mark 8:38-9:1; 14:62 and also the language of the coming kingdom of God, e.g. Mark 1:15; 9:1; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43). Additionally, some recent contributions have examined the apocalyptic character of Mark; these have some interesting overlap with the reading of Mark 13:24-25 I have proposed.<sup>60</sup> In regard to the rest of the New Testament canon, there are various topics that are worth reflection, including the synoptic parallels to Mark 13:24-25, the conflicting use of CCL in the epistles (Heb 12:26-28, 2 Pet 3:8-13; Rev 6:12-14); as well as

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<sup>59</sup> Although I have examined Mark 13:24-25 as an independent Second Temple text in the first century (as the NT canon was not finalised until much later), it is nonetheless worth considering the text in relation to the rest of the NT as they were all products of the early Christian community, taking and interpreting the legacy of the historical Jesus.

<sup>60</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000), Marcus, *Mark 8-16*.

the frequent description of Jesus' eschatological return (1 Thess 3:13, 4:13-18, 2 Thess 2:1-8; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 John 2:28; James 5:7-8; Rev 1:7, 22:20), in texts that both pre-date and post-date Mark's Gospel. In reviewing these topics, I will first address those that appear in the Gospel of Mark and secondarily, those that apply to the rest of the NT, briefly exploring tensions, implications and questions that might be raised.

### Mark 13:24-25 and Gospel of Mark

In the study of Mark's gospel, two topics that interrelate with this thesis are the eschatology of the gospel as well as recent arguments for its apocalyptic character. There are a couple of features of Mark's eschatology that provoke interesting questions when set alongside the Mark 13:24-25.<sup>61</sup> Traditional arguments about Mark's eschatology are not only based on Mark 13, but are, amongst other things, based on the arrival of the kingdom of God announced by Jesus in Mark 1:15 and 9:1.<sup>62</sup> The declaration of this at the start of Jesus' preaching ministry (Mark 1:15) is typically concluded to sum up his message and instigate an eschatological perspective from the outset of the gospel.<sup>63</sup> The second feature is the similar language to Mark 13:24-27 found in 8:39-9:1 and 14:62. These texts are usually understood to reflect Mark's eschatological outlook and, in contrast to Mark 13, make no mention of events in Jerusalem in 70CE. In addition to these two themes from Mark's eschatology, recent scholarship on the apocalyptic character of this gospel has begun to consider the whole of Mark in terms of cosmic battle between Jesus and demonic/evil forces, evident in his

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<sup>61</sup> Where necessary, I will also include the subsequent two verses, Mark 13:26-27.

<sup>62</sup> Collins also proposes this eschatological content is found in a divine plan that also includes the arrival of John the Baptist and the institution of the Lord's Supper. Collins, *Mark*, 42.

<sup>63</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 42-44, 153-155, Hooker, *Mark*, 20, 55-58, Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 71.

temptation in the wilderness, his exorcisms, and, more relevantly, also in the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders of the temple.<sup>64</sup>

### The 'Kingdom of God'

Several scholars emphasise the significance of Jesus' opening statement that "the kingdom of God has come near" (Mark 1:15) for the rest of the gospel.<sup>65</sup> This inaugural sermon announces the imminent arrival of God's dominion, an arrival similarly anticipated when Jesus prophesies that some present would "will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power" (Mark 9:1).<sup>66</sup> This kingdom is then seen arriving fully with the coming of the Son of Man in Mark 13:24-27 and the end of the world as it stands.<sup>67</sup> Although the meaning of the "kingdom of God" has been widely debated,<sup>68</sup> at times it clearly refers to something that is unfolding (e.g. "Your kingdom come" in the Lord's Prayer, Matt 6:10/Lk 11:2) or that is still in the future (e.g. Mark 9:1, 10:15). This aspect of Mark's theology raises some interesting challenges and limits to a non-eschatological interpretation of Mark 13:24-25.

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<sup>64</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, Marcus, *Mark 8-16*.

<sup>65</sup> Collins, *Mark*, 42-44, 153-155, Hooker, *Mark*, 20, 55-58, Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 71.

<sup>66</sup> The kingdom of God is also mentioned in Mark 4:11, 26, 30; 9:47; 10:14-15, 23-25; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43.

<sup>67</sup> Allison in particular argues for this intricate relationship between the Kingdom of God and eschatology. Collins argues that Mark 1:15 reflects the tri-partite structure of Mark as an eschatological historical monograph. Hooker sees 1:15 as a summary of Jesus' whole message. Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination and History* (London: SPCK, 2010), 36-38, 164-204, Collins, *Mark*, 42-44, Hooker, *Mark*, 55-58. Even Borg, who argues against Collins that Jesus is not an eschatological prophet, sees eschatology in Mark 9:1 and 1:15 if interpreted through the lens of 9:1, Marcus J. Borg, "Con: Jesus was not an Apocalyptic Prophet," in *The Apocalyptic Jesus: A Debate* (ed. Robert J. Miller; Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2001), 41.

<sup>68</sup> Gk. ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. For an overview of the issues see Hooker, *Mark*, 55-58, France, *Mark*, 71-79. For the meaning of kingdom of God in gospels in comparison to its use in Paul see David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 34-103.

If Mark 1:15 refers to the expectation that the kingdom of God was about to arrive in its completeness, i.e. the earthly powers that oppose God would be fully defeated, divine rule would be established and the peace would reign on earth, in other words if Mark 1:15 is expecting that the eschatological age is to be fully established in the present, then Mark 13:24-27, as a text that describes the defeat of those cosmic powers associated with the fall of the temple, is something of an anticlimax to the gospel. If Jesus' message was one in which he expected God's rule to be established imminently, then Mark 13:24-27 can *at best* be described as beginning that event, but more realistically is a fairly unremarkable, perhaps even disappointing, fulfilment of that hope. By the end of the first century (and beyond) God's kingdom is still yet to come. This disappointment is further highlighted by the prophecy in Mark 9:1: Jesus' disciples did *not* witness the kingdom of God coming in power, at least in all its fullness.

In contrast to the interpretation of the kingdom of God as a space to be fully established on earth, some interesting possibilities open up if it is understood as less the *kingdom* of God and more as the *kingship* of God.<sup>69</sup> Within its surrounding context, the kingship of God in 1:15 might be taken as the arrival of Jesus as Lord, fulfilling the prophecy cited in v.2 to prepare the Lord's way. If the cosmic power exchange in Mark 13:24-27 reflects a wider theme in this gospel, it is possible that the imminent arrival of the kingship of God is the beginning of a time when the cosmic hierarchy is to be upturned so that God will be victorious over the powers in heaven and, to those who assent, this kingship will be made manifest upon earth. The kingship of God on earth would become a dynamic reality,

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Hooker prefers "kingship" as closer to the Aramaic equivalent. Hooker, *Mark*, 55. This is explored more detail in France, *Mark*, 91-94, 1971. and Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 171-176. Contra Allison, who states that the kingdom of God is "a realm as well as a reign; it is a place and a time yet to come in which God will reign supreme" Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 201. He argues that texts that emphasise the reign of God, i.e. his kingship, should not control our understanding of the kingdom of God in texts where there is a more territorial focus. Rightly, he points out that words/phrases do not have to be limited to one sense (e.g. Kingdom of God can emphasise realm, royal rule, people of the kingdom), but given the Aramaic background emphasises kingship and that the phrase is regularly the kingdom *of God* and not simply *the kingdom*, Allison perhaps focuses too much on distinguishing territorial nuance from the implicit divine kingship.

conditional on personal submission. This may be intimated in Jesus' opening battle with Satan in the wilderness, reflecting the power battle that is to unfold, and John's preaching for the people to repent, which will prepare them to come under authority of a new lord. Against this, however, is that such a perspective on the kingdom of God challenges some of the kingdom parables, e.g. those in Mark 4:26-34, which do not centre around a person, but focus on land, place and provision. On the other hand, it may be that these parables describe the ethics that are innate to life under the rulership of the king and/or the character and example of the king himself. The future component of the kingdom (i.e. Mark 9:1 and 10:15) may reflect specific instances in which there is significant reordering of powers or acknowledgement of and submission to divine kingship. Thus Mark 9:1 would speak to the defeat of cosmic powers of the temple and its leaders and Christ's victory over them and, in Mark 10:15, the difficulty with which anyone can come under the kingship of God if they do not become like children who are truly dependent on the authorities in their lives.<sup>70</sup> On traditional interpretations of Mark's eschatology and kingdom language there are some clear limits to the wider coherence of interpreting Mark 13:24-25 as cosmic battle relating to history, although some interesting avenues for further exploration open up when the arrival of the kingdom of God is centred upon the arrival of divine kingship.

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<sup>70</sup> However, although the kingship of God may be a preferable emphasis, it likewise needs not to be pressed too far. Mark 12:34 and 14:25 both seem to focus on the kingdom of God as an established reality which a person can be either near (12:34) or in (14:25). Obviously that does not mean it is necessarily a reality in the sense of an actual, geographical place, but nonetheless the inference is less personally focused.

Mark 8:38-9:1 and 14:62

The cosmic catastrophe and arrival of the Son of Man in Mark 13:24-27 has parallel imagery in two other passages in the gospel: Mark 8:38-9:1 and 14:62. These texts are also interpreted as reflecting eschatology in Mark, namely Christ's return.<sup>71</sup> Mark 8:38-9:1 reads:

“Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

The second text, Mark 14:62, reads:

Jesus said, “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.’”

These texts share a number of features with 13:24-27. Mark 8:38-9:1 describes the Son of Man's arrival, the presence of angels and the arrival (of the kingdom of God) with power.

Mark 14:62 also depicts the Son of Man's arrival, with clouds as well as with power.<sup>72</sup>

Interestingly, neither passage uses the CCL of Mark 13:24-25, only the Son of Man imagery of vv.26-27.

Traditional interpretations conclude that Mark 8:38-9:1 describes the imminent expectation of Jesus' second coming and the arrival of God's kingdom in which those disciples who are ashamed of his message will be shamed.<sup>73</sup> These events are explicitly prophesied as occurring soon, within the lifetime of some of Jesus' audience (9:1b). The second passage (14:62) likewise reflects the expectation that Jesus will return and be

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<sup>71</sup> For Mark 8:38-9:1 see Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 628-630, Boring, *Mark*, 246-248. for Mark 14:62, see Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1005-1008.

<sup>72</sup> Although in Mark 14:62 it is euphemistic for God.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. Collins, *Mark*, 409-411, Hooker, *Mark*, 209-213, Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 232-235, Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 628-630, Boring, *Mark*, 246-248, Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998), 148-150. Dodd's argument is the most oft-cited contrary point of view. He argued the kingdom of God had *already* arrived because of the perfect participle, ἐληλυθυῖαν in 9:1 and thus the verse prophesies the after the fact acknowledgement that the kingdom has already arrived. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 53 n.51. See also France, *Mark*, 342-346.

vindicated before his enemies, in particular the priests and religious leaders.<sup>74</sup> The combination of the admission of Jesus' identity and that prophecy that he will be eschatologically exalted, an event the Sanhedrin will witness, reflects the expectation that Jesus will be vindicated over the religious leaders despite the present circumstances of his arrest and imminent crucifixion.

Clearly a mythological interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 that is consistent with the DWT in the 2TP challenges the traditional interpretations for these passages, as well as Dodd's interpretation that the kingdom of God has already come in the person of Jesus. If Mark 13:24-27 uses DWT to speak of the fall of Jerusalem as well as the corresponding spiritual powers, then it would be logical to conclude that, given the similarity in language, the same is true for Mark 8:38-9:1 and 14:62. This may be possible with respect to the second of the two, as Jesus is before the temple leaders, facing questions from the Sanhedrin, and one of the accusations is that he prophesied the destruction of the temple in three days (v.58).<sup>75</sup> However, it is more difficult to understand the imagery this way in Mark 8:38-9:1, which does not mention the temple, Jerusalem nor the religious leaders or Jesus' conflict with them. Rather, the focus is upon discipleship and whether the disciples will be ashamed of Jesus. It would require a distortion of the text to bring into the passage a sense that Jesus is concerned with the religious authorities of the day and his eventual vindication over them. Furthermore, if they all speak of the same event then Mark 9:1 would be equating the fall of the temple with the coming of the kingdom of God, which is an odd correlation to make, unless Dodd's argument is followed and that the envisaged event is the only time when the kingdom of God is acknowledged to have already come.

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<sup>74</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1005-1008, Collins, *Mark*, 704-705, Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 423, Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 233.

<sup>75</sup> The change between the third person ὄψονταί in Mark 13:24 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural ὄψεσθε in 14:62, possibly demonstrates the relationship between the spiritual powers that fall (13:24-25) with the temple and its leaders (14:62).



What possibilities are there for further research into Mark's use of the imagery of 13:24-27 in 8:38-9:1 and 14:62? First, the two latter passages invite investigation as to whether and how they use DWT. Given their similarity to 13:24-27, it is likely they draw on this mythological tradition, but both passages need to be examined on their own terms and their own contexts, which are quite different from that of Mark 13:24-27. Second, there seems to be a possible distinction to be explored between the imagery of the three texts. As noted above, both 8:38-9:1 and 14:62 only draw from the imagery of Mark 13:26-27, not vv.24-25. If the CCL of vv.24-25 refers to fall of spiritual powers connected to Jerusalem and vv.26-27 the vindication of the Son of Man and his victory over them, there may be a question to answer as to whether the DWT motifs in vv.26-27 speak of the DW's victory and vindication but not always with respect to the temple, spiritual powers or religious leaders. The imagery in 8:38-9:1 and 14:62 is used in response to a situation of conflict and unbelief, in the first the disciples who are ashamed of Jesus and thus ultimately rejected by him and in the second, the religious leaders who refuse to acknowledge his messianic authority. If DWT is used in these texts, could Mark be drawing on the component of the tradition that emphasises the DW's victory(ies) over his enemies and those who oppose him?<sup>76</sup> Finally, further work needs to be done on Mark 8:38-9:1 and how it relates the arrival of the kingdom of God to the coming of the Son of Man, if indeed the latter draws on the Divine Warrior myth, and to what extent this may affect interpretation of Mark 13:24-27.

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<sup>76</sup> Enemies that are not necessarily religious or political leaders, cf. 8:38-9:1. Alternatively, in this passage, perhaps Mark's community is facing persecution and is abandoning the faith because of persecution or social exclusion and therefore the enemy over whom the Son of Man will be vindicated is whichever power or institution the apostate disciples turn to.

## The Gospel of Mark as Apocalyptic<sup>77</sup>

There have been a couple of significant contributions to Markan scholarship, with a renewed focus upon the gospel as apocalyptic in character. First, Marcus' two-volume commentary with its focus on Mark as "cosmic apocalyptic eschatology,"<sup>78</sup> emphasises both the battle between Jesus and demonic powers as well as the more traditional eschatological hope that the Son of Man will return and the final victory over evil will be accomplished. Marcus argues that the description of Jesus crying out on the cross with a φωνή μεγάλη (15:34, 37), which is the same as the cry of demons when exorcised, reflects Satan's victory over Jesus at the cross.<sup>79</sup> His emphasis upon the conflict between Jesus and demonic powers is consistent with my assessment of the CCL in Mark 13:24-25, although he locates the conclusion to the conflict with demons in eschatological judgement and divine victory over evil. This raises an interesting question for an historical interpretation of cosmic conflict in Mark 13:24-25: to what extent is divine judgement upon the temple and spiritual powers a satisfactory climax and victory, when considered in the context of the whole of the gospel? The beginnings of an answer to this question may be found in a recent apocalyptic interpretation of Mark's gospel. Shively's monograph examines the gospel through the lens of Mark 3:22-30 and demonic conflict.<sup>80</sup> She offers a useful framework in which to consider Mark 13:24-27 as a text of cosmic battle in relation to the fall of the temple and defeat of Jerusalem. Although Shively follows an eschatological interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 itself,<sup>81</sup> the key themes she focuses

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<sup>77</sup> On one level, already widely accepted – many scholars see temple as theme up to v.23 and don't see an issue with wider theology of Mark. What's new? The added spiritual powers conflict.

<sup>78</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 72-73.

<sup>79</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 73.

<sup>80</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*.

<sup>81</sup> See above p.35.

on are consistent with identifying the CCL in these verses as the fall of spiritual powers associated with the temple and its leaders.

Shively, like Marcus, proposes that central to Mark is a conflict between Jesus and demonic powers, established in Mark 3:22-30. This conflict is not opposed to human conflicts, but actually found in them. Jesus' struggle with demonic powers is an effort to rescue people from Satan's household and bring them into the new family he is forming, based on obedience to the will of God. One of the human conflicts that Jesus encounters is with the temple authorities and Jewish leaders. While this conflict appears elsewhere in the gospel,<sup>82</sup> it becomes a key focus in Mark 11-12<sup>83</sup> where "the present temple system is a threat to proper worship" and "will be removed in order to make way for the formation of a new temple, that is, a new, fruitful community of those who follow Jesus."<sup>84</sup>

Shively's proposal of this subplot within the apocalyptic narrative of Mark would make sense of Mark 13:24-27 which otherwise, in light of more traditional, eschatological interpretations, sits awkwardly with the wider gospel. Jesus' conflict with the temple system as a reflection of a demonic struggle fits neatly with Mark 13:24-25 as a cosmic conflict and final defeat of cosmic powers with the destruction of the temple and fall of Jerusalem in 70CE. Within the context of Shively's wider subplot, Mark 13:24-27 is a necessary conclusion to the cosmic struggle outlined in Mark 3:22-30 and manifest in Jesus' conflict with religious authorities. Both human and demonic conflicts appear in the rest of the gospel<sup>85</sup> and both find their culmination in Mark 13, where the spiritual dimension to the conflict with the temple systems becomes more explicit in vv.24-25 and the demonic powers

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<sup>82</sup> E.g. Mark 3:6, 22; 8:31; 10:33.

<sup>83</sup> Evident in the cleansing of the temple (11:15-18), cursing of the fig tree (11:20-24) and the parable of the vineyard (12:1-12).

<sup>84</sup> Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 195.

<sup>85</sup> These conflicts are depicted in similar ways: Shively notes how exorcism language is used to speak of Jesus' conflict in the temple in ch.11. Shively, *Apocalyptic*, 193-194.

are finally defeated. This could also explain the subsequent action in v.27 of the angels being sent out to gather in the elect, to begin forming a new worshiping community.

## Conclusion

An interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 that focuses on cosmic conflict and defeat of spiritual powers associated with the temple and its leaders may be the most historically consistent interpretation of the mythological language employed, but it does present a conflict with wider eschatological themes in Mark's gospel as well as the similar imagery found in Mark 8:38-9:1 and 14:62. While I have outlined possible ways in which these may be reconciled and further avenues for exploration, there is much to be examined in the rest of the gospel to see if this interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 is corroborated by Mark as a whole. Marcus and Shively have both demonstrated something of the spiritual conflict and battle found throughout the gospel, but this has yet to be integrated with a non-eschatological interpretation Mark 13:24-27. There is also the additional question of to what extent does the conflict with spiritual powers in Mark 13:24-25 (and possibly the rest of the gospel) go back to the historical Jesus or does it reflect a specific and particular concern of the gospel of Mark?

## Mark 13:24-25 and the New Testament

As well as the questions and challenges that are raised by comparing Mark 13:24-27 to theological issues elsewhere in Mark's gospel, issues also come up when it is placed within its wider NT context. This thesis has examined Mark as a Second Temple text and not as a canonical text, yet Mark is nonetheless a product of the early Christian community and

deserves some broader contextualisation in its light. Considering the text in this way opens up a number of questions about eschatology, CCL and DWT in the NT.

First, there is the question of how to reconcile the reading I have proposed for Mark 13:24-27 with its synoptic parallels. Luke 21:25-27 is written with concern for the fall of the temple in 70CE, with a clear focus on the military presence in Jerusalem in the preceding verses (vv.20-24). By contrast, Matt 24:29-31 uses the same language to describe the Parousia of the Son of Man (and explicitly uses the Greek noun παρουσία in v.27).<sup>86</sup> If these interpretations of the material are correct, then Luke and Matthew are at odds with one another and whatever one concludes about Mark 13:24-27 will leave one or other of the synoptic parallels in contradiction to it. The question of DWT in Luke 21 has been examined by Angel,<sup>87</sup> but a mythological analysis of Matt 24:29-31 would benefit the discussion further. For example, even if the conclusion was reached that (a) there is mythological material in the passage and (b) it supports a non-eschatological interpretation of Matt 24:29-31;<sup>88</sup> the clearly eschatological language from vv.36-44 may indicate something of a change and adaptation of the mythological motif of the Son of Man's coming<sup>89</sup> and perhaps reflects a connection between historical judgement as a foretaste or manifestation of eschatological judgement. Alternatively, if Matthew has used Mark and adapted it for a wholly eschatological purpose, is this the clearest example of eschatologising a non-eschatological text and, if so, what can be learned from Matthew's example?

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<sup>86</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 354-364. The term παρουσία appears three other times in the chapter (Matt 24:3, 37, 39). France argues against Davies and Allison that the eschatological connotation is only present in vv.27-28 as an aside which is only returned to in Matt 24:36 onwards. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Mich. ; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 891-893, 917-925, R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 246-352.

<sup>87</sup> Angel, *Chaos*, 135-139.

<sup>88</sup> As argued by France, *Gospel of Matthew*, France, *Matthew: An Introduction*.

<sup>89</sup> Although v.37 and v.39 use παρουσία not ἔρχομαι (as v.30), the difference in vocabulary should not be overemphasised as ἔρχομαι is then used in vv.42 and 44.

A second consideration is what to make of Mark 13:24-27 alongside other CCL elsewhere in the NT. Cosmic catastrophe appears in a number of places (Heb 12:26-28, 2 Pet 3:8-13 and Rev 6:12-14). If CCL is used to describe spiritual powers in Mark 13:24-25, to what extent is this reflected in these other instances of cosmic catastrophe? Lane's interpretation of Heb 12:26-28 could incorporate this with his argument that the emphasis in the text is that the *heavens* are now shaken as well as the earth (where shaking reflects divine judgement rather than cosmic destruction), in contrast to the shaking at Sinai, and that the inclusion of the heavens in the new covenant indicates a deeper, more severe judgement to come.<sup>90</sup> There have been figurative interpretations of the CCL in Rev 6:12-14 also, although the emphasis has been usually more on humans rather than spiritual powers as the focus of judgement.<sup>91</sup> It is possible that as Revelation, like Mark, draws on Isa 34:4, there may be more to draw out concerning judgement upon spiritual powers, but that has not been demonstrated.

The third reference to cosmic catastrophe in the NT is 2 Pet 3:8-13. This passage presents a number of issues that need further attention in light of this thesis. It describes the Day of the Lord, namely the day when the heavens will pass away, elements be dissolved with fire and the earth uncovered and its contents disclosed (vv.8-10). There is a moral imperative to pursue holiness in the mean time (v.11-12) and wait for the new heavens and earth where righteousness will reside (v.13). This is probably the closest example of an actual eschatological cosmic catastrophe of some kind (although Bauckham is right to note the

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<sup>90</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (WBC 47B; Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1991). Although contra this, Attridge argues that Heb 12:26-28 is more literally a referral to the "annihilation of the visible universe." Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 379-381.

<sup>91</sup> Beale, Aune and Caird all connect Rev 6:12-14 to divine judgement, but the first two focus the judgement upon human sinners, either as an act of judgement (Beale) or a catastrophe to induce fear of God (Aune). Caird acknowledges the principalities and powers that are connected to political entities, but ultimately does not say whether it is human or spiritual powers behind them that receive judgement (perhaps because he has both in mind), concluding that "John's imagery... stands for an overthrow of a worldly political order." Beale, *Revelation*, 396-399, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 391-392, 415-419, Caird, *Revelation*, 88-91.

priority in the passage is the divine judgement not the catastrophe itself)<sup>92</sup> and the majority of scholars focus on the cosmic destruction as acting upon physical, natural realities, rather than being representative of spiritual beings and cosmic battle or judgement.<sup>93</sup> This is quite different from the understanding of CCL when used as part of the mythological language in Mark 13:24-25 and raises the question of whether CCL is used in differing ways in the NT. If 2 Pet 3:8-13 anticipates a literal cosmic catastrophe of some kind (even if not complete annihilation) and Mark 13:24-25 does not, is this a reflection of the latter's use of the DW imagery whereas 2 Peter is not dealing with mythology? A renewed examination of 2 Pet 3:8-13 may elucidate this further: what traditions are being used? Does it draw on divine warrior motifs or other apocalyptic imagery?<sup>94</sup> Or is it drawing on beliefs within Stoic cosmology?<sup>95</sup> This leads into another question for how my thesis more widely interacts with this text, namely how does my argument about SCI affect the interpretations of 2 Pet 3 that maintain elements of Stoic cosmology are used here? Given SCI had diversified in how it was used so that it was not necessarily relating to Stoic cosmology, what type of use is present in 2 Pet 3, if any? Could it have been repurposed to explicate something of the nature of eschatological

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<sup>92</sup> “The apocalyptic imagery which follows depicts not simply the dissolution of the cosmos but, more importantly, the eschatological coming of the divine Judge.” Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 321.

<sup>93</sup> Davids and Bauckham interpret the elements as primarily heavenly bodies, although both accept there may be some secondary connotation of spiritual powers. Adams maintains that the elements refer to earth, air, fire and water, which would explain the otherwise (on Davids and Bauckham's interpretation) unfulfilled description that both the heavens and the earth are reserved for fire (2 Pet 3:7). Yet this view is not without its own problems as when the elements are dissolved (v.10a) the earth still remains with its contents disclosed (v.10b). Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 315-316, Davids, *Letters of 2 Peter*, 283-286. This has recently been challenged by Juza, who argues that the reference to elements is intentionally ambiguous to refer to *both* heavenly bodies and spiritual powers. Ryan P. Juza, “Echoes of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of the Lord: intertextuality and tradition in 2 Peter 3:7-13,” 24, no. 2 (2014): 237-238. See also J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 190-193.

<sup>94</sup> Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 303-322, Davids, *Letters of 2 Peter*, 262-276.

<sup>95</sup> Adams, *Stars*, 200-235, Harrill, “Stoic Physics,” 115-140, Horst, *Hellenism*, 271-292.

judgement without referring to an actual ἐκπύρωσις?<sup>96</sup> Or is this an example of SCI that *does* draw on Stoic cosmology, albeit within a Judaeo-Christian framework?

While the above considers Mark 13:24-25 with specific CCL texts elsewhere in the NT, there are couple of more general observations that can be made. First, even when Mark 13:24-25 is excluded, the passages themselves show a difference in how and why they use the CCL, although the context for all three is eschatological judgement. Mark 13:24-27 is distinct from the other passages as it is the only text that does not, I argue, refer to this end-time scenario, yet does refer to judgement. Is there then some way in which divine judgement in the NT should be understood to hold both particular, historical instances of judgement alongside the expectation of a final judgement?<sup>97</sup> Even if this is not found within one specific verse or passage, perhaps the NT more broadly shows an understanding of divine judgement that goes beyond historical versus eschatological lines to something that is more interrelated. This possibility also arises when Mark 13:24-27 is considered alongside other eschatological features in the NT.

New Testament eschatology repeatedly expresses hope and belief in the second coming or Parousia of the Lord (e.g. 1 Thess 3:13, 4:13-18, 2 Thess 2:1-2, 8; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 John 2:28; James 5:7-8; Rev 1:7, 22:20) and anticipates the coming of the Day of the Lord or the Day of Wrath (e.g. 2 Pet 3:10, 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:1-8; 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Rom 2:5). Given these features find some parallel to the language of Mark 13:24-27, there are various issues that come up with a non-eschatological interpretation of the latter. Although many scholars have no problem in distinguishing between historical and last judgement in the NT and interpret one text historically and another eschatologically with no

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<sup>96</sup> Perhaps this could provide an opportunity to reconcile apocalyptic and Stoic readings of 2 Pet 3.

<sup>97</sup> I think here of Caird's "bi-focal" understanding of divine judgement and Raabe's particularising of universal judgement, but applying it to several texts rather than one. Caird and Hurst, *New Testament Theology*, 265-266, Raabe, "Universal Judgment," 652-674.



difficulty,<sup>98</sup> there is still the question of how both traditions emerged. In this thesis, I demonstrated that the context of the mythology in Mark 13:24-27 finds a preferable location within historical events, a conclusion supported by the development of the DWT into the Second Temple period. Yet, given the wealth of NT evidence for an eschatological coming of Christ and last judgement, how does Mark 13:24-27 fit within the development of early Christian thought? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is one of the earliest NT texts and gives one of the clearest examples of eschatology in the NT, so why would Mark include in his gospel a passage so open to misunderstanding when there was an established tradition of connecting divine advent with eschatological hope? Does the widespread NT evidence for the eschatological coming of the Lord originate from a different tradition or is it a DWT motif that has been adapted to articulate Christ's return and final judgement?<sup>99</sup> Alternately, does it have its own origins in the OT, separate to the development of DWT in Second Temple Judaism? Furthermore, is there something to be explored about the means by which God's judgement is manifested in the world, as the coming of the Lord in judgement is a reality which has both a historical component<sup>100</sup> as well as an eschatological one?

There are various tensions between a non-eschatological interpretation of Mark 13:24-27 and the CCL and eschatological material elsewhere in the NT: how to reconcile the different uses of CCL, where Mark 13:24-27 fits within the development of the eschatological hope in the 'coming of the Lord' and what it is about the Mark passage that warrants a non-eschatological interpretation of the one who is coming. While the

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<sup>98</sup> For examples of this compare France on Matthew 24:1-35 and Matt 24:36-25:46 or Wright on Mark 13 and 1 & 2 Thess. France, *Matthew: An Introduction*, 333-359, Wright, *Victory of God*, 339-366, Wright, *Resurrection*, 213-219.

<sup>99</sup> With a biblical picture of a God who brings judgement within human history on various people and places, it would not be a stretch to anticipate that a final and comprehensive judgement would also take place. If this is how the development took place, the secondary question could be asked of whether the belief in the second coming goes back to the historical Jesus or not.

<sup>100</sup> This broader picture of judgement could account for the imminent judgement to come on the churches of Sardis (Rev 3:3) and Pergamum (Rev 2:16), preventable should they repent.

mythological development of the DWT in the STP may assist in navigating the interpretative debate in Mark 13, it runs into more difficulty in comparison to CCL and descriptions of the second coming elsewhere,<sup>101</sup> which invites a question of whether DWT is present elsewhere in these passages in the NT and, if so, would it challenge this thesis by providing evidence of the eschatologising of the mythological tradition?

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<sup>101</sup> E.g. this especially applies to 1 Thess 4:13-18 where resurrection is anticipated so it would be a stretch and awkward manipulation of the text to try and interpret it non-eschatologically.

## Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the debate concerning the interpretation of Mark 13:24-27, in particular vv.24-25, is assisted by understanding in more the depth the nature of the DWT in the Second Temple period. I have shown that *Sib.Or.* 3-5, as an example of the tradition in this period, adeptly draws on and applies DWT to new situations and develops it in new ways, even incorporating elements of SCI, which had diversified from its cosmological roots. Various traditional DW motifs are used (e.g. divine judgement, astral battle, forces of chaos) and various referents made (e.g. Nero, Egypt, Rome), with a concern about those who threaten God's people and city as well as demonstrate hubris and/or rebellion against God. The picture of the DWT that emerges from *Sib. Or.* 3-5 supports the interpretation that the CCL in Mark 13:24-27 depicts the cosmic upheaval at the coming of the Divine Warrior and, as part of that, the defeat of the spiritual powers that are overcome at his coming and the demise of the temple in Jerusalem. While this is progress in navigating arguments surrounding Mark 13:24-27, it challenges the fundamentals of Mark's eschatology and kingdom of God language and offers a different climax to apocalyptic readings of the gospel. It also leaves the question of how to understand the differences between Mark 13:24-27 and its synoptic parallels, as well as how to make sense of Mark's mythological use of CCL with the eschatological use found elsewhere in the NT, along with other eschatological themes.

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