

## APOCALYPTIC, WISDOM AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS DEBATE

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One of the more obvious trends in some recent discussion of the historical Jesus is the preference for a wisdom-inspired rather than an apocalyptically motivated understanding of his mission and ministry. This trend is particularly noteworthy among the more influential figures in the Jesus-Seminar. Thus Robert Funk, the founder of that study group writes as follows:

Exorcise the apocalyptic elements from Christianity. Apocalypticism at its base is world-denying and vindictive. [...] The desire to reward and punish in the next world is self-serving in its most crass, pathetic form. It is unworthy of the Galilean who asked for nothing for himself, beyond his simplest needs.<sup>1</sup>

Equally negative about the apocalyptic dimension of earliest Christianity is Burton Mack, who makes the following claim:

The remarkable thing about the Q people is that they were not Christians. They did not think of Jesus as the Messiah or the Christ. They did not take his teaching as an indictment of Judaism. They did not regard his death as divine, tragic or saving event and they did not imagine that he had been raised from the dead to rule over a transformed world. Instead they thought of him as a teacher whose teaching made it possible to live with verve in troubled times. The people of Q were Jesus people, not Christians.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Robert FUNK, *Honest to Jesus. Jesus for a New Millennium*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco 1996, 314.

2. Burton MACK, *The Lost Gospel. The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, 4f.

Some might choose to dismiss these statements as being one-sided and reflecting a highly biased view of apocalyptic and its influence. However, similar, if not so strident, noises have been coming from other quarters within the field of Q studies for some time now. Thus Canadian Scholar John Kloppenborg's hypothesis that the earliest layer of Q was sapiential only, with apocalyptic entering in at a later stage of the redaction of this now-lost document<sup>3</sup> has given rise to a number of studies which seek to develop the implications of the sapiential Q for early Christian myth-making.<sup>4</sup> The fact that colleagues working in the field of Second Temple Judaism have also been discussing the Wisdom/Apocalyptic relationship for over 10 years already in a Society of Biblical Literature working group, indicates that this is a live topic indeed.<sup>5</sup> So passionate are some of the debates that it is easy to concur with the suggestion of Melanie Johnson-Debaufre, that something more is at stake here for many scholars. In her judgement the tone of the discussion indicates that the real question is about «the essence of Christianity in a changing world».<sup>6</sup>

In order to underline this point further, but also to introduce a note of hermeneutical suspicion to the discussion, it is good to remind ourselves that this same debate, in slightly different terms to be sure, is not a new phenomenon. Johannes Weiss, published his *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, in 1901, only after his father-in-law the great liberal theologian, Albrecht Ritschl had passed away. Ritschl was one of the champions of liberal theology, which presented Jesus as a teacher of an ethics, which could form the basis for a true human society. However, Weiss showed how this project was doomed to failure since it was simply a case of dressing Jesus up in liberal Protestant clothes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast he interpreted Jesus' talk of the kingdom of God, not in ethical, but rather in apocalyptic categories, that he shared with his own first century Jewish contemporaries. This implied for Weiss that Jesus expected an imminent end to this world as an earth shattering cataclysmic event, a view that was shared by Albert Schweitzer also.<sup>7</sup>

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3. John KLOPPENBORG, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987; ÍD. *Excavating Q*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2000.

4. Leif VAAGE, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus' First Followers According to Q*, Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press, 1994; William ARNAL, *Jesus and the Village Scribes* Minneapolis, Fortress Press 2001.

5. Benjamin G. WRIGHT III – Lawrence M. WILLS, *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism*, (SBL Symposium Series 35), Atlanta: Society Biblical Literature 2005.

6. Melanie JOHNSON-DEBAUFRE, *Jesus among Her Children. Q, Eschatology and the Construction of Christian Origins*, (Harvard Theological Studies 55) Harvard University Press: Cambridge 2005, 4f.

7. John RICHES, *A Century of New Testament Studies*, Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press 1993, 14-30.

Despite Weiss' shot across the bows of liberal theology, Adolf von Harnack continued to present Jesus message in ethical terms that contrasted sharply with his contemporaries. As late as 1900, he wrote as follows:

They (the Jews) thought of God as a despot, guarding the ceremonial conventions of the household; Jesus breathed in the presence of God. They saw him only in his law which they had converted into a labyrinth of dark defiles, blind alleys and secret passages; He (Jesus) saw and felt him everywhere.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, both sides in the debate were interested in situating Jesus within his own first-century setting, the liberals (Ritschl, von Harnack) to point out just how much Jesus differed from his contemporaries, thereby justifying Christian theological claims about him, and the apocalyptists (Weiss and Schweitzer) to highlight the strangeness of Jesus from a 19<sup>th</sup> century perspective in sharing his contemporaries' views about the end of the world. With the collapse of the two-source hypothesis, following W. Wrede's discussion of the messianic secret in Mark, one might have expected that the liberal case would have collapsed also, but this only occurred finally in the wake of the great war in 1914-18, which sounded the death-knell of liberal optimism. However, apocalyptic in the sense that Weiss and Schweitzer had intended, was not able to win the day, since, despite his History of Religions background, Rudolph Bultmann's demythologisation project meant that the kingdom of God was now regarded as an idea that could be expressed in existentialist terms rather than as a category from Second Temple Jewish thinking. It was only in the 1950ies that Bultmann's student, Ernst Käsemann, re-introduced apocalyptic as a usable theological category, but only for the early Christians, not for Jesus himself.<sup>9</sup>

This excursus into the past of our present discussions should sound a warning note. Indeed Funk, Mack, but also John Domnick Crossan, are quite explicit in their reasons for the need to de-apocalypticise Jesus, namely, the incompatibility of apocalyptic with the modern world-view. The case with Q is somewhat different. As mentioned, John Kloppenborg's analysis has set the agenda for much modern North American scholarship, often going well beyond the claims for Q that Kloppenborg himself has made. Thus, for example, he is careful to suggest that the absence of apocalyptic elements in the earliest layer of Q, does not necessarily exclude those features from Jesus' own preaching. As a literary production Q, no matter how early it is to be dated, should not be equated with Jesus' teaching. Nevertheless, Kloppenborg's

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8. Adolf von HARNACK, *What is Christianity?* (English translation of German original 1900), Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1986, 71.

9. Ernst KÄSEMANN, «On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic», in ÍD., *New Testament Question of Today*, London: SCM Press, 1969, 108-137.

analysis of Q's redaction makes it clear that almost all of the apocalyptic material in Q, including the Son of Man sayings and John the Baptist's preaching of an imminent judgement, is the product of a later development. While he is prepared to accept Helmut Koester's claim that to deny any eschatological teaching to Jesus would make it difficult to understand the emergence of Christianity as a movement with a pervasive eschatological message, he does not want to describe such a Jesus-figure in terms of Schweitzer's imminent apocalyptic expectations.<sup>10</sup>

In this regard he insists on the moderation of Q in terms of speculating about the day of the coming Son of Man or the fates of the righteous and the wicked in the judgement, in contrast to the later gospels, including Mark 13. John the Baptist's oracles of judgment and the sayings of Q 17 (especially vv 34-35) about the return of the Son of Man «render uncertain and problematic assumptions about national privilege and the ordinary workings of society». And this strategy is deemed to coincide with other aspects of the Q redaction (apocalyptic and judgemental). In his view this is partly a rhetorical strategy in order to «make room» for the alternative life-style that Q seeks to promulgate, but also thereby contributing to the impression that the current order of things is about to collapse.<sup>11</sup> In short, even when apocalyptic elements appear in the later redaction of Q they are deemed to be attenuated, and intended to serve a rhetorical purpose with regard to the present, rather than acting as oracles of an immanent cataclysm. Indeed elsewhere Kloppenborg seeks to avoid apocalyptic as a descriptive category altogether, preferring instead, what he describes as «symbolic eschatology».<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, Kloppenborg's preference, if he must choose, is for a wisdom rather than an apocalyptic emphasis in both Jesus and Q, even though he thinks that as a category of analysis wisdom is too general and vague. Following the suggestions of John G. Gammie, he accepts that wisdom had developed considerably from its original proverbial character based on human observation. In the Hellenistic Age, he claims, wisdom had accommodated itself to «temporal dualisms and made prophetising adaptations».<sup>13</sup> Yet unlike the Gospel of Thomas, Q does not go down the route of de-eschatologising Jesus entirely, deploying the idea of the reign of God to characterise Jesus' teaching as an invitation to a counter-cultural life-style, while at the same time implicitly pointing to Jesus as the teacher whose example is to be followed (Q 6, 47-9; 9,

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10. KLOPPENBORG, «The Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus», *HTR* 89 (1996) 307-44, especially 343; H. KOESTER, *Ibíd.*, 345-49.

11. KLOPPENBORG, *Excavating Q*, 379-398, here, 392, «The Sayings Gospel Q», 339-343.

12. J. KLOPPENBORG, «Symbolic Eschatology and the Apocalypticism of Q», *HTR* 80 (1987) 287-306.

13. KLOPPENBORG, *Excavating Q*, 395.

57-58 e.g. p. 393). Thus, Q's Jesus' is a wisdom teacher rather than a prophet or an apocalyptic seer.

According to Kloppenborg's analysis. «to characterise this Jesus as "the eschatological prophet" ... implies a clear christological and soteriological direction» and «the invocation of eschatology has the key apologetic effect of rendering Q (and Jesus) as definitive and incomparable».<sup>14</sup> Here, it seems to me, that his best efforts to avoid the Scylla of reducing Jesus to merely another wisdom teacher and the Charybdis (from Kloppenborg's perspective) of seeing him as an end-time figure of Jewish expectation, runs into serious difficulties. Thus Kloppenborg can use the adjective «definitive» for Jesus as a teacher, but in the very next page he must eschew it as suggesting Jesus as incomparable or unique.<sup>15</sup> One is prompted to ask who is the apologist: is it the modern interpreter who wants to claim Jesus as the eschatological prophet, or the author of Q, who describes Jesus' deeds as the vindication of Sophia (Q, 7,35)?

While Kloppenborg argues his case for the sapiential Jesus and Q with thoroughness and real insight, others are more strident in putting forward their claims. Thus, Markus Borg, arguing for a non-eschatological Jesus, considers that a selective straw poll of North American scholars suggests that the «German» consensus no longer holds and that this creates «the opportunity to construct a variety of images for Jesus» in which «conventional wisdom» will play an important part.<sup>16</sup> Burton Mack rises to this challenge with what can only be described as rare abandon, divesting Jesus of the myth-making encrustations of the NT texts and merely assumes that Galilee provides a suitable ethos for a Cynic Jesus without any detailed argument.<sup>17</sup>

J. D. Crossan's work has been the most influential popularisation of this trend with his Cynic-like Jesus portrait. In his interpretation of Jesus' understanding of the kingdom, he suggests that while Jesus may have shared John's apocalyptic understanding of the coming judgement initially, his ministry and teaching show that he abandoned such a conception for the idea of a kingdom now, «a kingdom of the nobodies and the destitute, a kingdom performed rather than proclaimed». The closest example he can find for his hybrid Jewish-Cynic understanding of what the non-apocalyptic kingdom in the present might mean is to be found in Egyptian Judaism (The Sentences of Sextus, the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo of Alexandria). In a later study he states clearly the implications of all this: «I ask emphatically, whether apocalypticism, be it

14. KLOPPENBORG *Excavating Q*, 396f.

15. KLOPPENBORG *Excavating Q*, 396 and 397.

16. Marcus BORG, «A Temperate Case for an Non-Eschatological Jesus», *Forum* 2, 3 (1986) 81-103.

17. Burton MACK, *A Myth of Innocence. Mark and Christian Origins*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, 72-4; *Id.*, *The Lost Gospel*, 68.

in Judaism or in Christianity, is about divine justice or divine revenge... If we await a divine slaughter of those who are not Jews or Christians, then we are the killer children of a killer God. It is a question once again of character. Is your God a God of justice or revenge?»<sup>18</sup>

## 2. TAKING A BROADER PERSPECTIVE: WISDOM AND APOCALYPTIC

If any satisfactory solution of the issue as both an historical and a literary problem is to be found, we need to stand back from these fraught discussions where more is clearly at stake than meets the eye. It is here that the SBL consultation mentioned previously can begin to provide some perspective, in addition to the pioneering work of George Nickelsburg, John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth,<sup>19</sup> as well as many other scholars of Second Temple Jewish literature. Of course this work also should be subject to the same reflective examination, since as we shall see both wisdom and apocalyptic in their pure form, represent two seemingly opposing worldviews. There will always be a preference for one or the other, often depending on the social standing and circumstances of those who are both producing literature in either genre (broadly understood) or those who are receiving it, both in the ancient world and in the modern. The real question is the compatibility of these two world views and how best to formulate the relationship.

George Nickelsburg's discussion of the Apocalyptic and Wisdom literature was intended to set the agenda for the SBL consultation.<sup>20</sup> He begins the discussion by outlining what he considers to be established points of consensus: only those writings in which revelation is a significant component should be labelled apocalyptic. On this criterion six works can be listed, among them 1 Enoch and Daniel are prime examples. Yet while all these writings do meet the revelatory criterion that is set out, nevertheless they each differ considerably in terms of their overall content. Thus Daniel consists of a collection of what have been described as court tales (chs. 1-6), followed by a series of dream

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18. John Domnick CROSSAN, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, New York: HarperCollins, 1991, 292-97 and 340; Íd. *The Birth of Christianity. Discovering What Happened in the Years immediately after the Execution of Jesus*, New York: HarperCollins, 1998, 586.

19. George W. NICKELSBURG, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, Second Edition, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2005; John J. COLLINS, *The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity*, New York: Doubleday, 1984; James H. CHARLESWORTH (ed.), *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York: Doubleday, 1992.

20. W. E. NICKELSBURG, «Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Early Judaism: Some points for Discussion», in B. G. WRIGHT – L. M. WILLS (eds.), *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom And Apocalypticism* (Symposium Series Paperback), Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2005, 17-38.

visions which are explained to Daniel by a heavenly interpreter (chs 7-12). 1 Enoch on the other hand comprises a collection of very different types of material: mythic narratives, heavenly ascent and journey through the cosmos, interpretation by angels, torah or instruction about the movement of the heavenly bodies, dreams visions and discourses on ethical admonitions and prophetic exhortation. On this sampling apocalyptic is indeed a broad genre, if indeed that is the correct term for such writings. Yet as John Collins has argued the genetic compatibility between wisdom and apocalyptic has a wide scope indeed<sup>21</sup> Thus at the literary level, these two cannot be cleanly separated, it would seem, nor should they be seen as being necessarily in opposition, no matter how much we moderns have difficulty in identifying what it is that makes such compatibility possible.

Nickelsburg proceeds to examine books that would be described as wisdom writings because of their emphasis on torah instruction, proverbial instructions and practical advice about human conduct —Tobit, Ben Sirach, Baruch— all show a high regard for prophetic traditions including interest in the future. Thus they can portray the sage/teacher/prophet as an inspired spokesperson for God. Even Ben Sirach, the most self-consciously scribal in character of the books mentioned can profile the ideal scribe (presumably a self-portrait) in decidedly revelatory language. The scribe is concerned with prophecies, preserving the sayings of the famous and penetrating the subtleties of parables and the hidden (*apokrupta*) meaning of proverbs. Furthermore, just like Enoch before receiving his dream vision (1 Enoch 11-16), Ben Sirach's ideal scribe communes with the creator in morning prayer and may expect to receive a spirit of understanding and direction from the Lord «as he meditates on the mysteries». (Sir 39.7). The identification in this book (ch. 24) of Torah with Personified Wisdom, who has decided to take up her abode in Zion, means that as torah teacher the scribe must also acknowledge that for proper understanding he requires divine assistance and inspiration.

If wisdom is by no means incompatible with revelation, equally, apocalyptic can draw on wisdom tropes to convey its revealed message.<sup>22</sup> Thus the content of 1 Enoch is repeatedly described as wisdom (5,6; 37,1; 92,1; 93,10). The focus is on creation and cosmos rather than the Mosaic Torah, which seems to have been replaced by Enoch's («the scribe of righteousness») books, as the repository of heavenly wisdom (1En 81,1-82,4 in contrast to Sir 24 and Bar 1).

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21. John J. COLLINS, «Wisdom, Apocalyptic and Generic Compatibility», in John J. COLLINS (ed.) *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, (JSJ Supplements 54), Leiden: Brill, 1997, 385-404.

22. Randall L. ARGALL, *1 Enoch and Sirach. A Comparative Literary and Conceptual Analysis of the Themes of Revelation. Creation and Judgement*, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta: Scholars Press 1995.

The instructional material in 1 En 92-105 is heavily dependent on the prophetic tradition, particularly with regard to the teaching on wealth and its abuse. In the so-called Book of the Watchers Enoch's ascent to heaven is cast in terms of a prophetic call, whereby he must return and communicate their fate to the sons of men who had asked him to plead for them (chs 12-16). By contrast, wisdom in Daniel seems to be more circumscribed in that it is mainly concerned with the interpretation of dreams in the opening chapters. Yet, a consideration of Daniel's own prayer suggests that it has a much broader scope, as he gives thanks for the gift of being able to «uncover depths and mysteries to things only known to God alone» (Dan 2,20-23). This range explains the opening description of Daniel as proficient (*maskil*) in all wisdom, thus preparing him for his role as prototype for the *maskilim* in the second half of the book, to whom the message of God's eventual triumph over evil in the visionary chapters is directed (Dan 11,33; 12,2f).

The discussion thus far underlines the need to have a much more fluid understanding of what constitutes both wisdom and apocalyptic, in view of the range of common themes and tropes. Nevertheless, there is need for more precise distinctions if the two categories are not to become totally meaningless. As mentioned already, the character of revelatory literature gives apocalyptic some distinctive features, all of which need not be present in all apocalypses, but which assist in establishing generic boundaries. These include interest in other-worldly regions, angels and demons, eschatological judgement and the promise of rewards for the faithful.<sup>23</sup> In the case of wisdom literature there would appear to be a greater variety and less definition to what are the common features within this group of writings that would make it identifiable as a separate genre. As Tanzer points out, Proverbs, Ben Sirach, Qoheleth, Job and the Wisdom of Solomon are often described as Wisdom books, yet they do not share a common world view, even when they have shared idioms and stylistics.

This lack of clarity in terms of literary features has led to the suggestion of «world-view» as a useful category in distinguishing between the larger literary types. Even here, however, there is the danger of falling into the trap of an oppositional dualism such as world affirming or world denying. Insofar as the proverbial or gnomic is based on human experience of the world and its ways, it would seem that it is markedly different from apocalyptic texts which are interested in another world, or deem the present as irreversibly evil and chaotic. At these poles no reconciliation would seem to be possible. The collections of proverbial sayings that comprise the Book of Proverbs would be the stan-

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23. S. TANZER, «Response to George Nickelsburg, "Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Early Judaism"», in WRIGHT and WILLS (eds.) *Conflicted Boundaries*, 39-50, here 43; John J. COLLINS, «Jewish Apocalypses», *Semeia* 14 (1979) 21-59.



dard-bearer for this kind of experiential wisdom. Yet once these collections are framed by the depiction of Lady Wisdom as present at creation, thus knowing the hidden secrets of the world (Prov 8,22-31), followed by her invitation to the wise to come and partake of her gifts (Prov 9,1-6), it would seem that we have moved from the world of everyday experience and general observation to a sense of the hidden nature of the true meaning of the world. While human agency still has its place, the instruction that lady Wisdom offers is not far removed from the interpreting angel of apocalyptic literature who explains the significance of the dream or vision within the divine plan.

There is one final factor, hinted at already, which has been proposed in terms of distinguishing the apocalyptic from the sapiential, namely, the social context of both the producers of these writings and their addressees. However, this mode of investigation too is in danger of leading to polarisations and generalisations. Thus, e.g. it has been suggested that whereas the scribes who were authors of the wisdom literature were content with the status quo and therefore advised people to work within the existing social system, the scribes associated with apocalyptic were disaffected and sought to generate a radically different situation to the prevailing one.<sup>24</sup>

Ultimately this model re-introduces oppositional categories as the criterion for a sharp distinction between the two types of literature and the two different sets of addressees. Yet the same word «scribe» occurs for the authors in both instances (Ben Sirach and 1 Enoch for example). And visions of a new world can go hand in hand with everyday instruction, as the example of 1 Enoch makes clear. Judgements about the disaffected can often be quite arbitrary. In the case of Q e.g., it is the sapiential layer, with its challenge to a counter-cultural life that is ascribed by Kloppenborg and others to disaffected scribes, not the later apocalyptic redaction.<sup>25</sup> It would at least be necessary to examine every specific situation and attempt to discern the nature of the disaffection and the reasons why conditions were so intolerable in one context and yet acceptable in another, and to discern to whom those contrasting realities applied. A third, and more realistic alternative might be to realise that human life is and always was complex. There is nothing inconsistent with on the one hand making do with one's lot and at the same time dreaming the impossible dream of a new world, in which all will be changed, changed utterly. In fact in many instances it is the possibility of the dream that makes the present not just tolerable, but even tolerably pleasant.

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24. R. HORSLEY, «The Politics of Cultural Production in Second temple Judea: Historical Context and Political-Religious Relations of the Scribes Who Produced 1 Enoch, Sirach and Daniel», in WRIGHT and WILLS (eds.) *Conflicted Boundaries*, 123-148.

25. KLOPPENBORG, *Excavating Q*, 200f.

### 3. 4Q INSTRUCTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION

When Nickelsburg wrote his original paper in 1994, the 4Q Wisdom document from Qumran had not yet been published. Though signalled earlier, the critical edition of the text appeared in 1999.<sup>26</sup> The reassembled 4Q Instruction comprised the following Qumran documents: 1Q 26 (published already in 1955), 4Q 415-18 and 4Q 423, amounting to the largest «wisdom» text in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Daniel Harrington pointed to its interest for NT scholars prior to the appearance of the official edition,<sup>27</sup> and this aspect has subsequently been explored by Matthew Goff in two separate monographs and a number of articles as well as by other scholars working in the field of Qumran and early Christianity: 1Q 27; 4,Q 525 Beatitudes.<sup>28</sup>

4Q Instruction, based on the handwriting, is dated to the Herodian period. Since the instructions are concerned with money matters (loans, sureties etc.) and the conduct of marriage and family affairs, it would seem to be addressed to a general rather than a sectarian audience, drawing on passages from the law codes of the Hebrew Bible. This combination of practical wisdom and biblical law might support the uncertain reading of a separate fragment, which has been interpreted to mean «by the hand of Moses». The document is similar in tone and style to such traditional wisdom teaching as that found in Prov 22,17-24,22. A teacher addresses a student (*mebin*) with a series of 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular commands, imparting practical knowledge and inspiring the student to follow his advice with admonitions and promises of rewards or punishments.

Of particular importance for this paper is the repeated use in 4Q Instruction of the somewhat enigmatic phrase *raz nihyeh*. This expression is a combination of a Persian loan word, found frequently in Daniel, meaning mystery or secret, with the niphil participle of the verb «to be». Thus it should be translated as «the mystery to be/come» in the future, rather than the more static «mystery of what exists» or «mystery of existence», which have also been proposed.<sup>29</sup> The expression appears over 20 times in the sections of the document that have survived, often in close association with other eschatological motifs, thus strongly colouring the work with apocalyptic ideas despite the ethos of learning that the instruction itself suggests. After a detailed study of all the fragments. Goff

26. John STRUGNELL and Daniel HARRINGTON (eds.) *Qumran Cave 4, xxxiv: Sapiential Texts, Part Two, 4Q Instruction (Musar le Mevin): 4Q 415ff. With a Re-edition of Q 26*.

27. Daniel HARRINGTON, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran*, London: Routledge 1996, 87-92.

28. Christine HEMPEL – Armand LANGE – Herman LICHTENBERGER (eds.) *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, Peeters 2005.

29. D. HARRINGTON, «The *Raz Nihyeh* in a Qumran Wisdom Text (1 Q 26, 4Q 415-418,423)», *RQ* 6 (1996) 549-552, here 551.

describes it succinctly: 4Q Instruction combines traditional wisdom with an apocalyptic world-view.<sup>30</sup>

A sharper focus on the way in which the *raz nihyeh* is introduced throughout the work can assist in bringing about a more precise understanding of the way in which Wisdom and Apocalyptic motifs can be combined in a Second Temple Jewish document. One should note the terminology used in encouraging the student to avail of what the mystery has to offer: he is to «gaze» on it, «examine it», «meditate on it» and «grasp» it.<sup>31</sup> This list has a certain overlap with similar usage in Ben Sirach, but also a different emphasis, it would seem. The ideal scribe should «study», «seek out», «be concerned with» and «penetrate», in his pursuit of wisdom (Sir 38,1-3). In the 4Q Instruction the language seems more mystical than investigative, putting less emphasis on human endeavour and allowing the mystery to generate its effect on the individual. True, as both Harrington and Goff note, there is no interpreting angel, the hallmark of the classic apocalyptic vision. Yet it does seem possible to suggest a sense of revelatory experience in the 4Q document combined with the more traditional school language, while acknowledging that its perspective has changed considerably from a merely experiential understanding of wisdom. In support of the different emphases suggested, it is worth noting that elsewhere Ben Sirach discourages any speculation regarding mysteries, «unless they have been sent by the Almighty» (Sir 3, 21-24; 34,5f).

Another approach towards unpacking the meaning of this enigmatic expression is to examine the content of the instruction that the *raz nihyeh* offers to the addressee. Harrington lists these as follows: «understanding all the ways of truth and all the ways of iniquity», «the birth-time of salvation and to know who is to inherit glory and iniquity», «the inheritance of everything that lives», «the generations of man», and «the weight of the times and measures (unclear)».<sup>32</sup> There is clearly an eschatological tone to these expressions, based on the ideas of creation and eschaton (Urzeit/Endzeit), even when practical wisdom is also included in its gifts. The biblical obligation to honour father and mother is explained as follows: it was they who were first «to uncover the ear to the *raz nihyeh*», a biblical expression that evokes a revelation of the mystery to the child (cf. 1 Sam 9,15; 20, 2.12f). Central to the revelatory role that the *raz nihyeh* can play is its agency in creation, as Goff points out:

[Day and night meditate on the mystery that is] to be. Inquire constantly. ...Then you will distinguish between good and [evil according to their] works. For the God of knowledge is a foundation of truth. By the means of the mystery that is

30. GOFF, «Discerning Trajectories», 655; *Discerning Wisdom*, 13 and 293-308.

31. GOFF, «Discerning Trajectories», 665; HARRINGTON, «The *Raz Nihyeh*», 551f.

32. HARRINGTON, «The *Raz Nihyeh*», 552.

to be (*raz nihyeh*) he has laid out its foundation and its works. [With all wisdom] and all [clever]ness he has fashioned it. (4Q417,1,i 6-9).<sup>33</sup>

In this passage the *raz nihyeh* is equivalent to wisdom as both the instrumental cause in the creation, but also the content of the truth that is disclosed through that action. Hence it can be identified with wisdom's role in creation as in Proverbs 8. Yet, despite the similarities with the biblical text, 4Q differs in its emphasis. There is no open invitation to the knowledge disclosed, such as Lady Wisdom could offer to every passer-by. Neither is there any medium of interpretation. The addressee is assured that he has already been instructed, but he must continue to be grasped and grasp the mystery. Thus as in 1 Enoch 61, 13 the knowledge it has to offer is the preserve of the elect, a facet that is also stressed in the Instruction, when a little later the addressee is likened to the angels «separated from every fleshly spirit» (4Q418, 81, 1-5).

Thus even though the *raz nihyeh* of 4Q Instruction resembles Wisdom, it also bears the mark of apocalyptic thinking with regard to the chosen ones to whom alone the revelation is entrusted. Yet it lacks typical features of both wisdom and apocalyptic as previously discussed – there is no general knowledge that can be read by all who observe the world and its ways, but likewise no medium to interpret the special revelation to the addressee and his circle, who must continue to pay attention and gaze on the mystery that is to be/come.<sup>34</sup>

Goff's analysis is based on a detailed discussion of all the fragments, suggesting a coherent point of view to the reconstructed document. He repeatedly stresses that this is a *sapiential* text but with an *apocalyptic* worldview. To my mind the key term here is «worldview». This is not an added extra or a later redactional layer, as has been argued by Kloppenborg in regard to Q, but shapes the whole document by grounding the practical instruction in the mystery that is to be/come.<sup>35</sup> This is a far cry from the proverbial/gnomic wisdom that is simply a formulation of the way things are, based on ordinary observation. Jonathan Z. Smith's study of Wisdom and Apocalyptic from the perspective of the History of Religions suggests that as far back as our literary sources will go, these two points of view were closely intertwined.<sup>36</sup> Certainly, as far as

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33. GOFF, *Discerning Wisdom*, 17-21.

34. *Ibid.* 36-44.

35. T. ELGVIN, «Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the early Second Century BCE – the Evidence of 4QInstruction», in Lawrence SCHIFFMAN – Emmanuel TOV – James VANDERKAM (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after their Discovery. Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress 1999*, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000, 226-247; GOFF, «Discerning Trajectories», 663.

36. J. Z. SMITH, «Wisdom and Apocalyptic», in Nirger PEARSON (ed.), *Religious Syncretism in Antiquity. Essays in Conversation with Geo Windengren*, Santa Barbara Calif: Scholars press 1975, 1312-56

Second Temple Judaism is concerned, at least insofar as the evidence of 4Q Instruction indicates, they were fully integrated into a single, coherent worldview. The mystery that is to be/come was already present in creation, and had always been here, for those to whom it had been revealed.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: Q, JESUS AND THE WISDOM/APOCALYPTIC DEBATE

John Kloppenborg's starting point in his study of Q was to reconstruct its redactional history on the basis of literary criteria alone, which resulted in his positing a purely sapiential Q that would later be given an apocalyptic redaction. He reacts to John Collins, Richard Horsley and others for misunderstanding his intentions when they point to the combination of both wisdom and apocalyptic in various writings of the Second Temple period. Kloppenborg recognises that wisdom and apocalyptic material can subsist in the same document, but queries what is to be done in order «to understand the literary and generic relationships among the various elements».<sup>37</sup> However, this response does not seem to acknowledge that precisely because these two world views which we label as wisdom and apocalyptic are to be found repeatedly in the literature of the period, the first response should not be to separate them into discrete ideal genres/categories, but rather to explore the ways in which from our perspective two different ways of seeing the world could and did, not just co-exist awkwardly, but in fact influenced one another in both literary and theological ways. Such a perspective would provide a different understanding of Q and its role within early Christianity.<sup>38</sup>

George Nickelsburg discretely sums up the matter as follows:

As modern scholars, we get caught in the trap of our own making when we attempt to lock clusters of motifs and emphases into exclusive categories like «wisdom» and «apocalypticism». We shall do better to study the texts broadly and comparatively in order to see what we find there, and to observe what patterns emerge from this comparative endeavour.<sup>39</sup>

One suspects that Kloppenborg would respond to this implied critique by pointing to the theological interests that determine those who want to highlight the apocalyptic element of Q from the outset, as his favourable citation of Dieter Georgi suggests. Georgi had noted that whereas the History of Religions

37. KLOPPENBORG, *Excavating Q*, 145f, note 61.

38. GOFF, «Discerning Trajectories», 667-670.

39. NICKELSBURG, «Wisdom and Apocalypticism», in WRIGHT – WILLS (eds.), *Conflicted Boundaries*, 54.

School had seen the eschatological dimension of Jesus' proclamation as representing «the foreignness of Jesus and the early church», the designation has come to mean «the uniqueness of the victorious religion» which excludes all other comparisons.<sup>40</sup> It seems possible to continue with this hermeneutic of suspicion indefinitely, each side doubting the other's implicit or explicit biases –literary and theological. The *via media* may lie in taking Nickelsburg's advice by looking at the actual evidence to hand and seeing how literary *and* theological interests may or may not coincide. Certainly the discovery of 4Q Instruction has introduced a highly significant new piece of evidence into the scene and we would all do well to see how it might help to illumine our understanding of both Jesus himself and early Christian myth-making about the significance of his teaching and ministry.

In my 2004 study of the historical Jesus I dealt briefly with the implications of 4Q Instruction for understanding Jesus' ministry especially in relation to poverty.<sup>41</sup> In that study I had suggested that as a disciple of John the Baptist, Jesus most probably had been in touch with some ideas current in the Essene world, as these have now come to our knowledge through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, not least their common interest in Isaiah. To be sure, the Jesus movement differed considerably from what we know of the Essenes, particularly in terms of their exclusivist attitudes, as James Charlesworth and others have highlighted.<sup>42</sup> Yet this does not preclude a shared vocabulary and ethos, even when these are played out quite differently in different interpretative communities. If my understanding of the manner in which the distinctive notion of the *raz nihyeh* brings together aspects of both wisdom and apocalyptic, is correct, it would seem that it provides an interesting notion with which to explore other aspects of Jesus' teaching and ministry, particularly the idea of the kingdom, with its present and future, but also its hidden and revealed, aspects. One example of how such an inter-textual reading might work is offered by way of conclusion.

Mark represents Jesus' preaching of the kingdom as a general proclamation to all (Mark 1,14f). However, despite apparent success and enthusiasm, the kingdom is soon declared to be a *mystery*, the meaning of which is disclosed only to the chosen or elect ones (Mark 4,10f). Yet in the same context its presence and working is described in various parables to do with farming and

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40. KLOPPENBORG, *Excavating Q*, 397; D. GEORGI, «Rudolf Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament Revisited*», in E. HOBBS (ed.), *Bultmann, Retrospect and Prospect: The Centenary Symposium at Wellesley*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1985, 75-87

41. S. FREYNE, *Jesus a Jewish Galilean. A New Reading of the Jesus Story*, London and New York, T. and T. Clark International 2005, 140-142.

42. J. H. CHARLESWORTH, «The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historical Jesus», in CHARLESWORTH (ed.) *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1-74.

growth in nature, drawing on the everyday experience of people in ways not dissimilar to 4Q Instruction, which advises the farmer to ensure that he attributes the success of his labours to God and not to himself (1Q 26,1,4-6). Furthermore, the *raz nihyeh* is linked to a bountiful harvest (4Q 423, 3,2).

In particular the exclusively Markan parable of the seed growing secretly, declares that «the earth *of itself* brings forth the stalk» in ways that the farmer cannot comprehend (Mark 4,26-29). This highlights the everyday experience of humans with the mysterious, hidden reality of the world which is not understood by all. The parable or *mashal* is a typical wisdom trope, suggesting that in principle its message is available to all, but Mark subtly combines this understanding with the notion of revealed wisdom, with Jesus himself functioning as the interpretative medium (Mark 4,13.33f). Significantly, the question on the lips of the people of his home-town when Jesus visited Nazareth was: «Where did this man get all this? What is this *wisdom* that has been given to him?» (Mark 6,2). If my argument has any merit, we may be in a position to give at least a partial answer to that question: the intermingling of apocalyptic and wisdom among his Essene contemporaries formed the backdrop to Jesus' own distinctive usage which combined both aspects in the service of elucidating his understanding of the kingly rule of God, both now and in the future.

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## Sumari

Aquest treball continua el debat actual de la relació entre l'Apocalipsi i la Saviesa, i com es refereixen al Jesús històric. Contràriament als suggeriments recents d'alguns especialistes, que consideren aquests dos gèneres bastant separats i tracten l'Apocalipsi com a poc aclaridora, aquest article argumenta a favor de la connexió d'aquests dos tipus de textos, dintre els testimonis de la literatura del període del Segon Temple. Com a exemple d'aquesta estreta connexió es proposa la importància de la instrucció del document de Qumram 4Q per a entendre el Jesús històric.