

# SYRIAC APOCALYPTIC AND THE BODY POLITIC: FROM INDIVIDUAL SALVATION TO THE FATE OF THE STATE. NOTES ON SEVENTH CENTURY TEXTS

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Date of reception: 30<sup>th</sup> of May, 2010  
Final date of acceptance: 19<sup>th</sup> of January, 2011

## ABSTRACT

One of the main goals of this paper is to comment on the eschatological notion of “end” as found in a Syriac apocalyptic text of the seventh century, the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* (or *Pseudo-Daniel*), recently edited by Matthias Henze and the possible links with the canonical tradition related to the Book of Daniel in the Syriac Bible and to present its own specificity due to the eschatological tone that relates the text with the classical authors of the fourth century like Aphraat. This eschatological tone marks a distance with other Syriac texts of the seventh century with a more political approach<sup>1</sup>.

## KEY WORDS

Syriac Christianity, Apocalyptic, Byzantium, Apocrypha, Jewish-Christianity.

## CAPITALIA VERBA

Christiana ecclesia Syriaca, Apocalypsis, Byzantium, Apocrypha, Christiana ecclesia Judaica.

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1. A previous version of this text was presented as a Lecture at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven on Thursday October 29th 2009 under the premises of the Van Roey's Chair of Oriental Christian Studies. I want to express my gratitude to Prof. Peter van Deun for his invitation and to Prof. Caroline Macé for all her help during my visit to Leuven.

A short note should be included on the very concept of “Body Politic”. Even if the analogy of the Body Politic as the, eventual, correspondence between society and the state and the human body is very old and was used extensively from the Greeks (as seen in Plato or Aristophanes), western medieval thinkers<sup>2</sup> and very different thinkers well into the Seventeenth Century when this approach was challenged by another well known analogy, that of the social contract. For the seventeenth century, in Bacon’s terms, the analogy exemplified the kind of Idol that obstructed scientific inquiry. For Calvin and his followers, the Church as mystical body was supplemented by a great emphasis on covenant, modeled on the one between God and Abraham. These theories of covenant and construct saw Church and State as artificial institutions created by an act of will of their individual members. If the definition is based on origins, the organic analogy seemed deficient. We all know that a striking fusion of the two traditions is found in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*.

But for all these distinctions, readers could allow me the use of the metaphor to define the Byzantine State<sup>3</sup> as an organized community (in some way a Theophany borrowing Hélène Ahrweiler’s words<sup>4</sup>) of believers marching towards the Second Coming lead by the Emperor as something different from the individual. The Fate of this State will be the main concern of seventh century Apocalyptic Texts<sup>5</sup>.

One of the main goals of this paper is to comment on the eschatological notion of “end” as found in a Syriac apocalyptic text of the seventh century, the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* (or *Pseudo-Daniel*), recently edited by Matthias Henze and the possible links with the canonical tradition related to the Book of Daniel in the Syriac Bible and to present its own specificity due to the eschatological tone that relates the text with the classical authors of the fourth century like Aphraat. This eschatological tone marks a distance with other Syriac texts of the seventh century with a more political approach.

The study of Apocryphal tradition owns a lot, as is known, to Fabricius and his two major editions (*Codex apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, 1703, and *Codex pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti*, 1713) where he establish a programme of study of early Christianity where latin and greek traditions were studied along with the oriental Christian traditions<sup>6</sup>. The work of Fabricius lays in a previous heritage of oriental studies, including the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of Barthélemy

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2. For example, the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury -1159- adopts for its structure a comparison between the human body and the kingdom; or the analogy present in Sir John Fortescue’s *De laudibus legum Angliae*, written ca. 1479).

3. Carile, Antonio. *Teologia política bizantina*. Spoleto: Centro italiano di Studi sull’alto Medioevo, 2008.

4. Carile, Antonio. *Teologia política bizantina...*: 267.

5. For a general introduction to Byzantine Apocalyptic, see now: Magdalino, Paul. “The End of Time in Byzantium”, *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in der monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder, dirs. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2008: 119-133.

6. See now: Reed, Annette Yoshiko. “The Modern Invention of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha”. *Journal of Theological Studies*, 60/2 (2009): 403-436.



d'Herbelot published in 1697 thanks to the aid of Galland —containing large sections on oriental Christianity or even the exegetical works of Jean Morin or Richard Simon. In the nineteenth century this tradition was continued with such a neglected work that is the *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes* that Jacques-Paul Migne published in collaboration with Pierre Gustave Brunet in two volumes in 1856 and 1858.

Within the Syriac Tradition we count the edition of the Syriac Apocrypha published by Lagarde in 1861<sup>7</sup> or the texts related to the Christianization of Edessa published by William Cureton in 1864<sup>8</sup>. A year later, William Wright published his work on the Infancy Gospels and the *Transitus Mariae*, the syriac *dimidium* of Tischenderof's edition of greek apocrypha<sup>9</sup>. Wright also published in 1871 his *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* completing the edition of the to then known syriac apocrypha<sup>10</sup>. We are not interested today in tracing the history of this scholarly tradition<sup>11</sup> but pointing out the importance of a given literary tradition within Syriac Christianity where a lot of those texts known as “apocryphal” were included in a biblical canon that was never normative, something related to the very fact that several texts —and we speak only of those related to the apocalyptic tradition— only survived in syriac like de II Baruch or Pseudo-Daniel. We should also remember that a book like Revelation was only very later received in New Testament Syriac Canon that included from its very origin books like Second Baruch or Fourth Ezra.

This characteristic obliges us to start our inquiry with the reception of the canonical book of Daniel.

This is not the moment to comment on the syriac version of Daniel as it appears in the Syriac Old Testament<sup>12</sup> but we can still underline what we think is a major dependence of Syriac Daniel on the Hebrew/Aramaic Text against possible influences of the greek versions (Septuagint, Theodotion, Aquila). In fact the non existence of a Targum for Daniel should point out in that direction. Since the notion of “end” is one of the most important differences between both traditions (the Hebrew as it reached us in the masoretic text and the Greeks) we

7. de Lagarde, Paul. *Libri Veteris Testamenti Apocryphi Syriaci*. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1861. (It included: Ecclesiasticus.-Sapientia Salomonis.-Tobit.-Baruch.-Iudith.-Canticum trium puerorum.-Bel et draco.--Susanna.--Esdras.--Maccabaeorum primus-tertius).

8. Cureton, William. *Ancient Syriac documents: relative to the earliest establishment of Christianity in Edessa and the neighbouring countries, from the year after our Lord's ascension to the beginning of the fourth century*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1864.

9. Wright, William. *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1865.

10. Wright, William. *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*. London: Williams & Wright, 1871.

11. That tradition received a first approach in: Desreumaux, Alain. “Des richesses peu connues: les apocryphes syriaques”, *Les apocryphes syriaques*, Muriel Debié, dir. Paris: Geuthner, 2005: 13-30.

12. Ubierna, Pablo. “Afrates y la interpretación bíblica: historia y exégesis de los Padres Siríacos del siglo IV”. *Estudios Patristicos*, 1 (2004): 45-78; Ubierna, Pablo. “L'apocalyptique byzantine au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Monastères, images, pouvoirs et société à Byzance*, Michel Kaplan, dir. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006: 207-221.



considered that this dependence of the syriac text on the Hebrew/Aramaic was deliberate.

The Book of Daniel deals with the problem of periodization of history. In the second part (chapters 7-12) the text comments on the visions of the first six chapters to give us an interpretation that touches the heart of the idea of “apocalypse”. In chapter X, 14 we find an announcement of the “end” of tribulation. And we could very honestly wonder about the moment of such “end”. It is hard to imagine the text speaking about a far “end” and addressing people suffering from persecution. Visions in chapters 1 to 6, even those of chapter 7 (and the organization of historical time that depends on them) could not be understood without reference to chapters 7-12. It is important to underline that the Book of Daniel insists on the notion of “end” of history (ܩܬܝܬ, *qets*), something some scholars, on one side, thought should be understood as relating to a short, limited period of time (*lʿqets shanîm*), “after some years”, “some years later”), but others, in an absolute sense: “the end of time”.

In this perspective, that we could name “eschatological” the book resumes the classic expression *bʿaharit hayyamîm*<sup>13</sup>, that should be also understood, say the later, in an eschatological sense “the end of days”<sup>14</sup>.

We think that the end of the aforementioned tribulations should not be placed at the end of time but in a close future. In all the apocalyptic section of Daniel (Chapters 7-12) the “end” does not mean the end of history but the end of tyranny and the days of distress.

We could not enter now into these fundamental aspects of the hebrew expression but we could at least say that the core of the interpretation deals with the analysis of the use of two very different words: *qets*, on one side, deals with the end of an epoch, a long period of time, whereas all those terms and expressions derived of the root *ajar* have a more restricted meaning, defining not the far end of an epoch or even of history but the close end of a given event.

This distinction between *et qets* and *bʿaharit hayyamîm* disappears when both expression were translated into greek by means of *eschaton* and *synteleia* understood, by greek patristics, as the “consummation of time”, the end of an historical period. This could be related to the meaning that *bʿaharit hayyamîm* has already acquired in time of the greek translations when well established jewish communities in the helenistic world did not expect the end of time<sup>15</sup>.

13. Num. 24, 14; Gn. 49, 1; Dt. 31, 29 where the use makes reference to a short period of time.

14. Mostly in Is. 2, 2; Mi. 4, 1; Os. 3, 5 where the expression deals with the complete transformation of Israel in the future or even Ez. 38, 16 where the coming of Gog is part of that Drama. But even in this case it is risky to understand it as the “end of days” because it is not at all related to the end of history. Lipinski, Edward. «באחרית הימים» dans les textes préexiliques». *Vetus Testamentum*, 20 (1970): 445-450; Grelot, Pierre. «Histoire et eschatologie dans le livre de Daniel», *Apocalypses et Théologie de l'Espérance*, Association Catholique Française pour l'Étude de la Bible, ed. Paris: Cerf, 1977: 63-109.

15. Delcor, Matthias. *Le livre de Daniel*. Paris: Gabalda: 212-213. The idiom is analogous to לעתיד לבוא (“in the future”) of Talmud Yerushalmi (*Taanit* 1.1 [63d]).



Anyway, it is this confusion that will allow an eschatological exegesis of the Book of Daniel and its use in favor of an “imperial eschatology” in the Christian Empire<sup>16</sup>.

We tried to show, in other occasions, how —even if the syriac version of Daniel keeps the terminological distinctions that allowed the developpement of an apocalyptic literary tradition, syriac eschatology on its side, developed outside those categories. There is an oversight, even an oblivion of “apocalyptic”. And this is very interesting because, contrary to greek patristic tradition, this oversight could not be establish on the received text but against it.

We will not deal today with the scholarly tradition about the syriac translation of the Old Testament and the nature of the community that produced it, brilliantly studied by the late Cambridge Scholar Michael Weitzman (nor, by case, on the polemics between Weitzman and Drijvers<sup>17</sup> or the problems of Targums)<sup>17</sup>.

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16. Podskalsky, Georg. *Byzantinische Reicheschatologie*. Munich: W. Fink, 1972. For an introduction to the history of Revelation in Late Antiquity see: Ubierna, Pablo. “Fin de los tiempos, milenio y exégesis del apocalipsis en el cristianismo tardo-antiguo y bizantino”. *Byzantion Nea Hellas*, 19-20 (2000-2001): 189-211.

17. Specifically the posthomous work of Michael P. Weitzman on the Syriac Old Testament. Weitzman, Michael P. *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament. An Introduction*. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 1999 (where his analysis is centered, mainly, on the Book of Chronicles); Brock, Sebastian. «The Peshitta Old Testament. Between Judaism and Christianity». *Cristianesimo nella Storia*, 19 (1998): 483-502; Drijvers, Han J.W. “Early Syriac Christianity. Some recent publications”. *Vigiliae Christianae*, 50 (1996): 159-177, considers that Weitzman opinions as they appeared in a previous article [Weitzman, Michael P. “From Judaism to Christianity: The Syriac version of the Hebrew Bible”, *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, Judith Lieu, John North, Tessa Rajak, dirs. London-New York: Routledge, 1992: 147-173] were wrong. According to Drijvers a non rabbinic Jewish origin was doubtful because he considered that a Jewish community of that type in northern Mesopotamia is not known to us. On the other side, a Syriac translation would not be necessary for them since, as it is observed in the Jewish inscriptions of Edessa, Hebrew and Greek were both used along with Aramaic, the language of the Targum (Drijvers, Han J.W. “Early Syriac Christianity...”: 174-175). Drijvers was inclined to support a Christian origin due to the polemics against the Marcionites. This could also be in parallel with Drijvers opinions about the Septugint whose use amongs Jews (who preferred other Greek versions like Aquila or Symmachus, even Theodotion) ceased when this version was adopted by Christians. Regarding the text of Daniel, the Syriac Translation was made after a Hebrew version and by translators well versed in Jewish exegetical tradition. This knowledge could be confined to Jewish groups. But the translation could also be related to groups of converts. Discussion is open. Weitzman, in his study of the Book of Chronicles, thinks that a Christian could not have such a piety towards the condition of Jews as could be found in the Syriac version of Chronicles. He also points out that one of the major characteristics of Jewish Christianity was his close relation to Law (which is not typical of Chronicles) and not a national identification with the Jewish people (Weitzman, Michael P. *The Syriac Version of the Old...* 209 and following). To us the problem of Jewish Christianity in relation to the Syriac translation is much more complicates than the possible —or not— ethnic/national identification with Jewish people. The use of adjectives like “Christian” and “Jewish” is not always clear or simple. If a text uses the Old Testament or texts of the haggadic tradition, for example, that does not mean, in that region and time that the work in question was redacted by Jews but by an author that knew the Old Testament and that have access directly or indirectly to Jewish tradition. For Mesopotamia: Becker, Adam; Reed, Annette. *The Ways that Never Parted. Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007 and also Marmelstein, Benjamin. “Adam, ein Beitrag zur Messiaslehre”. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 35 (1928): 242-275; Marmelstein, Benjamin. “Adam, ein Beitrag zur Messiaslehre. III. Mose-Adam”. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 36 (1929): 51-86. One of the most interesting aspects of Weitzman thesis lay in the possible distance that could have existed



It is important to us to point out that the Syriac version of Daniel keeps a clear distinction between, on one side, the close End of oppression and, on the other, the “end” of History. In this way the fundamental passage of Daniel X, 14 is translated *bharto d-ywmto* where *harto*, reproduces the Hebrew *ahar*. The idea of a close end is reinforced by the use of *ywmto*, meaning not only “day” but “twenty-four hours”. In Daniel XX, 35 the notion of “end” is translated into syriac a *’edon qetso*, where *’edon* is the well know syriac Word for “time”, “age” in the sense of a *longue durée*. *Qetsô*, itself, reproduces the hebrew *qets*. The distinction between a close “end” of oppression (Daniel X, 14), that we consider typical of the Book of Daniel, is kept in the syriac version. From this point of view the syriac Daniel is closer to the Hebrew (at least in the version that reached us, as I have already said) than to the Greek versions of LXX and Theodotion. As we have seen in these versions, *eschatos* is used to translate a complete set of Hebrew or Aramaic idioms related to two very different roots, *ahar* and *qets*.

This aspect of Daniel X, 14 is not present in the book of Taylor about the syriac translation of Daniel, who presents a exhaustive study of the links between the Peshitto and the greek versions. The study of the different notions of “end” (P-Dn X, 14 and others) are of prime importance since syriac eschatological thinking will be based on them and also the syriac apocalyptic tradition as it developed in seventh century. The book of Daniel along with II Baruch were the only two apocalyptic books received in syriac canon<sup>19</sup>.

The conformation of the Old Testament syriac Canon is not very clear. The list of Theodore of Mopsuestia is different to that of Jacob of Edessa, neither the Peshitto version includes the same books than the Syro-Hexapla<sup>20</sup>.

between a non rabbinic Jewish exegesis of the Bible and a rabbinic one. Yeshayahu Maori considers, rather alone, that this is not what could be found in the text of the Peshitto, but that would be related, on contrary, to more traditional rabbinic exegesis. See: Maori, Yeshayahu. *Targum ha-Peshiteta la-Torah veha-parshanut ha-Yehudit ha-kedumah*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995.

18. If we consider the Peshitto being a Jewish translation, it is clear that the rabbis were the last group to need such a translation since Jewish exegesis was attached to the text. On the other side, the specific sense of the Targums were to help preaching in those regions where Hebrew was not use in liturgy anymore. The *Ketubim* of Hebrew Bible were not read in public, but for the Book of Esther. Some scholars, Weitzman amongst them, consider that the fact of not having a Targum for some books (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah) should be related to the absence of interest or support for translations. But the fact could also be related to the open opposition of rabbis to apocalyptic literature since the genre comprises a kind of “plus” of revelation that was not acceptable for them because it leaves open the Sense of Scripture. It have been said that several books were not translated because they include passages in Aramaic (like Daniel) but this should not be accepted since the sections in Hebrew outnumbered the Aramaic passages.

19. le Boulluec, Alain. “Le problème de l’extension du Canon des Écritures aux premiers siècles”. *Recherches de Sciences religieuses*, 92 (2004): 45-87.

20. The Syriac translation made by Paul of Tella in 616/617 from the Septuagint Text established by Origen. Given its literal character this version is of prime importance for our knowledge of the Greek text, badly transmitted. In fact, the text of Daniel was revised, at the end of seventh Century, by Jacob of Edessa who considered that the text of the Peshitto should be improved using the Greek text. It was Jacob who established the division into paragraphs in the Western Syriac tradition. Assemanus, Joseph Simonius. *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*. Roma: Sacris Congregatione de Propaganda Fide, 1719:





For the New Testament, the Peshitto only counted twenty-two books were several *pericopae* included in the Greek Text were either different or absent. Further recensions augmented the number of Books to twenty-seven (like the canon list included in Athanasius thirty-nine Festal letter of 367 in the version called Filoxenian of sixth century or the Harklean version of seventh century). Every text attributed to a New Testament character could be considered as apocryphal.

For the East Syriac Tradition, generally speaking, in the absence of list of accepted books, biblical manuscripts and the testimony of Syriac Fathers are our source of information about the status of certain books<sup>21</sup>.

The absence of an unified normative, in the Syriac Tradition, is the reason for the survival of certain texts (like II Baruch or the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Daniel) that did not reached us in Greek, as we already mentioned.

But this absence of normative is also part of a paradox: if Revelation was not widely accepted, canonical lists included II Baruch and IV Ezra<sup>22</sup>. In fact, the Syriac version of IV Ezra, *shulomo* is used to define the eschatological End of History (the Judgement included), something very different to the use we could find the Peshitto version of Daniel.

Several Scholars, as we know, have tried to describe Jewish eschatological thinking using two different categories, those of "eschatology" and "apocalyptic"<sup>23</sup>.

The Syriac Text of Baruch (or II Baruch)<sup>24</sup> presents even more interesting problems related to the idea of "the end". The text was written in Palestina after the fall of Second Temple (AD. 70) by a Jewish author<sup>25</sup>. Besides the links between Baruch and NT or early Christian writings, this Jewish origin was never questioned<sup>26</sup>. The

I, 468<sup>b</sup>-494<sup>a</sup>; Baumstark, Anton. *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*. Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers, 1922: 248-256; Ortiz, Ignacio. *Patrologia Syriaca*. Roma: Pontificum Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1965: 177-183; Blum, George Günter. "Jakob von Edessa". *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 5 (1996): 725-727 and Fiey, Jean-Marie. "Jacques, dit l'interprète". *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, 26 (1996): 663-664. The commentary on Daniel and Susanna have not received an edition yet. See: Bibliothèque Nationale Paris. Syr. 27, fol. 91-149. Zotenberg, Hermann. *Manuscripts Orientaux. Catalogues des Manuscrits Syriaques et Sabéens (Mandaïtes) de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1874: 10-12.

21. Debié, Muriel. *Les Apocryphes syriaques*. Paris: Geuthner, 2005 and Dorival, Gilles. "L'apport des Pères de l'Église à la question de la clôture du canon de l'Ancien Testament", *The Biblical canons*, Jean-Marie Auwers, Henk Jan de Jonge, dirs. Leuven: Peeters, 2003: 81-110.

22. In fact the four Catholic Epistles and Revelation were not included in the first western Syriac canons and were never included in the Eastern (in printed versions, Revelation, was only added in 1627).

23. For the Jewish eschatological traditions in the Book of Ezra, see: Kabisch, Richard. *Das vierte Buch Esra auf seine Quellen untersucht*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1889 and Stone, Michael. *A commentary on the book of Fourth Ezra*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990 who did not make a distinction between the "apocalyptic" and the "eschatological" aspects.

24. The other books attributed to Baruch are the Apocryphal Book of Baruch (I<sup>er</sup> Baruch), the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* (III Baruch) and the *Paralipomena Jeremiae Prophetiae*, that, according to the surviving fragments in Ethiopic, was attributed to Baruch (IV Baruch). See: Bogaert, Pierre. *Apocalypse de Baruch*. Paris: Cerf, 1969: I, 451-457. See also: Hobbins, John F. "The summing up of History in 2 Baruch". *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 89/1-2 (1998): 45-79.

25. Bogaert, Pierre. *Apocalypse de Baruch...* I, 334.

26. Bogaert, Pierre. "Les apocalypses contemporaines de Baruch, d'Esdras et de Jean", *L'Apocalypse Johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, Jan Lambrecht, dir. Leuven: Leuven University



work has a very simple structure, as is known: It begins with a series of visions describing the destruction of Jerusalem<sup>27</sup> followed by three visions of eschatological redemption: the first describes the end of time, the previous sufferings, the eschatological supper and the two steps of the arriving of the Messiah (chapters 24-30). The second comprises the vision of the Woods, the cedar, the wine and the sources of water and describe the end of the eschatological drama with the establishment of Paradise on Earth (chapters 53, 56-74).

With an use of the concept of “end” very close to that of IV Ezra, the text of II Baruch is centered in the messianic and eschatological Hope (being a Christian or Jewish text) in the perennity of the world and in the Truthfulness of God's promises. II Baruch designs (chap. XXIX), according to the use we have outlined for IV Ezra, the “end of time” (which is an eschatological end) using a terminology always related to *leshuno*.

Neither II Baruch nor IV Ezra fear eschatology, always related to the coming of the Messiah. The destruction of Jerusalem is the necessary condition for the eschatological drama and the beginning of the time of redemption. Neither II Baruch nor IV Ezra awaited any changes in historical conditions. In fact, the coming of the Messiah was dependent on them.

The coming of Messiah will happened in two steps. In the first, the “Chosen One” will be revealed and the Garden of Eden —where the Supper will take place— will be reestablished (29: 3-8).

The second step will occur just after Messiah's arrival in Glory and Majesty. Then, the Saints will come back from death, the Warehouses were the souls of the Just have been stored will be opened and the Final Judgment will take place (30: 1-5)<sup>28</sup>.

According to the visión in the syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, the “end” means the end of this world and is already happening, 19:5:

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Press, 1980: 47-68, where the author considers Revelation as dependant on II Baruch. But even if the author of II Baruch makes an extensive use of Jewish tradition (which was almost usual among early Christian authors) we do not want to enter in the polemics about Jewish Christianity. As Marinus de Jonge said in relation to the text of the *Testament of the Twelfth Patriarchs*: “One should be cautious in using the labels ‘Jewish’ and ‘Christian’. If, for instance, the testaments use biographical material taken from the Old Testament or from Jewish Haggadic tradition, this does not prove that the testaments are Jewish, but only that the author knew the Old Testament and had access to Jewish traditions, either directly or indirectly”. See: de Jonge, Marinus. *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology, and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Leiden: Brill, 1991: 263-264. Recently the work of Nir, Rivka. *The Destruction of Jerusalem and the idea of Redemption in the Syriac apocalypse of Baruch*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003 was the first, after a long time, in proposing a Christian authorship for II Baruch and received a lot of criticisms. See the review of his book by Matthias Henze in: Henze, Matthias. *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, 15/2 (2006): 145-148.

27. The text, even if it was written after the fall of the Temple in 70 A. D., sets the plot in time of the first destruction of the Temple. Baruch, son of Neriah is already mentioned in *Jer.* 32.

28. The same description of the arrival of the Messiah in two steps could be found in IV Ezra 7: 26-36. The Messianic Kingdom will last 400 years.





The end of the world means, then, the end of this world as we know it and the coming of a new one in the context of the coming of the Messiah. This coming of end will neither be evident or understood as “the end of time” by the population of the Land of Israel. Neither the announced “end”, nor the awaiting of a new world will happen at a specific time but during a long period that should be completed by the coming of Messiah and the new creation. The description of sufferings and the end of Jerusalem, that will precede “the end”, establish a link between II Baruch and Christian eschatology.

As it is presented in the New Testament (Mark 13, Matthew 24, Luke 21) where each catastrophe is a sign announcing the coming of the end<sup>29</sup>.

The Apocalypse of Baruch is, then, a text of messianic waiting but like in IV Ezra that waiting is an eschatological waiting<sup>30</sup> without any use of biblical terminology to describe the end of a set of given historical events, which is typical of apocalyptic tradition<sup>31</sup>.

Christian thinking about the meaning of present and future times is focused, little by little in the more eschatological aspects of a political power understood in a more or less providentialist way, even before the conversion of the empire. Amongst syriac Christians, this idea could be found in the story about the conversion of the kings of Edessa<sup>32</sup>. This providential existence of the earth Kingdom will be ever more important for Syriac Christians who lived in both the Persian and Roman empire in the fourth century, the time of the first great development of Syriac Theology as you know.

We will focus in the case of Aphraat for being illustrative enough<sup>33</sup>. The works of other syriac theologians who wrote on eschatology before the redaction of the great Works of the seventh century (like Ephrem or Narsai) must be left aside now.

In Demonstration V, *De Bellis*, Aphraat comments, using the Book of Daniel, on the historical situation: the Roman Empire was converted to Christianity and the persecution of the faithful have stop in the West.

29. Rivka Nir considers this one of the aspects that links II Baruch with Christian tradition. Nir, Rivka. *The Destruction of Jerusalem...* 130.

30. Several scholars have pointed out the Christian elements in the description of the arrival of the Messiah in II Baruch 3, 1 but the considered the passage a later interpolation. See: Volz, Paul. *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1934: 44 or Lagrange, Jean-Marie. “Notes sur le messianisme au temps de Jésus”. *Revue Biblique*, 14 (1905): 503, note 5.

31. This distinction is absent in Rivka Nir’s study of the problem of “the end of time” in II Baruch. See: Nir, Rivka. *The Destruction of Jerusalem...*: 121-132. This author comments on the distance between the use of *qets* and *beaharit hayyamim* in Danielic tradition and the usage that II Baruch makes of *shulomoh*. That is the core of the problem; dealing with the apocalyptic tradition present in books written in either Hebrew or Syriac: we are dealing with two different roots related to different ideas.

32. Examples are the *Doctrine of Addai*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and the *Book of Laws of the Countries*. See: Murray, Robert. *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*. Cambridge (UK)-Londres: Cambridge University Press, 1975: 1-38 and Drijvers, Hans J. W. “Apocryphal Literature in the Cultural Milieu of Osrrhoëne”. *Apocrypha. Le champ des apocryphes*, 1 (1990): 234-246.

33. Murray, Robert. *Symbols of Church and Kingdom...*: 239.



In the Persian Empire, where Aphraat was writing, Christians were still persecuted under Shapur II under accusation of helping the enemy<sup>34</sup>. The Beasts of Daniel were Babylon, Media-Persia (unified by Aphraat) and Greece<sup>35</sup>.

Speaking about the third beast and the kingdom of Alexander, Aphraat inserts a short commentary on the fourth beast which is, first, identical to the Kingdom of the "Son of Esau": a name for Rome already present in rabbinical literature<sup>36</sup>. After this, he comes back to the kingdom of Alexander and states that both the third and fourth beast should be identify with him. In chapter 20, he continues with a long description of the times of Antiochus the Fourth. This king will appear at the end of the 62 weeks and will be identify with the "little Horn" of Daniel 7, 8. Originally, Aphraat will consider that the "Saints from High" will be persecuted by Antiochus on his attack on Jerusalem and the hole Jewish Law<sup>37</sup>.

In Chapter 21 que quotes Daniel 8, 27 (about the "Saints form the High who will receive the Kingdom) but denies any identification of them with the Jewish people<sup>38</sup>.

It is at the end of Chapter 22 when Aphraat says that the Messiah (the Vine), upon his Coming, will give his Kingdom to the romans, the Sons of Esau<sup>39</sup>. After this he establish an analogy between the Saints of the Kingdom and the Christians of his time<sup>40</sup> because they will inherit the "Kingdom which is down Heaven"<sup>41</sup>. The text of Daniel, says Aphraat, could not speak about the Jews because the live as slaves amongs the nations. As Marie-Joseph Pierre says in her commentary on the work of Aphraat: "(...) the roman empire, now Christian, in anything more than the temporal guard of a royal warden/obligation that should be accomplish in the best possible way and, in time, given back"<sup>42</sup>. The kingdom of the "Sons of Esau" will not be vanquished<sup>43</sup>. This ambivalence in Aphraat in relation to the character of the fourth kingdom (unified with the third in the figure of Alexander or in itself, related to the Romans) have always been one of the major problems regarding

34. Brock, Sebastian. "Christians in the Sasanian Empire: a Case of Divided Loyalties", *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, Sebastian Brock, dir. Londres: Variorum, 1984, chapter VI.

35. Aphraat. "Demonstration V", 18, *Patrologia Syriaca*, ed. Ioannes Parisot. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1894: I, 217. The Kingdom of the Greeks, that began with Alexander, was the third beast.

36. *Demonstration V*, 19 (*Patrologia Syriaca*... I, 220): "On the fourth beast, he says: She is very strong, powerful and vigorous, he smashes everything under her feet: it is the kingdom of the sons of Esau. Because after Alexander the Macedonian became King, the kingdom of the Greeks existed; Alexander being part of the Greek. The third beast was him because the third and the fourth beast are only one".

37. "Demonstration V", 20, *Patrologia Syriaca*... I: 220-224.

38. "Demonstration V", 21, *Patrologia Syriaca*... I: 224-225.

39. "Demonstration V", 22, *Patrologia Syriaca*... I: 229-232.

40. "Demonstration V", 23, *Patrologia Syriaca*... I: 232.

41. *Dn*, 7, 27.

42. See: Pierre, Marie-Joseph. *Aphraate le Sage persan. Les Exposés*. Paris: Cerf, 1988: 354, note 38.

43. See: "Demonstration V", 24, *Patrologia Syriaca*... I: 233-236. See: Barnes, Timothy D. "Constantine and the Christians of Persia". *Journal of Roman Studies*, 75 (1985): 126-36.



the interpretation of his work. Maurice Casey proposed, in different occasions<sup>44</sup>, to relate the incongruences of his exegesis to the overlapping of two traditions. On one side, we could find what Casey calls “the old syriac tradition” where the fourth kingdom in the kingdom of the greeks. On the other side, Aphraat, would have been influenced by the western tradition, i.e. “greek” of danielic exegesis where the fourth kingdom was identified with Rome<sup>45</sup>. This theory received various different criticisms and I think it is not necessary to come back to the arguments which are, moreover, not sufficient<sup>46</sup>. We think there was never such a overlapping of traditions in the work of Aphraat. His intention was to provide an interpretation of the succession of empires and the lasting character of the fourth. His interpretation of that succession is close to Jewish tradition (like many other aspects in his work) and it is because of this that Aphraat “closes” his exegesis and attributes the fourth kingdom to Alexander and to his successors —and Antiochus IV was amongst them—. Aphraat continues his commentary with a long description of the days of this monarch. But for him, like for everybody else in his days, the kingdom of the Greeks was already part of the past. Doing this, Aphraat closes the door to any kind of eschatological interpretation and inserts the passages on the Kingdom of “the Sons of Esau”. By this, he makes a *tour de force* and continues with the identification of both the third and fourth kingdoms with the figure of Alexander. *There is no need to interpret in advance* seems to say the text of Aphraat, because, it is true, we still need to wait a while in order to see the coming of a new kingdom, that of the romans. But this one will not be the eschatological kingdom but a preparation for it. This part is not an interpolation so, we should take it as an integral part of his thinking. And the sense is not clear enough. In Demonstration V, 19, Aphraat announces that, in the prophecy on the fourth kingdom he alludes, to the kingdom of the “Sons of Esau”. After this, and without any problem, he affirms that after the

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44. Casey, Maurice. *The Son of Man. The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1979 and Casey, Maurice. “The Fourth Kingdom in Cosmas Indicopleustes and the Syrian Tradition”. *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 25 (1989): 385-403. Casey was interested in the exegesis of Daniel as it is found in the work of Porfirius, where the succession of empires ends with that of the Greeks. In this tradition, the “saints” were always understood as the persecuted Maccabees. Casey considers this exegetical tradition being at the origin of that of the Syriac Fathers and that it reached them through Jewish-Christian communities See: Casey, Maurice. “Porphyry and the Origin of the Son of Man of Daniel”. *Journal of Theological Studies*, 27 (1976): 15-33; Casey, Maurice. *The Son of Man...: 59*. Casey's interpretation was accepted by Bodenmann, Reinhard. *Naissance d'une Exégèse. Daniel dans l'Église ancienne des trois premiers siècles*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986: 260-262.

45. Casey, Maurice. “The Fourt Kingdom...”: 392. The identification of the fourth beast with the roman empire could be found already in first century apocalyptic literature. See: IV *Ezra*, 12, 1 1 and sq.; II *Baruch*, 39, 3-7 and in rabbinic tradition. See: von Schlatter, Adolf. *Die Theologie des Judentums nach dem Bericht des Josephus*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932: 200 and following.

46. Based, on one side, in the lack of proofs to accept this identification with the work of Porphyry and, on the other, on the fact that Aphraat is not the best of witness because he *overlapped* both interpretations. See: Collins, John J. *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993: 115. For a criticism of Casey's thesis, See: Ferch, Arthur J. *The Son of Man in Daniel Seven*. Berris Springs: Andrews University Press, 1979: 193-204.



anointing of Alexander as emperor, arrived “the kingdom of the greeks” because Alexander belong to that nation. To that moment

The only thing Aphraat have said to us (V, 19) is that the fourth beast of Daniel corresponds to the kingdom of the Sons of Esau and that the third and fourth visions both correspond to Alexander. After this, Aphraat mentions the succession of empires within the same tradition<sup>47</sup>. Once he establish the *lasting*, the *durability*, of the last kingdom, the text goes on (V, 20) with the description of the kingdom of Antiochus. Only at the end of Demonstration V, 22 and 23, he makes a new identification of the “Sons of Esau” with the Romans, as we have seen. In V, 19, the text announces:

- The identification of the fourth beast with the kingdom of “the Sons of Esau”
- The assimilation of the third and the fourth beast with Alexander
- The identification the heirs of Alexander with the Romans.

The succession of Kingdoms goes on up to “Severus”<sup>48</sup>. In V, 23, the “Sons of Esau” receive the kingdom from the hands of the Messiah. Even if they were still pagans during his coming, the text takes the conversion of the empire for granted. In V, 19 and 23 there is no mistake between (according to Collins) or even overlapping of (according to Casey) different exegetical traditions but a clear distinction between two different times within the history of the kingdom of the “Sons of Esau”. In V, 19 the author identifies in advance this kingdom with the last of monarchies announced before in order to avoid it to be understood as the eschatological kingdom<sup>49</sup>.

Aphraat's work is related to Jewish tradition<sup>50</sup> and our author lived in the Persian Empire and his interpretation of the Roman Empires was surprising and, of course, risky.

47. “Demonstration V”, 19, *Patrologia Syriaca*...: I, 220.

48. On the succession of kingdoms and their dates, see: “Demonstrationes”, praefatio: LXIV-LXV, and we should recall: *Demonstrations* 1 — 10, *Patrologia Syriaca*...: I, 336-337; Pierre, Marie-Joseph. *Aphraate le Sage Persan: Les Exposés*...: I, 42. This distinction is absent in the recent article on the subject by: Morrison, Craig. “The Reception of the Book of Daniel in Aphrahat's Fifth Demonstration ‘On Wars’”. *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, 7/1 (2004), electronic edition at <<http://syriacom.cua.edu/hugoye/Vol7No1/HV7N1Morrison.html>>.

49. Aphraat makes a commentary after a biblical quotation. It is not, so, a mistake made by making a reference *memoriter*. Owens, Robert J. *The Genesis-Exodus Citations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage*. Leiden: Brill, 1983.

50. As heir and disciple of “Sacred Scriptures” and not of philosophical schools, Aphraat, could be related to that “simple” (peshat) tradition of interpreting the Bible that will produce the syriac translation. Neusner, Jacob. *Aphrahat and Judaism. The Christian Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran*. Leiden: Brill, 1971 denies this link between Aphraat and the rabbins. This link was pointed out by Marie-Joseph Pierre: Pierre, Marie-Joseph. *Aphraate le Sage persan*...: 137-138 for the Babylonian rabbis and also by Ouellete, Jean. “Sens et portée de l'argument scripturaire chez Aphraate”, *Studies in Early Christian Literature and its Environment*, Robert H. Fischer, ed. Chicago: The Lutheran School of Theology, 1977 for a relationship with Jewish communities in northern Mesopotamia but without any specific link with the Babylonian Schools. This aspect was also mentioned by Henze, Matthias. “Nebuchadnezzar's Madness (Daniel 4) in Syriac Literature”, *The Book of Daniel. Composition and Reception*. John J. Collins, Peter Flint, ed. Leiden: Brill, 2001: 556. See: Murmelstein, Benjamin. “Adam ein Beitrag zur Messiaslehre...”: 242-275; Murmelstein, Benjamin. “Adam ein Beitrag zur Messiaslehre. III. Mose-Adam...”: 51-86 and Albrile, Ezio. “Il mister di Seth. Sincretismo gnostico in una perduta apocalisse”. *Laurentianum*, 38 (1997): 413-453.



But he did not make an apologetic description of new power of the zoroastrian faith<sup>51</sup>. His valorization of the Roman Empire should be understood within the wider frame of polemics against Judaism<sup>52</sup>. If Aphraat underlines the historical importance of the empire of the Romans as the last of the empires prophetized by Daniel is for two reasons: on one side, he want to give hope to Christians living under a newly established Zoroastrian rule in the Persian Empire and on the other to assure to the same populations that the eschatological crisis was still far away from them; that they were not living in the days of Parusia.

For him the existence of the roman empire (whose place in human history is described in Demonstration V) is assured till the Second Coming. In that sense the reading he makes of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* is not different of that made by the greek Fathers. It is the power of that empire what unables the Christian people to understand in an eschatological way the different “signs” (historical events, natural phenomena).

In Demonstration XXII, “On Death the Last Times”<sup>53</sup>, the notion of “end” is expressed through the word *shulomo* which appears in the technical senses, eschatological, (*De novissimis*) we have mentioned for previous texts as the IV Ezra<sup>54</sup>. When the context is of that of an eschatological speculation, the “end” (in this case, the end of history) is expressed by terms that are never used in the “apocalyptic” context of Daniel<sup>55</sup>, fact underlined by the type of exegesis made by Aphraat<sup>56</sup>. He consideres (like Melito or Origen) the existence of the Roman Empire as providential. But our author doesn't speak about the “end” in an apocalyptic sense regarding

51. Fearing reapresals in Marie-Joseph Pierre's opinion. Pierre, Marie-Joseph. *Aphraate le Sage persan...*: 76-80.

52. Besides, as we have seen before, the identification of the fourth kingdom with that of the Romans, “Sons of Esau” was part of traditional Jewish exegesis. In giving a new identification to that kingdom, Aphraat confronts the Jews.

53. A theological narration without any major link with contemporary history. It is the last in an alphabetical series based on the development of faith. See: Pierre, Marie-Joseph. *Aphraate le Sage persan...*: 840.

54. PS, I, 993: **ܕܒܪ ܥܠܡ ܕܠܡܐ**. The word is the same that could be found in the colophon of manuscripts. The sense of **ܕܒܪ** as a long period of time was uses once again while explaining Dn. 7, 25. See: PS, I, 225. A very different sense of “end”, as the “end” of a narration or revelation is **ܕܠܡܐ**, see: PS, I, 236, cap. 25. The sense of durability of contemporary history is reinforced in 212-213 where our author makes this commentary, based on Dn. 2.44, about the future and eschatological kingdom of Christ which will be the end of the fourth kingdom. This makes his commentary rather interesting because he uses **ܕܠܡܐ** to define “the end” to define the “end” of the fourth beast. This word could be understood as “end” or as “path”. As the derivate sense of root **ܕܒܐ**, “to pass”, “escape from”, “traspase”, “be victorious over”, reinforces the placement of that “end” in the future. The original root points out, moreover, to the idea of “being in rout towards”. The root **ܕܒܐ** is not found in Dn. 2, 44).

55. To Aphraat, the kingdom (**ܡܠܟܘܬܐ**) of this world is not against the Christ. Earthly power is something wanted by God in order to provide happiness to his sons. Christ did not establish, according to Aphraat, a Kingdom opposed to the earthly power. What interested Aphraat is roman victory over the Persian in order to obtain freedom for the Church in Sassanid territories.

56. For him, no one could say a final word regarding God's will not even at the end of a demosntration or speech on specific topics. Exegesis is just a path, without final arrival, which Aphraat precises with the use of the root **ܕܠܡܐ** in the sense of «absolute».



the Persian Empire. It is the Roman Empire which takes all his Hopes and closes his exegesis. This was also shared by Ephrem or later by Narsai<sup>57</sup>.

When the historical in the seventh century —persian occupation first and then, the arab invasion— requires a new set of texts of political Hope (apocalyptic like Pseudo-Daniel or Pseudo-Methodius but not only, also chronicles like the one written by John of Fenek<sup>58</sup>) this previous tradition will be at hand to provide a complete imagery.

One of those texts was the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*. This work only received new attention in the last years. Preserved in a single manuscript (Harvard MsSyr 42, 117r-122v), it also includes Works by John of Fenek, John Dalyatha, homelies of Evagrius, Gregorius the monk, Basilius, Philomen and Chrysostom<sup>59</sup>.

The text received a first, and surprinsing, edition in esperant by M. Slabczyk and a new one with english translation by Matthias Henze<sup>60</sup>. The text shows some parallels with other syriac apocalypse, edited by Hans Schmold, "The Apocalypse of the Young Daniel", but the eschatological section in Syriac Pseudo Daniel is more developed and allow us to date the text<sup>61</sup>. Lacking external references we base our assumptions in the internal evidences to date the text. One of those references, in chapter 22, mentions the opening of the "Door of north" (*tur'ô d-garbyô*),

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57. This aspect is not present at all in the recent article by Posseke, Ute. "Expectations of the End in Early Syriac Christianity", *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity*, Robert S. Daly, dir. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009: 160-173.

58. The work of John of Fenek (a Universal History partly unedited) is untitled *Ktâbâ d-reš mellê'* was partially published by Mingana, Alphonse. *Sources Syriacques*. Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1908: I (with French translation of book XV: 172-197). The narration of epidemics and hunger of A.H. 67 (A.D. 686-687, only few years before the prophecy of Pseudo-Methodius) appears in page 160, 3. 6 and page 165, 9. See: Reinink, Gerrit J. "Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende", *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, Andries Welkenhuysen, dirs. Leuven: Peeters, 1988: 82-111, especially 85. There is a French translation of books XIII and XV in: Scher, Addai. «Notice sur la vie et les œuvres de Johannan bar Penkayê'». *Journal Asiatique*, 10/10 (1907): 170-178. Extracts from books XIV and XV have been partially translated into german by Abramowski, Rudolf. *Dionysius von Tellmahre, jakobitischer Patriarch von 818-845*. Leipzig: Kommissionsverlag F. A. Brockhaus, 1940 (Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XXV 2). See also: Reinink, Gerrit. "East Syrian Historiography in Response to the Rise of Islam: the case of John Bar Penkayê's *Ktâbâ d-reš mellê'*", conference given in the congress "Redefining Christian Identity. Christian Cultural Strategies since the Rise of Islam", University of Groningen 7-11 april 1999.

59. Goshen, Moshe. *Syriac Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library: A Catalogue*. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979: 54.

60. Slabczyk, Miron. *Apokalipso de Danielo Profeto en la Lando Persio kaj Elamo: Sirian tekston, Esperantan tradukton kaj Komentaron preparis Miron Slabczyk*. Vienna: Arkado eldonejo, 2000 and Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel. Introduction, Text and Commentary*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001.

61. Schmoldt, Laurence H. *Die Schrift "Vom jungen Daniel" und "Daniels letzte Vision". Herausgabe und Interpretation zweier apokalyptischer Texte*. Hamburg: University of Hamburg (PhD. Dissertation), 1972: 25-113.





which will permit the invasion of the “people from the north” already announced in chapter 14<sup>62</sup>. In fact those “northern doors/walls” is a reference to the syriac *Alexander Legend* written around 629-30 which is the *terminus a quo* for the redaction of the Apocalypse of Daniel<sup>63</sup>. But the absence of any mention to the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, written in 690-91, is the *terminus a quem*<sup>64</sup>. Chapter 16 mentions a tax payment something that could allow us to settle the text in the first years of arab rule<sup>65</sup>.

The conception of history that is behing several syriac apocalyptic and eschatological texts of seventh century —amongst them the aforementioned Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius which mentions the coming of the “Sons of Hagar”, Ismael— is related to the fourth kingdom prophetized by Daniel. But the eschatological section in the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* begins with the follow down of that very empire (even without any mention to its universal character). In other texts, like Pseudo-Methodius, this is related to the legend of the last emperor something that it is not present in this text<sup>66</sup>. Since the description of history could be related to Revelation, the editor considers the text as chalcedonian<sup>67</sup>. Much

62. *Pseudo Daniel*, chapter 14. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel...*:

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63. Reinink, Gerrit. “Die Entstehung der syrischen Alexanderlegende als politisch-religiöse Propagandaschrift für Herakleios’ Kirchenpolitik”, *After Chalcedon. Studies in Theology and Church History*, Carol Laga, Joseph A. Munitiz, Lucas van Rompay, dirs. Leuven: Peeters, 1985: 263-281. The dating of these eschatological texts presents a problem because it makes a double reference: from one side the “revolt of the peoples from the north” and, on the other, “the doors/walls of the north”. If the reference to the doors/walls of the north is part of the legend concerning Alexander (seventh century), the revolt of peoples could be deduced from the prophecy of Ezekiel 38, 1-9. Klaus Berger considers “Vom Jungen Daniel” to be written before the Fourth century because there is no mention to de “doors of the north” (anyway, never before VII<sup>th</sup> century) something we consider to be correct (See: Berger, Klaus. “Hellenistisch-heidnische Prodigien und die Vorzeichen in der jüdischen und christlichen Apokalyptik”. *ANRW II: Augustan Literature. The Classical Review*, 23/2 (1980): 1463.) Berger’s conclusion have been refuted by Matthias Henze (Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse...*: 16) and by Heinrich Weinel based only on literary ground, which is an insufficient argument. See: Weinel, Heinrich. “Die spätere christliche Apokalyptik”, *Eucharisterion. Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments: Hermann Gunkel zum 60. Geburtstag, dem 23. Mai 1922 /dargebracht von seinen Schülern und Freunden*, Émeric Balla, ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923: II, 141-173. On Alexander’s Legend see also: Schmidt, Andrea. “Die Brüste des Nördens und Alexanders Mauern gegen Gog und Magog”, *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in der monoteistischen Weltreligionen*. Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder, dirs. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2008: 89-99 and Van Donzel, Emeri; Schmidt, Andrea. *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources*. Leiden-New York: Brill, 2010.

64. Reinink, Gerrit. “Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser”, *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, Andries Welkenhuysen, dirs. Leuven: Peeters, 1988: 82-111.

65. *Pseudo Daniel*, chapter 14. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel...*: 42:

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66. The prophecy of Daniel was already incorporated to Syriac and Byzantine literature on the Arab Conquests. See: Kaegi, Walter E. “Initial Byzantine reactions to the Arab Conquests”. *Church History*, 38 (1969): 139-149.

67. Matthias Henze thanks Gerrit Reinink for this remark on the origin of the text. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse...*: 17, note 43. The eschatological perspective is centered on the vision of Heavenly Jerusalem (*Pseudo-Daniel*, 33) Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel...*: the exiles’ pilgrimage to





associated to Leuven University through the name of Jan Lambrecht— could define the text as an “historical apocalypse”<sup>71</sup>.

The first part of the text take up again the structure of the biblical text and it is only in chapter 14 —beginning with the revolt of the northern peoples— that the eschatological section begins. This section will finish in chapter 49 with the Banquet of Peace. Now, even if “visions” are always part of those apocalypses called “historical”, this long second section makes no mention of the historical events of seventh century. In relation to this main aspect of the structure of the text, Alexander Golitzin have recently produce a sharp criticism of Matthias Henze's position<sup>72</sup>. Beyond the problems originated in the aforesaid definition (since every Apocalypse is related to problems concerning the oppression suffered by those communities addressed by the text, every aspect becomes “historical”, without need to recur to contemporary events or at least to make this explicit), the remarks of Golitzin did not touch the core of the problem. Golitzin considers that this incongruency could disappear by considering the author a monk, writing in a monastic milieu and addressing a monastic public. The monastic condition of the author would have made him to prefer the figure of Daniel (who Golitzin consideres primarily an ascetic) in order to recall the faithful, *id est* the other monks a central characteristic of their Charisma or vocation. This will allow the author to introduce two admonitions: the first one on the very nature of the vows, later on about fidelity to them and the dangers of any spiritual path. Golitzin's views are related to his last contributions to byzantine apocalyptic studies<sup>73</sup>, trying to underline that the text does not focus

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71. See: *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East. Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979*, David Hellholm, dir. Tübingen: Mohr, 1989 and *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, Jan Lambert, dir. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980. See also: Collins, John J. “Apocalypse: The morphology of a Genre”. *Semeia*, 14 (1979); Carmignac, Jean. *Le mirage de l'eschatologie*. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1979; Carmignac, Jan. “Qu'est-ce que l'apocalyptique”. *Revue de Qumrân*, 10 (1979). The Biblical Genres Project proposed a definition: (an apocalypse is) «a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world; such a world is intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of a divine authority», Collins, John J. *Apocalypse...: 7*). This definition has been challenged by several biblical scholars, amongst them, Oxford Professor John Ashton who proposed the following definition: “An apocalypse is a narrative, composed in circumstances of political, religious or social unrest, in the course of which an angelic being discloses heavenly mysteries, otherwise hidden, to a human seer, either indirectly, by interpreting a dream or vision, or directly, in which case the seer may believe that he has been transported to heaven in order to receive a special revelation”, in: Ashton, John. *Understanding the fourth Gospel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991: 383. The conditions of distress that gave birth to apocalyptic texts make them to focus first in giving a certain Hope and then to produce a praxis. It is important so far to distinguish between “apocalypse” as a literary genre and the diverse and derivative notions of “apocalyptic”.

72. Golitzin, Alexander. “Making the Inside like the Outside. Toward a Monastic *Sitz im Leben* for the Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel”, *Festschrift*, Monica Blanchard, Robin Darling Young eds. 2003. *Catholic University of America Press*. 31 July 2010. <<http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/daniel.html>>.

73. Golitzin, Alexander. “‘Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men’: The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Niketas Stethatos and the Tradition of ‘Interiorized Apocalyptic’ in Eastern Christian Ascetical Mystical



on historical events because the only intention of the author is to improve the spiritual life of the monks. Golitzin makes a link between spiritual improvement (founded in the fidelity to the vows as is expressed by Isai of Ninive in Homily 73) and the eschatological thinking. By this, the Last Judgement would only be the acknowledgment of one's internal transformation. The monk expresses by this his inner conformity to the Body of Christ after Transfiguration<sup>74</sup>. Here we enter the last part of this talk, the split between an individual salvation and the fate of the Christian empire as the main purpose of an apocalyptic writing such as the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*.

Beyond Golitzin's remarks on the redactional *milieu* (which could be fairly more than monastic for a seventh-century syriac text) and on the destinaries of the text, what we want to underline today is the eschatological character of the texts, something that overstep any consideration about the historical events. In two opportunities the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* mentions the "end of time", one in chapter 13 and the other in chapter 25 by using *qetso*, which points out to the End of History in itself, as we have already seen in the syriac version of Biblical Daniel and IV Ezra, for example<sup>75</sup>. This is a text that focus in the periodization of history on the seven-weeks typology (according to a schema already present in Daniel 9, 24-27, interpreting Jeremiah) and whose End will happen at the end of the seventh week (of millennia)<sup>76</sup>.

Literature". *Dumbarton Oaks Paper*, 55 (2001): 125-153.

74. See: Golitzin, Alexander. "Earthly Angels ...": note 29. On the base of this considerations Golitzin, comes back to a new definition of a central problem in Syriac Ascetic Tradition: *bnai/bnat qyama*. Following Sydney Griffith, he considers the possibility a new translation, not related to the notion of "Covenant" anymore, but to the root *qwm* and its derivatives, like *qyamta*, resurrection. The expression could mean, then, not only "Sons/Daughters of the Covenant/Alliance" but more precisely "Sons/Daughter of the Resurrection" or even "of Eschaton". These derivatives do not seem to be established on the firm ground of textual evidence. See: Griffith, Sydney. "Monks, 'Singles', and the 'Sons of the Covenant': Reflections on Syriac Ascetic Terminology", *Eulogema*, Ephrem Carr, Stefano Parenti, Abraham Thiermeyer, dirs. Roma: Centro Studi S. Anselmo, 1992: 141-60; Griffith, Sidney. "Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syriac Asceticism", *Asceticism*, Vincent L. Winbush, Richard Valantasis, dirs. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1995: 220-245.

75. *Pseudo-Daniel*: chapter 13: 38-39. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel...*: "and the end of history (that) the Holy Spirit showed to Daniel in Persia and Elam in the days of King Darius". Matthias Henze points out that this use of "end" in the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* is not related to the meaning of "end" in the Biblical Book of Daniel, that related to the "end" of an age of crisis. This last remark by Henze is founded in an article by Collins, John J. "Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death". *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 36 (1974): 26 that points out to a mistaken interpretation of the problem. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac...*: 75, note 51 and also chapter 13 *in fine*: "The Sages who keep the Covenant will understand this book and in the last End (end of ends)"; he underlines in the exclusively eschatological quality the author tried to show. For those "who keep the Covenant" —in the interpretation of Alexander Golitzin- we have already said that we considered that translation to be excessive. It is risky to interpret *bnai/bnat qyama* in an eschatological way, following Griffith because both *bnai* and *bnat qyama* are different from the "meshkilim of Jehova" of the previous Apocalyptic tradition as they are correctly understood by Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac...*: 76, note 58.

76. Adler, William. "The Apocalyptic Survey for History adapted by Christians: Daniel's Prophecy of 70 weeks", *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, James C. VanDerkam, William Adler, dirs. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996: 201-238. See also: Witakowsky, Witold. "The Idea of *Septimana Mundi*



The second part of the narration reinforces the idea of an appropriation, by the author, of a complete set of images already present not only in other —jewish— apocalypses but also in those texts belonging to the Messianic literary tradition. What is important to the author is not to explain contemporary problems but to make explicit that the end of history is about to come and that will be a testimony for the imminence of the coming back of the Christian Messiah<sup>77</sup>.

In chapter 33 the author composes his vision of Jerusalem not only on the base of Old Testament texts (Is. 54, 11-14; Ez 40-48; Zac 2, 4-8) but also on John's Revelation what makes of him an exceptional case within Syriac literary tradition<sup>78</sup>.

In the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*, once the eschatological drama had begun it is not explained by an Angel or Seer (which is typical in these texts). The Drama was not motivated by the sins of the community (another typical aspect)<sup>79</sup>. The case of the ausence of an angel is, in fact, very interesting. Even if those celestial beings (ܬܠܝܡܐ) appear in many opportunities<sup>80</sup>, its ausence here makes this text something very singular

Other aspect that reinforces the originality of the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* is related to divine Chastiments. The section about individual Judgement and that of the nations by Christ in his Second Coming is, surprisingly, very short and underlines the fact that every person will be judge with rectitude. The texts points out to the evidence of the Second Coming but it also implies that this will not be cause of any

and the Millenarian Typology of the creation week in the syriac tradition", *V Symposium Syriacum 1988*, René Lavenant, dir. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1990: 93-109 where he presents a synthesis of the presence of this *topos* in Syriac Literature. Witakowsky underlines the importance of number seven not only to establish a periodization of history but also to organize the liturgical calendar Witakowsky, Witold. "The Idea of *Septimana Mundi*...": 94-95.

77. See: The prophecy of Isaiah about redemption, concerning the glorious restoration of Jerusalem (Is. 60, 19-20), was used not only by IV Ezra but also by the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*. This last text quotes almost *verbatim* the description of the state of perennial Peace of the Heavenly Jerusalem. See: Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac...*: 29.

78. This allows Henze, after a suggestion made by Gerrit Reinink, to place the redaction of the Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel in a melkite milieu: Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel...* 17, note 43. The comment on “Those who keep the Covenant will understand this book”: (ܡܠܚܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܡܬܬܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܝܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܝܬܐ) is related to Dn. 8, 26; 12, 4 y 12, 9 because it obliges the visionary to keep the words secret and the book sealed till the coming of the “end” of history when things will be clear enough to be easily understood. Let us indicate again that it is this use of ܡܬܬܝܬܐ, *qyama*, what relates this Word to the notion of “Covenant” and not to “Resurrection” as it has been postulated by Griffith and Golitzin.

79. This element is present in several other syriac texts. The aforesaid “Wall of the North” will not open to permit the entrance to Gog and Magog because of men’s sins but as a necessary condition for the arrival of the Antichrist. See: *Pseudo-Daniel*, chap. 22: 47. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*... ܕܠܟܝܢ ܕܕܝܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ ܕܡܕܢܚܐ, “and then the Walls of the North will open before him”. Both in the “Syriac Legend of Alexander”, the “Syriac Poem of Alexander”, “The discourse of Pseudo-Ephrem on the End of the World” or “The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius”, the walls of the North will open because of men’s sins.

80. *Pseudo-Daniel*, chapter 15-16: 41. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel...*: The angels will come to Earth like human beings (ܐܬܝܠܚܝܢ ܡܠܬܝܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ), and they will reach “Sion over the waves of the sea”, chapter 19: 45: ܐܘ ܡܬܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܬܝܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ ܡܬܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܬܝܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ ܡܬܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܬܝܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ.



suffering. This way, the Judgement become only one of the aspects of Parousia but not the most important.

But there is a final aspect to consider regarding the way text approaches the notion of “end” of history and the link with contemporary events which seems to be placed far away from the others. After the description in chapters 15-16 of the Time of Peace that will precede the beginning of the Final Act (described in chapter 17-19) and the coming of the Antichrist (chapters 21-24)<sup>81</sup>, the text uses the expression “the last days” (ܝܡܝܬܐ ܠܗܪܝܬܐ -*ywmîê 'hryê-*), which is a very specific way to describe the lapse, the interval of time between these two periods. Henze does not mention this aspect which we consider to be of prime importance. That time, as could be inferred from terminology and for the general sense of the text, could be understood as about to come; it is a close (and I want to underline this aspect): once the “end comes” (ܝܬܠܡܢܢ ܢܒܢܐ -*nshlmwn nbnê-* and the eschatological drama completed, the “last days” of history will be very close. But in this specific case, the author uses a very different root to express the closeness of those days<sup>82</sup>.

This eschatological aspect separates *the Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* of other syriac apocalyptic texts of the seventh century, all of them with a more political approach (like the *Syriac Legend of Alexander*<sup>83</sup>, reissued at the times of Heraclius’ last offensive against the Persians in 629/30, the pseudo-Ephremian Homily “On the End of the World” or even the *Syriac Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*<sup>84</sup>.

The political events of the first half of the seventh century, mainly the Persian occupation of Northern Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt and the Arab invasion will be the opportunity for the drafting of new Apocalypses both Jewish and Christian, whose circulation could allow us to place again the general context of Christian apocalyptic in that century. That context would be the *Adversus Judaeos* polemics.

Amongst the Jewish texts we can mention, of course, the *Apocalypse of Zorobabel*, a Palestinian Jewish response to the Sasanid conquest of Jerusalem and the

81. Who will be from the tribe of Levi, ܠܝܘܝܐ, *Pseudo Daniel*, chapter 21: 46. Henze, Matthias. *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel...*: which is a novelty because, traditionally, the Antichrist belongs to the tribe of Dan.

82. This idea is reinforced by the use of two different words in chapter 26 while describing the moment the end of time will happen. This will be a final, but at the same time, close age.

83. See the classic study by: Reinink, Gerrit. “Die Entstehung der syrischen Alexanderlegende...”: 263-281 and now Ubierna, Pablo. «Recherches sur l’apocalyptique syriaque et byzantine au VII siècle: La Place de l’Empire romain dans une histoire du salut». *Bulletin du Centre d’études médiévales d’Auxerre*, Hors série 2, 2008 (*Le Moyen Âge vu d’ailleurs*, Eliana Magnani, dir.). 31 July 2010. <<http://cem.revues.org/index10895.html>>.

84. *Die syrische Apokalypse des pseudo-Methodius*, Gerrit Reinink, ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1993.





persecution of Jews after Heraclius' *Reconquista*<sup>85</sup> or the *Sefer Eliyahu*<sup>86</sup> or even the *Book of Eliah*, which went through several drafts from the third to sixth century and where the prophet Eliah is taken to the Heavens and later to Mount Carmel to received means of information about close date of the end of Israel's sufferings which will stop with the arrival of the "last King of Persia" whose identity will be largely debated by the rabbis<sup>87</sup>. We should also mention the liturgical poem *Oto ha-yom* (In that Day)<sup>88</sup> and the *Pirke of Rabbi Eliezer*, a text written at the beginning of the eighth century but bearing previous materials<sup>89</sup>, the *Nistarot of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai*,<sup>90</sup> or the *Midrash of the Ten Kings* a revelation in the form of an historical chronicles influenced by the *Pirqé* and the *Nistarot*.

It would take us much more time than we have today to describe this Jewish apocalyptic tradition of the seventh century but let's say, at least, that the very end of the Empire (vanquished by the Persians or the Arabs) will be the occasion for the coming of the Jewish Messiah and the final restoration of Israel's power.

That is, I think, a long neglected aspect of the compelling rationale for a new type of Apocalyptic amongst Christians in the seventh century. Rome-Byzantium have been at war against Parthia then and the Sasanid Empire later for centuries now, but the Fall of Jerusalem in 614 and the Persian occupation brought to the table, and for the first time, the possibility of a close end of the Christian empire. An End that refused to come, an End the rabbis have been expecting since the great distresses of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. century crisis (the development of such a tradition amongst non

85. Lévi, Israel. «L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès». *Revue des Études Juives*, 68 (1914): 129-160; edition and French translation: Lévi, Israel. «L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès (Suite)». *Revue des Études Juives*, 69 (1919): 108-112; commentary: Lévi, Israel. «L'Apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroès (Suite et fin)». *Revue des Études Juives*, 71 (1920): 57-65. A shortened version of this text could be found in: Jellinek, Adolf. *Bet ha-Midrash: Kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der ältern jüdischen Literatur*. Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1967 (Leipzig: Fridikh Nies, 1877): II, 54-57. Levi's study is at the base of the datings proposed by Yehuda Even Shmuel and Salo Baron. See: Even-Shmuel (Kaufman), Yehuda. *Midreshey Geulah*. Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1954, who consecrates a great part of the volumen to the *Sefer Zerubabel* and its continuators till the 13th. century.

86. Jellinek, Adolf. *Bet ha-Midrash...*: III, 65-68.

87. The text was attributed to Simeon ben Yohai, a famous rabbi from the third century who is considered the author of many apocalyptic texts. The text identifies that Persian king (Chosroes II) under his Arabic name, *ha-Kesra*, which points out to the beginnings of Arabic Rule in that región, moreover the text plot is based under Sasanian Rule.

88. This poem was edited several times, the last one by Yahalom, Joachim. "‘al toqpan shel yesirot sifrut ke-maqor le-vêrur she'êlot histôriyot" *Catedra*, 11 (1979): 130-133 ("On the validity of literary Works as historical Sources").

89. *Pirke D-Rabbi Eliezer*, ed. Avraham Aharon Broda. Jerusalem: Zikhron Aharon, 2004. See: Horowitz, Chaïm. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer: a Complete Critical Edition*. Jerusalem: Makor, 1972. (English translation: Friedlander, Gerald. *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer (the Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) according to the Text of the Manuscript belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna*. New York: Hermon Press, 1965).

90. Jellinek, Adolf. *Bet ha-Midrash...*: III, 72-78. See also: Even-Shmuel (Kaufman), Yehuda. *Midreshey Geulah...*: 162 and following with bibliography: 175-176. See now: van Bekkum, Wout Jac. "Four Kingdoms will Rule: Echoes of Apocalypticism and Political Reality in Late Antiquity and Medieval Judaism", *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in der monotheistischen Weltreligionen*, Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmied, dirs. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2008: 101-117.



Talmudic Jews, like the Karaites is very interesting but, once again, far from our main concerns today<sup>91</sup>).

Thirty years ago, the German-born Byzantinist Paul Alexander, then professor at UCLA, considered that there was a link between the Legend of the Last Emperor as it appears in the Syriac Pseudo-Methodius and Jewish Messianic Literature<sup>92</sup>. This was refuted by Gerrit Reinink in a series of articles largely accepted by scholars<sup>93</sup>. And, of course, I agree with Reinink but there remain a couple of observations I believe worth making about Alexander's Thesis: first of all, Alexander did not mention most of the Jewish Apocalyptic Texts we have commented on (the *Apocalypse of Zorobabel* for example) but rather he bases his opinions mainly on Scripture, and Talmudic and Midrashic passages. Given the slight interest the rabbis showed in the apocalyptic (because it comprises an additional quota of revelation, moreover in an on-going sense that could not be easily managed by scholars) it is not a surprise to find almost no major links with that kind of texts.

The end of seventh century, or even the eighth, were centuries when the core of Christian polemics was addressed more against Jews (or Judaizers heretics) than against the Moslems<sup>94</sup>. From the Jewish side, the antichristian polemic is mostly centered on the *midrashim* and the apocalyptic literature<sup>95</sup>. It is one of the major problems of seventh century religious history, given that the existence of those texts

91. See: Cohen, Martin A. "Anan Ben David and Karaite Origins". *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 68/3 (1978): 129-145; about the origin of the movement: Ankori, Zvi. *Karaites in Byzantium*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959: 58-86. The Book of Daniel was one of the most important books for Karaite Exegesis. We still have the commentaries by Jafet ben Ali, in Arabic and another in Hebrew by a Persian member of the Karaite community of Jersualem, Daniel ben-Moshe al-Qûmisî. A fragment of the Book of Daniel was found in the Cairo Genizah and some more fragment in jewisch-persian, belonging to a two different texts, have been published recently. The Tenth century Karaite Scholars (Yûsuf b. Baxtûy, Salmon b. Yruhim y Binyâmin al-Nahâwandi) devoted themselves largely to comment on the End of Jewish oppression and the arrival of the Messianic Age independently of Rabbanites opinions. See: Jepheth Ben Ali. *Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889. Margoliuth, David Samuel. *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by Jepheth ibn 'Ali the Karaite*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889. On Japheth see: Birnbaum, Philip. "Yefet ben Ali and His Influence on Eiblical exegesis". *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 31/1 (1941): 51-70, and Pinsker, Simhah. *Liqqûte Qadmoniyyot*. Viena: Druk fon A. Della Torre, 1860: 181 and following; Mann, Jacob. "Early Karaite Bible commentaries". *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 12 (1921-1922): 435-526; Shaked, Shaul. "Commentaires on Daniel". *Irano-Judaica*, 3 (1994): 304-310.

92. Alexander, Paul. "The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and its Messianic Origin". *Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institutes*, 41 (1978): 1-15.

93. Even if, besides the legend of the Last Emperor, some of Pseudo-Methodius principal sources like the *Cave of Treasures* have strong links with Jewish writings. For a general survey of seventh century syriac apocalyptic texts, see now: Reinink, Gerrit. "From Apocalypses to Apologetics. Early Syriac Reactions to Islam", *Endzeiten. Eschatologie in der monoteistischen Weltreligionen...*: 75-88.

94. Déroche, Vincent. «La polémique anti-judaïque au VI<sup>e</sup> et au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle...»: 275-311 where the author points out the importance of a kind of literature such as the *Kephalaia epaporetika*, a collection of questions to be used by Christians in their polemics against Jews; and Reinink, Gerrit. "The beginnings of Syriac Apologetic literature"....: 169-170. We should mention the importance of the new edition of the *Doctrina Jacobi* by Vincent Déroche. See: Dagron, Gilbert; Déroche, Vincent. "Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Orient du VII<sup>e</sup>. Siècle". *Travaux et Mémoires*, 11 (1991): 47-229.

95. Cameron, Averil. «Byzantine and Jews: some recent work on early Byzantium». *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 20 (1996): 249-274, especially 264.



represents actual historical debates<sup>96</sup>, an option favoured by scholars like Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche<sup>97</sup>.

In this context, historical Apocalypses like the *Syriac Pseudo Methodius*, could be understood, at least in part, as texts favouring anti-Jewish polemics, attacking the vision of contemporary history and the end of Rome as a pre-condition for the arrival of the Messiah depicted in works such as *Zorobabel*. Texts like the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* with its interest mainly in Eschatology and the Second Coming, regardless of the Fate of the Empire, were an evident target for those polemicizing against Jews' or Judaizer's visions.

This could also allow us to put into perspective the known opinions of Scholars such as Averil Cameron and Nicholas De Lange who considered that the polemics of Jews against Christians are very difficult to find because the former would have lacked the theological imperative to prove the Error of Christians. The end of the Empire and the consequent coming of the Messiah is just such an imperative.

Besides, both Averil Cameron and Nicholas de Lange, suggest that Jews were not in the kind of social position to commit themselves to open debates against Christian leaders<sup>98</sup> (something the debates between Jews and Christians depicted in texts such as *De Doctrina Jacobi* or the *Trophies of Damascus*<sup>99</sup>, at least for the decades running from 630 to 660, seem to deny).<sup>100</sup>

But the importance of historical apocalypses in a probable dispute against Jews lies in the new and decisive fact of placing the Syriac Legend of Alexander in a new context, at the core of an Apocalypse (as the genre that conveyed Jewish opinions against the Empire) and showing that, thanks to the *Legend of the Last Emperor*, the Empire will survive. That Empire will survive even against those visions in favour of the Second Coming like the one presented by the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel*. This argument concerning the Fate of the Empire based on different interpretations of

96. Cameron, Averil. «Byzantine and Jews...»: 263.

97. Déroche, Vincent. «La polémique anti-judaïque...»: 284 and following; Dagron, Gilbert. «Judaïser». *Travaux et Mémoires*, 11 (1991): 370. Even the theology of an author centered in Dogmatics, like Maximus Confessor, is full of an apocalyptic dimension, specially when it touches the compulsive conversion of Jews under Heraclius. See Vincent Déroche in: Dagron Gilbert; Déroche, Vincent. «Juifs et Chrétiens...»: 30-31. Besides the fact that the place of Jews was different under Arab Rule, Anastasius Sinaite still kept polemics against them. See: *Anastasii Sinaïtae Viae Dux*, Karl Heinz Uthemann, ed. Turnhout: Brepols, 1981: 257-258; even if the text mentioned there is not the same as the *Disputatio* attributed to him.

98. Cameron, Averil. «Byzantines and Jews...»: 264; de Lange, Nicholas. «Jews and Christians in the Byzantine Empire», *Christianity and Judaism*, Diana Wood, dir. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992: 27-29. See also: de Lange, Nicholas. «A fragment of Byzantine anti-Christian Polemic». *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 41 (1990): 92-100 and de Lange, Nicholas. «Jewish and Christian messianic hopes in pre-Islamic Byzantium», *Redemption and Resistance. The messianic hopes of Jews and Christians in antiquity*, Markus Bockmuehl, James Carleton Paquet, dirs. London: T&T Clark: 274-284. See also: O' Sullivan, Shaun. «Anti-Jewish Polemic and Early Islam», *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, David Thomas, dir. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007: 49-68.

99. «Trophies of Damascus», *Patrologia Orientalis*, dir. G. Bardy. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1920: XV, 171-292.

100. Other seventh century texts of Anti-Jewish Polemic were the *Dialogue of Papius and Philo*, the *Dialogue of Gregentius*, the *Apology against the Jews* of Leontius of Neapolis and the *Syriac Disputation of Sergius the Stylite*, the *Disputatio Anastasii adversus Judaeos* and the *Questiones ad Antiochum ducem* which are still now at the center of a major debate concerning their attribution.



the Biblical Daniel already involved Jews and Christians at the end of the *Doctrina Jacobi* (drafted 634-635).

It is not only about placing Islam (or the Persian occupation) within an historical frame but also and mostly about not denying that neither the Sasanian Conquest nor the Arab accomplishments (included the building of the Dome of the Rock<sup>101</sup>, of course) were evidence of the End of Times<sup>102</sup>.

Texts like the *Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel* being focused as it is on the imminence of the Second Coming, could not bring the most needed Hope (defined in political terms, of course) and its vision will then be surpassed by the new historical Apocalyptic. Even if the Text is not centered on individual salvation and we think it could not be understood as a *vademecum* of Ascetic Holiness, it is not sufficiently interested in the Fate of the Byzantine Empire in the way that other Apocalypses—with a much longer influence—of the seventh century will be.

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101. The building of the Dome of the Rock is the *terminus post quem* for the drafting of the *Syriac Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* according to its editor, Gerrit Reinink; but we should also say that the german editor of the Greek Versions (supposed to be translations from the Syriac), Lolos, dates the first redaction of the text in the decade of 650. The new edition of the Greek versions by Aerts and Kortekaas for the Corpus Christianorum follows Reinink. Shaun O'sullivan is unaware of this new edition (O'sullivan, Shaun. "Anti-Jewish Polemic and Early Islam...": 68, note 58). See: Aerts, Willem J.; Kortekaas, G.A.A. *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*. Leuven: Peeters, 1998: 569-570), 2 vols; Lolos, Anastasios. *Die Apokalypse des Ps.-Methodios*, Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1976; Lolos, Anastasios. *Die dritte und vierte Redaktion des Ps.-Methodios*, Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1978. See also: Ubierna, Pablo. "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Greek)", *Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History, Volume One, Seventh to Tenth Century*, David Thomas, dir. Leyden: Brill, 2009: 245-248.

102. It was an age when the Christian were barely aware of the assimilation power of Islam. The generation of Patriarch Sophronius and his friend John Moschus did not even considered that possibility. See: Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Land called Holy*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1992: 239. On Sophronius, see: von Schönborn, Christoph. *Sophrone de Jérusalem: Vie monastique et confession dogmatique*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1972. Vincent Déroche considers, speaking about the *Life of George Choziba* and the war against the Persians: *Le VI<sup>e</sup> siècle byzantin semble parfois persuadé d'avoir récupéré à son profit et au sens littéral les promesses de l'Ancien Testament liées aux lieux, à la Palestine ainsi pour Georges Choziba, ces promesses rendaient inconcevable l'idée que les Perses puissent vraiment s'emparer de la Palestine et surtout de Jérusalem (...). Une telle interprétation ne pouvait qu'aviver les frictions avec les communautés juives*. Déroche, Vincent. "L'Apologie contre les Juifs de Léontios de Néapolis...": 91, note 85. For the importance of Palestine, as a region, in this context, see: Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Land Called Holy...*: 235-246. This importance, regarding the theology of the Last Things, is still very important for a thinker like Maximus Confessor. Brock, Sebastian. "An Early Syriac Life of Maximus the Confessor". *AnBoll*, 91 (1973): 299-346.

