The Place of the Fourth Sibyl in the Development of the Jewish Sibyllina

The nature and the development of the corpus of sibylline oracles is as yet a little researched area of Jewish studies. There is general agreement that at least Books III, IV and V of the standard collection of sibylline oracles are Jewish and that many of the other Christian books have Jewish substrata. These books are widely separated in time of origin and probably also in the places in which they were written. Despite this diversity there is an amazing uniformity in style and even in the interests and motifs which recur in the various books. We must assume some degree of conscious continuity in the development of the Jewish sibylline tradition.

As a result of this need to posit some degree of unity in the sibyllina there is a growing consensus among recent writers that the entire Jewish sibylline corpus should be localised in Alexandria. Now in the case of Sib III and Sib V an Egyptian, though not necessarily Alexandrian, origin appears to be beyond doubt. The present writer has argued at length elsewhere that these two books represent various points in a coherent tradition and reflect the history of a Jewish community in Egypt, from the second century B.C.E. to the early second century C.E.

However, Sib IV is more problematic. The majority of scholars who have written on Sib IV have favoured a non-Egyptian origin. In this paper I wish to argue that Sib IV cannot have originated in the circles which produced Sib III and Sib V, and that the affinities of this book to the other sibyllina point to a more complex development of the Jewish sibylline tradition, which cannot be contained within the history of one local community.

1 See the basic edition of J. Geffcken, Die Oracula Sibyllina (1902) and A. Rzach, Oracula Sibyllina (1891).
2 The basic discussions of the provenance of the sibylline books are still those of J. Geffcken, Komposition und Entstehungszeit der Oracula Sibyllina (1902) and A. Rzach, "Sibyllinische Orakel" in Pauly-Wissowa Real-Encyclopaedie 11A (1923), cols. 2073–2183.
Sib IV cannot be attached to the Egyptian Sibyllina

The main reason why Sib IV cannot be attached to the Egyptian Sibyllina lies in its fundamentally different attitude to the temple. The temple had in fact played a central part in the earliest Jewish Egyptian oracles, in Sib III.6 This centrality is most clearly displayed in the final oracle of the book, vvss 657–808. There the temple is the focus of the eschatological drama. The kings of the earth are aroused to envy by the prosperity of the Jewish temple. Accordingly they will invade the land and lay siege to the temple. God will then intervene directly and destroy those kings with cosmic upheavals. Then “the sons of the great god will live in peace around the temple” (702) and the nations will resolve to pray to God and “send to the temple, since he alone is powerful ruler” (718).

This oracle, quite remarkable for Hellenistic Judaism, is based on the old biblical motif of the storming of the nations against God’s sanctuary.7 However, it cannot be dismissed as merely a biblical motif in an eschatological tableau and therefore peripheral to the main interests of Sib III. Rather it is the culmination of a theme which runs right through the book. In the historical account of the restoration after the Babylonian exile (286 ff.) the re-establishment of the temple is emphasised and the motif of the eschatological pilgrimage of the gentiles is introduced. In this way we are prepared for the role of the temple in the eschatological age. Perhaps the most decisive passage is found in Sib III 545–72. The Greeks are rebuked for sacrificing to idols but are told that when “Greece offers the oxen and loud-bellowing bulls she has slaughtered as holocausts to the temple of the great God she will escape from evil-sounding war, panic and pestilence.” Here sacrifice at the Jewish temple has become the pre-requisite for salvation. The sibyllist could scarcely have put greater emphasis on the role of the temple.

When we turn to Sib IV we find a sharply contrasting view of temple worship. Not only are there no passages which exalt the temple in the manner found in Sib III, but we also find two passages which seem to reject the very idea of temple worship. The first of those passages (vv. 5–12) is a polemic against idolatry, but also declares (v. 8) that God “does not have a house, stone drawn to a temple”. The second (vv. 24–34) lists the virtues of the righteous (presumably the Jewish people or a sect).8 These virtues include the rejection of “all temples and altars” and of blood sacrifices.

7 Cf. Ps. 46 and 48 but especially Ps. 2. The motif can be traced back to the Canaanite mythical texts from Ugarit. See Richard J. Clifford, The Cosmic Mountain (1972), pp. 144–55.
8 Thomas, Le Mouvement Baptiste, argued for a sectarian origin, following M. Friedlaender, “La Sibyle juive et les partis religieux de la dispersion”, Revue des Études Juives 29 (1894), pp. 183–196. Nikiprowetzky and Noack agree, in the words of the latter, that “the Sibyllines do not display any interest in parties or factions. The books do not aim at propagating any particular faith or way of life but merely at maintaining the Jewish religion in general against all paganism”. (Noack, “Are the Essenes referred to . . .” pp. 101–2.) For further bibliography see Nikiprowetzky, “Reflexions . . .”, pp. 34–35.
These two passages appear at first sight as a complete rejection of all temple cult, and they have been interpreted in this sense by many scholars. However, a number of objections have been raised against this interpretation, most recently by Noack and Nikiprowetzky, who argue that Sib IV is only engaging in polemic against heathen cults, a polemic also found in Sib III.

The argumentation used to support this objection is weak. This is particularly true of Noack's article. He begins by assuming the Egyptian origin of Sib IV for no better reason than that he finds it "more natural". He then cites texts from Sib III and Sib V and argues that those passages "indicate that IV: 24–30 aims at heathen worship only". However if the question whether Sib III and Sib IV come from the same circles is one of the points at issue, it is surely obvious that disputed passages in Sib IV cannot be explained by passages from Sib III without further argument.

Nikiprowetzky does not beg the question so blatantly as Noack. Nevertheless his argument is largely based on the prior assumption that all Jewish sibyllina belong together. At least he presumes that the burden of proof lies on anyone who would separate the various books. His main argument concerns the date of Sib IV. All agree that Sib IV was written after the fall of the temple about 80 C.E. Nikiprowetzky suggests that the silence of Sib IV with regard to the temple, which is admittedly strikingly in contrast with Sib III, can be explained by the fact that the temple was no longer standing. Further, he claims positive support for his interpretation in the manner in which Sib IV treats the fall of the temple.

The destruction of the temple is mentioned twice in Sib IV. In v. 116 we are told that a storm from Italy will destroy "the great temple of God". In vv. 125–6 there is a simple statement that a prince from Rome will destroy the temple of Solomon with fire. Neither of those passages is anything more than

---

10 E.g. Sib. III: 30–2; 564–5; 605–6.
11 NOACK, p. 97: "There are so many references to Egypt also in Bk. IV that it is more natural to infer that it was written in Egypt." In fact there is only one reference to Egypt in the entire book (v. 72) and even that is in a passage which is usually considered to be an earlier fragment.
12 The passages he cites are III: 575–9 and V: 501–3.
13 Cf. La Troisième Sibylle, p. 235:
Rien ne nous autorise à sonder le cœur et les reins de la Quatrième Sibylle ni à décider péremptoirement qu'elle inclut les sacrifices offerts à Jérusalem au nombre des offrandes impies. Quelle preuve avons-nous plutôt qu'elle n'ait pas continué à faire la même distinction que la Troisième Sibylle entre les sacrifices croupables offerts aux dieux du paganisme et les holocaustes légitimes au Grand Dieu, qui n'étaient plus d'ailleurs qu'un souvenir?
14 See H. Lanchester in CHARLES' PSEudepigrapha (1913), p. 373. The main indications of date are references to the destruction of the temple (vv. 125–7), the expected return of Nero (vv. 119–124) and the eruption of Vesuvius (vv. 130–6).
15 I agree with Nikiprowetzky's interpretation of the following verses 117–18. ("Reflexions", p. 68.) Those who shed blood in front of the temple were not the Zealots but the Romans.
a simple historical statement. Sib IV does not develop the incident or attach any special significance to it.

Nikiprowetzky departs from the evidence of the text when he alleges that the destruction of the temple is presented as the cause of the eruption of Vesuvius. The text says that the catastrophe would come about "because they will destroy the blameless race of the pious" (135–6). Historically, of course, the destruction of the pious included the destruction of the temple, but Sib IV does not single out the temple for special mention or attach special importance to it. Contrary to what Nikiprowetzky suggests, the temple is not the hinge on which the fate of Pompeii turned. There is nothing here analogous to the indispensable role assigned to the temple in Sib III: 545–72. No conclusions can be derived from the treatment of the fall of the temple in Sib IV. It is simple historical reporting, and gives no expression to the author’s attitude to the temple.

The simplicity with which the fall of the temple is passed over in Sib IV cannot be explained as a result of a decline in the significance of the temple when it was no longer standing. Nikiprowetzky claims that an attack on the temple in 80 C.E. would not have made sense. The sibyl adopted a spiritualising approach in the interests of propaganda, and this spiritualising was uninhibited because the temple no longer existed. The fallacy of this line of argument can be clearly seen when we contrast Sib IV with Sib V. Unlike Sib IV, which passes over the fall of the temple with the briefest possible mention, Sib V voices a bitter complaint. He predicts ruin for Rome "when I saw the second temple cast down headlong, kindled with fire through the hand of an impious one, an ever-flourishing house, the watchful temple of God" (398–402) and again "but now a certain inconspicuous and impious king has gone up and cast it down and reduced it to a ruin" (408). The passion of those verses shows a concern totally lacking in Sib. IV. Furthermore, Sib V predicts that in the eschatological time Egypt will be converted and "then in Egypt there will be a great holy temple, and to it the people fashioned by God will bring sacrifices". The fact that Sib V finds such a prominent place for the temple, even though its oracles were written much longer after the fall of the temple than those of Sib IV, shows the gulf between the attitudes of the two books. Nikiprowetzky has argued that "long lamentations over the fall of the temple had no place in the missionary and paranetic context of Sib IV" and that the impracticality of expecting Gentiles to worship at a temple which no longer

16 La Troisième Sibylle, p. 234; "Reflexions", p. 35.
17 This argument was already advanced in the last century by B. Badt (cf. Friedlaender, "La sibylle juive", p. 187).
18 La Troisième Sibylle, p. 234.
19 On the temple in Sib V, see Collins, The Sib. Or., p. 93.
20 It is a strange measure of the pessimism of Sib V that even this eschatological temple will not survive but will be destroyed by the Ethiopians. See Collins, op. cit., p. 94.
existed, deterred the author of Sib IV from giving expression to his true attitude towards the temple.21 Yet these considerations should have weighed equally heavily with Sib V, or rather more heavily since he wrote later. The prominence which the temple retains in Sib V makes it quite unjustifyable to assume without evidence that the attitude of Sib IV was other than what is explicitly stated.

We should emphasise that Sib IV is not directly attacking the Jerusalem temple on any interpretation. Rather the author ignores it, to the extent that he fails to distinguish it from pagan temples. This neglect is itself a form of attack, but we need not suppose that Sib IV wrote to deliberately attack a temple which no longer existed. The references to temple worship are incidental to the main purpose of Sib IV as we will argue below. Nevertheless they reveal the underlying attitude. Such neglect of the temple would be quite inconceivable in a work written in the tradition of Sib III and Sib V.22

There is no valid reason then to assume that Sib IV held an unexpressed esteem for the Jewish temple which would contradict the apparent meaning of its explicit statements. In any case it is quite clear that these oracles do not belong to the same Egyptian sibylline tradition which is attested in Sib III and Sib V.

This conclusion is supported by other, less decisive observations. First there is the almost total lack of reference to Egypt in Sib IV.23 While we do not accept the claim of J. Thomas that the call to Asia and Europe with which the book begins necessarily defines its horizons,24 the lack of references to Egypt means that there is no reason whatever to posit an Egyptian origin. Otherwise the local references in the book are scattered over Syria, Greece and Asia Minor. These references do not provide a clear pointer to the provenance of the book, but at least they weigh against an Egyptian origin.

Second, the eschatological expectation of Sib IV diverges significantly from what we find in Sib III and Sib V. After the final conflagration, which is a

22 This remains true even if one were to grant Nikiprowetzky's interpretation that only pagan temples are attacked.
23 There is only one such reference, in vv. 72–75.
common sibylline motif, we read that God himself will again fashion the bones and ashes of men and will set up mortals again as they were before (179–82). This is the only passage in the Jewish sibyllina which shows a belief in resurrection or any form of after-life. The lack of such a belief is highly unusual in Jewish works of the intertestamental period which are so largely concerned with eschatology of an apocalyptic type. I have argued elsewhere that this peculiarity of Sibs III and V shows that the Egyptian sibylline tradition developed in a milieu which had little contact with the Palestinian Jewish apocalyptic writings. The fact that we find a belief in resurrection in Sib IV supports our contention that this book was produced in a milieu other than that which produced Sib III and Sib V.

The place of Sib IV in the Sibylline Tradition

There remains a remarkable similarity between Sib IV and the other Jewish sibylline books. The similarity extends not only to form and style but also to typical sibylline motifs—periodisation of history, destruction of the world by fire, the Nero legend. However, the explanation of this common fund of motifs must be sought not in interdependence of the Jewish books but in the nature and function of the gentile sibylline oracles on which the Jewish writings were based.

The roots of Sib IV in older gentile sibylline traditions can be seen clearly in the way in which the book is built around an old Hellenistic oracle. That oracle divided the course of history by combining and superimposing two schemata. On the one hand there are ten generations from the time of the flood to the rule of Macedonia. On the other hand there are four empires of which the first, Assyria, rules for six generations, the second, Media, rules for two, the third, Persia, for one, and finally Macedonia is the tenth generation. The oracle can be dated to Hellenistic times by the fact that both its tenth generation and its fourth empire coincide with the dominion of Macedonia. A

28 The same similarities extend to the Christian sibyllina but these were admittedly modelled on the Jewish books.
29 We might add the polemic against idolatry and immorality but these were typical motifs of Hellenistic Jewish propaganda and not distinctively sibylline. See especially W. Boussert, Die Religion des Judentums (1903), pp. 77–82.
30 The presence of this older oracle in Sib IV was already recognised by Geffcken, Komposition, pp. 18–19. It has been most fully discussed by Flusser, “The four empires”.
32 Vv. 89–90.
FOURTH SYBIL IN DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH SIBYLLINA

later writer added references to Rome to update the oracle but did not integrate Rome into the numerical sequence.33

David Flusser has shown that the combination of schemata found in this oracle corresponds exactly to what was attributed to a Cumean sibyl by the pagan grammarian Servius. Servius’ sibyl “divided the ages according to metals, said also who would reign over each age and would have it that the sun (ruled) the last, that is the tenth, age”.34 Servius’ sibyl is obviously independent of Sib IV which neither refers to metals nor to the sun (at least directly). On the other hand Sib IV could derive directly from the Cumean sibyl. Both specify the rulers of the various ages. The Cumean sibyl’s division “according to metals” was presumably a division into four ages, since the four ages are identified by metals in such diverse sources as Hesiod, the book of Daniel ch. 2 and the Persian Zand-i Vohûman Yasn.35

There are strong indications that both Servius’ sibyl and Sib IV depend ultimately on a Persian schematisation of history. In the case of Sib IV this is suggested by the fact that Media is listed as one of the four empires. The Medes ruled over the Persians but their empire never spread to the west. In Servius’ sibyl the final period will be ruled over by the sun—probably a reference to the Persian Mithras, Sol Invictus.36 All the schematising principles involved—ten generations, four periods, and division by metals—are found in the Persian Zand-i Vohûman Yasn. On the other hand, all these are not found together in any Jewish or classical source.37 It is likely then that the schematisation of history found both in the Cumean sibyl and in the Hellenistic oracle in Sib IV was ultimately derived from or modelled on a Persian source.

Schematisations of history such as this could easily spread from Persia to

33 The scheme of four empires implies that the fifth is lasting and glorious. (Some exceptions to this are found in Roman authors—see Flusser, pp. 160-1). Roman historians such as Ammianus Sura (in Velleius Patерculus 1:66) used the scheme to glorify Rome as the fifth empire. In the book of Daniel the fifth kingdom was the kingdom of God. See J. W. Swain, “The Theory of the Four Monarchies, Opposition History under the Roman Empire”, Classical Philology, 35 (1940), pp. 1-21; Flusser, pp. 156-62 and the literature there cited. Sib IV in its present form does not speak of a final glorious kingdom.

34 Flusser, “The four empires”, p. 163. The text is the commentary of Servius on Virgil’s fourth Eclogue, “saecula per metalla divisit, dixit etiam qui quo saeculo imperaret et Solem ultimum, id est decimum, voluit.” (G. Thilo (ed.) Servii Grammatici qui ferunt in Vergili Bucolica et Georgica Commentarii (1887), pp. 44-5.)

35 The Zand-i Vohûman Yasn is a late “midrashic” elaboration of a lost text of the Avesta, the Vohûman Yasn. The original Yasn is certainly pre-Christian but the Zand contains some later material. The antiquity of the basic schema and of the apocalyptic motifs in the Zand is guaranteed by the fact that the four-fold division was prevalent in the Hellenistic age and by the parallels with the Oracle of Hystaspes. See especially the study of S. K. Etny, The King is Dead (1961), pp. 16-18. The text can be found in E. W. West, Pahlavi Texts (Sacred Books of the East, ed. F. M. Muller, vol. 5, 1880), pp. 1-lix and 189-225. For further bibliography see Collins, The Sib. Or., p. 129. The association of the metals with the four ages is found in Hesiod, but it is not possible to determine whether it was originally Greek or Persian.

36 See Flusser, p. 163.

37 See the synopsis of Flusser, p. 171.
Jewish the west because they played a prominent part in the ideology of Near Eastern resistance to Hellenistic and especially Roman rule.\textsuperscript{38} We find them in the Persian Vohûman Yasn, the Hellenised Persian Oracle of Hystaspes,\textsuperscript{39} the Jewish book of Daniel, and indirectly in the Roman historians where the pattern is transformed to show the greatness of Rome by contrast with the preceding empires.\textsuperscript{40} We also find such periodisations of history frequently in the Jewish sibyllina. In Sib III we find a pattern of ten generations in vv. 156–61 and in v. 108 the age of Cronos is said to be the tenth generation. The Jewish original of Sibs I/II was also constructed on a pattern of ten generations.\textsuperscript{41} I suggest that this common sibylline motif does not necessarily prove that the Jewish sibylline books were directly interrelated. Rather schematisation of history was common among Jewish sibylline books because they were modelled on the style of the pagan sibyllists. The pagan sibyllists in turn were often engaged in political propaganda and schematisation of history was a common means of presenting political ideologies in the Hellenistic age. Therefore schematisation of history began as a feature of political oracles, especially in Persia. From there it spread to Greek and Roman political oracles which were often in sibylline form. Servius’ sibyl was itself probably motivated by a political concern. The Jewish sibyllists inherited the motif as a feature of sibylline style, and also because they shared the political interest.

The fact that sibylline oracles often functioned in the realm of political propaganda is well attested.\textsuperscript{42} Callisthenes, Aristotle’s nephew, who accompanied Alexander as historian of his campaign, wrote that both Apollo of Didyma and the Erythrean sibyl had prophesied Alexander’s coming kingship.\textsuperscript{43} Nicanor, Aristotle’s adopted son, who was also on Alexander’s staff, is cited by Varro as source for the statement that the Persian sibyl was oldest of all.\textsuperscript{44} The inclusion of this information in Nicanor’s lost life of Alexander strongly suggests that the Persian sibyl uttered prophecies which had a bearing on Alexander’s campaigns. It is significant that when Augustus in 12 C.E. de-

\textsuperscript{38} For the expression of Eastern resistance, especially in oracle form, see EDDY, \textit{The King is Dead} (1961) and H. FUCHS, \textit{Der Geistige Widerstand gegen Rom in der Antiken Welt} (1938).


\textsuperscript{40} E.g. TACITUS, \textit{Hist.} V, 8–9; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1:2, 1–4; APPIANUS, \textit{Roman History} (introduction) and Velleius Patерculus. Cf. FLUSser, pp. 153–62. We also find a pattern of ten ages in other Jewish works—the Apocalypse of Weeks in first Enoch and 11 Q Melchizedek. In those works however the political nature of the ideology is less marked.

\textsuperscript{41} See GEFFcken, \textit{Komposition und Entstehungszeit}, pp. 47–53.

\textsuperscript{42} See COLLINS, \textit{The Sib. Or.}, pp. 2–4.

\textsuperscript{43} Strabo, 17.1.43 (814).

\textsuperscript{44} Varro cited by LACTANTIUS, \textit{Div. Inst.} 1.6.
stroyed two thousand oracles which he considered politically subversive he also edited the sibylline prophecies.\textsuperscript{45} The political interest of the sibylline oracles is further attested by Plutarch where he credits them with foretelling “numerous desolations and migrations of Grecian cities, numerous descents of barbarian hordes and the overthrow of empires” as well as “recent and unusual occurrences”.\textsuperscript{46} It is also significant that the sibyl is repeatedly coupled with Hystaspes by the Church fathers.\textsuperscript{47}

It is clear then that sibylline oracles were closely related to the political oracles of the Near East. We should expect the motifs of the political oracles to recur in the sibyllina. The Jewish sibyllists also repeat these motifs. This was partly a matter of sibylline style but also due to the fact that authors who chose to use the sibylline form must to some extent have seen themselves as writers of political oracles.

The fact that schematisations of history are found in several sibylline books does not argue that all those books originated in the same community. Just as political oracles were written all over the Near East in a uniform style, and sibylline oracles from Cumae, Erythrae and other diverse locations showed the same form, so Jewish sibyllina with a common style and common motifs could also originate in diverse communities.

\textit{The extent of the Hellenistic Oracle in Sib IV}

Before we can attempt to discuss more fully the provenance of the final form of Sib IV, it is important to clarify how much belonged to the Hellenistic oracle and how much was added later. If we accept the schematisation of history as the core of the original oracle we must at least attribute to it v. 49 and the following verses. Vv. 102, however, belongs to the later additions since it introduces Rome. If the reference to Rome belonged to the original oracle we should expect it to mark the final definitive generation and empire which brings the schematisation of history to a close. Instead we find that Rome is not the definitive kingdom but rather an indecisive prolongation of the series of empires without reference to the numerical patterns. We can fairly safely, then, attribute the intervening vv. 49 to 101 to the Hellenistic oracle while allowing for the possibility of minor redactional additions within that passage and of further fragments of the older oracle outside it.

Sib IV, vv. 49–101, obviously does not represent the older oracle in its entirety. The schematisation of history must have built up to some conclusion which is now lost. Presumably the original oracle expected either that Mace-

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Suetonius, Augustus}, 31.1.
\textsuperscript{46} \textit{De Pythiae Oraculis}, 398.
\textsuperscript{47} E.g. \textit{Justin, Apology}, 1.44.12: “By the work of the evil demons a penalty of death was decreed upon those who read Hystaspes or the sibyl or the books of the prophets”. Also \textit{Justin, Apol.}, 1.20.1; \textit{Clement of Alexandria, Stromatels} 6.5; \textit{Lactantius, Epitome Institutionum} c. 68 (73).
donia would in turn be destroyed by a further, definitive, kingdom or that as fourth empire and tenth generation it would itself bring history to a close. Since there is no reference to a definitive kingdom in Sib IV in its present form, it is possible that the rule of Macedonia was originally followed directly by the conflagration.48

Some light is cast on the probable conclusion of the Hellenistic oracle by comparison with Servius’ sibyl. According to Servius, the last generation would be ruled by the sun, and this would be followed by a renewal in which the whole course of the world would be repeated.49 Flusser has plausibly argued that Servius is here misrepresenting his sibyl by confusing its doctrine with Stoicism.50 According to the Stoics the world would be destroyed by fire in the ekpyrosis, and this would be followed by the cyclic renewal of the entire world process. However we have seen already that the sibyl is likely to have drawn on Persian sources. Now Zoroastrianism expected a destruction of the world by fire,51 followed by a resurrection of the dead.52 It did not however believe in the repetition of the entire world process, which is rather a Stoic doctrine. Servius, then, modifies his sibyl to conform to the Stoic pattern of ekpyrosis or conflagration (here represented by the reign of the sun) followed by the cyclic renewal of the world. The Cumean sibyl, however, is more likely to have followed the Persian pattern of conflagration followed by the resurrection of the dead.

Now it is striking that in Sib IV: 174–92 we find an extended treatment of the final conflagration, followed by a resurrection of the dead. If Flusser is right, this is essentially how the Cumean sibyl described by Servius concluded. In view of the extensive parallelism between that sibyl and the Hellenistic oracle in Sib IV: 49–101 it is highly likely that vv. 174–92 are also closely based on the older Hellenistic oracle. We must, of course, allow for the possibility of some redactional changes,53 but essentially vv. 174–92 reflect the Hellenistic oracle rather than the work of the Jewish sibyl in the first century C.E.

48 In Servius the final kingdom is the rule of the sun. This may have been identified with the conflagration.
49 “finitus omnibus saeculis rursus innovari . . . necesse est ut omnia quae fuerunt habeat iterationem: universa enim ex astrorum motu pendere manifestum est” (Servii Grammatici, pp. 44–5).
50 “The four empires”, p. 163.
52 The belief in the resurrection of the dead is attributed to the Persians by Diogenes Laertius, Froom. 9 who derives his statement from Theopompus, who wrote in the third century B.C.E. See A. V. Williams-Jackson, Zoroaster (1899), pp. 241 ff., 246.
53 The manner in which the final judgment is described is not paralleled in any Persian source, but, then, the Hellenistic oracle preserved in Sib IV is hardly directly derived from Persian sources in any case. A judgment scene such as we have here is conceivable in a Greek writing—cf. T. F. Glasson, Greek Influence in Jewish Eschatology (1961), pp. 26–8. On the other hand it could quite easily have been added by a Jewish redactor.
On this reconstruction the Hellenistic oracle taken over by Sib IV was extremely close to the sibyl described by Servius. It included not only the historical schematisation but also the eschatological conclusion. Both those elements were taken over by Sib IV as the framework for its message. The message of Sib IV can be seen in the way the later Jewish writer modified the older oracle and in the passages he added. Before we turn to examine the later additions, however, a few more comments must be made on the earlier oracle.

The authorship of the Hellenistic oracle

Flusser has suggested that the older Hellenistic oracle was also written by a Jew. He infers this from vv. 51–3—"from the time, when, since the heavenly God himself was wroth with the cities and with all mankind, the sea covered the earth with the outbreak of the flood", which he takes to be a clear reference to the biblical flood story. However, this is not necessarily so. Classical antiquity also had a legend of a great flood. Significantly, the flood legend was often integrated into a theory of a great year, in which the history of the world was envisaged as two great movements ending respectively in destruction by fire (summer) and by water (winter).

It is quite possible that the schematisation of history which we find in Sib IV was related to the doctrine of the great year. Servius explicitly relates the schematisation of the Cumean sibyl to the great year. If there is any basis for this association, the flood may also have figured in the Cumean sibyl. The sibyl diverged from the pattern of the great year by avoiding the cyclic repetition of all things and presenting instead a linear development of history starting with the flood and ending with the conflagration.

There are also some grounds for belief that Hesiod's myth of four ages was originally related to a cyclic view of history. In Works and Days 109–201 the poet bemoans his birth in an evil age and wishes he had been born in an earlier period or in one yet to come. This implies that after the fourth age the decline of the world will be reversed.

54 It was not, however, identical with it as it makes no reference to metals.
55 "The four empires", p. 152.
56 See the article on "Deucalion" in Pauly-Wissowa, RE, V cols. 270–1.
58 "quam etiam philosophi hac disputatione colligunt, dicentes completo magnno anno omnia sidera in ortus suos redire et ferri rursus eodem motu."

We cannot establish with any certainty whether the ultimate origin of this pattern was Greek or Oriental. Seneca, Nat Quaest., 3.29.1 attributes it to the Chaldeans but see the objections of W. Lambert, "History and the Gods, a review article", Orientalia, 39 (1970), p. 177.
59 Cf. Plato, Politicus, 273 b–c. The world goes through two great cycles—one towards and one away from the divinity. When it is in its negative cycle it goes through a process of decline reminiscent of Hesiod's myth of the four ages.
The strongest argument for seeing a connection between the great year and the schematisation of history found in Sib IV lies in the analogy of the original oracle underlying Sibs I/II. There we find world history divided into two great cycles, the first of which ends with the flood and the second of which ends with a conflagration. The second half of the pattern has unfortunately been largely replaced by a Christian interpolation but the first generation after the flood is referred to as the golden one (Sib. I: 284). Quite probably the next three generations were also associated with metals as in Hesiod and Servius' sibyl. The pattern here is obviously not identical with what we find in Sib IV. However it provides an example of the integration of the schema of the four ages (followed by a definitive fifth age) into a pattern involving the two cycles of a great year, ending respectively in flood and conflagration.

It is not possible to establish in what way the doctrine of the great year was originally associated with the four-fold or ten-fold periodisation of history. There is no suggestion of a great year or of a flood in the Persian sources which show periodisation. It is possible that the two schemata were brought together only in Greek writing. Servius certainly saw a relationship between his sibyl and the great year, but we cannot be sure whether that relationship was explicit in the sibyl itself. It is also possible that the motifs were first combined by Jews, influenced by the biblical flood-story. This question must be left open. The reference to the flood in Sib IV: 51–3, then, could well point to Jewish authorship but does not necessarily do so.

In fact a non-Jewish authorship of the old oracle in Sib IV is more probable. If the older oracle in Sib IV had been written by a Jew under the Macedonian empire we should expect some reference to the Greek mistreatment of Jews or to whatever grievance caused the author to write the oracle at all. Since Jews would presumably have been the victims of that grievance, whatever it was, the reference would not have been dropped by a later Jewish author. Accordingly I find it easier to suppose that the older oracle was written by a Gentile.

The Jewish Redaction and Elaboration

In view of the foregoing analysis of the earlier Hellenistic oracle we can get a clearer picture of the specific contribution of the Jewish author of Sib IV. We can bracket off vv. 49–102 and 173–92 as inherited material. This material is highly important for the Jewish redactor. It provides the framework for his own message. He accepts this framework to argue that history is determined

60 Cf. above n. 41.
62 In Sib IV there are ten generations between the flood and the conflagration; in Sib I/II there are only five.
63 The idea that Noah's flood ended the first phase of the world and that the second phase would be ended by fire is found in Josephus Ant. 1.2.3 (70 f.) and Vita Adae et Evae 49. For further references in Jewish literature, see J. Chaine, "Cosmogonie aquatique et conflagration finale d'après la secunda Petri", RB 46 (1937), pp. 207–16.
according to a set schematisation and inclines towards a certain catastrophic conclusion. He suggests that there is a certain logic to this schema and that the conclusion is dependent on certain moral and religious considerations.

In part the additions of the Jewish redactor only serve to update the historical schema he has inherited. This is true of vv. 103–51. This passage shows that the Jewish redactor writes in continuity with the tradition of political oracles which inspired the older Hellenistic sibyl. He is concerned with the conflict of East and West, of Asia and Europe. This is why he attaches importance to the Nero legend, which was very widespread throughout the Near East at the end of the first century C.E. Here Nero becomes the agent of the revenge of the East against Rome. Nero does not appear here as an Antichrist and lacks the mythological characteristics which he carries in the later sibyllina. For Sib IV the legend is merely part of the historical framework.

The passages in which the Jewish redactor provides his interpretation of the historical schema are vv. 1–48 and vv. 152–72. We should add the interpretative remark in vv. 135–6. The first of those passages conforms for the greater part to the general apologetic of Hellenistic Judaism with the one distinctive feature of a strong rejection of temple worship. This is introductory material, and it obviously carries less weight in the book than vv. 152–72. This is evident from the respective places of the passages in the structure of the book. The placing of vv. 152–72 is crucial. They form the bridge between the schematisation of history in the preceding verses and the following eschatological passage. The sibyl is giving her interpretation of history. The disaster which has already come upon Rome in the eruption of Vesuvius is due to the impiety of Rome in destroying the Jewish people (vv. 135–6). That, however, was only a particular case. The general impiety of mankind is prompting God to destroy the entire race in a conflagration (vv. 152–61). There is only one remedy for the situation:

Putting aside daggers and groanings, murders and outrages, wash your whole persons in perennial rivers, and stretching your hands to heaven ask pardon for your previous deeds and atone for bitter impiety with words of praise. God will grant repentance and will not destroy (vv. 163–9).

The placing of this passage in Sib IV elevates baptism and repentance as the

---


65 Cf. vv. 145–8: "Great wealth will come to Asia which once Rome herself ravaged and placed in her abundant home. Later she will give back twice as much to Asia."

66 Here again it is not necessary to posit dependence of Sib IV on Sib V. Both derived the Nero material from the political literature of the time. The widespread nature of this legend and its impact on Judeo-Christian apocalyptic is evident from the fact that it appears quite independently in the Jewish Sib V, written in Egypt, and in the Christian Apocalypse of John in Asia Minor.

67 Cf. above n. 29.
only key to salvation. The function of the passage in the structure of the book differentiates the baptism of Sib IV decisively from the reference to ritual washings in Sib III. The Third sibyl referred to a daily ritual of washing hands, and listed this among the general characteristics of the Jewish people. Sib IV proposes one decisive baptism in the context of conversion and repentance. If we were to seek a functional parallel to the baptism of Sib IV in the third Sibyl, we should look rather at Sib III: 564–7 where the sibyl suggests that the salvation of the Greeks depends on offering sacrifices at the true temple. Baptism and repentance functionally replace the temple cult in Sib IV and even greater weight is placed on them as a means of salvation. The proclamation of this baptism appears to be the main purpose of Sib IV.

The baptism of Sib IV shows little resemblance to the ritual washings of the Essenes or of the Qumran sect, despite the numerous efforts of scholars to identify them. All that we know of the baths of the Essenes from Josephus or from the Qumran texts points to daily purification, not to a baptism of repentance. We may add that the other arguments advanced for the Essene authorship of Sib IV have no better basis. The Essenes rejected the current temple, but not the very idea of temple worship as is the case in Sib IV. The outstanding characteristics of the Qumran texts—the two spirits, dualism of light and darkness, community organisation, use of scripture—are simply lacking in the sibylline oracle.

The most obvious parallel to the baptism of Sib IV is provided by John the Baptist in the synoptic gospels. Here baptism is preached as a sign of repentance and is presented as a last hope to avert eschatological destruction. This is precisely the function of baptism also in Sib IV.

The theology of Sib IV is also marked by the rejection of temple cult. Such a blanket rejection of the idea of temple cult is highly unusual in Judaism. It

68 Sib. III: 591–3; “but they lift their holy hands to heaven at dawn after sleep, always sanctifying their hands with water.” The manuscript reading chera is to be preferred over the emendation of Rzach and Geffcken—chao (following Clement of Alexandria, Protrepticus VI. 70, 2). See NIKIPOROWETZKY, La Troisième Sibylle, pp. 238–9.
69 An Essene origin for Sib IV was first posited by H. Ewald, “Abhandlung ueber Entstehung, Inhalt und Werth der Sibyll. Buecher”, Abh dl. der Goettingen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaf ten, viii (1858–9), Hist-phil Kl., p. 87 and H. HILGENFELD, “Die juedischen Sibyllen und der Essenisimus”, Zeitschr. für Wiss. Theologie, xiv (1871), p. 45. Most recently this theory has been defended by A. Peretti, “Echi di dottrine esseniche negli Oracoli sibillini giudaici”, La Parola del Passato, 17 (1962), pp. 247–95. B. Noack admits that the attitude towards temple cult and sacrifices “turns out to be a dubious criterion” (“Are the Essenes referred to . . . “, p. 101) but says that “the ablations remain the sole clearly circumscribed custom to remind the reader of the Sib. Or. of the Essenes or the Qumran community.” On all these views see the thorough critique of Nikirowetzky, “Reflexions”, pp. 29–57.
70 JOSEPHUS, Jewish War, 2.8.5 (129); IQS 3.4 ff. See NOACK, pp. 94–5.
72 Is. 1:16 probably provided the biblical basis for both John and the sibyl but there was no analogous practice of baptism for conversion in the time of Isaiah.
FOURTH SIBYL IN DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH SIBYLLINA

The resemblance to Ebionite Christianity is striking, as there also we find the rejection of temple cult coupled with a strong emphasis on baptism and lively eschatological expectation of the resurrection of the dead. Similarities can also be seen between Sib IV and the prophet Elcasai. Elcasai also preached baptism as an opportunity for obtaining salvation before the end of all things, and rejected outright all bloody sacrifices. There can of course be no question of attributing Sib IV to either Ebionites or Elcasaites, but the parallels confirm the basic correctness of the view of J. Thomas that Sib IV originated in Jewish baptist circles, related to the sectarian Christian groups.

Such baptist circles could most probably be located in the Jordan valley. We know that there were Jewish groups who preached baptism and repentance throughout the first century. The fourth sibyl shows that at least one of those groups was also marked by rejection of temple cult.

The rejection of temple worship may have been a result of the actual fall of the Jewish temple and its apparent rejection by God. However, if we envisage the group in which Sib IV was written as having influenced the Ebionites, then we should probably infer that the anti-temple tendency was present earlier. It goes far beyond what we find in allegorising Hellenists such as Philo. While Philo regarded the temple as primarily an allegory of spiritual worship he never negated its earthly role. His loyalty to the Jerusalem temple emerged clearly when that temple was threatened by Gaius. For a complete rejection of the temple we must go to Christian texts such as the speech of Stephen in Acts 7, and the Jewish-Christian Ps.-Clementines.

The resemblance to Ebionite Christianity is striking, as there also we find the rejection of temple cult coupled with a strong emphasis on baptism and lively eschatological expectation of the resurrection of the dead. Similarities can also be seen between Sib IV and the prophet Elcasai. Elcasai also preached baptism as an opportunity for obtaining salvation before the end of all things, and rejected outright all bloody sacrifices. There can of course be no question of attributing Sib IV to either Ebionites or Elcasaites, but the parallels confirm the basic correctness of the view of J. Thomas that Sib IV originated in Jewish baptist circles, related to the sectarian Christian groups.

Such baptist circles could most probably be located in the Jordan valley. We know that there were Jewish groups who preached baptism and repentance throughout the first century. The fourth sibyl shows that at least one of those groups was also marked by rejection of temple cult.

The rejection of temple worship may have been a result of the actual fall of the Jewish temple and its apparent rejection by God. However, if we envisage the group in which Sib IV was written as having influenced the Ebionites, then we should probably infer that the anti-temple tendency was present earlier. It goes far beyond what we find in allegorising Hellenists such as Philo. While Philo regarded the temple as primarily an allegory of spiritual worship he never negated its earthly role. His loyalty to the Jerusalem temple emerged clearly when that temple was threatened by Gaius. For a complete rejection of the temple we must go to Christian texts such as the speech of Stephen in Acts 7, and the Jewish-Christian Ps.-Clementines.

The resemblance to Ebionite Christianity is striking, as there also we find the rejection of temple cult coupled with a strong emphasis on baptism and lively eschatological expectation of the resurrection of the dead. Similarities can also be seen between Sib IV and the prophet Elcasai. Elcasai also preached baptism as an opportunity for obtaining salvation before the end of all things, and rejected outright all bloody sacrifices. There can of course be no question of attributing Sib IV to either Ebionites or Elcasaites, but the parallels confirm the basic correctness of the view of J. Thomas that Sib IV originated in Jewish baptist circles, related to the sectarian Christian groups.

Such baptist circles could most probably be located in the Jordan valley. We know that there were Jewish groups who preached baptism and repentance throughout the first century. The fourth sibyl shows that at least one of those groups was also marked by rejection of temple cult.

The rejection of temple worship may have been a result of the actual fall of the Jewish temple and its apparent rejection by God. However, if we envisage the group in which Sib IV was written as having influenced the Ebionites, then we should probably infer that the anti-temple tendency was present earlier. It goes far beyond what we find in allegorising Hellenists such as Philo. While Philo regarded the temple as primarily an allegory of spiritual worship he never negated its earthly role. His loyalty to the Jerusalem temple emerged clearly when that temple was threatened by Gaius. For a complete rejection of the temple we must go to Christian texts such as the speech of Stephen in Acts 7, and the Jewish-Christian Ps.-Clementines.
is likely that the Ebionites definitely broke off from Judaism about the time of the destruction of the temple,84 and were less likely to accept Jewish influences thereafter. Alternatively, the sibyllists and the Ebionites may have had a common ancestry in the Jewish baptismal groups but developed their attitude to the temple independently of each other, in response to the catastrophe of its destruction. Since we have no Jewish parallel for such outright rejection of temple worship,85 and since Sib IV itself must definitely be dated after the fall of the temple, the latter alternative may be preferable. We need not, then, infer that any Jewish baptist group rejected temple worship as such before the fall of the actual temple, although we cannot decisively exclude the possibility.

Conclusion
The fourth sibylline oracle has much in common with other Jewish sibylline oracles. The common features can however be best explained as deriving from their common source in the sibylline and political oracles of the gentile world. Sib IV itself is directly built on an older Hellenistic oracle, which probably included not only the schematisation of history in vv. 49-101 but also the eschatological conclusion in vv. 174-92. Sib IV is sharply differentiated from the Egyptian sibylline books, Sib III and Sib V by its attitude to the temple. It is also distinct in the manner in which it elevates baptism to the role of main requirement for salvation. The rejection of temple cult and the emphasis on baptism are also found in the early Jewish-Christian Ebionite and Elcasaite sects. Sib IV, which is definitely Jewish, cannot have originated in either of those groups, but the parallels support the thesis of J. Thomas that the sibyl belonged to a Jewish baptismal group in the Jordan valley.

St. Mary of the Lake Seminary
Mundelein, Ill., U.S.A.

JOHN J. COLLINS

---

84 SCHOEPS, Jewish Christianity, p. 18, dates the separation of the Ebionites from the fall of Jerusalem. Cf. EPIPHANIUS, Pan 30.2.7; 29.5.4.

85 A possible exception is Is. 66: 1–2, which, significantly, is cited in Stephen’s speech in Acts 7:49.