THE SYNOPTIC APOCALYPSE (MARK 13 PAR): A DOCUMENT FROM THE TIME OF BAR KOCHBA

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I. The Synoptic Apocalypse and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels.

he thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark belongs to those texts of the New Testament which have been examined particularly often in recent times. Despite many differences in detail, a certain consensus is apparent between exegeses in so far as they all assume that the text in question, the so-called "Synoptic Apocalypse" (hereafter abbreviated as the SynApoc), arose either in the first or the second half of the first century. This investigation, however, will show that there are a number of factors which exclude such a dating and that numerous of clues indicate rather an origin in the time of the Bar Kochba uprising (132-135 CE). To be sure, the possibility of assigning such a date, which diverges considerably from what is usually taken for granted, does not even occure to most scholars, since the conclusion of their investigation is clearly determined by a prior methodological assumption: since the common assumption is that both Mark and Matthew were written in the second half of the first century, the SynApoc must also belong to this period or even precede it. In my opinion, however, for various reasons, it is highly questionable whether the customary and generally accepted dating of Mark's gospel around 70 CE is correct.

Whoever concerns himself with the question of when the Synoptic Gospels arose quickly notices that he has hit upon a genuine weak point in the scholarly study of the New Testament. While elsewhere New Testament scholars bring to bear on particular exegetical questions an extravagant richness and admirable knowledge of historical details, they become remarkably curt with regard to the dating of the Synoptic Gospels. This can hardly surprise in view of the limited, vague criteria employed

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for purposes of dating. Discussions of dating of the Synoptic Gospels are always limited to the same observations. On the one hand, one emphasizes, correctly, that the ecclesiastical tradition regarding the dating as well as the identity of the authors is of little value. On the other hand, to establish a *terminus a quo* one appeals to a few material facts. For the most part, the only genuinely reliable point of reference is the fact that the Synoptic Gospels look back to the destruction of Jerusalem and consequently must have been written after the year 70.

There would be no objection to this if on the basis of the conclusion that Mark was written *after* 70 CE, correct in itself, the claim was not immediately made, underhandedly, that it must have been written *around* 70 CE. Since a Gospel written after 70 CE could theoretically have been written even in the second century, a dating around 70 is hardly necessitated – especially since further evidence cannot be put forward advocating and justifying a date around 70 CE.

This remains the case even if one accepts the external arguments advanced to determine the *terminus ad quem*. This is certainly not easy, since as external witnesses for the existence of the Synoptic Gospels in the first century such uncertain candidates as Ignatius and Clement are advanced, regarding whom one can not say with great certainty either when the documents presumed to have originated with them (the letters of Ignatius and 1 Clement) came into existence, or whether the citations, or parallels, from the New Testament contained in them may already be introduced as evidence for the existence of the Synoptic Gospel literature. Both of these objections apply also to the *Didache*, which closely approximates Mark's gospel but, remarkably, knows only its sayings material.

In any case, it is important to emphasize that neither the Ignatian letters, nor 1 Clement, nor the *Epistle of Barnabas*, nor the *Didache*, nor any other early Christian documents are able to witness with certainty to the existence of the Synoptic Gospels,

¹ Theißen, *Der historische Jesus*, 43: "Mark was composed around 70, since the Jewish-Roman war (66-74 CE) is clearly reflected in the Gospel"; Conzelmann-Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch zum Neuen Testament* (*1979), 248: "The problem of the time of writing depends in a crucial way on whether one sees the destruction of Jerusalem presupposed in the apocalyptic speech of Jesus (Mk 13), or if one assumes this is only expected in the near future. In any case, the book must [!] have originated around 70 CE, i.e., the time of the Jewish war."

whose names they nowhere mention.² One cannot even demonstrate a knowledge of the synoptic Gospels for Justin in the middle of the second century, even if he obviously did know a kind of Gospel literature, namely the "Memoirs of the Apostles," which was already publicly read in worship services in his time.³ To be precise, we first encounter the Synoptic Gospels in the writings of Irenaeus toward the end of the second century.⁴

Contrary to Theißen (*Der historische Jesus*, 1996, 46), it cannot be said that in Ign. *Smyrn*. 1.1 Ignatius "quotes a redactional phrase from Matthew." Ignatius employs a theological idea that was also known to the Gospel writers. What J.A. Fisher says with regard to the relationship between Ignatius and the Gospel of John — "Ignatius knows theology like that found in John"— also applies to the relationship between Ignatius and the Synoptic Gospels. Quotes which can be regarded as clear evidence for a relationship of dependence, or for the existence of complete Synoptic Gospels, can be found nowhere with certainty.

³ Justin, Dial. 106: Against the thesis that the author of the Didache had no knowledge at all of the synoptic Jesus it could be observed that in various places in the Didache a Gospel is explicitly mentioned to which he appeals: 8.1; 11.3; 14.3. The Gospel mentioned here has been often identified with the Gospel of Matthew — which seems plausible because the author cites the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's form, not Luke's. Against the assumption that the writer knew a complete version of Matthew, however, stands the fact that he cites exclusively words of Jesus from his Gospel, and betrays no knowledge at all of the narrative tradition, or the Passion Narrative. What the author of the Didache understands by "Gospel" also seems to differ from that form of the Gospel which we know from the Synoptics and John, for which alongside speech material also miracle stories and, above all, the Passion narrative constitute essential and characteristic components. As I see it, this problem is resolved when we recognize that the author of the Didache had before him a collection of sayings circulating under the name of Matthew - which possibly was a definite Matthean recension of the Sayings Source Q (Qmt). This extended Matthean recension of Q could be in view in the

² I leave aside the claim already made at an early date (in Tübingen circles) and then renewed above all by the Dutch radical critics that 1 Clement and the seven Ignatian letters are pseudepigraphical writings: see, for example, G. Volkmar, "Über Clemens von Rom und die nächste Folgzeit mit besonderer Beziehung auf den Philipper- und Barnabasbriefe sowie auf das Buch Judith," in ThJb(T) 15 (1856), 287-369; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, Onderzoek naar de echtheid van Clemens' eersten brief aan de Corinthiërs, Leiden, 1908; "Zur Echtheitsfrage der ignatianischen Briefe," in PrM (1907), 258-268, 301-311; "De jongste verdediging van de echtheid der Ignatiana," in NTT (1915), 115; W.C. Van Manen, Handleiding, 74ff; H. Paulsen, Studien zur Theologie des Ignatius von Antiochien, FKDG 29, 1978; H. Delafosse, "La lettre de Clément Romain aux Corinthiens," in RHR 97 (1928), 53-89. R. Weijenborg, Les Lettres d'Ignace d'Antioche. Etude de critique littéraire et de théologie, 1969. Cf. H. Detering, Paulusbriefe ohne Paulus? (1992), 152-163; Idem, Der gefälschte Paulus (1995), 91ff. It has little importance here since the reference to the pseudepigraphic character of the writings says nothing regarding their age. Moreover, the thesis presently finds few supporters. Today one can even write a commentary on 1 Clement without devoting more than a single sentence to the authenticity of the "letter": see the commentary on the Clementines by Andreas Lindemann, HNT 7, 12.

The absence of external witnesses to the Gospels in the first century and the first half of the second century, or at least the highly problematic nature of such evidence, makes it clear that in a historical consideration of the SynApoc it is not advisable, from the very beginning, to set forth as an axiom the origin of the synoptic Gospels in the second half of the first century. This would be especially true if it proved to be the case that the SynApoc could be located in the Procrustean bed of an alleged temporal and historical framework of relationships only with great difficulty, and that numerous tensions and inconsistencies arise which can be resolved only by the assumption of later redactional insertions.

Under these circumstances, it is altogether possible and permissible to drop apriori chronological stipulations so as to direct one's view out beyond the boundry of the first century and investigate whether or not in some later time an historical situation might possibly be found that would produce a more adequate understanding of the text.

Before I proceed to the question of dating the SynApoc in detail, however, I would like to introduce a few requisite remarks regarding the relationship between the Markan and Matthean texts. Comparing the two chapters, Matthew 24 and Mark 13, it soon becomes apparent that the current consensus must be questioned at yet another crucial point, since — as we shall see — there are several observations which fly in the face of the dominant assumption that Mark's version of the SynApoc is the older and more original version.

II. The Priority of Matthew's Text

A comparison of Mark 13 and Matthew 24 produces the following obvious differences:

- 1) Matthew 24:3 refers simply to "the disciples," while Mark 13:3 identifies Peter and James and John and Andrew by name.
- 2) In Mark 13:6 the many say "I am he," while in Matthew 24:5 they say "I am the Christ."

well-known and often discussed testimony of Papias. In the testimony of the Bishop of Hierapolis deriving from 90-150 CE it says: "Matthew gathered together the words [of Jesus] in the Hebrew language, but translated them as well as he could" (Eusebius, HE 3.11.8).

⁴ Irenaeus speaks in *Haer.* 3.11.8 for the first time of a "quadriform gospel" — and explains the existence of four Gospels, for example, from the existence of four cherubim.

- 3) The Jesus saying, Mark 13:9, 11, 12 stands in a different place in Matthew (10:17-21).
- 4) The reference to the Gentiles ("and the Gentiles") in Matthew 10:18 is missing in Mark 13:9.
- 5) In Mark, the expression "And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations" (Mk 13:10 = Mt 10:22) stands before the phrase "But whoever endures to the end will be saved" (Mk 13:13), but in Matthew after it (Mt 24:13). In Luke the sentence is missing completely. Mark 13:10 refers to "the gospel"; Matthew 24:14 refers to "the gospel of the kingdom."
- 6) The word "first" $(\pi\rho\hat{\omega}\tau\sigma\nu)$ in Mark 13:10 is missing in Matthew 24:14.
- 7) In Matthew 24:14 the prophecy that the gospel must be proclaimed in the whole world is followed by the announcement of the end, "And then the end will come," which is missing in Mark 13:10.
- 8) In Matthew 24:9 the Christians will be hated "by all nations"; Mark 13:13 simply says they will be hated "by everyone."
- 9) The passage in Matthew 24:10-12: "And then many will fall away... And...most people's love will grow cold," finds no parallel in Mark.
- 10) In Matthew the "desolating sacrilege" (24:15) is attributed to the prophet Daniel ("spoken of by the prophet Daniel"); in Mark 13:14 this attribution is missing.
- 11) In Matthew (24:15) the "desolating sacrilege" stands in "the holy place"; but in Mark 13:14, it is simply there "where it ought not to be."
- 12) a) In Matthew 24:20 "your flight" is the subject of the sentence. In Mark 13:18 this explicit reference to the "flight" is missing. Instead, it is simply said in an impersonal way that "it should not happen." b) According to Matthew (24:20), the flight into the Jewish mountains should occur, if at all possible, neither in winter nor on a sabbath. The reference to the sabbath is missing in Mark 13:18.
- 13) In Mark 13:19, one reads "from the beginning of creation; in Matthew 24:21, "from the beginning of the world." Mark adds tautologically, "from the beginning of creation which God created..."
- 14) In Mark 13:20 there is another tautological reference to "the elect, whom he chose" (τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς οὺς ἐξελέξατο). This is missing in Matthew.

- 15) The passage Matthew 24:26-28 is missing in Mark (compare Q 17:23-24).
- 16) Matthew 24:29 reads "Immediately after the tribulation of those days"; Mark 13:24 simply has "After the tribulation."
- 17) The reference to the "sign of the Son of Man" in Matthew 24:30a is missing Mark, along with
- 18) the following reference to the tribes of the earth who will cry out on the occasion of the Son of Man's appearance ("And then all the tribes of the earth will mourn"). Instead, Mark simply reads: "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."
- 19) The mention of the Son in Mark 13:32 is missing in Matthew 24:36.
- 20) The passage Mark 13:33-37 is positioned in a different place in Matthew (25:13-15b = Q 19:12-27 = Parable of the Pounds; Matthew 24:42 = Q 12:39-40 = Parable of the Thief in the Night).

The following passages clearly indicate that in the composition of the SynApoc serious attention was given to the concerns of Jewish-Christian readers:

Matthew 24:14: "this gospel of the kingdom."

Matthew 24:12: "Lawlessness will be multiplied."

Matthew 24:15: "spoken of by the prophet Daniel."

Matthew: 24:25: "in the holy place."

Matthew 24:20: "not on the sabbath."

Matthew 24:30 "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven."

Matthew 24:30: "all the tribes of the earth."

The increase in lawlessness is a typical motif in Jewish-Christian apocalyptic (cf. *Did.* 16:4); the Old Testament references to the prophet Daniel, the temple, and the Sabbath likewise belong in this sphere, as well as the "gospel of the kingdom" and the question regarding the sign of "the Son of Man" (further, see below). In addition, talk of the (Gentile) peoples' hatred—Mt 10:18 ("and the Gentiles") and Mt 24:9 ("all the Gentiles")—could

indicate a Jewish background and, in this sense, also the Jewish perspective of the author (*Jub.* 23.23).⁵

⁵ Bornkamm, Enderwartung, 19.

The question is whether, for the sake of his Gentile-Christian readers, Mark abridged Matthew by deleting Jewish-Christian elements,⁶ or did Matthew expand his source to appeal to his Jewish-Christian readers?⁷ This question would have to remain undecided but for the several passages which clearly indicate that Mark's version presupposes the prior existence of Matthew's version, particularly at Mk 13:13, Mk 13:18, and Mt 24:30. At these several points, the Markan text would not be understandable without the prior existence of the Matthean text.

The word πρώτον ("first") in Mark 13:10 doesn't make sense, since it is not clear from the preceding text to what it refers. Mark can hardly have wanted to say that the gospel must be spread across the whole world *prior* to the persecution of Christians referred to in 13:9. That matter is treated in 13:7 and 13:13. But the substantial gap in between makes it impossible to any longer detect the connection. From this it follows that Mark was writing with a document in view — such as Matthew 24:13-14 — in which the proclamation of the gospel and the coming End formed a meaningful connection.

The verse Mark 13:10 consequently appears to derive from the text of Matthew 24:14. It was only that Mark, who wrote his own version, failed to incorporate half of the verse, "and then the end will come." Nevertheless Mark did, in his own mind, retain the spirit of the passage. That accounts for the term $\pi\rho\dot{\omega}\tau$ o ν ("first"), which now becomes a revealing indicator of his dependence on the text he had before him.

A comparison of Mark 13:18 and Matthew 24:20 makes it clear that Mark knew the Matthew text, or the SynApoc text presupposed by Matthew; he could delete Matthew's explicit reference to "your flight" because he was concentrating his attention on his own SynApoc text. In the variation of the Markan text (contained in the apparatus of Nestle-Aland) which reads, "your flight," we are clearly dealing with an attempted harmonization of the texts of Mark and Matthew.

⁶ Wikenhauser-Schmidt, *Einleitung*, 220.

⁷ Ibid., 245.

In Mark 13:26 the subject of the phrase "and they will see" (third person plural) remains entirely undetermined. Since it can hardly have anything to do with the preceding, "powers of heaven" (13:25), it is usually translated impersonally or — looking at Matthew's text - associated with the people (i.e. the "tribes of the earth"), concerning whom, however, we find no mention yet in Mark. Here also it is clear that Mark knew the Matthean version. The words "and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn" were not added by Matthew, but rather deleted by Mark. Perhaps in his opinion the words concerning the (Gentile) "tribes of the earth" mourning at the coming of the Son of Man smacked too much of Jewish Christianity (see below).

These remarks regarding Mark 13:10, 13:18, 13:26 — items 6), 12a), and 18), above — constitute a solid basis from which the other deviations between Mark and Matthew in the passages noted above may be judged, i.e., those deviations from which, treated in isolation, it would be difficult to reach a definite conclusion regarding the direction of dependence between the evangelists.

- 1) The names of the disciples in Mk 13:3 prove to be an insertion, or a redactional construction, within the Gospel of Mark, which elsewhere as well attributes an elevated position to these disciples (Mark 1:29; 3:17ff.; cf. 5:37; 9:2; 10:35; 10:41; 14:33).8
- 2) The "I am" in Mk 13:3, instead of "I am the Christ" (Mt 24:5), reflects a tendency that can also be observed elsewhere in Mark to abridge the Matthean text, even though the dogmatic intent behind the abbreviations is always clear (cf. Mt 24:7 par; Mt 24:10-12; Mt 24:15 par; Mt 24:26-28 par; Mt 24:30 par)
- 3) The verses Mk 13:9, 11, and 12 were not transported by Matthew into another context (Mt 10:17-21), but were rather inserted by Mark into the text before him (from Q1?). Luke, in his own version, did not work from the Matthean, but rather from the Markan version. He diverged from Mark, however, by not incorporating Mk 13:10.

Indeed, in my opinion it would be very difficult to explain Matthew's procedure at this point if one assumed his exclusive dependence upon Mark. Even if it were conceivable that he removed the passage Mk 13:9, 11-23 from its original context and inserted it in the tenth chapter of his gospel, it remains

⁸ See Schmithals, Das Markusevangelium (1979), I, 132; II, 570.

remarkable that he did not transfer Mk 13:10 into chapter 10 along with the rest of the text, but left the verse standing in chapter 24 — to be sure, now assimilated in a different, more meaningful context than in Mark.

- 4) Mark 13:9 along with Mark 13:10, 13:13, 13:14, 13:18, 13:26, and Mt 24:10-12 belongs in the collection of passages that Mark undertook to modify to remove the substantial Jewish coloring of the presupposed source and make the text acceptable for Gentile Christian readers.
- 7) With the relocation of Matthew 24:14, it was necessary to delete the words "And then the end will come," for to retain these words would have interrupted the train of thought, and the reader's attention had to be diverted from concern about the End to reflect anew on the preceding events.
- 10) and 11) Many New Testament scholars who presume the priority of the Markan text proceed on the assumption that Matthew 24:15 represents a correction of Mark 13:14. According to Vielhauer, Mark thereby acknowledged unwittingly that he was citing a written document and that despite 13:5 he was not really repeating a saying of Jesus. Matthew then took note of the "awkwardness of having Jesus speaking to his listeners as if they were readers" and "cleverly avoided it" by referring to the book of Daniel.⁹

This explanation is unlikely, in my opinion, precisely because the "correction" of Matthew is far too "clever" to be passed off simply as a later improvement. Rather, this passage also corresponds to Mark's practice, which we already observed, of deleting the Jewish or Jewish-Christian colouring of his source. Mark obviously understood the text in the same way as Matthew; but he thought he could make things easier for his readers, who were poorly informed regarding the Old Testament and Jewish peculiarities, by avoiding the reference to the prophet Daniel as well as mention of the "holy place," which, for his Gentile-Christian readers who had no interest in a "holy place," he replaced with "the place where it (the "desolating sacrilege") ought not to be." As a result of the alterations Mark made the text became ambiguous: the appeal "Let the reader understand" could now also refer to the reader of the gospel, and

⁹ Vielhauer, Geschichte, 335.

would then in fact have to be understood as an indication that Mark was working with a written document.¹⁰

- 13) This modification in Mk 13:19 with its explicit emphasis on the God of Creation gives the impression that Mark had already been engaged in controversy with Gnostics. This possibility (also on the basis of what I hold to be the probable dating of the Apocalypse) should certainly not be excluded.¹¹
- 14) The tautology in Mk 13:20 is a failed attempt to rhetorically polish up the text in a way similar to Mk 13:19, but in this case with no apparent purpose.
- 15) The absence of Mt 24:26-28 in Mark is a seemingly unmotivated abbreviation.
- 16) The deletion of the word "immediately" $(\epsilon \dot{\theta} \dot{\theta} \dot{\omega} \zeta)$ in Mk 13:24 seems to reflect a certain scepticism regarding the expectation of an imminent end of the world in Matthew (or Mark's source). This too is an indication that Mark represents the more recent text and can already look back on a long period of time since the signs of the imminent End portrayed in 13:5-15 and which have meanwhile come to pass (the erection of the "desolating sacrilege" seems to lie further in the past for Mark than for Matthew).

When Matthew has Jesus prophesy that the end will come immediately after the "desolating sacrilege," on the other hand, this derives from a better text of the prophecy than Mark preserved, which probably already related the "desolating sacrilege" to the destruction of Jerusalem and so no longer ventured to use the word "immediately." Here also Matthew gives the earlier elements of the prophecy, without having entirely understood them.¹²

¹⁰ With regard to (11), see Weiss-Bousset, *Die Schriften des NT*, I, 367: "While Mark, however, only speaks vaguely of "where it should not be," in Matthew we read "on a holy place." That is even more peculiar since Matthew, in any case, writes long after the destruction of the holy place. Thus he would not have introduced this modification of his own accord. We must assume that the prophecy, which is also found in Mark, was read by Matthew in a different (more original) form and simply passed on without him understanding its meaning.

¹¹ G.A. van den Bergh van Eysigna, Verklaring van het Evangelie naar Mattheus, tevens bijdrage tot de kennis van ontstaan en karakter der Evangeliegeschiedenis (Arnhem, 1947), 199.

 $^{^{12}}$ Weiss-Bousset, *Die Schriften des NT*, I, 368. In my opinion, however, it is questionable whether for Mark the "desolating sacrilege" was already related to the destruction of Jerusalem. As Mk 13:14 ("The desolating sacrilege stands where

17) and 18) The phrase "sign of the Son of Man" (Mt 24:30) derives from a Jewish-Christian milieu (see *Apoc. Pet* 1, which—as in the case of *Apoc. Elijah* 32:2—understands the phrase as referring to the cross) and could easily be omitted by Mark who was writing for Gentile Christians. This also applies to the mourning of the "peoples of the earth" on the occasion of the Son of Man's appearance, since it is possible that Gentile Christians could have easily recognized themselves in these words.

19) Whether the insertion of the Son in Mk 13:32 originated with Mark or already stood in Matthew (as suggested by a few good textual witnesses) can no longer be determined.

20) In this passage (Mk 13:33-37) Mark aludes to motifs from parables that are more developed in Q (or Q^1).

In principle, the conclusion that the Matthean version of the SynApoc with its much stronger Jewish-Christian flavour is the more original document is also very consistent in so far as, with regard to form and content, the entire apocalypse indicates a distinct Jewish-Christian tendency.¹³ It is *a priori* more probable that the Matthean text with its pronounced Jewish-Christian elements is more closely related to the original source of the apocalypse that one in which these elements are generally lacking. The only reason most New Testament exegetes have rejected this conclusion until now¹⁴ obviously only consisted and still consists in the fact that, because of their unswerving commitment from the very beginning to the two-source theory and Markan priority, they do not recognize, or do not want to recognize, the actual relationships of dependence.

The recognition of Matthew's dependence on Mark in this one passage in no way necessitates a revision of the two-source theory or, as the case may be, the recognition of total Markan priority. As Bousset already suspected, it is entirely possible that in addition to his copy of Mark (and Q) Matthew could have possessed still other sources from which, in common with Mark, he composed the SynApoc, and indeed in a more original form than Mark's version.

it should not") shows, in contrast to Luke, Mark seems to relate the "desolating sacrilege" not at all to the destruction of Jerusalem, but rather to the erection of a statue of the emperor on the place where the temple was.

¹³ L. Schenke, *Die Urgemeinde* (1990), 267: "Motifs and style accord entirely with Jewish apocalypticism."

¹⁴ Exceptions would be Schlatter and Bousset.

III. Marking out the Boundary Lines for the SynApoc

It has long been recognized that both Matthew 24 and Mark 13 are based upon an earlier document (the SynApoc) that was appropriated and reworked by the evangelists. Even though until now no argeement has been reached regarding this document's size, form, and delimitation, this assumption, as we shall see, can be shown to be well founded.

In the light of what has been said above, it is clear that the original form of the SynApoc cannot be reconstructed on the basis of Mark—as most exegetes assume—but only from Matthew's text.

a) A first indication is found in Matt 24:3. Although the occasion and point of departure for the question of the disciples in the context of the gospel is Jesus' announcement of the destruction of the Temple, Jesus' answer no longer relates to the time of the Temple's destruction, but rather, in a general way, to the the "signs of the arrival" (24:3).

The breach is more obvious in Mark 13:4 than in Matthew. There the question of the disciples to Jesus runs: "Tell us when shall these things be and what will be the sign when all of these things are to be accomplished?" Since until now only the destruction of the Temple has been spoken of, the remark in Mark 13:4 that "all these things will come to an end" (Matt 24:3 = "at the end of the age") comes unexpectedly. It becomes clear that a disjunction exists between the words of Jesus regarding the Temple, which speak only of the temple's destruction, and the description of a great world-wide catastrophe spoken of in Matthew's source. "The prophecy of Jesus and the Little Apocalypse which follows it, in which it will be difficult for us to uncover at all the moment of the temple's destruction, did not originally belong together in any way." 15

Theißen also maintains with regard to the relationship between Mark 13:1-4 and 13:5ff. that Jesus' response "nowhere clearly relates to the temple." He rejects the proposition of Lührmann, Sowers, Gunther and others who associate the "desolating sacrilege" with the destruction of the temple in the year 70—irrespective of whether they connect it with Zealots' choice of the High Priest, or the appearance of the Roman army under the command of Cestius Gallus on Mount Scopos in the

¹⁵ Weiß-Bousset, Die Schriften des NT, I, 192.

¹⁶ Theißen, Lokalkolorit, 138.

year 66, or the standard of the Roman soldiers in the temple following its conquest, etc. Against all these attempts ,Theißen objects that the keyword "sacrilege" ($\beta\delta\dot{\epsilon}\lambda\nu\gamma\mu\alpha$) "usually relates to idolatry in the Old Testament" and thus refers to "an outrageous human act." Since the judgment of Jerusalem in the preceding text, however, was conceived as the judgment of God (Mk 12:9), Theißen regards this as an irreconcilable contradiction.

This may be true. But apart from this, however, there are also still other crucial reasons barring an association of the "desolating sacrilege" with the events around the year 70. We shall come back to this matter later when we focus our attention more closely on the meaning of the concept. Luke, who, as we will see, was the first to actually make this connection and to relate the events reported in Mark 13 to the destruction of the temple, recognized this inconsistency and left it out, or reinterpreted it! For Luke the "desolating sacrilege" has become the "desolation" of Jerusalem (Lk 21:20). That clearly shows that till Luke the "desolating sacrilege" was unknown as a phenomenon connected with the destruction of the temple in the year 70.

All in all, it is evident that there exists no original relationship in content between Matt 24:1-2 and 24:3f. Rather, this relationship was first established at a later time by the evangelist. Matt 24:3ff. constitutes the beginning of an independent literary unit.

- b) An additional, clear indication that in Matt 24 we are dealing with a tradition that has been reworked by the gospel writer is found in 24:15. The sentence, "When you see the desolating sacrilege" (second person, plural), is continued most peculiarly in the third person plural: "then those who are in Judea must flee to the hills" (24:16). With regard to the Gospel of Mark, Bousset observed: "That is a sign that these prophecies were not originally directed to the readers of Mark, but rather to the people of Judea. The passage originated in Palestine and was simply taken over by Mark." 17
- c) As additional evidence for the presence of a document which the gospel writer employed, one is often referred to an observation regarding Mark 13:14, which, of course, is excluded as an argument for us because, as we saw, in comparison with Matthew, the Markan text turns out to be secondary. Even though Mark presumes that 13:14ff is a speech of Jesus, in this

¹⁷ Weiß-Bousset, *Die Schriften des NT*, I, 193.

verse he suprisingly addresses the readers: "Let the reader understand!" In the opinion of many exegetes, this shows that Mark had a written source before him which had been composed as an essay, not as a speech.

As we saw above, a comparison with the corresponding passage in Mt 14:15 reveals that Mark's unexpected appeal to the reader obviously had a very different purpose than interpreters presume. The very fact that Matthew — unlike Mark — provides the reference to the "desolating sacrilege" with the remark concerning the words "spoken by the prophet Daniel" reveals the fashion in which he wishes the appeal to the reader to be understood: it relates not to the readers of the Apocalypse, but to readers of the book of Daniel! We must presume, therefore, that Mark understood the appeal to the reader in 13:14 in the same way as Matthew, but that he omitted the reference to Daniel out of consideration for his Gentile Christian readers.

d) While the beginning of the SynApoc as an independent, traditional unit can be determined with relative certainty, difficulties appear in determining its end. As a comparison with Apoc. Pet. will make clear, one must presume that the section that Mark appropriated also contained the parable of the fig tree and extended at least to Mt 24:34. With regard to form and content, the admonition, "Truly, I say to you: This generation will not pass away before all these things take place," corresponds well with the prophetic style of what preceeds. While the Amen-formula nicely rounds out what has been said and (at the same time, as legitimation) once more calls attention to the prophetic authority of the speaker, the indication that the hearer himself will experience what has been prophesied registers anew the seriousness of the situation. It underlines the necessity of taking seriously the signs of the time indicated by the writer of the Apocalypse and to take his demands as applying to one's self ("this generation") in a most radical way (including flight).

If the SynApoc constitutes an independent literary unity, however, the question arises as to its function and meaning apart from its present context, i.e., in its own *Sitz im Leben*. The customary conception is that we are dealing here with an "apocalyptic handbill" which Mark appropriated and reworked.¹⁸ Despite numerous objections, this conception seems to fit in so far as the Apocalypse is concerned to provide not only a largely

¹⁸ Vielhauer, Geschichte, 335.

disinterested description of the signs of the end time, but has a very specific situation in view. As Schoeps aptly expressed it, it is "a warning at the last possible moment," 19 into which—like a real hand bill—it intervenes and calls for a concrete action by the reader, namely, flight into the Judean mountains.

According to Hegesippus, the flight of the Jerusalem community to Pella immediately before the Jewish War was prompted by a prophecy.²⁰ In this case as well, then, the existence of an independent prophecy (presumably a written one) seems to be presupposed, which then became the signal for the flight of the community from Jerusalem. It can hardly be surprising that some researchers identify the prophecy of which Hegesippus speaks with the SynApoc.²¹ That such an assumption, however, rests upon a false estimation of the date of origin of the SynApoc will become even more clear below.

IV. The SynApoc and Apocalypse of Peter.

t is well known that we meet a series of citations from the SynApoc in the so-called Apocalypse of Peter (Ethiopian Leversion).²² From this fact it is often inferred that the author of the Apoc. Pet. used Matthew and Luke; but that is an unproven presumption. One cannot help but notice that in the discussion of the disciples with Jesus on the Mount of Olives in the first chapter of Apoc. Pet. there is no reference to the destruction of the temple, as in the Synoptic Gospels. Instead of "Tell us, when will this (i.e. the destruction of the temple) take place, etc." (Mt 24:3), Jesus' speech is introduced with the disciples' question, "Make known unto us what are the signs of your Parousia and of the end of the world, that we may perceive and mark [them]..." I adjudge this as an indication that the author of Apoc. Pet. also did not possess his text as part of a synoptic gospel, but rather as an independently transmitted text. At the same time, he thereby confirms the thesis that a source independent of the Synoptic Gospels actually existed and that the author of Apoc. Pet. obvi-

¹⁹ Schoeps, Ebionitische Apokalyptik im Neuen Testament, 265, n. 1.

²⁰ Eusebius, *EH*, 3.5.3.

 $^{^{21}}$ E.g., Schoeps (*Ebionitische Apokalyptik*) 105, who refers to the apocalyptic passage as a "word of instruction" (for the early Christian community) and cites Eusebius, *EH*, 3.5.2-3, as well as Epiphanius, *AH*, 29.7; 30.2, and *de mens. et pond.* 15.

²² W. Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, Revised Edition (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), Vol. 2, 620-638).

ously made use of it. If the author of *Apoc. Pet.* had acquired his knowledge of the passage from one of the Synoptic Gospels, he would most certainly have included the motive of the temple's destruction, closely linked there with the apocalypse, in his own text.

Moreover, the fact that the citations utilized exhibit a textual form similar to Matthew (and not Mark) could show, in addition, that the text of Matthew (and not Mark) in fact stands closest to the original text of the Apocalypse. This, of course, is not to say that *Apoc. Pet.* represents the original text. That this is impossible is shown by the simple fact that the document itself exhibits a series of literary irregularities (e.g., the striking shift from "his" to "we" immediately in the first sentence of the first chapter) which clearly show that the author used the Apocalypse (and perhaps other texts related to the gospels) as a source. In any case, in interpreting, reconstructing, and dating the SynApoc there is no reason, in my opinion, for not also utilizing *Apoc. Pet.* as an additional text independent of the Synoptic Gospels.

At this point, I would like to give special attention to an aspect of the problem which has not yet been touched upon, which has particular importance for me and, indeed, constituted the point of departure for my reflections on this entire subject.

In chapter two of *Apoc. Pet.*, in conjunction with the parable of the fig tree, a "lying Christ" is mentioned who persecutes the Christians. Weinel argues that this reference makes possible an "extremely precise dating... since it identifies an Antichrist from within the Jewish people who persecutes Christians and turns them into martyrs. After the year 70, that was possible only on one occasion, the time of Bar Kochba. Our book consequently belongs approximately in the year 135."²³

In my opinion, this view, which Alon²⁴ and Abramsky²⁵ and others support (and which only Schäfer²⁶ rejects, with weak grounds) is correct. The first and second chapters really do deal with events in the time of Bar Kochba, with Christian martyrs

²⁵ Abramsky, Bar-Kochba, 56ff.

²³ Hennecke-Schneemelcher, Neutestamentliche Apokryphen (1924), 317.

²⁴ Alon, Toledot, II, 34.

²⁶ Schäfer, Der Bar Kochba Aufstand, 61f.

attested to by Justin²⁷ and Eusebius.²⁸ "This lying fellow" (singular!), of course, is none other than Bar Kochba himself, who lived on in Jewish tradition as Bar Koziba (Liar's son). Of course, the (generally accepted) dating of *Apoc. Pet.* is one thing, while the date of the appearance of the SynApoc, which was obviously used in it, is another, above all because (in contrast to the Gospels) in *Apoc. Pet.* no direct connection is made between the lying Messiah and the situation of persecution. Nevertheless, the striking parallels between *Apoc. Pet.* and the SynApoc may be regarded, as a reason to re-examine the first-century dating of the SynApoc (generally assumed to be self-evident) and as an incentive to understand the SynApoc in the light of the historical events of the second century.

In fact, closer consideration shows:

- a) not only that the customary dating of the SynApoc in the time of the so-called "Caligula Crisis" in the year 40, or the proposition that this was played out once more in the time of the Jewish war in 70, is untenable, but also that
- b) only a dating in the time of the second Jewish War, i.e., in the time of Bar Kochba, 132-135, is historically appropriate.

V. The Synoptic Apocalypse as a Document from the Time of the "Caligula Crisis" (37-41)

The proposition, first set forth by Hölscher, to the effect that the SynApoc originated in the time of the "Caligula Crisis" has been, to the best of my knowledge, most thoroughly defended by Theißen.²⁹ The fact that it has not been possible to maintain the characteristic connection of the indifidual motifs of the SynApoc in their entirety (whether one works from Matthew or from Mark is relatively unimportant at this point) is decisive in rejecting a dating of the SynApoc in the first century:

- (1) The reference to false Messiahs (in the plural!): πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες· ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ χριστός (Mt 24:5/par);
- (2) Wars and the rumors of war: μελλήσετε δὲ ἀκούειν πολέμους καὶ ἀκοὰς πολέμων (Mt 24:6/par);

²⁷ Justin, Apol., 1.31.6; cf. Schürer, Geschichte, I, 571.

²⁸ Eusebius, EH, 4.8.4; Chron. (Schoene, ed.), II, 168ff.

 $^{^{29}}$ Theißen, "Die große Endzeitrede und die Bedrohung des Jerusalemer Tempels im Jahr 40 nach Chr," in idem, Lokalkolorit, 133-211.

- (3) Nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom: ἐγερθήσεται γὰρ ἔθνος ἐπὶ ἔθνος καὶ βασιλεία ἐπὶ βασιλείαν (Mt 24:7/par);
 - (4) Hunger: καὶ ἔσονται λιμοὶ (Mt 24:7/par);
 - (5) Earthquakes: καὶ σεισμοὶ κατὰ τόπους ((Mt 24:7/par).;
- (6) Persecution: τότε παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς θλῖψιν (Mt 24:9/par);
- (7) Treachery: καὶ τότε σκανδαλισθήσονται πολλοὶ καὶ ἀλλήλους παραδώσουσιν καὶ μισήσουσιν ἀλλήλους (Mt 24:10/par);
- (8) Preaching the gospel throughout the world: καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῆ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (Mt 24:14/par);
 - (9) Desolating sacrilege (Mt 24:15/par);
- (10) The prophet Daniel: τὸ ἡηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου, (24:15/par);
- (11) Winter: προσεύχεσθε δὲ ἴνα μὴ γένηται ἡ φυγὴ ὑμῶν χειμῶνος μηδὲ σαββάτῳ (Mt 24:20/par);
- (12) Being led astray by signs and wonders of the false Christ: ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται καὶ δώσουσιν σημεῖα μεγάλα καὶ τέρατα ὥστε πλανῆσαι, εἰ δυνατόν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς. (Mt 24:24/par).

Up until now, in order to save their thesis as a whole, most exegetes have felt obliged to break out individual elements from their overall construct and treat these elements as later redactional insertions or, alternately, to forcefully cram individual verses into their postulated, historical situation of the Caligula Crisis, rather than, on the contrary, effortlessly explaining them on the basis of that crisis. Theißen, indeed, represents the right good fundamental principle: "The fewer the number of textual fragments which under no circumstance can be fitted into the presumed situation and must therefore be excluded as secondary interpolations, the better!" Nevertheless, at various places in his investigation he himself also finds it necessary to transgress this principle.

For example, with regard to (1), he fails to make a plausible case that (apart than Simon Magus, whom he mentions, who was obviously active since ca. 36 CE) there were also other "seducers" in the time frame 36-41, when the SynApoc was presumably written, who put in an appearance with the claim "I am He" ($\dot{\epsilon}\gamma\dot{\omega}$ $\dot{\epsilon}l\mu\iota$) and thus justify the use of the plural in Mt

³⁰ Theißen, Lokalkolorit, 139.

24:5/par. In both his *Antiquities* and his *Jewish War*, Josephus provides us with an extensive survey of the pseudo-prophets who appeared in the first half of the first century. According to Theißen, in theory these persons could be in view in this passage. But apart from Simon Magus, all of them appear on the scene after the year 41 (e.g., Theudas, or the so-called Egyptian).

Theißen himself is aware of this deficiency in his argument,³¹ but regards it as inconsequential. Moreover, in his opinion it was altogether possible that Mark "first formulated this introduction (13:5) while recalling many false teachings and prophets." One must maintain, therefore, that Theißen only postulates the "many" pseudo-messiahs of whom Matthew and also Mark speak. He does not demonstrate their presence on the basis of sources.

Basically, the question remains open as to whether Mark 13:6 is referring at all to (Christian) pseudo-prophets, who appear in the fashion of Simon Magus (as Theißen thinks), or whether real messianic pretenders are not in view. For, to begin with, both Mark and Matthew clearly distinguish the false messiahs from the false prophets, separating the one from the other (24:11.24; Mark 13: 22). And, in addition, the "seducers" (in the older, Matthean version) do not say of themselves, "I am He" (ἐγώ εἰμι), but rather, "I am Christ" = "I am the Messiah."

The pseudo-prophets of Celsus cited by Theißen,³² by contrast, proclaim themselves to be "God" or the "Son of God," but not the Messiah. That is a decisive difference not considered by Theißen, which also speaks against his thesis that the Apocalypse should be dated to 40 CE. For men who appeared in public with messianic claims were still unknown during the years 36 to 41; they seem to have first shown up with the beginning of the First Jewish War (see below). For these reasons, in my opinion, Theißen cannot even refer to Simon Magus to account for Mark 13:5.

Nor can Theißen explain (again with regard to 2) the reference to "wars" in the plural. He seems to recognize this shortcoming, and appeals therefore, in addition to the Nabataean war which he cites, to wars between the pretenders to the Parthian throne as well as to the setting up of a Roman client

³¹ Ibid., 163

³² Ibid., 162.

king in Armenia, which were obviously accompanied by disturbances.³³ But that these distant events had repercussions in Palestine and caused unrest among the populace there is highly improbable and can in no way be derived from sources such as Josephus, for example.

But Theißen also seems to highly overrate the significance of the one-year long Nabataean war (36-37) in its size as well as in its impact on the Jewish population. Bousset correctly sums up the impression left behind by the apocalyptic scenario portrayed by the writer: "A universal world-war would precede the end." The Nabataean war was in no way a "world war" or an "international war" threatening the existence of the Jewish people, but was a limited, localized, military skirmish of little importance, which, significantly, left no mark worth mentioning in Jewish sources.

With respect to (6) as well, i.e., proof of the persecution of Christians in the period in view here, Theißen has trouble demonstrating his thesis. He first presumes that the passage Mk 13:9-13 "may have been first inserted into the present context later on"³⁶ and that it alludes to a persecution of Christians in Syria between 66 and 76³⁷ (In this regard, see below). In the case that the passage does represent tradition, Theißen suspects that there is a connection with the persecution of the Hellenistic community in Jerusalem and to the stoning of Stephen, following which the community was driven out of the city. Reference is also made to the report in Acts 9:24ff (2 Cor 11:32f) regarding a persecution of Christians in Damascus, in which Paul's status changed from persecutor to persecuted.

But the situation described in the SynApoc (whether one uses the Matthean or the Markan version makes no difference), with mutual betrayal of family members, with mutual disclosure and deliverance into the hands of the authorities, in no way corresponds with the persecutions in earliest Christian times reported in Acts — even apart from the fact Luke can also say in another place that this early community was "united in heart and soul" (Acts 4:32).

³³ Ibid., 164.

 $^{^{34}}$ Weiß-Bousset, Die Schriften des NT, I, 192.

³⁵ Robinson, Geschichte seit dem Jahr 30 n. Chr., 126.

³⁶ Lokalkolorit, 166.

³⁷ Ibid., 281.

In Theißen's fundamental text in the Apocalypse (Mk 13:9), Mark speaks of the beatings which Christians suffer before the $\sigma\nu\nu\acute{\epsilon}\delta\rho\iota\alpha$ (= "councils," plural!), which, as Grundmann correctly observed,³⁸ indicates a situation in the Diaspora. The reference thereby can in no way be to the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem, though it is possible that the persecution of Christians in Damascus is in view. But there are no sources at all that relate a persecution of Christians in the Diaspora beyond Damascus at this early time.

If we take the Matthean text as a basis, it also becomes clear that the persecution described in the SynApoc has already reached universal dimensions. Christians appear to suffer persecution in the same degree from pagans and well as Jews ("by all the nations," Mt 24:9). But the world-wide expansion of Christianity presupposed here may under no circumstances be associated with the thirties and forties of the first century. And when it is further stated that persecution occurs simply because of the Christian "name" (Mt 24:9), this rather indicates—as we shall see here below—a situation like that known from the reports by the apologists concerning persecutions of Christians in the first half of the second century (or in the letter of Pliny to Trajan).

This accords with (8), where it is said that the gospel will be preached throughout "the whole world" (24:14 par), which likewise does not fit well in the earliest period of Christianity. In this passage, Theißen finds himself (along with many other New Testament scholars) obligated, once again contrary to his fundamental principle cited above, to assume the presence of a later redactional elaboration.³⁹

On the other hand, Theißen seems well able to explain (9), the "desolating sacrilege" (Mt 24:15/par) by associating it historically with the so-called Caligula Crisis, i.e., the Roman Emperor Caligula's plan to set up a statue of himself in the temple of Jerusalem, which was forestalled by his early death on the 24th of January in 41. But even here doubts are in order. For as we know from Josephus and Philo, the actual erection of this desolating sacrilege, even if it were planned, was never carried out.

By contrast, Mk 13:14/par suggests rather that the announced event was actually a vaticinium ex eventu, which the

³⁸ Das Evangelium nach Markus (1959), 264.

³⁹ Lokalkolorit, 166.

author of the Apocalypse referred to in retrospect. He appears to already know for sure that the "desolating sacrilege" was erected "in a holy place," i.e., there where the former temple once stood. Otherwise he could hardly have been able to affirm with such certainty: "Lo, I have told you beforehand" (Mt 24:25). His sole concern is that the reader might not correctly understand the events that have taken place in the meantime, namely, as events of the end-time against the background of the prophecy in the book of Daniel. Therefore, he emphatically urges flight (Mt 24:20).⁴⁰

(11) The explicit prayer that the flight not occur in winter (Mt 24:20 par) only makes sense if one presupposes the chronology of Josephus and presumes that the desecration of the temple became imminent in the months October/November in the year 40. If we proceed from the chronology offered by Philo, on the other hand, problems arise. According to Philo, the negotiations with Gaius occurred in Spring so that the erection of the "desolating sacrilege" would have been at hand in May, or in the following summer months. In this case, the prayer that the flight closely associated with the desecration not occur in winter would be out of place. To point out that winter "in both cases" was relentlessly approaching⁴¹ can hardly set aside the incongruity between Mk 13:18 and Philo's chronology. That even in May winter is "relentlessly approaching" is true only in the sense that the statement that every person must die one day is generally valid.

But even the proposition that a SynApoc written in the 40s was adapted, or "brought up to date," 42 and reinterpreted against the background of the first Jewish war c. 70 — as Theißen and other NT scholars have suggested — raises substantial questions.

⁴⁰ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the radical-critical theologian Hermann Raschke already called attention to the indicated connection in his book *Die Werkstatt des Markusevangelisten*, 277ff. To be sure, alongside many other illuminating insights, this work contains a number of arbitrary and fantastic constructions, whereby the scholarly value of the book is greatly reduced.

⁴¹ Lokalkolorit, 172.

⁴² Ibid., 272

a) According to Theißen, Mk 13:9-13 reflects "experiences which Syrian Christians could have had during the period ca. 66 to 76 CE." His primary evidence for this is Josephus' *Jewish War* 2.462ff., where "Judaizers" are mentioned who are associated with the persecuted Jews and feared by the Syrian urban population "as enemies."

The situation portrayed in 13:9-13, which Theißen accurately describes —"pressure from all sides [13:13], mutual betrayal by family members [13:12], interrogation by Jewish and pagan authorities [13:9], but also the certitude that the gospel was advanced in every persecution"⁴⁴ — certainly has little to do with the circumstances depicted by Josephus. If one proceeds as Theißen does (correctly) on the assumption that the circumstances portrayed in the SynApoc not only concern apocalyptic motifs but also reflect historical reality, the connections with actual historical conditions at that time should be clearer.

What cannot be made plausible, in spite of Josephus, is, above all else, that in this time-period persecutions of Christians took place that (1) extended beyond the local region and (2) were carried out by both Jews and Gentiles. The persecutions to which the SynApoc refers are clearly not confined only to a specific geographical region (Syria), as especially Mt 24:9 shows ("you will be hated by all peoples for my name's sake"), and also Mk 13:9 and 10, indirectly. Moreover, the "Judaizers" mentioned by Josephus-in so far as "Christians" are in view here at all, which cannot be demonstrated—were threatened by Syrian residents of the city, but not concurrently by the Jews as well. But even in this case, they were not actually persecuted and killed by the residents of the city, but, as Josephus explicitly only feared "as enemies." In short, the passage from Josephus on the persecution of Jews in Syria to which Theißen appeals as evidence has nothing whatsoever to do with the persecutions of Christians announced in the SynApoc.

b) Theißen presumes that—even after the year 70—Mark waits for the "desolating sacrilege" to take place again, or to still take place: "Everything indicates that the consummation should now take place for which the way had been previously prepared."⁴⁵

⁴³ Ibid., 281.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

 $^{^{45}}$ Ibid., 277. Also on the basis of Tacitus, *Anal.*, 12.54.1, a passage that certainly relates to the situation prior to the Jewish War.

Regarding the expectation that Vespasian would very soon erect a stature of the emperor "on a holy site" (the "desolating sacrilege"), there is no indication at all in the sources at hand. Even 4 Ezra, the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, and the *Sibylline Oracles*, which appeared soon after the year 70, suggest nothing of the kind. Following the end of the Jewish war in 70 and the consequent disillusionment with the messianic expectations it had raised, there was an understandable brief period of conscious withdrawal and reflection. The apocalyptic expectation of the erection of the "desolating sacrilege," on the other hand, signified a renewed ignition of messianic hope. The time immediately following the events around 70, however, seems in no way ripe for such a thing, in spite of many "after-effects of war" that one must certainly grant Theißen (Masada, 73, or possibly 75).

Rather than continuing to hope for a quick military victory over Rome, which at least right after the year 70 could hardly seem realistic, a period of consolidation began at first, in which forces of moderation, i.e., the leaders of the school of Yavneh (Yohanan ben Zacchai and his successor, Gamaliel II) laid claim to spiritual leadership for an extended period of time. In the Jewish literature appearing after 70, the question was raised (as by the writer of 4 Ezra) regarding the meaning of the defeat: why had God delievered his people to the pagans; how did it come to pass that God granted peace and prosperity to those who showed no respect for the law and commandments of Israel, while he had obviously rejected his chosen people to whom had been promised dominion over all the world. One sought comfort and counsel on these and other questions in that place where one had already at all times always sought and found it: in the Holy Scriptures. Here one could in fact bring forth new hope, not only for surmounting past events, but also with regard to the future.

The messianic hope and expectations by which people were carried away during the first war against Rome and which temporarily subsided after the defeat at first gradually began to grow again (especially in the Jewish Diaspora), so as to produce apocalyptic pictures of the future and final war of all peoples against Rome now surpassing everything before in hatred and radicalism—of the appearance of a Nero redivivus and, ultimately, of the final appearance Messiah (4 Ezra; *Apocalypse of Baruch*).

Even the prophecies in the book of Daniel, which in the first great controversy with Rome possibly already played an important and clearly fateful role, were once again newly interpreted. So an obviously anonymous writing, based upon the prophecies of Daniel, came into circulation.⁴⁶ Its author assumed that according to Daniel a period of 71 years of weeks must pass before the Messiah could appear, not 70, as everyone had believed until now. This calculation was in fact a necessary expedient. To maintain the hope that, in spite of his failure to appear after the catastrophe of 68 CE, the appearance of the Messiah was imminent, one inserted a full week of years between the destruction of the temple and the anticipated revelation of the Kingdom of God. The biblical basis was found in Daniel 9:27.⁴⁷

All calculations now point to the period between the years 128 and 138; that is, to the time Bar Kochba, with which the 71st week of years would be completed, the very last of the weeks of years announced by Daniel. It is very possible that such calculations did not remain unknown among the Christians and that they shared the hope of their Jewish brothern in faith, even though they interpreted the matter differently in details.

VI. The SynApoc and the Bar Kochba Uprising, 132-135

In contrast to the previously discussed and criticized dating of the SynApoc in the time of the Caligula Crisis, dating the document to the period of the Bar Kochba affair recommends itself because not a single one of the elements listed above needs be excluded or regarded as later insertion.

Items (1), (12), (6): Unlike the time of Gaius Caligula, in the presumed time of origin for the SynApoc we already encounter more than one false Messiahs, or Messianic pretender. On the one hand, one could look back on a considerable number ("many," Mt 24:5/par) of Messiahs and pseudo-Messiahs. From the time of the first Jewish War, for example, there is the nephew (or son?) of Judas, Menahem, who in the autumn of the year 66, following the conquest of the temple, dressed himself in "royal purple" and for this reason (?) was murdered (Josephus, War, 2:444; 2:17.8). Similarly, Simon bar Giora who was captured wearing royal insignia (War, 7:26ff). In addition, if one includes

⁴⁶ Strack-Billerbeck, VI, 2, 1010f.

⁴⁷ Ibid

(as does Theißen – in my opinion, however, without good reason) both Christian and Jewish prophets, then, leaving Simon Magus aside, Theudas (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.97-99) in the time of Cuspius Fadus, 44-46, would come to mind or also the Egyptian prophet on the Mount of Olives (Josephus, *War*, 2: 261-263) in Felix's time, 52-50 (cf. also *Antiquities* 20.169-171 and Acts 21:38).

On the other hand, there were a number of messianic pretenders in the first half of the second century who seem to have made messianic claims. During the Jewish uprising in Cyrenia, 115-117, when Trajan was emperor, a Jewish "king" named Lukuas seems to have appeared,⁴⁸ under whose leadership in Egypt devastation and incendiarism were carried out.⁴⁹ Dio Cassius, however, referred to the leader of the Jews in Cyrenia as Andreas.⁵⁰ The Jews on Cyprus seem to have emulated the example of the Cyrenian Jews under the direction of a certain Artemio (or "Artunion").⁵¹

Above all, however, at this point the Jewish Messiah, Simon Bar Kochba, must be considered. Now that archaeologists have discovered a number of artifacts and documents from the time of Bar Kochba, among them original manuscripts, we know that his actual name was certainly Simon ben Kosiba. The most probable explanation for the name Bar Kochba would be that the leader of the Jews at that time, Rabbi Akiba, regarded him as the Messiah and on the basis of Num 24:17 ("a star will come forth out of Jacob, a scepter will arise out of Israel") changed his name to Bar Kochba ("son of the star"). ⁵² In the Talmud, one most often finds "Ben Koziba," not Bar Kochba. The Rabbis indicated in this way that following his failure they regarded the would-be Messiah as a liar.

Bar Kochba was the leader of a Jewish underground movement, which was founded in 127, the year of Hadrian's prohibition of circumcision, and in which the Zealot-Maccabean traditions of the rebellion put down by the Romans in 70 lived on. The actual causes of the war are debatable. It is most often

⁴⁸ Eusebius, *HE*, 4.2.

⁴⁹ See Maier, Geschichte, 103f; Eusebius, HE, 4.2.

⁵⁰ Schürer, Geschichte, I, 559; Dio Cass LXVIII, 32.

 $^{^{51}}$ Maier, Geschichte, 104; Schürer, Geschichte, 560; Dio Cass, LXVIII, 32.

 $^{^{52}}$ y Tann 4.8, fol. 68d.

thought that the Roman emperor Hadrian (117-138) provoked the conflict through his prohibition of circumcision in 127 and his announcement that he wished to erect a temple for Jupiter on the place where once the Jewish temple stood.⁵³ In Jewish traditions it is often claimed that Hadrian had promised to rebuild the old temple,⁵⁴ but was prevented by intrigues of the Samaritans.⁵⁵

In our immediate context, it is a matter of indifference why the war started. Decisive is the fact that during his trip through his Eastern provinces in 130 Hadrian came to Jerusalem and issued the order to construct the city of Aelia Capitolina and to erect a temple for Zeus. As long as Hadrian remained in his eastern provinces, peace reigned. But once the emperor had passed through Syria and Pontus to Greece the uprising under the leadership of Bar Kochba (132-35) began, since the Jews especially regarded the construction of a temple to Zeus (and the image of the emperor) on holy ground as an intolerable provocation, which reminded them of a traumatic event from their past: the "desolating sacrilege," i.e., the consecration of a temple dedicated to Zeus Olympios in Jerusalem by the Seleucid king Antiochus the IV Epiphanes in 168 BCE.

In fact, the parallelism of the events is amazing. As Perowne emphasizes in his biography, Hadrian seems to have perceived himself as a second Antiochus. In summarizing the factors which excited the anger of the Jews against Hadrian, Perowne makes all too apparent how many similarities connected the Roman emperor and Antiochus Epiphanes:

First of all, he designated himself as the successor of Antiochus Epiphanes. He even saw to the completion of the temple of Antiochus in Athens. Secondly, like Antinous, he elevated himself to the status of the God Zeus Olympios, or at least permitted others to do so. Thirdly, he allowed his visage as one deified to be stamped on coinage which circulated in Jewish communities as well. Fourth, he proscribed circumcision, the seal for Jews of their nature and faith. Fifthly, he was on the way to flatter the Greeks of Alexandria who were renowned as

⁵³ Dio Cass 69.12.

⁵⁴ Schäfer, 29ff.; *Barn.* 16.3f.; Leslie William Barnard, "The Date of the Epistle of Barnabas. A Document of Early Egyptian Christianity," *JEA* 44 (1958), 101-107; Schürer, *Geschichte*, I, 564f.; Schlatter, *Die Tage Trajans und Hadrians*, 63-67.

⁵⁵ Perowne, *Hadrian*, 177; Schäfer, *Der Bar Kohkba-Aufstand*, 29ff., with the midrash in *BerR* 64.190 as *locus classicus*.

the most impassioned haters of the Jews. Sixth, he interrupted a trip to specifically honor a man who had conquered Jerusalem almost two hundred years before and desecrated the holy of holies. And finally, seventh, he gave the order to eradicate Jerusalem and build a Roman colony on its site which was to be named after himself and would include a sacred sanctuary in which he was worshiped as God precisely on the ground where the ancient temple had stood.⁵⁶

Just as the desecration of the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BCE became the incentive for the uprising of the Maccabees, so also this time Jewish resistance rose up against the erection of the temple and the related oppressive measures undertaken by Hadrian whose goal was the dissolution of Jewish identity.

It is significant that the uprising broke out in Judea which had been the homeland of the Maccabean family. Starting in the year 132, the Jewish rebels conducted a guerrilla war against the Roman occupation forces, which initially proved to be very successful. It appears that in 132 the troops under the command of Bar Kochba successfully took over Jerusalem. Coinage from the Bar Kochba period shows that this event was celebrated by the rebels as Year One of the "deliverance of Israel." Bar Kochba ruled over Jerusalem for two years as Nasi (prince) of the newly founded state. By his side stood the high priest Eleazar, under whose leadership a makeshift temple ritual was established and it is even possible that a beginning was made in rebuilding the Jewish temple that had been destroyed in the first war. Uncircumcised males were now no longer tolerated in the new Jerusalem. Christians who did not identify with the national cause, or would not recognize Bar Kochba as the Messiah, were subjected to draconian persecution (see below).

Hadrian nevertheless recognized the extreme urgency of the situation. Much as Nero in 66, he called back one of his best generals from Great Britain and installed him as supreme commander in Palestine. From the beginning, Sextus Julius Severus pursued a strategy of attrition, relying upon sieges and starvation. Dio Cassius described Severus' procedure as follows:

He [Severus] did not dare to enter into an all-out battle with the enemies, since he was well aware of their number and their

⁵⁶ Perowne, *Hadrian*, 180.

desperate courage, but he did let his subordinates attack individual units, cutting them off from provisions, and thus was finally able, slowly but surely, to weaken them, wear them down, and destroy them.⁵⁷

One could take his time with the conquest of Jerusalem, into which the insurgents withdrew at the end of the struggle. Severus used the pause in winter 133/134 to reorganize his troops; and in the following spring he then destroyed the remains of Jewish Jerusalem. Bar Kochba and Eleazar withdrew with the rest of the army to Bethar, a small town about eight kilometers from Jerusalem. There they were finally defeated in August 135 — on the 9th of Ab, which was the day on which the temple was destroyed in 70. Bar Kochba died in battle.

According to Dio Cassius, the tactic pursued by the Romans was extremely "successful": "Few escaped. Fifty of their fortified places, 985 of their most significant towns were destroyed. 580,000 died in massacre and slaughter. The great number who died of hunger and sickness, can not be precisely determined, but almost all of Judea was turned into a desert." In the end, total destruction of the opponent had been achieved. A graphic passage in the Talmud depicts the enormity of the destruction: "For fifty years no bird was seen flying in Palestine." 58

Following the victory of the Romans, who had likewise suffered severe losses in battle, the oppressive measures which had already been introduced by Hadrian before the war were taken up again and intensified. Jewish religious rites, including circumcision, were forbidden. Instead, construction of the temple of Zeus began on the site of the Jewish temple. From the ruins of Jerusalem rose the city of Aelia Capitolina. For a Jew to enter the city was punishable with death. Jews were totally banished even from the mountainous regions of Judea.

That the SynApoc has the events portrayed here in view can be demonstrated in each individual case:

• With reference to Bar Kochba, there is a word-for-word parallel in rabbinical literature to the claim of the false messiah transmitted by Matthew (24:5): "I am the Christ." In Sanh. 93b one reads:

 $^{^{57}}$ Dio Cass LXVIII 32.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

- (i) "Bar Koziba reigned for two and a half years. He said to the rabbis, 'I am the Messiah.' They said to him, 'It is written of the Messiah that he has a reliable sense for what is right. We wish to see whether this man has such a sense.' Once they saw that he did not have it, they killed him." ⁵⁹
- (ii) In the *Seder ha-Qabbalah* of Abraham Ibn David, from the 12th century: "In their days a man with the name stood up and claimed that he was the Messiah, the son of David." 60

With regard to Mt 24:23, cf. y Taan 4:8 fol. 68:

(iii) "Rabbi Aquiva said [namely] when he saw Bar Kozeba, This is the king Messiah!' " 61

Even if the historical value of any given source may be questioned,⁶² one must observe that there is no other figure in Jewish history of the first and second century regarding whom one can say with more certainty than for Bar Kochba that he appeared on the scene with messianic pretensions. There can hardly be any doubt that Bar Kochba expressed messianic ambitions, probably even in the first-person "I" style. The relationship to Mt 24:5, therefore, could hardly be more clear cut.

In light of the fact that Bar Kochba is the only messianic pretender in Jewish history of the first and second centuries for whom claims can be documented which have word-for-word parallels in the Gospels, it is incomprehensible how this figure as well as the events of 130-135 have remained totally disregarded by historical-critical exegesis of the SynApoc.⁶³ The explanation can only be that the interpretation of the SynApoc on the basis of the dating of Mark and Matthew in the second half of the first century functions as an axiom, which itself is still maintained even if the text can be reconciled with the historical events of the first century only with great difficulty (i.e., by positing redactional insertions).

• The false messiahs in Matthew and Mark are referred to as *pseudochristoi* (Mt 24:24/par). In *Apoc. Pet.* 2 as well there is a

⁵⁹ Schäfer, Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand, 57.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 53.

⁶¹ Ibid., 55, 137.

 $^{^{62}}$ Schäfer (*Der Bar Kochba-Aufstand*, 58) regards (1) in particular as historically worthless, while Abramsky (*Bar Kochba*, 56), on the contrary, believes that the text originated immediately after the Bar Kochba revolt and reflects the vew of the rabbis following the revolt.

⁶³ With the exception of H. Raschke and S. Lublinsky, whom we previously mentioned.

reference to "deceitful Christs." "These deceitful men are not Christ." The concept of the pseudo-Christ (from *pseudos* = deceitful) still reflects the fact that according to later Jewish tradition Bar Kockba was a Bar Koziba, a "Liar's son"

• The assumption that at the time the SynApoc was written and the author referred to the pseudo-messiah he had primarily a specific person in view, namely Bar Kochba, would also explain the singular in Mt 24:23: "Then if someone (tis) says to you, 'Lo, here is the messiah!'." Similarly, just as when the SynApoc was written everyone would have first thought of a specific pseudomessiah, Bar Kochba, so also with the reference to a single (tis) false prophet everyone would think of that person who proclaimed Bar Kochba to be the Messiah (= Christ), namely, Rabbi Akiba.64

Item (12): Matt 24:24/par speaks of being misled by signs and wonders of the false Christ. Such "signs and wonders" are also mentioned in traditions concerning Bar Kochba. According to Jerome, Bar Kochba performed "deceitful wonders," e.g., spewing fire from his mouth (cf. 2 Thess 2:8; Isa 11:4b; Ezra 13:10, 27). There were also rumors of his enormous physical strength.

Item (6): Not only can a connection be established between Bar Kochba as the "pseudo-Christ" probably referred to in Mt 24:24 and the "signs and wonders" (Mt 24:24/par), there also seems to be a connection between the persecution referred in Mt 24:9 and Bar Kochba's persecution of Christians.

For Theißen and others there is finally no inner connection between the themes of being deceived and being persecuted. The two themes appear alongside one another with no inter-relationship. Their connection immediately becomes clear, however, as soon as one recognizes that the deceiver and false Christ (Mt 24:24) is also the persecutor (Mt 24:9) and that this person is obviously none other than Bar Kochba.

⁶⁴ y Taan 4.8, fol. 68d; see Raschke, Werkstatt, 280.

⁶⁵ Adv. Rufin, III, 31: "...as Bar Kochba (Barchochabas), who brought about the Jewish rebellion, would stir up an ignited straw he held in his mouth with his breath so that he seemed to spew fire" (= ut ille Barchochannas, auctor seditionis Judaicae, stipulam in ore succensam anhelitu ventilabat, ut flammas evomere putaretur); see Schäfer, Bar Kokhba-Aufstand, 58; Schürer, Geschichte, I, 571.

⁶⁶ Schäfer, *Bar Kokba-Aufstand*, 144: "And what did Ben Koziba do? He caught the [stone] with his knee, threw it back, and thus killed some opponents. EkhaRB: "and [the stone] rebounded from him [= his knee], flew [back], and killed some opponents."

In Mt 24:9 we read: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation." From the passage is is unclear who the subject of the sentence is, who hides behind the third-person plural. Since it cannot refer back to the immediately preceding passage (vv. 6-8), it seems once again to connect with 24:5 and refer to the many.⁶⁷ In other words, Matthew's text shows that what was suggested above, namely, that the pseudo-messiah—or the pseudo-messiah Bar Kochba (24:24), who is especially in view here—took part in the persecution of Christians, is historically very true. We learn from Justin:

During the Jewish war that recently flamed up, the leader of the Jewish uprising, Bar Kochba, ordered the most severe of punishment only for those Christians who refused to deny Jesus Christ and revile him.⁶⁸

The situation portrayed here, as well as that in the SynApoc, entirely corresponds to what we know from *Apoc. Pet.*:

This liar [i.e., Bar Kochba, or Bar Koziba] is not Christ. And should they despise him, he will murder them with the sword and there will be many martyrs...And for this reason, those who die at his hand will be martyrs and will be counted among the good and righteous martyrs whose lives have pleased God.

On very weak grounds, Schäfer has rejected the idea that the "Liar-Messiah" in *Apoc. Pet.* refers to Bar Kochba.⁶⁹ Referring to Mk 13:22, he speaks the "stereotypical arsenal" of the eschatological false messiah. But Mark in no way reflects a "stereotypical arsenal" of apocalyptic conceptions. Rather, as we have seen, Mark reflects a specific historical situation—the same one as in *Apoc. Pet.*! Given that Schäfer also cites the passage from Justin, I simply cannot understand why much imagination is required to recognize those persons who despise the false messiah to be "the Jewish Christians persecuted by Bar Kochba."⁷⁰ Besides, Schäfer seems to undervalue the historical dimension of apocalyptic texts, which did not originate in a vacuum. Finally, Schäfer indicates that *Apoc. Pet.* is not concerned with "Jews who follow a false Messiah," but with

 $^{^{67}}$ Mark 13:9 presupposes that the persecutors are all Jews.

⁶⁸ Justin, *Apol.*, 1.31.6; cf. Eusebius, *HE*, 8.4; Idem, *Chron.*, (ed. Schoene), II, 168ff ad. aann.

⁶⁹ Schäfer, Bar Kokhba-Aufstand, 61f.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 62.

"Christians who at the end of time will be unfaithful to their false Messiah Jesus"—a questionable distinction if one considers that the Christians persecuted by Bar Kochba were Jewish Christians.

The Christians whom Bar Kochba persecuted were expected to deny the name of Jesus Christ and revile him,71 or, in other words, to suffer "for his name's sake" (Matt 24:9). The elaboration "by all peoples," however, makes clear that in this passage (in contrast to the previous sentence) the writer of the Apocalypse (or Matthew in reworking it) cannot have only the Bar Kochba persecution in view. Here the writer already speaks in a summary way of different forms of persecution, those attributable to Jews as well as those carried out by Roman authorities. Even the "for my name's sake" indicates that we find ourselves in the second century, when persecutions of Christians "for the sake of the name" was a daily affair. So the procurator in Bithynia, Pliny the Younger, in his famous letter (10.96) to emperor Trajan, asks "whether the name itself, even without offenses... should be punished." From this it is clear that for the previous legal practice the mere admission to being a Christian was sufficient for condemnation.⁷² Even in the Martyr Acts of the second century Christians are persecuted "for the sake ot the name": see the stereotypical christianus, or christiana sum, in the Martyr Acts (Mar. Justin, 3.4; Scillitan Martyrs, 1-17).

Systematic persecution on account of the Christian name seems to have first taken place under Trajan. Persecutions of Christians in the first century, however, were of a different character. Christians were not persecuted "for the sake of the name," but because of their supposed criminal acts (incendiarism) under Nero, or because of their Davidic origin (Eusebius, EH, 3.19-20) under Domitian. 74

⁷¹ Justin, *Apol.*, 1.31.6.

⁷² Peter Guyot and Richard Klein, Das frühe Christentum bis zum Ende der Verfolgerung (1993), 321.

⁷³ Bousset, *Apocalypse* (1906), 133.

⁷⁴ The Apocalypse of John could know of persecutions "for the sake of the name" (see 2:13; 3:8). But at what time did the Apocalypse originate?

The material from the Sayings Source Q taken over by Mark (13:9-13) and substituted for Matt 24:9-14, which Mark only partially appropriated, also already presupposes persecutions by both Jewish and Roman authorities. Mark 13:9 obviously refers to persecutions by Jews. Noteworthy in this context is the reference to sanhedrins (in the plural!), which, as already indicated above, reflects the circumstances in the Jewish Diaspora. "Synhedrion appears elsewhere only in the singular (14:55; 15:1); the plural means that Jewish local courts outside Jerusalem are in view."⁷⁵

It is difficult to find any evidence for the persecutions of Christians by Jews referred to here before 60.76 Here as well the text would be much more appropriate for a situation towards the close of the first century or the beginning of the second. In any case, the earliest reliable witnesses to Jewish persecutions of Christians derive entirely from the Flavian period to the time of the Bar Kochba rebellion.⁷⁷ To be sure, most of the examples derive from Palestine. One must begin, however, with the recognition that severe persecutions of Christians by Jews must have first taken place not in the period 139-135 in Palestine, but even earlier in the period 115-117 in the Diaspora as well, because of Christian pacifist conduct which (as later during the Bar Kochba rebellion) could be regarded as a betrayal of the national cause.

A piece of important legal evidence that Christians were exposed to the pressure of persecution at this time—to be sure, by the state—would be the so-called *aposynagogos*, i.e., the banishment from the synagogue. On the basis of the expansion of the twelfth of the daily "eighteen prayers," presumably through Gamaliel I at the end of the first century, to include the words, "Let there be no hope for apostates, and may you uproot the kingdom of insolence speedily in our days, and let the Nazarenes and the heretics perish in a moment," Christians could be excluded from the fellowship of the synagogue and thus given up to persecution by the Romans.⁷⁸

 $^{^{75}}$ Lührmann, Das Markusevangelium, 220; cf. Lohse, TWNT, VII, 864.

 $^{^{76}}$ In 1 Thess 2:14f there is a reference to a) persecutions of Christians in Judea by Jews as an example for b) persecutions of Christians outside Palestine by non-Jews.

 $^{^{77}}$ See Schlatter, $Geschichtei,\,315.$

 $^{^{78}}$ Cf. Schmithals, *Johannesevangelium und Johannesbriefe* (1992): "Even if the explicit mention of the Nazarenes should probably be dated later, the cursing of

The Apocalypse of John knows only of persecution by Roman authorities (possibly including even here persecution "for sake of the name," 2:13; 3:8). Moreover, the dating of this document is subject to controversy. If it is related to the persecutions of Domitian, however, it would have originated between 90 and 95,79 which in any case would be later than the presumed time of origin for the Gospel of Mark.

Items (2) and (3): "War and the rumours of war" (Matt 24:6/par) were not at all uncommon between 100 and 135, which in my opinion constitutes the historical background for the events described in the SynApoc. Around 115 the general world-historical situation reached a new crisis under Trajan for the first time since the ending of the Jewish war. In contrast to the time of the so-called Caligula Crisis, one needs no historical magnifying glass to ascertain that the situation at this time was ripe in every way to provoke apocalyptic fears and produce a sense of the world's coming destruction, a condition attested eloquently in the literature of the period (e.g., 4 Ezra; *Apocalypse of Baruch*). (It should not be forgotten that almost all the decisive literary sources relating to Jewish Apocalyptic derive from this period! See below.)

As Maier observed with regard to Jewish uprisings in the Diaspora: "In 115 CE the entire political constellation was very distinctive; speculation about the collapse of the Roman empire flourished, and in Jewish apocalyptic circles this was linked with the arrival of the messianic age."80 "Speculation and prophesying about Rome's collapse became almost fashionable, and in Jewish circles of the Diaspora such ideas fell on especially fruitful ground, particularly after the most militant, apocalyptic prisoners of war from 66-70 CE had their freedom purchased by Diaspora communities and infected these with their fanaticism..."81 In addition, as we have seen, the prophecies of the book of Daniel were now interpreted as applying to the time between 128 and 138.

For the Jews and Jewish-Christians in Palestine, apart from Trajan's campaign against the Persians (114-117), especially the

the Minim applied from the very beginning, and particularly to Jewish Christians"; also Schrage, *TWNT*, VIII, 845ff.

⁷⁹ O. Böcher, *Die Johannes-Apokalypse*, 26ff.

⁸⁰ Maier, Geschichte, 102.

⁸¹ Ibid., 99.

events in the Jewish Diaspora, that in Trajan's time (between 115 and 117) had resulted in various anti-Roman insurrections, suggested the beginning of a "general world war."⁸² In fact, in these engagements it was not only, or primarily, a conflict between opposing kingdoms, but between "peoples" (Mt 24:7/par), namely, a conflict between different social groups, in particular between Jews and Hellenists, i.e., between Jews and "Greeks."⁸³ Since the Roman military units were engaged in preparation for their campaign into the East, Jewish groups in Egypt (Alexandria), Mesopotamia, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus concluded that the moment had come for a reckoning with the "non-Jewish countrymen"⁸⁴ with whom they had lived in severe conflict for so long.

While those in the conflict on the side of the "Greeks" poured out their anger over the special status enjoyed by the Jews, imagined or real, religious-apocalyptic fanaticism served as the decisive factor provoking tulmult among the Jewish agitators. Following the destruction of the capital city of Cyrenaica and other Hellenistic cities, Lukuas-Andreas, the messianic pretender, obviously entertained the hope to press forward into Palestine and liberate it from the Romans. To be sure, this preposterous project was thwarted by the Romans. The troops of the Cyrenician messiah-king were already destroyed before it began and he himself was condemned to death.

The conflicts often unfolded in unbelievably gruesome ways. According to Dio Cassius, the Jews in Cyrene supposedly ate the flesh of their non-Jewish fellow citicens and smeared theselves with their blood. They cut people in pieces, or threw them to wild animals as food.⁸⁵

Such incidents and others as well certainly came to the ears of the Jews of Palestine and further confirmed their conviction of living in an apocalyptic End time. That numerous reports about the revolts of 115-117 would have reached Jews and Jewish Christians in Palestine as "rumors of wars" is obvious. While these incidents were still distant, at the same time, because they

⁸² Ibid., 192.

⁸³ In 4 Ezra 13:30-31 the situation in this time is described in a more pregnant way: "And bewilderment of mind shall come over those who dwell on the earth. And they shall plan to make war against one another, city against city, place against place, people against people, kingdom against kingdom."

⁸⁴ Eusebius, *HE*, 4.2.

 $^{^{85}}$ Dio Cass LXVIII, 32; cf. Oros. VII, 12; Schúrer, Geschichte, I, 559.

concerned fellow countrymen and because forebodings of a general world-war could be perceived therein, they were existentially very near. So the conviction could thus arise that with what from a Jewish perspective seemed to be the world-wide conflict between the "peoples" the last phase of history had been introduced and that with the beginning of the Bar Kochba revolt was nearing its end.

The uprising was finally forcefully suppressed through the powerful intervention of the Roman state, which after its victory over the Parthians could bring all its power to bear against the rebels. In addition to Marcius Turbo, one of Trajan's best generals, Lusius Quietus, the Moorish prince, played a special role by ruthlessly driving the rebels out of Mesopotamia. "Quietus's War," which is often mentioned in rabbinic sources, seems to have this in view.

Aside from the war of "people against people," which, as we saw, refers in all likelihood to the uprisings in the Diaspora in 115-117, there was in the same period a war of "empire against empire": the war between Rome and Parthia during the years 114-117 CE. When Trajan decided to fight this war in 113, he was intent upon ending the danger to his empire from the East once and for all. He might very well have had the design of conquering the entire Middle East as Alexander the Great had done — a plan that was already around in Nero's time. Rome's enemies, on the other hand, dreamed about a crushing defeat of the Romans. Rumors of a phantom Nero, a "Nero redivivus" arising from the East, circulated among them. The rumor maintained that Nero had in truth not been killed, but had only hidden himself away so as to return at the head of an army assembled in the East to take bloody revenge on Rome. Connected with this was the hope for Rome's imminent downfall and for a transfer of world dominion into the hands of the East.86

Item (5): In this context, a severe earthquake (Matt 24:7/par) that occurred in the year 115 and which caused major damage not only in Antioch but also in many towns and villages in Syria and Asia Minor could be interpreted as a promising omen.⁸⁷ Indeed, Roman military power was seriously affected by

⁸⁶ Sib. Or., 5.363-6: "A man who is a matricide will come from the ends of the earth, in flight and devising penetrating schemes in his mind. He will destroy every land and conquer all, and consider all things more wisely than all men" (trans. by J.J. Collins, in J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *OT Pseudepigrapha*, I, 401f.).

⁸⁷ Maier, Geschichte, 99.

the earthquake, since the preparations for war were greatly inhibited thereby.

Theißen has pointed out that in Mark 13:7 (and Mt 24:7 as well) "the earthquake... is synchronized with the war,"88 and correctly observes that the great earthquakes witnessed in the time after 37 CE took place either before or after the Jewish war. That is certainly a convincing argument against wide-spread dating of the SynApoc around 70. As we saw above, however, whether Theißen's dating of the Apocalypse between 37 and 41 is thereby demonstrated must nevertheless remain doubtful, since the other arguments advanced by him in support of his thesis are finally not convincing. Furthermore, Theißen has overlooked the fact that as least after 70 there is still another situation that agrees with that portrayed in the SynApoc to such an extent that there exists here an absolute synchronism between the events of war and earthquakes: e.g., the Roman campaign against the Parthians in 116 CE and a devastating earthquake in Syria in the summer of the same year that hindered Trajan's preparations for war⁸⁹ — an event which, because of its world-historical significance, must receive, and has received, much more attention than the war against the Nabataeans considered by Theißen.

From the perspective of the year 130, or 133-134, the presumed time of the appearance of the SynApoc, there could be still another earthquake that the writer had in mind and which from his perspective was both more recent and geographically nearer than the earthquake in 115. Admittedly, the existence of this earthquake cannot be validated with complete certainty from existing sources, and can only be presumed on the basis of a few small hints. Perowne calls attention to an interesting passage in Dio Cassius's account of Bar Kochba's uprising:

...the grave of Salomos had entirely collapsed (until today no trace of it has been found) and wild animals wander through the streets of the city.

⁸⁸ Theißen, Lokalkolorit, 165, n. 62.

⁸⁹ The earthquake took place on December 13, 115. Antioch and other Syrian cities were affected and perhaps some Rhodian cities as well: Malal. 275; Zonar. 2.511.18f.; Oros, 7, 12.5 Euagr. h.e. 2.12. Antioch was visited by Trajan on the day of catastrophe: Dio 68.24f.; cf. Mair, *Geschichte*, 99.

Since the animals only do that when the city has been abandoned, Perowne concludes (in my opinion quite correctly) that "shortly before this the land had been shaken by an earthquake that had already undermined public security."⁹⁰

Item (4). For Theißen, in the years 37-41, "of the three apocalyptic terrors, war, earthquake and famine... only the famine can not be directly verified."91 If we position the author of the SynApoc around one hundred years later, this is not difficult. To be sure, the author would no longer have in view the famine of the year 92, witnessed to by the edict of Domitian, 92 to which the Apocalypse of John (6:6) possibly alludes. But one need not go back all that far. The author is presumably thinking of the famines that arose during the Bar-Kochba war, caused by typical Roman tactic of surrounding and starving out their opponents. As we saw above, along side the half million Jews who were killed in battle, Dio Cassius is not able to precisely provide "the great number who died from hunger and disease."93 In this regard it should be noted that some manuscripts of Matthew in addition to λιμοί (famines) also have καὶ λοιμοί (= plagues, epidemics), or the reverse. So if these readings were valid we would have a striking parallel with the situation in 130-135 as portrayed by Cassius Dio.

In the apocalyptic literature appearing after the year 70 there are also many references to famines as a sign of the End time: "Sown places shall suddenly appear unsown, and full storehouses shall suddenly be found to be empty" (4 Ezra 6:22); "famine and the withholding of rain" (*Apo. Bar.* 27:6); "Everyone who saves himself from the war will die in an earthquake, and he who saves himself from the earthquake will be burned by fire, and he who saves himself from the fire will perish by famine" (*Apo. Bar.*, 70.8). Also *Sib. Or.* 2.153; *Apo. Abr.* 30.5.

It has been common practice in this regard to speak of apocalyptic "motifs" and to attribute them to the repertory of apocalyptic language and conceptions. In my opinion, such a perception divorced from specific historical circumstances, with a literary canon of apocalyptic motifs valid for all times and places, is very problematic. The question is whether a number of the

⁹¹ Lokalkolorit, 165.

⁹⁰ Hadrian, 197.

 $^{^{92}}$ Suetonius, Vita 7.

⁹³ Dio Cass., LXIX, 14.

future terrors, e.g., war, famines, earthquakes, predicted by apocalyptic writers do not relate to specific historical events and to that extent have a contemporary historical background. Indeed, it can be observed elsewhere that apocalyptic literature in no way merely fantasizes about future events, but has definite historical events of the present and the past in view. Apocalyptic literature is always a portrayal of present events or historical developments — in the veiled language of apocalyptic, of course. The effectiveness of such literature depends in large part on the fact that, behind the apocalyptic allusions and innuendos, the reader can recognize the circumstances of his own time, in which what is predicted as future has already come to pass.

At the same time, it is remarkable that this apocalyptic literature, characterized by a definite, established arsenal of apocalyptic motifs (4 Ezra, Sib. Or., Apo. Bar.), derives from a very definite period, i.e., the time between 70 and 135. It seems to me that this also indicates that the motifs are not simply literary phenomena. Rather, it is obvious that the same historical circumstances produced the same apocalyptic motifs. In them the consciousness of a specific epoch finds expression. It is something to think about, therefore, if the conceptual world of the SynApoc employs concepts which clearly first arose several decades after the Jewish war. In my opinion, the numerous references in New Testament commentaries to passages in Jewish apocalyptic literature from the period 70-135 should be regarded not only as aids to understanding but also as aids in dating the SynApoc.

In any case, there are good reasons to regard the triad of terrors in the apocalyptic repertory — war, earthquakes, famines — not only as literary motifs, but as references to real historical events in the time period in view.

Item (7). The theme of the mutual betrayal of family members (Mt 24:10) is known in the Old Testament (Micah 7:6); there, of course, there is not yet any connection with other signs of the End as in Mt 24/par.

Here also one must begin with the recognition that the writer of the SynApoc has specific circumstances of his own time in view. In fact, one can hardly demonstrate the existence of such circumstances at the time of the Caligula Crisis, i.e., in the first half of the first century, for which reason the corresponding allusions are consequently either perceived as later insertions deriving from the time around 70 or given a new meaning.

Schmithals refers in this regard to the circumstances "in the royal palace and in the Herodian family" as well as "increasing licentiousness and moral decay," which should indicate that "the accumulation of sin in the old aeon has reached full measure." On the contrary, however, nothing indicates that the apocalyptic writer has circumstances in the royal palace in view. Rather, the context and especially the reference to being "delivered up" (Mt 24:9) makes it very clear that the reference here is to the betrayal, denunciation, and persecution of Christians.

We first find actual evidence for mutual betrayal and denunciation by (Jewish) Christians (Mt 24:10/par) in the second century. Schlatter calls attention to various passages in the rabbinic tradition, including a reference to a rabbi from Lydda who was suspected of leaning towards Christianity. Consequently, he was spied upon by two witnesses, and once his Christian faith was confirmed he was stoned.95 In addition, Eliezer, the son of Hyrkanus, was called to account for being a Christian by the governor (cf. Mk 13:9), who is said, however, to have exonerated him.96 The author of the SynApoc seems to have in view precisely such circumstances of spying and betrayal that occurred again and again in the first half of the second century. The promulgation of the synagogue ban as well as the Bar Kochba revolt that came later, in which Jews could accuse Jewish Christians of betraying national interests, were the presupposition for such denunciations.

On the other hand, however, Jews could later be denounced and "delivered up" by Christians, so that here as well Micah's prophecy is confirmed from the other side. After Christians were first terrorized and persecuted by Jews in the time of Bar Kochba, they now revenged themselves after the uprising was put down by handing over those Jews to the Roman authorities who did not adhere to the religious laws of Hadrian. Such desolate circumstances seem to be reflected in the rabbinic literature from this time. It is no wonder that they thought they perceived therein omens of the End.

Sanh 97a (Bar, 36): R. Nechorai (ca. 150) declared: "In the generation in which the son of David comes, the youths will make the face of the elderly ashamed, and the elderly will stand up

⁹⁴ Schmithals, Evangelium des Markus, 562f.

⁹⁵ Schlatter, Geschichte, 315.

 $^{^{96}}$ Ibid.; cf. Friedländer, Religiöse Bewegungen innerhalb des Judenthms (1905), 216.

before the youths; daughters will rise up against their mothers and daughter-in-laws against their mothers-in-law; the face of generation is (in insolence) like the face of the dog, and the son shows no shame in the presence of his father." The same thing appears in the anonymous *Sota* 9.15: "The enemies of a man are those with whom he dwells." Also *Pesiq.* 51b; *Pesiq. R.* 15 (75b), etc. Also *Sanh* 97a (Bar. 41): "The son of David will not come until denunciations have multiplied, or until the students have decreased, or until every peruta (penny) has disappeared from the purse, or until one no longer believes in redemption." "97"

Significantly, in the Jewish-apocalyptic literature from the end of the first and the beginning of the second century one finds the motif of the betrayal of relatives only seldom, or not all!!98

Item (8). The increasing deterioration of the general situation (on which the author of the SynApoc, or its redactor, Matthew, obviously looks back) is paralleled, on the other side, by the proclamation of the gospel throughout all the world (Mt 24:14/par). Various witnesses indicate that after Hadrian's victory the Christian mission received a new impulse. Eusebius tells us in the *Church History* that after the Bar Kochba revolt "the faith in our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ was flourishing among all mankind." On the other hand, a pupil of Rabbi Akiba indirectly confirms the missionary success that Christianity had after 135 — whereby, to be sure, he perceives only another sign of the approaching eschatological Destruction:

R. Nechaja (ca. 150) said: "In the generation in which the son of David appears insolence will multiply and scarcity will increase. The vine will produce its fruit, but the wine will be expensive and the entire realm (i.e., the Roman Empire) will turn to heresy (i.e., Christianity), and there will be no more reproach." 100

The question of how far Mt 24:24/par belongs to the original strata of the Apocalypse, or whether it represents later redaction, since the great missionary success presupposed here presumably took place only after the Bar Kochba revolt, can remain open.

⁹⁷ Strack-Billerbeck, IV, 2, 982-983.

 $^{^{98}}$ That 4 Esra 5:18ff. ("In that time friends will battle one another as enemies...") is in mind here seems improbable to me.

⁹⁹ Eusebius, *HE*, 4.7.1 (Loeb trans.).

¹⁰⁰ Strack-Billerbeck, 982 (Sanh 97a [Bar 39]).

Even around 130 (or 133/134) the writer of the Apocalypse was aware of a Christianity that had already spread into the entire world. If the SynApoc derives from the time around 70, or even 40 (!), however, this would hardly be possible.

Items (9) and (10). The phrase τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως (Mt 24:15/par) is usually translated as "atrocity of destruction" (better would be "horrible atrocity") and derived from the Hebrew ロガッ (the Syrian god of heaven = the Olympic Zeus, to whom the temple was dedicated) As Mt 24:15 explicitly indicates, the expression derives from the book of Daniel (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; cf. 1 Macc 1:54, 59) and refers there to the erection of the altar to Zeus by Antiochus IV Epiphanes on the 15th of Kislev in 168 BCE, 101 an event that the Jews perceived as an atrocity, i.e., as an outrage.

Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built [pagan] altars in the surrounding cities of Judah. (1 Macc 1:54, RSV)

1) While Daniel and 1 Maccabees seem to understand by "desolating sacrilege" the erection of a second pagan altar on the altar of burnt sacrifice (1 Macc 1:54), the language of the Gospels, especially Mark, suggests (perhaps unintentionally) that they mean, or have before their eyes, something more specific. As is often observed, Mark 13:14 seems to speak of the "desolating sacrilege" as if it were a person, in that he attaches the participle $\epsilon \sigma \tau_{\rm K} \dot{\sigma} \dot{\tau} \dot{\alpha}$ "The constructio ad sensum leads one to presume the presence of a person behind the 'desolating sacrilege,' "102 namely, the emperor in the form of a (masculine) statue, or a (masculine) image of a pagan god (the Olympic Zeus?). Theißen notes rightly that "with regard to content, the participle 'standing' is highly appropriate for a statue." 103 Thus the $\dot{\epsilon} \sigma \tau \dot{\rho} \dot{\zeta}$ in Matt 24:15 points in the same direction as the $\dot{\epsilon} \sigma \tau \dot{\eta} \dot{\kappa} \dot{\sigma} \dot{\chi}$ in Mark, which is certainly revealing. 104

 $^{^{101}}$ The dating varies between 168 and 167. Cf. Schüer, 155: "15, Kislev in the year 145 aer. Sol, therefore in December 168 BCE."; Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, (71950), 328: "December of the year 167 BCE."

¹⁰² Theißen, Lokalkolorit, 170.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 170.

 $^{^{104}}$ See already Raschke, *Werkstatt*, 277: "Whoever grants, as did Joh. Weiss, that the το βδείλυγμα τη=ς εθρημωίσεως alludes to Dan 11:31 and 12:11, and indeed

In my opinion, the specification of the βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως with regard to content carried out by the Gospel writers excludes every attempt to date the SynApoc in the time of the first Jewish war. For what then should the ἑστηκότα or the ἐστὸς refer to? According to Schenke, the reference is to "the desecration of the temple by the Roman military seen in advance by the prophets," 105 or "the desecration of the temple by Zealots." 106 That has nothing more to do, however, with the "setting up" or "erection" of βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως in the sense of Mark 13:14 or Matt 24:15. Whether ἑστηκότα or ἑστὸς, the "desolating sacrilege" remains! In connection with the first Jewish war, however, there is no mention anywhere of the setting up of a second altar or even the erection of a (masculine) statue. 107

It must be granted, however, that at a later time, with decreasing knowledge of what Mark and Matthew actually meant by the "desolating sacrilege," the terminology could in fact be applied to the first Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem, or the destruction of the temple. As we have already seen, Luke seems to have in fact related the reference to the βδέλυγμα τῆς ξρημώσεως found in his sourse (Mark) to the destruction of

to the erection of the altar to Zeus in 168 BCE in the Jerusalem Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, and whoever, with Joh. Weiss, calls attention to the fact that the masculine $\epsilon 0\sigma \tau \eta \kappa o' \tau \alpha$ indicates that it concerns a being of masculine sex, that Mark therefore alludes to a very specific person, and when one further recognizes that the $\epsilon 0\sigma \tau \eta \kappa o' \tau \alpha$ can not simply mean 'standing' — because that the monster stands cannot be explicitly indicated in Greek by $\epsilon 0\sigma \tau \eta \kappa o' \tau \alpha$, and since it is also self-evident — but must mean set up, raised up, erected, one is then obligated to look for an historical event in the Gospels that corresponds with the 'erection' of an altar to Zeus."

 $^{^{105}}$ Schenke, $\it Die\ Urgemeinde, 267;$ cf. Josephus, $\it War, 6.326.$

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

 $^{^{107}}$ See Lührmann, Das Markusevangelium, 221f.: "For dating the Gospel of Mark, or the apocalyptic fly-leaf... the question that was already inappropriate for Daniel again and again pays a role, namely, in what situation a statue was erected in the Jerusalem temple. That is particularly wrong for Mark or his presupposed source." Lührmann provides no reason why in view of the ε9στος the question os wrong. Significantly, he has little illuminating to say regarding the constructio ad sensum (p. 222).

Jerusalem in the first Jewish war. But he could only do this by transforming the βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως into the ἐρημώσεως of Jerusalem (Luke 21:20). Eusebius no longer noticed this decisive difference. He writes about how "the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophets was set up in the very temple of God, for all its ancient fame, and it perished utterly and passed away in flames." 108

2a) The reference to the "desolating sacrilege" is surely one of the strongest arguments for the origin of the SynApoc in the time of Bar Kochba. It cannot be emphasized often enough that the erection such a "desolating sacrilege" in the sense determined above of an historical event is witnessed to only two times in all of Jewish history: once in the year 168 BCE and a second time before and after the Bar Kochba revolt. It is the second event that the SynApoc has in view. Jerome is still able to report that on the place where the temple formerly stood, where according to Cassius Dio the temple to Zeus was erected, stands an equestrian statue (equestri statua) of Hardian (perhaps next to that of Zeus) until the present day (usque in praesentum diem). 109 Rabbinic sources also relate the erection the βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως by Hadrian: e.g., 1.1 m. Tam 4.6 relates: "On the seventeenth of Tammuz... the sacrifice of Tamid ceased, the city was conquered, סשמול burned the Torah and set up a pagan image in the temple."110 In my opinion, Schürer,111 Schlatter,112 and Herr¹¹³ correctly relate this to the close of the Bar Kochba rebellion.114

Schäfer, on the contrary, argues that "the termination of the Tamid sacrifice and the erection of a pagan image in the temple can better be related to the persecution under Antiochus IV, and perhaps also to the first war, while nothing at all relates to the

¹⁰⁸ Eusebius, *EH*, 3.5.4 (Loeb trans.).

¹⁰⁹ Jerome, Comm. to Isa 2.9 (Vallarsi IV, 37).

¹¹⁰ See Schäfer, Bar Kokha Aufstand, 195.

¹¹¹ Geschichte, 549.

¹¹² Die Tage Trajans und Hadrians, 5f.

¹¹³ ScrHier 23 (1972), 95, n. 36; cf. Schäfer, 195.

¹¹⁴ Schlatter, *Die Tage Trajans und Hadrians*, 24, 29. In addition, Schlatter would read *apostasis* instead of *apostumos* and includes among the apostates R. Elischa b Abuja (ca 120). The otherwise undocumented burning of the Torah reminds one of the burning of the books of law during the first religious persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (1 Macc 1:56): Str-B. I, 196

Bar Kochba uprising." But this cannot be true if only because the erection of the "desolating sacrilege" by Antiochus IV Epiphanes is dated by all sources on the fifteenth of Kisley, not on the seventeenth of Tammuz. The destruction of the temple in the year 70, as well, did not occur in the month of Kislev, but in Ab (10th of Ab = 10th of Loos). 115 Moreover, there was no idol or statue of the emperor involved and, possibly, there was not even a complete cessation of the Tamid sacrifice. 116 The conquest of the city on the seventeenth of Tammuz in the year 134, on the other hand, is well attested. 117

2b) In contrast to the actual erection of an altar to Zeus and the setting up of a monument to Zeus, or the Emperor, "on a holy place" by Hadrian, the construction of such a monument by the Roman emperor Caligula was indeed intended, but could not be realized because of his death. Since it is now clear that the erection of the "desolating sacrilege" (as the erection of a monument to the Emperor, or the gods, and of an altar to Zeus) already represented a reality for the author, the content of the SynApoc can only relate to the time of Hadrian.

3) Relating the "desolating sacrilege" (Matt 24:15/par) to the time of the Bar Kochba war and Hadrian is likewise appropriate because, as we have seen, the latter regarded himself as an Antiochus Epiphanes redivivus. For this reason it is hardly remarkable that the reconstruction of Jerusalem as Aelia (Hadrian's patronymicon) Capitolina ordered by Hadrian could be perceived by Jewish contemporaries as an analogue to cultural reform decreed by Antiochus Epiphanes' (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Just as then the erection of the "desolating sacrilege" in 168 BCE led to the uprising of the Maccabees, so the reforms of Hadrian led to a new war.118

 $^{^{115}}$ Schurer, Geschichte, I, 539, n. 115. The rabbinic tradition, however, sets the end on the ninth of Ab, i.e., actually the eighth of Ab.

¹¹⁶ Schürer, Geschichte, I, 548ff.

¹¹⁷ m. Taan. 4.6; Hieron, ad Sacharja 8, 19; Schürer, Geschichte, I, 578.

¹¹⁸ The parallels between Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Hadrian are so obvious to the eye that most history books explicitly refer to them: Schürer, Geschichte, I, 565: "It (The erection of a pagan temple on a holy place) was a horror like that once perpetuated by Antiochus Epiphanes and as then was answered by a general uprising of the indignant people.'

4) Finally, the existence of a wide-spread expectation (which was therefore know to the Gospel writers), already cited above, according to which the events announced in the book of Daniel would be fulfilled in the time between 128 and 138 CE can be regarded as well documented. ¹¹⁹ By contrast, we know nothing at all of a corresponding expectation concerning the realization of prophecies from Daniel in the time of Caligula, which the author of the SynApoc might have utilized. ¹²⁰ Moreover, since neither Josephus nor Philo ever explicitly interprets the events they report from that time against the background of the book of Daniel, or as a $\beta\delta\dot{\epsilon}\lambda\nu\gamma\mu\alpha$ $\tau\hat{\eta}\varsigma$ $\dot{\epsilon}\rho\eta\mu\dot{\omega}\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$, and no such interpretation of the events appears in ancient or rabbinic sources, such arguments in fact constitute unfounded speculation.

Item (11). The (hardly accidental) observation of the apocalyptic writer that the flight from Judea should not occur in winter (Matt 24:20) is perceived by Theißen as an additional allusion to the time of the Caligula Crisis and thus as a confirmation of his dating of the Apocalypse in that time:

In fact, the events in 13:14ff. exhibit features which are only conceivable as real future events. So it is still not certain in which year the great tribulation will take place. Otherwise the appeal that one should pray that it not take place in winter (v. 18) would be meaningless. The question is whether the pseudo-prophets and pseudo-messiahs will be able to mislead the chosen ones before the parousia. 121

Theißen rightly emphasizes that "the text refers to concrete conduct: after the occurance of some specific events, those addressed should flee to the mountains." Against Theißen's explanation, however, is the fact that at least Philo knew a different chronology of the Caligula Crisis than Josephus (see above). Apart from that, we have already determined above that the author of the SynApoc seems to already know about the erection of the "desolating sacrilege," and look back on this as a

¹¹⁹ Str-B. IV,2, 1010f. Jerome also mentions the view of some Hebrews "that the last of Daniel's week of years (Dan 9:27) would encompass the time of Vespasian and Hadrian" (comment to Dan 9 = opp. ed. Vallarsi V, 696), Schürer, *Geschichte*, I, 581, n. 116.

¹²⁰ See the desisive section in Str-B, IV, 996f.

¹²¹ Theißen, *Lokalkolorit*, 140.

¹²² Ibid., 141.

past event, while according to Theißen's explanation he portrays a future event still expected in the immediate future.

A situation in which the erection of the "desolating sacrilege" does not simply hover as a future threat, but actually became a reality is first found once again in Jewish history at the time of the Bar Kochba war. In fact, the appeal to flight in winter also fits well in this time period, either immediately following the decree to set up the "desolating sacrilege" (in 130 CE)¹²³ or in the winter of 133/134, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the second case, to be sure, one would have to assume that between the initial erection of the "desolating sacrilege" in 130 (which the insurgents had undone in the meantime) and the appearance of the SynApoc some four years had already passed, so that the direct connection between the erection and the flight (Matt 24:15-16) would be a literary creation. 124 The author (resident in Judea, or in Jerusalem itself) is fully informed regarding the erection of the "desolating sacrilege" in a holy place, since precisely this event provoked the war against Rome. At the same time, however, he observes with great apprehension the concentration of Roman military forces in Palestine as they prepare themselves for their last, decisive blow against Judea and Jerusalem.

The winter pause in 133-134 provided Severus with an opportunity to reorganize his troops and to rethink his strategy. The attack of the Romans had not yet begun. The prophet, however, knows that the end of Jerusalem approaches unavoidably, which in fact came to pass in the spring of 135 when the Roman troops cleared out Judea and destroyed Jerusalem. And in the Apocalypse he thus sets forth an urgent "warning for the very last hour" 125 to the Christians living in Judea and Jerusalem admonishing them to take flight.

The fact that all he had said before had taken place in the meantime (Matt 24:25/par) should make clear to the Christians in Judea and Jerusalem that the prophet spoke with full

¹²³ According to Dio Cassius (LXIX, 12), the founding of Aelia and the construction of the temple of Zeus took place in the time of Hadrian's first presence in Syria (130 CE): see Schürer, *Geschichte*, I, 565, 570. For Spartian (*vita Hadriani*, ch. 22) the prohibition of circumcision brought about the end of the war: *moverunt ea tempestate et Judaici bellum, quod vetabantur mutilare genitalia*.

 $^{^{124}}$ That the "desolating sacrilege" in the meantime (since 132 CE) had been done away with by the rebels would then be of no significance.

 $^{^{125}}$ Schoeps, "Ebionitische Apokalyptik im Neuen Testament," 265, n. 1.

authority, so that the flight he called for was necessary, even if, as was now more and more apparent, it must take place in winter.

In closing, I would like to recall once again Theißen's fundamental working principle, cited earlier: "The fewer the number of textual fragments that under no circumstances can be fitted into the presumed context and, as such, must be excluded as later interpolations, the better the final result." With this as a measuring rod, there can be no question but that the explanation provided above, in which the attempt was made to understand the SynApoc against the background of the Bar Kochba rebellion, fulfils Theißen's principle most effectively, since not a single element needs to be excluded from the entire text.

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¹²⁶ Lokalkolorit, 139.

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