

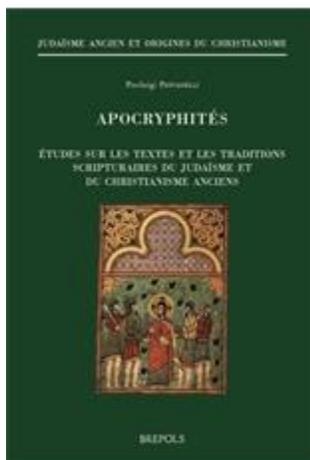


Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2019.05.07

Pierluigi Piovanelli, *Apocryphites: Études sur les textes et les traditions scripturaires du judaïsme et du christianisme anciens. Judaïsme ancien et origines du christianisme 7.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2016. ISBN: 978-2-503-56883-6. Pp. 568. 100 EUR. Paperback.

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This is a collection of twenty-one essays on the texts and Scriptural traditions of ancient Judaism and Christianity, from apocalyptic literature to the rewriting of Scripture and much more. It represents the fruit of a quarter of a century of research by Pierluigi Piovanelli. The work appears in the collection, *Judaïsme ancien et origines du christianisme*, directed by Simon Claude Mimouni (Piovanelli himself is a member of the series' editorial board). Pages 18–20 list the venue of the first publication of each article. Variations from the original publications are very few: chapter 11 is published in the volume for the first time in its integral version; chapter 5 is published in an augmented version; and chapter 7 is published in a new French translation. I shall discuss here several of these engaging articles.

After an autobiographical reflection (Ch. 1: “1987-2016, un long chemin depuis la Faculté des Lettres de Florence”), Ch. 2 (“Rewritten Bible ou Bible in Progress? La réécriture des traditions mémorielles bibliques dans le judaïsme et le christianisme anciens”) opens the first part of the book, entitled *Phénomènes scripturaires et apocryphes, passés et présents*. Here Piovanelli analyzes the biblical, para-biblical, and sectarian texts of Qumran. Scholars often designate the para-biblical texts as “rewritten Bible.” Piovanelli, citing especially scholarship by James Kugel (30),¹ finds that this label is reductive and obliterates the difference between older pseudepigrapha such as Jubilees and later exegetical and homiletical Midrashim such as Bereshit Rabba. Therefore, he suggests that scholars abandon the label “rewritten Bible,” which is anachronistic, and offers the designation, “Bible in progress.” He proclaims the motto, *Ex una plures* (from one Bible, several pseudepigrapha) as he highlights the continuity between Second-Temple Judaism scriptural practices and “pseudepigraphical” texts (36).²

¹ J. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was*, Cambridge, MA, 444-446, and other studies, also related to *Joseph and Aseneth*.

² S. Docherty, “Joseph and Aseneth: Rewritten Bible or Narrative Expansion?” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 35 (2004) 27-48, also argues that the Jewish Hellenistic novel *Joseph and Aseneth* (which might also be of Christian origins), can be described more as narrative expansion than as rewritten Bible. This illustrates well Piovanelli’s notion

Ch. 3 discusses the much-debated meaning of “Christian Apocrypha” (“Qu'est-ce qu'un ‘écrit apocryphe chrétien’ et comment ça marche? Quelques suggestions pour une herméneutique apocryphe”). In ch. 4 (“Le recyclage des textes apocryphes à l’heure de la petite ‘mondialisation’ de l’Antiquité tardive [ca. 325-451]: Quelques perspectives littéraires et historiques”), Piovanelli addresses the “mondialisation,” marked by the ecumenical Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, which was short-lived, before regional particularistic forces overcame and paved the way for the Middle Ages. Piovanelli exhorts scholars to a deeper study of late ancient apocrypha and suggests the deletion of a boundary which I also have found rather artificial and find it more and more in the work I am doing for the project *Novel Saints*:³ the demarcation between apocryphal and hagiographical texts at the end of the third century. Indeed, in the time of the “mondialisation” of Late Antiquity, we witness a recycling of apocryphal texts and traditions from earlier centuries.

Part II is entirely devoted to *Les vies multiples des différents livres de Jérémie*. It contains four chapters that deal with the text of Jeremiah used by Josephus in the tenth book of his *Antiquitates*; the condemnation of the Egyptian diaspora in Jeremiah (Jer^a 50,8-51,30 // Jer^b 43,8-44,30); the continuity of institutions in the Maccabean Era (Jer^b 33,14-26); the *Paralipomena* of Jeremiah and the century-long sleep of Abimelech. The apocalyptic origins of Jewish and Christian mysticism are investigated in four other chapters in Part III, *D’Hénoch à Rabbi Išmaël, les origines apocalyptiques de la mystique juive et chrétienne*. In this third part of the book, Ch. 9 (“L’Enoch Seminar. Quelques considérations rétrospectives et prospectives de la part d’un ‘vétérain’”) reminds readers of the foundation of the Enoch Seminar by Gabriele Boccaccini in 2000, which brought attention to 1 Enoch (or Ethiopic Enoch), and of the subsequent Enoch Seminars in different venues, with some of the participants and some important questions. Among these are the momentous problem of the origins of apocalyptic and that of the relation between the Enochic movement and the Qumran community, as well as the interpretation of the Book of Parables and the figure of the Son of the Human Being. Piovanelli hopes that more Francophone scholars will be involved in the Enoch Seminar and related scholarly activities.

Ch. 10, “*Odio humani generis*. Apocalypticiens messianistes et historiens intégrés à l’époque des Guerres des Judéens,” uses for its title the accusation levelled against Jews, and later against Christians, of hatred of humanity. I have studied it in some essays, where I endeavored to highlight the continuity of the anti-Jewish accusation with that against Christianity.⁴ Tacitus reports the anti-Jewish charge of entertaining *aduersos omnes alios hostile odium* (*Hist.* 5.5.2); for the Christians, *Ann.* 15.44 is an important source about the anti-Christian accusation of *odium humani generis*. Piovanelli supposes that one of the factors that gave rise to the charge of hatred of humanity levelled against the Jews is to be found in apocalyptic eschatological ideas such as those of the imminent *ekpyrōsis* or conflagration. Piovanelli embraces the analysis by Martin Goodman, who highlighted the responsibilities of the Jewish elites, in terms of incompetence and ambiguity, in the outburst of the First Jewish War. However, Piovanelli does not accept Goodman’s assessment that the Jewish world in which Jesus lived was not oppressed, and didn’t feel like oppressed, by the Roman power (210), since apocalyptic literature written between 63 and 135 attests to a feeling of oppression, from the Book of Parables and the Testament of Moses, 4 Esdras, 2 Baruch, the Apocalypse of

of “Bible in progress” over that of “rewritten Bible”. Tim Whitmarsh analyzes *Joseph and Aseneth* in a recent monograph, *Dirty Love* (Oxford: OUP, 2018), from the angle of exogamic-endogamic love in ancient Judaism.

³ For the ERC Project *Novel Saints* (Ghent University), which is producing a database (<https://dev.novelsaints.ugent.be/>) and a printed volume, I am working especially on the *Life of Macrina* by Gregory of Nyssa, the *Life of Evagrius* in Palladius’ *Historia Lausiaca*, and the *Acts of Thomas*. I questioned the use of the apocryphal and hagiographical labels in *I romanzi antichi e il Cristianesimo* (Madrid: Signifer, 2001; 2nd ed., Eugene: W&S Church History, 2012) and *Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms*, ed. Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins, WUNT 1/348 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), as well as in an invited interview with Tavis Bohlinger, *The Logos Academic Blog* 2019.

⁴ Esp. “Un topos anti-giudaico in Diodoro: l’odio del genere umano,” *RIL* 132 (1998): 467–484 and further in “Elementi comuni della polemica anti-giudaica e di quella anticristiana fra I e II sec. d.C.,” *Studi Romani* 49 (2001): 245–274.

John, and the Apocalypse of Peter. Piovanelli does not regard these texts as expression of minority extremists, but as reflecting a broader popular perspective. This perspective is that God will bring about the restoration of the patrimony and fortunes of Israel (220). As I have demonstrated elsewhere, this idea belonged to the terminological and conceptual antecedents of the Christian doctrine of apokatastasis or restoration, and is also found in the Acts of the Apostles (1:6; 3:21).⁵

Ch. 11, “*Katabaseis* orphico-pythagoriciennes ou *Tours of Hell* apocalyptiques judéens? La fausse alternative posée par la typologie des péchés et des châtements dans l’*Apocalypse de Pierre*”, studies the explanation for the chastisements in the afterlife in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which, according to my investigation, in parts such as the Rainer Fragment and behind the later Ethiopian version, is an important document of the first development of the doctrine of apokatastasis.⁶ Piovanelli contests the validity of a dichotomy between Greek Orphic-Pythagorean “descents” and Jewish apocalyptic visits of Hell, two components that subsequent phases of research have highlighted. According to Piovanelli, the focus on personal eschatology became stronger after the defeat of the Second Jewish War, and integrated Orphic elements into Jewish and Christian ones. Ch. 12, “Pratiques rituelles ou exégèse scripturaire? Origines et nature de la mystique de la *Merkava*,” ends Part III with a study on the origins of Merkava mysticism.

Part IV is devoted to the Gospel of Thomas and the so-called Secret Gospel of Mark. Indeed, Ch. 13 (“‘Un gros et beau poisson.’ L’Évangile selon Thomas dans la recherche (et la controverse) contemporaines”) investigates the *Gospel of Thomas* as one of the most ancient Gospels. The priority of the Syriac text over the Greek one is normally accepted, although there are warnings to the contrary.⁷ Piovanelli argues that Thomas should be studied along with the four canonical Gospels, although he has no intention of rewriting the Christian Canon. His call is purely historical rather than theological.

Ch. 14, “Entre oralité et (ré)écriture. Le genre des *erotapokriseis* dans les dialogues apocryphes de Nag Hammadi,” studies the questions-and-answers genre in the dialogues of Nag Hammadi, mostly between the risen Lord and his disciples. Piovanelli explores this important genre by paying special attention to the Book of Thomas and its *erotapokriseis* between Thomas and the Lord. He rightly stresses the eminently didactic nature of this scheme. I would add to this landscape the so-called *Book of the Laws of Countries* by the school of Bardaisan, which is a dialogue modelled on the Platonic dialogues⁸ and works out many truths through the *erotapokriseis* format. Later on, the *Dialogue of Adamantius*, which often discusses Scriptural passages in the light of philosophical reasoning and belongs to the Origenian tradition, will adapt to this model.⁹ These additional cases enrich the already variegated landscape ably depicted by Piovanelli.

⁵ “Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation”, *HTR* 102.2 (2009): 135–168; “Philo’s Doctrine of Apokatastasis: Philosophical Sources, Exegetical Strategies, and Patristic Aftermath”, *StPhiloA* 26 (2014) 29–55; *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), ch. 1; “Philo’s Dialectics of Apophatic Theology and His Impact on Patristic Exegesis and Theology”, *Philosophy* 3 (2019): 36–92; briefly in *A Larger Hope*, 1, forthcoming.

⁶ As pointed out in “Origen, Bardaisan.”

⁷ Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, “A Syriac Original for the Acts of Thomas? The Hypothesis of Syriac Priority Revisited”, in *Early Christian and Jewish Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms*, eds Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins (WUNT I 348; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 105–34.

⁸ *Bardaisan of Edessa: A Reassessment of the Evidence and a New Interpretation* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2009); *Bardesane di Edessa Contro il Fato* (Rome, ESC - Bologna, ESD, 2009); “Bardaisan of Edessa, Origen, and Imperial Philosophy: A Middle Platonic Context?”, *Aram* 30.1-2 (2018) 337-353; *Bardaisan on Human Nature, Fate and Freewill* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

⁹ “The *Dialogue of Adamantius*: Preparing the Critical Edition and a Reappraisal”, forthcoming in *Rheinisches Museum* (also with reference to the little existing literature on the subject); a critical edition and a monograph are in preparation.

Ch. 15 (“L’Évangile secret de Marc trente trois ans après, entre potentialités exégétiques et difficultés techniques”) is a dense article, which narrates the history of research into the Secret or Mystical Gospel of Mark. I have studied this problem,¹⁰ and so have Stephan Hüller and Daniel N. Gullotta, but their work appeared after Piovanelli’s publication.¹¹ Quesnell’s remarks on other documents in Mar Saba and similar characteristics in the use of ink to those in the *Secret Mark* provide some evidence against the objections to the authenticity of the Mark document.¹² Piovanelli praises the work by Scott Brown as an exhaustive and balanced study of the literature on this gospel (326). Brown concludes that the secret Gospel of Mark was an augmented version, mystical and esoteric, of the canonical Mark. Stephen Carlson’s critical position against Morton Smith is also analyzed in detail. What remains unclear is the reason why Smith should have invented this false document (just to fool his colleagues? See p. 330). C.W. Hedrick’s thesis is reported with respect: the Secret Gospel of Mark confirms that in the first centuries the text of the Gospels was not stable (337).

Ch. 16, “Une certaine ‘Keckheit, Kühnheit und Grandiosität’ ...: La correspondance entre Morton Smith et Gershom Scholem (1945-1982),” critically assesses the long-lasting epistolary correspondence between Morton Smith and Gershom Scholem edited by Guy Stroumsa. It follows the main stages of the professional life of Smith, including his discovery of the Secret Gospel of Mark and the stark polemics it elicited. Although he observes that the objections by Carlson have been mostly refuted (353), Piovanelli prefers not to consider the Secret Gospel of Mark an apocryphon of controlled origins but rather a strange kind of modern apocryphon (359).

The fifth part of the book is titled *L’Apocalypse de Paul, le Livre du coque et autres réécritures apocryphes de l’Antiquité tardive*. Ch. 17, “Les origines de l’*Apocalypse de Paul* reconsidérées,” studies the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which has many traits in common with the *Apocalypse of Peter*, including in the eschatological scenario.¹³ Piovanelli correctly stresses that this was a source of imagery for the Christian landscapes of heaven/paradise and hell. He analyzes the complex manuscript tradition in Greek, Latin, and vernacular languages, and also offers a survey of the history of studies from 1851 to 1990. Then he advances his own hypothesis that perfects previous studies, especially by Casey and Silverstein. He hypothesizes a first edition, possibly known to Origen, but the testimony of Origen, Piovanelli notes, is so dubious that it is better to drop it (393) and to keep Prudentius and Sozomen as the first sure sources. Piovanelli offers a new classification of the ms. tradition and supposes that the *Apocalypse* was written before the death of Theodosius I in 395, and at any rate before the testimony of Augustine in 416. He rightly calls attention to the problem of the effectiveness of the suffrages of the living for those who are dead, which was hotly debated in the time of Augustine.¹⁴

¹⁰ In “The Birth of the Rome-Alexandria Connection: The Early Sources on Mark and Philo, and the Petrine Tradition”, *The Studia Philonica Annual* 23 (2011): 69-95; further in works on Clement and Origen in preparation.

¹¹ “Quentin Quesnell’s Secret Mark’s Secret: A Report on Quentin Quesnell’s 1983 trip to Jerusalem and his inspection of the Mar Saba Document,” *VigChr* 71.4 (2017): 353–378. Similarly also Scott Brown, “Behind the Seven Veils, II: Assessing Clement of Alexandria’s Knowledge of the Mystic Gospel of Mark,” in *Fakes, Forgeries, and Fictions*, ed. Tony Burke, Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017, Ch. 7, who compares Secret Mark with Clement’s own writings on language of initiation and relation to Christ and concludes that he is the author of the Letter to Theodore about Secret Mark.

¹² Even academic blogs asked scholars their opinions on this score, e.g.: <http://stephanhuller.blogspot.com/2010/01/professor-ilaria-ramelli-say-it-best.html>.

¹³ As I have highlighted in “Origen, Bardaisan” and *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, first chapter: Piovanelli’s treatment finds me in complete agreement.

¹⁴ I discussed this point in my “Origen in Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception,” *Numen* 60 (2013): 280–307.

Two other chapters are devoted to the Apocalypse of Paul (18: “La découverte miraculeuse du manuscrit caché, ou La fonction paratextuelle du prologue dans l’*Apocalypse de Paul*” and 19: “La Prière et *Apocalypse de Paul* au sein de la littérature apocryphe d’attribution paulinienne”) before Ch. 20, “À la découverte du *Livre du coq* éthiopien, un évangile apocryphe de la Passion de l’Antiquité tardive,” which studies the account of the last three days of Jesus’ life on earth in the Ethiopian *Book of the Cock*. A full list of 36 mss. is provided, both those which contain this book as a separate work and those which include it along with another work. Piovanelli parses many parallels between the *Book of the Cock* and various apocrypha and concludes, without certainty but with probability, that the work was composed in Late Antiquity, probably in or around Jerusalem in the fifth or sixth century. It may have been inspired by Gerontius’ *Life of Melania*. The story of Melania and Pinianus is to be read within the accounts of late antique couples who, at a certain point, decided to become ascetics, embraced abstinence, renounced being served by slaves, and divested their patrimonies.¹⁵

The last chapter, 21, “De l’usage polémique des récits de la Passion, ou Là où les chemins qui auraient dû se séparer ont fini par se superposer,” deals with the problem of the so-called Parting of the Ways. Piovanelli agrees with the scholars who have questioned the concept itself.¹⁶ In his opinion, the more interesting question would be whether second-Temple Judaism was a religion or a culture. Both Jesus and Paul himself were Jews; not even Paul was a Christian, but a “radical Jewish monotheistic” (470).¹⁷

There is an introduction to the volume but no conclusion, although the last chapter (22: “Les parcours de la réécriture. Lorsque des textes apocryphes deviennent, de surcroît, hérétiques”) provides some closure. It investigates how apocryphal texts were used by various sides in heresiological discourse by way of demarcation. Daniel Boyarin, indeed, argued that the construction of Jewish rabbinic and Christian “orthodoxy,” by means of opposition to “heresies” pointed out within this dialectic, contributed to the parting of the ways. The volume is closed by three indices (ancient texts and authors, modern authors, and subjects). In short, this is a very interesting collection, which makes available a number of engaging essays in a convenient format.

¹⁵ Discussed in my *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), ch. 5.

¹⁶ I examined one of its initial historical stages and some of the very abundant literature in “The Jesus Movement’s Flight to Pella and the ‘Parting of the Ways,’” *Augustinianum* 54 (2014): 35-51; received by Simon-Claude Mimouni, *Jacques le Juste, frère de Jésus de Nazareth et l’histoire de la communauté nazoréenne-chrétienne de Jérusalem du 1^{er} au 4^e siècle* (Paris: Bayard, 2015), 492 (reviewed in *RES* 2016: <http://enochseminar.org/review/10414>).

¹⁷ See my “Dieu et la philosophie: le discours de Paul à Athènes dans trois ‘actes apocryphes’ et dans la philosophie patristique,” *Gregorianum* 93 (2012): 75-91.