Apocalyptic Wisdom: an interpretative key of the Q Source

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Abstract
The Q Source is a collection of the sayings of Jesus where we can probably find traces of the oral tradition of Jesus. Its wisdom character is evident in the nearly total absence of narrative text in the collection. The purpose of this article intends to show apocalyptic wisdom’s two level structure. The first is revelatory and the second is ethical. Both characterize the Q document. The first revelatory level in Q is represented by the enigmatic temptation story, whereas the ethical level develops the many practical teachings in the rest of the document.

Keywords: apocalyptic wisdom; Q source

Sabedoria Apocalíptica: uma chave interpretativa da fonte Q

Resumo
A fonte Q é uma coleção de ditos de Jesus onde, provavelmente, nós podemos encontrar vestígios da tradição oral de Jesus. Seu caráter de sabedoria é evidente diante da ausência quase que completa de textos narrativos na coleção. O objetivo desse artigo é demonstrar dois níveis de estrutura da sabedoria apocalíptica. O primeiro é de revelação e o segundo é ético. Ambos caracterizam o documento Q. O primeiro nível – de revelação – em Q é representado pela enigmática história da tentação, enquanto o nível ético desenvolve os muitos ensinamentos práticos do resto do documento.

Palavras-chave: sabedoria apocalíptica; fonte Q

Sabiduría Apocalíptica: una clave interpretativa de la fuente Q

Resumen
La fuente Q es una colección de dichos de Jesús donde, probablemente, podemos encontrar vestigios de la tradición oral de Jesús. Su carácter de sabiduría es evidente frente a

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la ausencia casi completa de textos narrativos en la colección. El objetivo de este artículo es demostrar dos niveles de estructura de la sabiduría apocalíptica. El primero es de revelación y el segundo es ético. Ambos caracterizan el documento Q. el primer nivel – de revelación – en Q es representado por la enigmática historia de la tentación, mientras que el nivel ético desarrolla las muchas enseñanzas prácticas del resto del documento.

**Palabras-clave:** sabiduría apocalíptica; fuente Q

**Introduction**

The hypothesis of a written old source, called the Q document, and its reconstruction have represented one of the major challenges of the last two centuries. The possibility of its existence had already begun to be considered in the XIX century when, apart from the “Jesus of faith”, there began to arise an interest in the “Jesus of history”. The method of critical-literary analysis as applied to the sources of the Gospels permitted the hypothesis of a more ancient and independent source used by Mark, i.e., the Q Source. The use of the comparative study of the gospels in the tradition known as “the history of forms” outlines the Q Source which begins to have its own literary definition. At the end of the XX century, in the midst of enthusiasm for the new studies on the Historical Jesus, the reconstruction of the Q Source was completed on the basis of the Greek text of Matthew and Luke. Its realization is due in particular to The *International Q Project sponsored* by the Society of Biblical Literature under the direction of Mr James Robinson of the Institute of Antiquity and Christianity at Claremont. The publication of the critical edition of the Q text (Robinson, 2000, p 581) has represented without any doubt extraordinary progress for the study of this important document. The intention of this article is to give a new interpretation of the Q document starting from its comparison to Judaic Apocalyptic Wisdom. According to the numerous statements of research in the last few years (Kloppenborg, 1989, p 323), this reading renders Jesus’s portrayal closer to the Jewish eschatological prophet and ethical sage than to the sage figure of the Hellenistic sapiential schools, and according to which, the movement originated by Jesus would have substantial Jewish eschatological-apocalyptic connotations supported by the hard social and economical reality of Galilee in the first half of the I century.

**1. The Judaic apocalyptic wisdom: origin and features**

**1.1. Wisdom in the Judaic world**

Wisdom is common to all cultures. In the Hebrew Bible it is expressed in different forms. Wisdom is related to daily life, which is present in the
proverbs (*mashal*), (Prv 10-30). There is theological wisdom (Prv 8) and natural wisdom, related to the knowledge of natural laws (Jb 28.38-41). Mantic wisdom involves divination and the interpretation of dreams (Dn 4). There is also “higher wisdom”, as obtained from revelation and apocalyptic visions. As for its origin, wisdom developed from the observation of life and was expressed in the proverbs. Its function was to inform, guide, preserve values and traditions, organize life, criticize behaviour, etc. During the Monarchy, wisdom, arose in the family sphere and was used to organize the State. Wisdom and the exercise of authority were identified in the person of the king. The most characteristic figure of this tradition was king Salomon, whose function as a wise king was to advise, reign and organize the life of the State. After the Exile, wisdom was important for two reasons: internally, as a reflection upon the disaster of the Exile and its concrete consequence on peoples’ lives; externally, as influenced by the contact with the Mesopotamian culture, its wisdom and astral sciences which exalt the person of the sage as an expert of natural and astral laws. The sage became increasingly important from this period on in that they were considered custodians of a wisdom, inaccessible to other mortals and obtained by divine revelation. As this divine nature develops, wisdom begins to depend on the justice and righteousness of the life of the sage, who, as visionary, has access to the divine mysteries and can transmit them to men. As developed from this supernatural wisdom, “the mystery” came to be revealed through a human visionary that gave origin to apocalyptic wisdom, which, according to Collins, is real wisdom: “Daniel, Enoch, Ezra and Baruch are sages more than prophets. Daniel’s book heroes are the *mâskîlîm*, the teachers and sages. In Enoch and Qumran literature great importance is given to the comprehension of “the mystery” (Collins, J. 1997, 330).

1.2. The sage

Biblical, Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic literature presents many types of sages (Collins, J. 1990, 343-354):

a) **Enoch**

He is a figure who probably originated during the Babylonian diaspora, a scribe who disappeared as a human being. He was taken up to heaven by angels and was called to be an intermediary between holy angels and angels corrupted by sin. To those condemned, he cursed, but he also asked to write a prayer of intercession and forgiveness to be brought to himself from heaven.
b) Daniel

The origin of this name is uncertain. It seems to be Dan’el, the main personality of a document discovered in 4Qumran, Nabonide’s Prayer, a midrash of Dn 3,31-4,34. In Ez 14,14-20 and 28,3, Dan’el is an ancient and wise sage quoted with Noah and Job, and also mentioned in the Ugaritic and Egyptian mythological tradition of the II millennium BC. In Daniel’s book the author identifies himself as a member of a group of “magicians, wizards, charmers and Chaldeans” (Dn 2,2). He appears in Dn 5,7-11 and in Nabonide’s Prayer. The word gzrj is translated as “astrologer” (Kee, 1990, 49). In Daniel lives “the spirit of the saintly gods” (5,11), and his surname is Balthazar, the second name of the Babylonian god Bel, who gives him the present of inspiration and interpretation of dreams. Therefore, he is a mythic personality, important for his wisdom that comes directly from God.

c) The Mantic Sage

He is a person who deals in divination and prophecy. Sages such as Enoch and Daniel can through their visions interpret history, often presented in sequels and parables. The angel Gabriel explains to Daniel the meaning of the vision of the parable of 70 weeks (Dn 9). The same happens to Enoch in The Book of Dreams or Visions (1En 83-90), and in Qumran’s literature. The pesharim are authentic editions of biblical texts, commented, reinterpreted and renewed according to their new historical context and tradition. An example is The Book of Jubilees, that represents a history of origins from Genesis to Moses, or The Testament of Moses, another Palestinian text of the I century BC. In these two texts Moses is a sage who prophesies... “And Moses stayed there, on the mountain, 40 days and 40 nights and the Lord showed him things past and future, the division of time according to the law and the testimony (of events)” (Jub 23,23-32 // TMos 9-10). The mantic sage takes into account past history, revealed in Scripture, reads and interprets present history in the form of prophecy.
d) Visionary sages

Ezra and Baruch are representatives. After Jerusalem’s fall in 70 AD one was greatly challenged as to how to interpret the political disaster. Again, the past helps understand the future. The sage is a visionary who, because of his access to heaven, knows the meaning of the mysteries of life and history (Prv 30,1-4 // 4Ezra 4,7-9). For this reason he presents his symbolic visions in the form of revelation or apocalypse. This is not new since, in a certain way, it has been also found in Daniel (Dn 7 // 4Ezra13). In 4Ezra the new Moses receives a revelation superior to that of the ancient Moses. While Moses received 24 books, that compose the Hebrew Bible, the new Ezra received 70 books more, that he will have to deliver as the sage of his people because “in them there is the origin of intelligence, the door of wisdom, and the river of knowledge” (14, 47).

Baruch, according to tradition, was Jeremiah’s disciple who had been deported to Babylon and was Ezra’s teacher. This fact explains the reason why Ezra was not in the first caravans of exiles returning to Jerusalem since he had to complete Baruch’s instruction. This relationship is a literary device to justify the resemblance between the two pseudepigraphic books. In The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch the sage’s function and the reason for his receiving God’s revelation is very clearly defined... “Israel won’t lack a sage, as a son of the law won’t be lacking to Jacob’s birth. However, prepare your hearts to hear the law and to be subdued to those who, for fear, are sages and intelligent ones. Prepare your souls not to go far from them. Certainly, if you do that, you will fulfill my predictions and you won’t fall into the torment which I have predicted before” (46, 4-6). Revelation and the sage are relative to the community... “without them people will walk in darkness. They won’t have light and they won’t be able to distinguish between life and death” (46, 3). In his testament the elderly Baruch exhorts them with these words... “therefore, according to your possibilities, exhort people, as this is our work. If you teach them, you’ll make them live!” (45, 1-2). In these words wisdom and apocalypse are closely connected. Wisdom originated from the light by revelation or vision, and it gives a new interpretation to the law itself.

1.3. Apocalyptic Wisdom

There are two kinds of wisdom in the ancient world: one earthly, the other supernatural or revealed. The sage is the mediator who receives wisdom from God and transmits it to people. There is no opposition between the two forms of wisdom, but, the apocalyptic, for its relation to the religious dimension, claims a “higher”, superior wisdom (Collins, J. 1990, 354),
which we define as *apocalyptic wisdom*. In *apocalyptic wisdom*, the sage’s person coincides quite well with that of the prophet or the visionary. There exists a secret project of God for the universe and history, defined as “mystery” and which has to be revealed. In The Qumran *Book of Mysteries* (4Q 299 III,11), it is defined by the word “kvl rz”, whose literary meaning is: *the whole mystery* (Garcia Martinez, 1997, 627), the root of which is “rz: † râz”, mystery. The mystery of God is marvellous (1QpHab VII,8), and it is evident, for example, in creation, in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, etc. Mystery is the time established for Belial, the eschatological opponent and injustice (1QS 4,18). Sin also represents a *mystery* (1QH 36), as well as the mysteries of God regarding our existence (1QM 17,9). Finally, there is the mystery of time destined for the eschatological battle (1QM 18,14), where the word *mystery* gains eschatological implications (Ringgren, 1995, 60-63). Wisdom is to know the mystery of God through divine revelation that is given in Qumran to the prophet (1QpHab VII,5) and to the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab VII,4). Besides, to know is to submit oneself to the mysterious divine project, without changing anything that has been destined (1QS 1,14). In this pre-determination arises the origin of determinism. To the sinner, however, the revelation of the divine mystery remains hidden. For deprived due to their own fault of divine light, they will be wrapped in darkness and corruption, which will spread upon the whole earth. Revelation is therefore necessary as the last hope of redemption before justice will be realized by the final judgment of this word, with the condemnation of the evil and salvation of the just (Collins, J., 1990, 390).

1.4. Features of Apocalyptic Wisdom

Apocalyptic literature, in its vertical dimension, is the revelation of secret mysteries as in the celestial battle (Ap 12), the judgement of nations (Dn 7, Ap 12,8-9, 17-18; 20,11-14) and the salvation of the elect (Ap 12,10-12; 19,1-10). However, this revelation has an horizontal objective. It exhorts to resist persecution, transform life on earth, build up God’s reign. In apocalyptic literature, revelation is always oriented to practice, as “the object of celestial visions is to inspire people to live an ethical and moral life” (Wright, 2000, 183).

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1 The word *râz* has a Persian origin and it is present in Dn 2,18s., in Eccl 8,18. In Qumran literature it means “the secret” and it seems to anticipate the meaning of the word *mysterion* used by Paul (Rm 16,25, 1Cor 2,7s., Ef 3,3-9).
The moment of revelation

In the introduction to Enoch’s book there is an invitation to contemplate divine wisdom which reveals itself in the cosmic order of the stars, in the seasons of the earth and in nature. Everything obeys God’s project. Unfortunately, men are turned away from God’s project... “You were not perseverant and you did not put into practice God’s law. You fell and you offended God’s majesty with arrogant and obstinate words coming from your mouth. Oh, heartless! You will not find peace. For this reason I will curse your days and ruin the years of your lives. The eternal curse will multiply itself and there will not be mercy for you” (1Enoch 5,4-5). This introduction gives the sense of Enoch’s vision. He contemplates God on his throne, his wisdom in creation and history, his anger, but this is all part of a higher plan which includes the invitation to change one’s life and return to faith in God’s law. In the Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran) it is declared that to those who continued believing in his norms, God “revealed the hidden things in which Israel was wrong: its holy sabbaths and its religious celebrations, its righteous testimonies, its truisms, and the capriciousness of its will, that humankind had to bear in order to live for them. He opened to them (these things) and they dug a well of abundant waters, and those who will despise them will not live” (CD 3,13-17). The community which produced this text considers itself a custodian of a special revelation that encompasses a new liturgical calendar and a right interpretation of the law. This divine wisdom has, as its concrete objective, a corresponding ethic... “he who keeps himself steady in it, will gain eternal life, and for them it will be all Adam’s glory” (3,20). For this God “gave them a Teacher of Rightness, to guide them to the way of his heart” (1,11). “So, the just will know the Most High, and the wisdom of the sons of heaven will educate those whose behaviour is treacherous” (1QS 4,22). Therefore, the rule which the community has imposed on itself becomes the necessary instrument to live this new ethic and leave the sons of darkness. The First Letter to the Thessalonians, written probably in the same period as the Q Source, presents the apocalyptic context of the “future anger” and arrival of God (4-5), the final judgement (1,10) and the elevation of the righteous to heaven. The apocalyptic scene is defined by two occurrences: Jesus’s resurrection and the day of future wrath. In this Letter there is the dualism typical of the Manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls... “you all are sons of the light, sons of the day. Therefore we don’t belong to the night, neither to the darkness” (5,5). “These expectations justify the exhortation to a life worthy of God, who calls you to his reign and his glory” (2,12), where “glory” refers probably to transformation into a heavenly
existence. The theme of the apocalyptic wisdom is here present in the knowledge of God’s project, secret and mysterious. Paul’s attempts to calculate the duration of future events, maybe keeping in mind the interesting parallelism of 4Ezra 4,33-52, but to humankind God’s projects remain secret... “you perfectly know that God’s day will come as a thief, at night” (5,2). The consequence is an ethic based on vigilance, as in the example on the soldier... “let’s not sleep, as the others, but let’s stay watchful and sober. Those who sleep, do it at night; those who get drunk, do it at night. On the contrary, we, who live in the day, are sober, protected by the armour of faith and charity, and by the helmet of hope in salvation” (5,6-8). In the Apocalypse the theme of the apocalyptic wisdom appears in all the visions of the prophet whose purpose is to reveal “the things which have to happen” (1,1). Chapters 2-3, however, present a literary structure different from the rest of the book, as there are Seven Letters to the Churches, with a parallel literary structure. They are introduced by the vision of the Son of Man, characterized by the divine features of an eschatological judge. The content of the Letters is ethical, exhortative and an emendation of mistakes. It is probable that the context of persecution offered a pretext to write this book, whose purpose is, through the visions, to reveal the mysterious divine project and to exhort the communities to maintain their faith.

a) A moment in ethics

The second moment, the one in ethics, is usually concerned about some practical instructions, related to some behaviour and attitude while awaiting the great eschatological occurrence. This is the case of The Epistle of Enoch, probably written during the Maccabean period. In the section that might be the general introduction to Enoch, the patriarch as a sage educates humankind... “(The Book) written by Enoch, writer of this entire wisdom doctrine, praised by all men, judge, prince of the earth, for all my sons that live on earth and for future generations which follow righteousness and peace” (1En 92,1). Enoch himself summons his sons and tells them... “ listen, my sons, to all your father’s words, and listen in righteousness to the voice of my mouth, as I exhort and tell you__ My beloved, love righteousness and live it, and don’t follow it with two hearts, but walk in righteousness, oh double-hearted, and it will lead you to right ways and justice will be your companion” (1En 91, 3-4). Further, in vv 8-11 there is an announcement of the eschatological judgement that will fall upon the unjust as destroying fire. These exhortations and threats are followed by an explanation... “my sons, love justice, walk with it, accept the ways of justice because the ways of evil
will be soon destroyed and end” (94,1). The most typical form of threat is “Woe”... “Woe to you, mighty people, who, by your force, oppress righteous people because the day of your destruction is coming. In those days, on the day of condemnation, it will be very good days for the righteous” (96, 8). Prophetic and sapiential styles are in this text very similar one to one another (Eccl 2,12-14; 41,8-9). The purpose of these warnings anticipate a waiting for the final judgement... in those days “they will try to avoid the presence of the Great of Glory and they will tremble and will be frightened. The sons of the earth and you, sinner, will be cursed forever and will not have peace. However, you, souls of the righteous, don’t be afraid. Hope, all you who died for righteousness!” (1En 102,33-4). The same kind of instruction can be found in 2Enoch, a text of the Egyptian diaspora of the II century BC. After his trip to heaven, God gives Enoch thirty days to educate his sons, and then he is brought to heaven (2En 39-66). The passage starts thus... “Oh my sons, my beloved, listen to your father’s exhortations, because this is the Lord’s will” (39,1). The beatitudes’ parallel to the curses are interesting. They are expressed in a typically wisdom style... “blessed be the one who follows his father’s doctrines, built on firmness, from the start. Cursed be the one who alters his ancestors’ laws. Blessed be the one who cultivates peace and love. Cursed be the one who disturbs those who love their neighbours” (52,9-12). All that Enoch teaches his sons was revealed by God... “and now, sons, keep well your father’s words, as they all come from God’s mouth. Bring and read these books, written by your father. Through these books you will learn about God’s works, from the beginning of creation to the end of time” (47,1-3). This type of wisdom instruction develops more completely in the literary genre of the “testament”, of which the most beautiful example is the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, written probably between the last half of the II century and the first half of the I century BC. What most interests us is the typical form structure of a testament:

– the patriarch addresses to his sons
– he remembers some facts about his life
– he pronounces a lengthy ethical exhortation
– he gives a foretells in an eschatological dimension
– conclusion of the testament with the patriarch’s death and burial.

The central part is ethical and wisdom instruction, established in the context of a world vision typically apocalyptic (Collins, J, 1997, 397-8). Sin, for example, has already been provoked by Belial. Dan, telling how in his
heart he decided for his brother Joseph’s death, states... “one of Belial’s spirits helped me, saying— bring the sword and kill Joseph so, once dead, the father will love you” (TDan 1,7). The exhortation is strengthened by an eschatological prediction. Again, “the wisdom tradition guarantees the ethical theme of the testament, while apocalyptic tradition gives the literary structure (Collins, J, 1997, 399).

The whole discussion is summed up in Qumran and in later literature as the theme of the two ways. The origin is attributed in The Community Rule to two spirits that man was given by God at the creation: the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood (1QS 3, 18-19). In practice, this can be interpreted as two ways or two options: living as “sons of the light”, the way of good, or as “sons of darkness”, the way of evil (1QS 1, 9-10). This dualism will endure until the “time of his visit”, the eschatological time which in God “has established an end to the existence of injustice, destroying it forever” (1QS 4,18-19). This ethical dualism is again oriented toward the great eschatological event. This dualism is expressed in the prologue of the Community Rule through other dualisms:

– good vs evil: “keep ourselves far from evil and approach all good deeds” (1,4-5). This is the first formula which develops in the whole document. Good deeds to be realized are enumerated in the Community Rule.
– light vs darkness: “love the sons of the light and hate all the sons of darkness” (1,9-10). Qumran members considered themselves elected by God, chosen to live in perfection and in truth, which was revealed only to them. Their retiring to the desert justified this choice and consciousness. The word Sons of the light referred to their exemplary life enlightened by God’s revelation through figures capable of interpreting God’s law: the Teacher of Rightness, the head of the Community, the priest, the plenary council. This opposition between light and darkness, described in The Treaty of the two Spirits (3,13-IV,26) is expressed in the opposition and eschatological comparison of spirits: one of truth and the other of falsehood (4,15-26).
– loving vs hating: “love the ones chosen by Him and hate the one rejected by Him” (1,4). There are two kinds of dualism: loving vs hating and choosing vs refusing.
– Advancing vs delaying: “you will not change His time, neither delay any of His feasts” (1, 14): This concerns the liturgical calendar, as a sacred time of celebration of the divine precepts. Fidelity to dates and sacred time is fidelity to God. An apocalyptic context determines historical time, characterized by feasts and celebrations, up to the final event. On account of this, the calendar could not be modified.
— *advice vs revenge*: “according to his mission in God’s counsel….according to his fault in God’s revenge” (1, 10-11). Here we find two more opposites: mission for fault and counsel for revenge.

— *left vs right*: “so they will not deviate neither to the right nor to the left” (1,16). These are the possibilities of the ways that one can walk: straightward, leftward or rightward. It was stated that that only one path leads to God: both right and left are deviations. Qumran members affirmed in this way their conviction to be on the right path to join God. Taking dualist opposition into consideration the only certain way is clearly affirmed,i.e., walking with God without question: to choose this was to be safe. There was no freedom of choice, but only rigid determinism. The question of evil was not regarded in terms of transgression, but as a reality pre-existent to man (the doctrine of the spirits). It was not to be solved in historical time, nor simply by human effort, but to be left to meta-historical time.

The theory of the two ways is very present in the Q Source and in the NT text: in the comparison of the narrow and wide door (Mt 7,13 // Q 13,24), in the parable of the house built upon a rock foundation and of the house built upon sand (Mt 7,24-27 // Q 6,48-49), and it is silently present in the *Didaché* at the beginning of the II century AD. The dualism light vs darkness is present in Jn 1,5; 3,19; 12,35.46; in the 1 Jn 2,8.9; in Eph 5,8; 2Cor 4,6; 6,14; in Rom 2,19; 13,12; in 1Thes 5,5. The dualism good vs evil is present in Jn 5,29; Rom 3,8; 7, 19.21; 2Cor 5,10; 13,7; Heb 5,14, and the dualism love vs hate in Mt 5,43.

b) **Resumé about apocalyptic wisdom**

Revelation and ethics are two fundamental and interdependent elements in apocalyptic literature. They represent two distinct symbolic movements: the first, vertical (earth ’t heaven and heaven ’t earth) which refers to the vision; the second is strictly connected to the first, horizontal (past ’t present ’t future). If the first movement has an apocalyptic feature, the second is historical or meta-historical (eschatological). The first regards the ecstatic and visionary experience; the second implies ethics. We think this symbolic-literary structure defines and characterizes *apocalyptic wisdom* in the sense of revelation oriented to an historical practice, whose purpose, in many cases, is to resist the persecution.

**2. Q Source and apocalyptic wisdom**

The framework of apocalyptic wisdom gives the literary structure on which is based the Q Source document.
2.1. The element of vertical revelation: Jesus’s temptation story (Q 4,1-13)

The temptation story of Jesus (Q 4,1-13) is at the beginning of the Source. It is a text considered a later addition, perhaps the 80s, and which would already announce the beginning of a biographical structure, later consolidated in the gospels (Kloppenborg, 1989, 323-324). However, we think that the various visionary elements, composing this marvellous narration, make this a revelatory text, and the themes presented are deeply connected to the eschatological and apocalyptical cosmos-vision of the first half of the I century BC. Presupposing the following, it will be considered one of the most ancient Q texts, thus justifying its literary collocation at the beginning of the document.

a) The vision

The subjective symbology of the temptation story leads us to state that it does not concern historical “temptations”, but the literary genre of “temptation or the testing of the righteous”. However, this story is the symbolic synthesis of the great heavenly battle between the devil and his eschatological opponent, the Messiah, embodied in the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth. So, this text reveals the faith of the Q community in Jesus as the eschatological Messiah who definitely overcomes the devil. The text is a panoramic vision in three scenes that introduce the Q document. The Q 4,1-13 story can be classified in terms of the literary genre of “a journey around the world”, a subcategory of “heavenly journey”, or an ecstatic journey. This is evident in the use of the technical word for religious ecstasy: transported in spirit (“ἐγετο ἐν τού πνευματ”), whose meaning is to be raised, transported in spirit or brought up to heaven. This word has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit which transports Jesus to the desert, as has been previously interpreted but wrongly. On the contrary, this is a spiritual, interior experience, lived by Jesus; a real ecstasy, synthetically narrated and symbolically expressed in this text. Consequently, the desert, mentioned in the text, is not a geographical desert, but a situation of solitude, necessary for ecstasy to exist ( “in desert”, without the Gk article). Therefore, Q 4,1 does not refer to historical and geographical elements, but to a mystic and ecstatic experience. If we give priority to literary and semantic criteria (and not theological), the correct translation would be: “Jesus was transported in spirit to a situation of desert”. Other symbolic and visionary elements of the narration of Q 4,1-13 prove this, such as the movement from one place to another, the transportation of the body, the submissiveness of the subject, the presence of angels, etc.
The literary genre of “heavenly journey”, applicable to this story, is composed by the following elements (Schiavo, 2002, 146-7):

– the santity of the traveller (Jesus)
– the preparation ceremony for the journey (fasting and loneliness)
– the bringing up to heaven (the spiritual transportation)
– the disappearance (40 days in the desert)
– the ascent to heaven
– the accompanying of an angel (Satan was considered by tradition a fallen angel)
– the vision (in this case of terrestrial reigne)
– the return to earth.

The text narrates a visionary experience, very similar to those of the apocalyptic visionaries.

b) The content

The vision is expressed in three distinct scenes: two superhuman beings face and challenge each other, on one side, Satan, the eschatological opponent and on the other, Jesus, the messianic angel’s incarnation. In the first and third scene Jesus is challenged twice to demonstrate his messianic identity of “son of God” (Q3.9) by the realization of two signs of messianic content: to transform a stone into bread (a miracle also attributed to Elias, who was a messianic prophet [1QM 3,23]) and to jump from the highest point of the temple in order to be miraculously rescued by angels (the highest point of the temple according to the Judaic tradition was the place were the messiah had set foot at his arrival [1QM 3,1]). The opponent is testing Jesus’s messianic power and, by a sort of magical repetition of his enemy’s name like in the exorcism ritual, he tries to neutralize his force. We could also think, as it has been underscored many times, that the Devil is provoking Jesus to a magical display of messianism based on miracles and prodigies to demonstrate his messianic identity. The most important point of contention is, however, the power over human domains (oikoumenç). In the central scene, there is a wonderful vision where the Devil states that domains, power and glory belong to him and that he can give them to Jesus if only Jesus would adore him as a god (Q 4,5-8). If in the celestial journey the objective is the vision of God’s throne and adoration, here the interesting thing is that a throne appears, but it is the Devil who wants it for himself. There is a reversal of power: In Judaic faith God dominated heaven, but after the fall the control of heaven and earth was reserved to the Devil (Rev 12-13). Now the Devil is sitting on God’s throne and says that he has to be adored. The reversal consists in the Devil’s auto-proclamation as God. From an historical point of view, this fantastic story
recalls the image of the Roman emperor, who, beginning with Claudius in 41 AD, imposed the imperial cult of his effigy. The identification of the emperor with Satan is the clear expression of the first Christians’ refusal to the presumption of supreme Roman authority.

From a literary point of view, there is in the three satanic assaults a concentric structure, where the first and third scene (the miracle of the stone into bread and the jump from the temple) include within the centre the most important statement: God’s cult is to Satan sitting on his throne.

c) The interpretation

The vision of the eschatological battle (Q 4,1-13) wants to reveal what is happening in human history, and it reflects, like in a mirror, the heavenly war between angels and demons. The imposition of the imperial cult caused many Judaic revolts in the Palestine of the first half of the I century AD (Ant XVIII, 271-272; War II,171). The discontent against Rome, justified by other social and political situations, degenerated so much that it became open war from 66 AD up to the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the rebels’ massacre in 70AD. Certainly the war was motivated on the Judaic side by apocalyptic and eschatological ideology that interpreted the facts according to the model of the mythical stories of Exodus and proclaimed the messiah’s arrival very near. He, as an authentic military leader, would lead the army of the “sons of the light” to defeat, as the new Moses, the present pharaoh and his army, considered “sons of darkness”. He would establish in this way divine domination, God’s Reign. However, the consequences of the war were dramatic. The defeat provoked the end of the political, social, religious institutions and the beginning of the Diaspora.

Therefore, in the initial vision of the Q Source, we can see, behind the fantastic images of the vision and its symbolic language, the description of the social-religious conflicts of the Judaic people over all of Galilee and of the Jesus’s first disciples in the first half of the I century AD. Now we will attempt to discover how the story of the eschatological battle, which represents the revelation of the divine mystery, becomes the reference and centre of the faith of the Q community, capable of developing a new wisdom, an alternative ethic that corresponds to the same present urgency and represents the social and religious proposal of Jesus’s group.

2.2. The Q community’s ethics

The ethical, horizontal, historical and eschatological element of apocalyptic wisdom is translated into several teachings while waiting for the im-
minent realization of the final judgement with its condemnation of the evil and salvation of the just. Dualism and opposition are necessary elements for the creation of its identity and specific ethics that go beyond the apocalyptic-eschatological expectations, as they represent a concrete answer to the anguish for the search of a social alternative.

a) **The end of time is here!**

The Q community thought they were living the eschatological time. This conviction is evident in John the baptizer’s presence to which are referred the prophecies about the last days of the prophet (1QM 3,1) and, in the language and tone of his preaching, full images of eschatological content (the coming anger, remorse, the axe at the roots of the trees, and above all the shovel, the threshing-floor and the fire of judgement(1QM 3,7/17). However, it is in the initial vision of the eschatological battle (Q 4,1-13), where the opponent is defeated in his attacks of Jesus, that we find the certainty that the final stage of the story has really started. The confirmation of the beginning of the “new time” is also in Jesus’s signs, as a reply to John’s question about his messianic identity, and indicates that the messianic time, where physical and moral evil affecting humankind, traditionally attributed to the Daimon and evil spirits’s action, are overcome and won, has begun (7,18-22) (Schiavo-da Silva, 2000, 47-66). The attribution to Jesus of the title “Son of Man” or “Son of Humanity”, an expression probably created by the Galileans in their Aramaic dialect (Vermes, 1983, 93-94), illustrates the Q community’s conscience that considers Jesus the historical incarnation of the supernatural figure of the Son of Man, a figure related to the eschatological judgement, and depending on Dn 7 and Enoch’s Parables (En 46; 48; 71). Afterwards, in 4Ezra, the Son of Man will become a warrior who destroys his enemies with the fire of his mouth from the top of Sion mountain in En 13,25-36 (Schiavo, 2006, 51-58). The image of the sword of fire coming out from his mouth (Is 49,2; Ap 1,16; Hb 4,12; Ef 6,17) reminds us of Jesus’s defeat of Satan in the story of the eschatological battle by the power of his faith in the scripture and law. This is a clear and explicit affirmation that for the Q community, as for the Qumran, that the best way to establish God’s Reign was faithfulness to the law. However, if in Qumran the law is interpreted in a ritual and legal way, in Q there is a more open and inclusive, but not less radical interpretation. In this case, we can also compare Jesus to the Teacher of Rightness, who was considered, at times, a messianic figure. Jesus seems to be aware that he is the Son of Man; the use of the third singular person in most Q statements about the Son of Man, shows modesty, and
refer always to the one speaking that is Jesus (Vermes, 1983, 93-94; Robinson, 2007, 107). It seems that Jesus is aware not only of his being a prophet, but also, in general, of being the last of the prophets (Sanders, 1985, 319). Actually, people believed they were living the months or years of the end of time (Kee, 1990, 17), or that this was the last or the next to the last generation (Becker, 1998, 40) before the great day in which God would destroy the world order to establish his Reign, a “reign that will never be destroyed and whose power will not be of other people” (Dn 2,44). There were also those who foresaw that the Messiah’s arrival would begin a new eschatological era, as the rabbi Eliezer ben Hyaicns (the rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai disciple) who maintained the messiah’s arrival within 40 years (Sanhedrin, 99a, BT), or rabbi Joseph the Galilean (120-140) who declared that the Messiah’s reign would last 60 years (Midrash Tehillim, 90,17 in Davies, 1962, 23).

The Q community thought that in Jesus the end of time had arrived, because of this people had to learn to discern the time in which they were living (Q12,54-56). The parable of the invitation to the banquet (an eschatological image) was an invitation to make a decision, since refusal meant exclusion (Q14,16-23).

b) The emphasis on practice

The insistence on an alternative practice in Q is justified by the fact that the new eschatological reality, God’s Reign, is already present in Jesus’s person. His victory against the Devil is the border between “before” and “after” and this “after” has already begun. So, the kingdom does not only refer to a far future, but has extraordinary consequences for the present. Jesus declares that the poor are happy,”because their’s is God’s Reign” (Q6,20). Here attention is drawn to the present tense of the verb, a tense that implies what is already final and definitive. “By their practice, Jesus’s disciples transform this historical reality, still marked by sin and injustice, in order to rebuild the primitive paradisiacal condition, which was thought to be rebuilt at the end of times” (Mealand, 1980, 87). An alternative practice at the same time must have been critical and demanding, radical and prospective in relation to their society.

This practice would correspond to what Flusser defines as a “new sensitivity in Judaism”, “a new Judaic ethics” present already in the 1 century AD, and summarized in the commandment to love God and neighbor (1991,167-170). This was an original ethos, mainly typical of Galilee, that underscored “an extroverted love” that was clearly in conflict with the legalist interpretation of the law in Jerusalem. This situation, although typical
of the diaspora, was considerably present in Palestine and especially in “the cities in the region of the lake of Galilee”, where there existed a sort of diaspora, a land whose population was mixed and bilingual, where purity laws were respected with difficulty as in contrast to “orthodox Jerusalem” (Schillebeeckx, 1974, 232). For Galilean peoples speaking Greek were “extremely inclined to philantropia, to love for humankind, a universal love, the most of what other people called the Law was, in reality, incompatible with the generally accepted law, that is with God’s Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. In Galilee, on the contrary, about what was happening in Jerusalem, this Hellenic-Judaic prospective was in fact a general rule (and for this reason Judea could not hope for something good coming from Galilee, Nazareth)” (Schillebeeckx, 1979, 118-119). Part of this Galilean ethos of many of Jesus’s specific teachings are found in Q: complete faith in God (12,7-12), forgetfulness of private interests (17,33), usefulness to others in their necessities (12,31), giving and forgiving without limit (6,27-32; 13,3-4), the proper treatment to all people, including Samaritans and the Romans (7,1-9) and other Gentiles (10,12-14; 11,31) as neighbours, living without being anxious for tomorrow (12,33-31), and trying to live as real sons of the heavenly Father (6,35-36). This explains, in Q, the insistence to produce (3,8.9; 6,43), to work (6,31.34), and not only to be verbose (6,46), to persevere until the end (11,9-10), on the coherence between thought and action (11,39-48), and on sharing (12,42-46). A lot of importance is given to small realities: to what is little, hidden from sight, such as ferment and the mustard grain (13,18-21), but whose potential and force can totally transform reality, and against the temptation to conform and think that nothing will happen (12,45s).

The emphasis on the present makes Q community organize itself in the absence of a future eschatology (10,2-12; 11,31-32; 11,49-51; 12,4-5; 12,8-9; 12, 39-46; 13,27-30; 13,34-35; 17,23-24; 22,28-30). Seeley writes... “in any case future eschatology appears as a constitutive element of the process of social formation on which Q is based” (1996, 144-153). In this way, the disciples’ life and dedication become announcement and judgement for those who do not accept them: “in the city you enter and you are not accepted, do shake dust from your feet” (Q10,10). “Like slaves, they will have to account to the Lord, who will say to them__well done, good servant faithful in small things, you’ll be responsible for greater things” (Q19,17), and their final prize: “you who followed me will sit on the thrones and will judge the twelve tribes of Israel”(22,28.30).
c) The centrality and specificity of the interpretation of the Law in Q
The matter of practice (halakah) raises the problem of the interpretation of the law. In this discussion, we cannot forget the importance that the time of the “traditions of the ancients” or “the tradition of the fathers” had for Judaism that resulted from the new interpretations of the sages at first, and, afterwards, the rabbis who attempted to interpret and apply the law to daily life. Initially born from oral tradition, “the tradition of the fathers” had the same importance as the written tradition (torah), being also attributed to Moses’s revelation on Sinai, and being later codified in rabbinical schools or academies in the II-III century AD creating the Mishnah.

Jesus’s is victorious against the Devil through the law, whose practice expresses Jesus’s faithfulness to God. In Q the story of the initial vision (4,1-13) gives centrality to faithfulness to God’s law. Therefore, Jesus’s subsequent teaching will be an entire series of sayings and statements that suggest to the disciple how, in practice, he might remain faithful to God. In this way Jesus presents his own specific interpretation of the Judaic law. The Jesus movement, which produced the Q Source, participated in the ample discussion of the law, which involved nearly all the religious Judaic groups of that period.

Some criteria can illustrate the specificity of the interpretation of the law in Q:

– The tension between lax and strict observance
There was a subtle common trend among the reform movements to intensify the observance of certain social rules and laws, as those about marriage and costumes, and relax other laws which clearly referred to the Judaic identity of the group, such as the laws about the purity of food, the purification of the body, the observation of Saturday, etc. If, on one hand, the social relations of the group strengthened, on the other, religious laws that maintained specificity weakened gentile entrance and a universal tendency to accept others (Witherington, 1995, 142). In this case, we must keep in mind the influence of the Galilean geographical context and of the ethos, typical of Galilee, which we have already mentioned below, as one of the elements that could mostly have influenced in the definition of a “new” method of the interpretation of the rules, typical of the group. Certainly, reading the law in Galilee was different from reading it in Jerusalem.

– The return to the Decalogue
There are only three explicit sayings about the law in Q. In spite of the
difficulty and discussion of their reconstruction (Tuckett, 1996, 403-409), they give a clear affirmation about Jesus’s adherence to the validity of the law and a second general rule which characterises his interpretation.

“since a long time ago God’s Reign .... violence and law ...law and prophets up to John. But it is easier that heaven and earth pass away rather than for a part of the law to be cancelled.
The one who divorces his woman … commits adultery, and the one who marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (16,16-18).

Differently from many Judeans, Jesus and Q criticize the use of some stratagems to justify a softer interpretation of the law, as in the case of the regulation of divorce. In the specific case of divorce, the manuscripts of Dead Sea Scrolls, too, defend the original commandment, condemning one for fornication who has two women (CD 4, 20-5,1). With Jesus the law does not loose its value, but it is confirmed in its originality and need of strict application. Jesus’s criticizes the later applications of the law which, afterwards, became more important than the law itself. Here, Jesus and his movement are on the same level of interpretation as that of the Judaic diaspora, which was critical towards the orthodox Judaism of Jerusalem. In fact, they considered that, after the episode of the golden calf (Ex 32), the post-Sinaitic law (the “second law”, from where comes the name “Deuteronomy” [Dt 31,9]) was a compromise and an adaptation of rules more human than divine (Ez 20,25-26) written by Moses for the population before entering the land of promise, visible, for example, in the case of divorce and many other practical adaptations of the law (from where the “Fathers’ Tradition” originated) and which transformed the law into prescriptions and legalistic observances unacceptable to the people. This infidelity to the original law caused, according to the Judaic diaspora, the punishment and end of the monarchy in Israel and Judah, synthesized in the strong words of Nehemiah’s book: “they despised your law, killed the prophets who warned them to bring back them to you and did horrible crimes. So you abandoned them to their enemies’ hand, who oppressed them” (Neh 9,26-27).Thus, the proposal of this movement was to return to the original law, to the Decalogue, as the expression of divine will and the original order of creation. So, Hellenic Judaism, influenced by wisdom literature, pointed out: a) God’s creation as the reason of the commandments coming from God b) the sociologic ethics of the commandments c) impurity as an internal fact, rather than external (Schillebeeckx, 1974, 231).
The social situation of Galilean people favours a more humanized and less legalistic reading of the law. This can be proved in relation to the themes of bread, hunger, debt and richness. In Q there are several references to hunger and bread: Jesus’s hunger (4,2); the starving will be satiated and for this reason are declared “blessed” (6,21); the “Our Father” asks God for the necessary daily bread (11,3); the son who is given a piece of bread and a stone (11,11); there is an invitation not to worry about food, drink and dress “because your Father knows you are in need” (12,22-31); and there are servants who have to feed all God’s house (12,42). On the other hand, “this generation” is criticized, in comparison to the generation of Noah’s times, worried only by eating and drinking (17, 26-27). There is a lot of hunger in Q, but there is also much eating and wasting! For this reason the Devil proposes to Jesus the magic sign of transforming stones into bread like the great prophets of the past: Moses (Ex 16), Elias (1Kgs 17), and Eliseu (2Kgs 4). The miracle of bread is related to the request of a sign by “this generation” that, however, will receive only Jonah’s sign (11,29-32), which “for Q is referred to the present activity of Jesus’s predication” (Tuckett, 1996, 420-1). The solution of the problem of bread is not magic, the eschatological opponent’s art, or the later Antichrist’s art, which seduces and deceives in order to be classified as a god and, thus, an adored being. The solution is neither in the multiplication of bread, because “not only by bread does man live” (4,4), but by sitting together at the same table (10,4-9), like in a big banquet, which invitation not everybody has accepted (14,16-23). Hunger and bread are important in Q, because they are expressions of a different society, where everybody can have the possibility to sit at the same table, equally, “this generation” and the Q community, Judeans and pagans, poor and rich, etc. In this context bread is not given, but shared. It is not a sign of power, but of solidarity. Poverty and hunger are in opposition to the proposal of the Devil’s cult (Q 4,7), as “you may not serve God and Mammon” (16,13). Probably Q is criticizing the Roman tradition to throw bread to the population during feasts: “bread and circus”, an easy bread dressed with blood of those sacrificed in the arena, a bread useful only to imperial ideology. The bread to which Jesus refers is different. It is a bread made by the peasants’ sweat, and a great deal of effort, bread for family’s survival. It is the bread of the missionaries sent by Jesus, as poor among poor, “without money or packsaddle” (10,4) that they will share in the houses where they will be welcomed and announce the Reign of God’s presence that is visible in the sharing of bread. Hunger and the absence of bread are strictly related to debts (11,4; 12,58-59; 10,7; 12,22-31), another theme very present.
in Q. Certainly, here is the visible hard social reality of Galilee, where farmers and small craftsmen could not bear the increasing weight of production, favoured by the rapid urbanisation of the region and by developing commercial activity. The dramatic growth of crime in the Galilee of this period, as Josefus (Ant 20,124) gives evidence, could be a consequence of the progressive exploitation of Galilean people, who, unable to pay the heavy taxes (War 2,272.3; Ant 20,215) became more and more oppressed, and preferred rebellion as the last sign of despair (Crossley, 2006, 43-62). Undoubtedly, the conflict was between villages and cities, between the countryside and urban areas, between the agricultural model of subsistence, with its traditions linked to the family, and the new urban context, linked to the Hellenic-Roman culture, depending on commerce and taxes. Perhaps, many the sayings that condemn wealth, attributed by the Q Source to Jesus have to be read in this context and perhaps, “banditry is an important parallel to the rise of the Jesus movement” (Crossley, 2006, 56). In this interpretation of the law, Jesus is placed among the great prophetic traditions that interpret wealth and, consequently, hunger and debts in terms of oppression. This kind of interpretation is very present also in Qumran documents in relation to foreigners oppressing Israel’s people (1QM XII,13-15; CD VII,3-10; 1QS XI,1-2). In this way we can clearly affirm that wealth can lead to social injustice (Dn 5,7; 4Mac 2,8). In this context law becomes salvation from the danger of wealth leading to injustice. Therefore, the sayings against wealth in the Q Source are thus explained (6,20; 11,3; 12,22.30.33.45; 13,30; 14,11; 12,9; 16,13; 17,27). Wealth is considered a blessing by the classical theology of retribution: God will give the righteous wealth, sons and a long life (Gn 12,1-3; Jn 4,7). Poverty, disgrace or failure are considered curses and divine punishment for sin. However, Jesus and the eschatological prophets overturn this interpretation: they take the place of the poor and the oppressed, they criticize wealth as a sign of divine favour. This change of theological orientation is one of the new aspects of the interpretation of the law in Q, perhaps by Jesus, and causes his opposition to “this generation”, probably intended against those who, from Jerusalem to the other Galilean cities, were the political and spiritual guides of the people. In the Q 16,13: “nobody can serve two lords: or he will love one and hate the other, or he will be faithful to one and will despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon, too”. “The choice was between the support of the Roman power based on commerce and exploitation, and that of God. Choosing God was the affirmation of the Judaic Identity and this was certainly based on the Torah. The idea that loving Mammon more than God led far from the way of the law, was a vision recalling, for example, Judah’s Testament 18,2-6” (Crossley, 2007, 67).
Burton Mack presented a suggestive interpretation about the centrality of
law in Q. According to him, the context is after the great Jewish war when the
Q community wanted to be the authentic interpreter of God’s Reign and the
movement decided to “withdraw from the social conflict to take care of its
ethical integrity. Jesus’s words seemed apparently unable to deal with the new
circumstance, so, as the scriptures had formerly been used in Israel’s epic, now
there were considered a whole range of ethical rules, adequate to God’s Reign”
(Mack, 1994, 169-170). This was, according to the author, an “attractive solu-
tion” and the most ancient sign of adaptation of the law in Jesus’s movement,
which saw the catastrophe of Jerusalem’s destruction as a consequence of the
non-observance of the law by “this generation”. This hypothesis would place
the Q data somewhat later than 70AD.

d) The law and the absence of the report about Jesus’s crucifixion
and resurrection in Q

The centrality of the law in Q gives an explanation to one of Q’s most
disturbing matters which equals it to The Gospel of Thomas: the absence of
the report of Jesus’s death and resurrection. The emphasis in observing the
law, in Q, ensured salvation. This concept is different from the traditional
doctrine of salvation resulting from Jesus’s redeeming death on the cross,
mainly developed by Paul and accepted by the Church until it became one
of the pillars of Christian theology. In these differences of doctrine we can
see the theological pluralism of the origins of Christianity, which now is being
recovered by Q’s reconstitution and the discovery of Nag Hammadi gnostic
gospels. The texts resulted from different social groups that developed dif-
cerent visions and interpretations of Jesus and his message. To Jewish Chris-
tianity which had its origin in the Q Source, and to Paul’s Hellenistic Chris-
tianity, we should add also the Gnostic movement which developed mainly
from the II century AD, and which affirmed salvation through knowledge,
as a result of divine revelation. The relationship between the apocalyptic
movement and Gnosticism is quite evident in the importance of revelation
as a privileged instrument of access to the divine word. This pluralism of
primitive Christianity is proved by the wide literature produced and discov-
ered only in the last years. Most probably the affirmation of a unique theo-
logical line that happened in the Council of Nicea made other Christological
and ecclesiological interpretations heretical, if not persecuted. The great theo-
logical quest of the II century, which had in Ireneus of Lyon, its major
exponent with his great work “Adversus Hereges” (“Against the heretics”),
proves this fact. This might also explain the sudden disappearance of several
ancient texts, and among them the very Q Source, which was destroyed, burned or at least buried, because they were considered heretical as Nag Hammadi gnostic literature.

Therefore, in the Q Source, the fundamental and original features of the Jesus movement have been recovered: the emphasis in observing the law as a salvific instrument. This fact justifies the absence in Q of the report of Jesus’s death and resurrection. This does not mean that Jesus had not been crucified. There is a saying in Q 14:27 which states that the disciple has to follow Jesus carrying his cross, but his cruel death has not yet the salvific value given it by Paul and his group.

e) The eschatological community

Jesus’s project in the Q Source is the creation of the eschatological community. This aim justifies his insistence upon practical and ethical rules: following a radical lifestyle, and expression of the urgency of the present. This dream and hope, also called “God’s Reign”, is the reference and horizon of Jesus’s disciples (6:20): it had to be sought as the most precious treasure (12:31), and asked God in prayer (11:2). The Reign is near (10:9), and his vitality is as that of the mustard grain which grows till it becomes a big tree, or as the power of ferment transforming the bread (13:18-21). The group of disciples that Jesus joined together represents the original nucleus of this community, which he forms through his teaching, common life (9:57-60), poverty (9:57-60), total sharing (10:7), sending to mission (10:2-4), prayer (11:2-4), freedom from earthly goods (12:33-31) and family (14:27) as well as our own life (17:33), respect for law (16:17-18), attention to the poor and suffering (6:20-23), the sinner (15:4-10), children (17:2) and the careful waiting for the Son of Man’s revelation as last judge (12:45; 17:24;17:26-19-26).

The new community needs the reconstruction of human relations, probably damaged by the cultural disintegration of Galilee. It needs a positive attitude with one’s enemy (6:27) and with those committing bad actions (17:3), but it also needs to give arrogance up (6:29), to learn solidarity (6:30), honesty (12:58-59), and coherence (17:2).

This kind of community needed to overcome to Israel’s racial and religious borders. Although the mission among the pagans is not so evident in Q, however there is a certain openness to the gentile and, consequently, the progressive withdrawal “towards this generation”: probably the aristocracy of the cities, responsible for the desperate situation of the population. This condemnation is justified by the non acceptance of Jesus’s announcement, represented by the refusal to take part in the common banquet (14,21) and the exclusion.
from the kingdom (13,28-29). In their place are invited pagans from the East to the West (13,28-29), the cities of Tyre and Sidon (10,13), the ancient inhabitants of Nineveh (11,31-32) and the Roman centurion, of whom Jesus says that “never in Israel did he see such faith” (7,9).

In the kingdom community even social classes are overcome, favouring people who had always been excluded: the poor, the starving, the distressed, the outcast, the persecuted (6,20-23), the innocent, (10,21), the children who are shocking(17,2), the lost (15,4-7), the Roman centurion (7,1-9): now they are the main protagonists. There are also categories of power: “there is no disciple more important his teacher... he will be like his teacher” (6,39), while “the smallest in God’s Reign will be superior to John, admitted by Jesus as the greatest of the prophets” (7,24-28), because, “the one who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself, will be exalted” (14,11).

Even the custodian of wisdom changes, because now heavenly things are revealed to the innocent, while they remain hidden to the sage, to the expert and to the prophet (10,21-24). Evidently these statements are a strong criticism of traditional Galilean leadership, condemned as “blind guides” (6,39).

Probably the Q community was, at the beginning, very reduced and restrained, considering itself surrounded by enemies (6,27) as “lambs among wolves” (10,3), misunderstood by their own family, when not in the explicitly persecuted. They believed themselves to be custodians of a divine revelation, which they must make public, that with Jesus had begun the eschatological period (12,2-3), being brave and persevering, without being afraid of misunderstandings, persecutions and death... “don’t be afraid of killers of the body, nor of those who are able to kill life. Be afraid of those ....” “Don’t you sell two sparrows for little money? And not one of them will fall on earth without God (knowing it)?”.

Perseverance, faith, certainty that they will not be abandoned by God...”even hairs on your head have all been counted. Don’t be afraid: you are not worth more than many birds”: 12,4-7), and that they will be defended on trial (12,11-12). This is the mysticism sustaining the Q group. Martyrdom and absence of worry about one’s own life are the necessary conditions as “good is salt. But if it looses its taste, what can give its taste back? It is unuseful: you’ll have to throw it away” (14,34).

f) The urgency of the choice

If God’s Reign is the new happening, it is necessary it to be recognized in signs revealing it: “when (you see something in the sky) do say (something). And (when you notice another phenomenon, you draw a conclusion). You
can judge the sky and can’t you judge the time?” (12,54-56). Those who cannot read the signs will be condemned: “Woe, to you Corozaim. Woe, you Bethsaida. Because if to Tyre and Sidon were shown the same signs as you, long since they would have been sorry with sackcloth and ashes” (10,13), and you see those refusing to recognize them, accusing Jesus of expelling devils in the name of Beelzebub (11,15).

The time urgency demands a radical choice to follow Jesus: the new questions the old, for this Jesus imposes the break with some traditions, which he considered past (“let the dead bury their dead” 9,60), even if this attitude can cause conflict with families,” …. “you think that he came to bring peace on earth. No, but a sword. Because … son against father and daughter against mother and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law” (15,51-53). The choice of God’s Reign has priority even on the deeper relationships, such as those with our own parents and family: “if someone does not hate his father and mother he can not be my disciple” (14,26).

The shade of imminent judgement is upon the opponents of this projects, through the eschatological images of the axe at the roots of the trees, of the shovel used to clean the threshing-floor and of the fire burning what is unuseful (3,17). “This generation” (the leaders of the people), who does not admit the signs and condemns the prophets (7,31-35; 11,29-32), the cities of Corazaim, Bethsaida and Capernaum accused to refuse the kingdom’s messengers (10,13-15) and Jerusalem killing the prophets (13,34) will be condemned as “operators of evil actions” (13,25-27), like those shocking children (17,1-2), and those who pay attention only to eating and drinking (17,23-24) and do not multiply what their maste hasr granted them (19,12-26).

**Conclusion**

Apocalyptic wisdom guarantees a literary scheme which gives a certain internal unity to the Q Source: by the apocalyptic vision (the story of the eschatological battle), high expression of Q’s faith and proposal of a consequential ethic that defines ethos, and by its own lifestyle and the identity of the community of Jesus’s first disciples. Considering these statements, we affirm the deep relationship of the Jesus movement with the eschatological and apocalyptic cosmo-vision of the 1 century AD, more than with that of the Hellenistic schools, as has been declared more than once (Kloppenborg, 1989, 323-4; Mack, 1994, 39). If Hellenistic wisdom is directed to teaching, Jewish wisdom is a “higher wisdom”, transcendental, whose aim is the construction of God’s Reign on earth.

In the light of the exposed arguments, with reference especially to the narration of the eschatological battle (traditionally known as: “Jesus’s temp-
tations” [Q4,1-13]), the possibility of levels of stratification in the Q Source (Kloppenborg, 1989, 323-324) has to be revised. The ascertainment of different literary genres does not always imply different strata. It’s our impression, however, that some passages, referring to Jesus as rabbi (6,40), the reference to the synagogue (12,11) and to the harsh condemnation of the Pharisee (11,39-48) might be later insertions, attempting to transform Jesus into a rabbi in the bitter confrontation between the Christian of the second and third generation and Jamnia’s ruling Judaism that resulted in mutual excommunication. Matthew’s community, the Palestinian heir of Jewish Christianity of the Q Source, might be responsible for this “arrangement” affirming this position before the Jewish people. In fact, the Pharisees’ presence in Galilee before the war of 70 is very small and insignificant. There are news of the great rabbi Johanah ben Zakkai who seems to have lived for 20 years in the city of Arav (between the 20s and 40s), near Seforis, with only one disciple, Hanina ben Dosa. The tradition tells that the rabbi hadn’t been successful in his teaching, but, on the contrary, the reputation of the disciple overcame that of the teacher, who, returning to Jerusalem, would have said: “Galilee, Galilee: you hate Torah!” (Neusner, 1970, 53). According to archaeology, too, there would not be many evidences of synagogues in Galilee before the III century A.D. (Horsley, 1995, 222-4).

In conclusion, the Q Source would be the Rule of Jesus’s movement, parallel or similar to the various Rules found in the Manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls and which were the reference of the Essene communities. Jesus like Qumran’s Teacher of Righteousness is the founder and guide of the Q community, which considers him the sage, the prophet and eschatological Son of Man. The context is still a Judaic one, characterized mostly by eschatological and apocalyptic movements. However, as differences became greater because of the special emphasis on Jesus’s person and ethos, separation from the peculiar practice of Judaism would become definite.

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