



**Sacchi, Paolo**

***The History of the Second Temple Period***

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This book is the English translation of the Italian *History of the Second Temple* from 1976 by the well-known Turin professor emeritus Paolo Sacchi. The present book has been updated by a preface (9–22) and a recent bibliography (513–16).

The book consists of four parts divided into nineteen chapters. Part 1 (“The Age of Exile”) begins with chapter 1, “The Events” (46–68), in which the author argues that immediately after the fall of the monarchy there was a brief period when Jewish society decided to have a constitution based on the law. This was a regime foreseen in the final version of Deuteronomy, dating to the years immediately after 515 B.C.E., and mirrored an analogous process to the one that had taken place in Greece with the first written legislation. Chapter 2, “The Jewish Culture of the Sixth Century BCE” (69–111), proposes that in the sixth century B.C.E. Ezekiel promoted a new Jewish culture of the exile that, on the one hand, remained within the Jewish tradition but that, on the other hand, opened a heavenly and eschatological dimension in it, thus transcending history as something dependent on God’s will.

Chapter 3, “Early Zadokitism (c. 520-400 BCE)” (114–29) begins the second part of the book, “The Zadokite Period.” Here Sacchi recounts that, after bringing his work to a close, Nehemiah had given Judaism a new face. With Nehemiah the theology of the

covenant was imposed in Jerusalem in its Deuteronomistic form. Chapter 4, “Nehemiah” (130–51), argues that in this period there was a struggle between nationalistic and universalistic views and groups, but common to both was their worship of the one God. Chapter 5, “The Samaritans” (152–59), addresses the Samaritan schism, the Samaritan Torah, and Samaritan messianism, while chapter 6, “Late Zadokitism (c. 400-200 BCE)” (160–212), focuses on the Enochic movement, the origins of apocalyptic literature, and the Book of Watchers, the Chronicler, Job, Qohelet, and Hellenism.

Part 3, “Palestine from the Advent of Seleucid Domination to the Destruction of the Second Temple, begins with chapter 7, “Palestine under the Seleucids: The Maccabees” (214–49). Here Sacchi discusses the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, the ethical and political collapse, the various forms of reaction, Onias IV, the Essenes, the early apocalyptic movement, and the Maccabees. Chapter 8, “The Hasmonaeans” (250–83), continues the historical coverage, focusing on Simon, John Hyrcanus Aristobulus I, Alexander Janneus, Alexandra Salome, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, and the Roman-Herodian period. Chapter 9, “Judaea at the Time of Jesus of Nazareth” (284-302), then covers the reign of Herod the Great and his successors, the Herodians and the procurators.

Chapter 10, “Introduction to the Problems” (304–15), initiates Sacchi’s fourth section, “The Themes of Middle Judaism.” “Middle Judaism” (300 B.C.E.–70 C.E.) is defined and its general characteristics given (the two pillars of temple and law). Because this period saw the rise of ideological and theological fragmentation, Sacchi treats it in a thematic way rather than according to ancient authors. Chapter 11, “The Problem of Knowledge” (316–27), examines apocalyptic vision and Essenic illumination and its relation to the law and to *ratio*. Questions addressed here include: Where does knowledge come from? Who has the authority to receive and interpret it? Chapter 12, “Predeterminism and the Problem of Evil” (28–54), focuses on determinism, dualism, humanity and evil, and the devil, while chapter 13, “Salvation” (355–79), shifts the discussion to salvation and purification, justification and judgment, and salvation in Essenism and in more traditional circles.

In chapter 14, “Messianism” (80–408), Sacchi surveys messianism prior to 200 B.C.E., the rebirth of messianism in the second century B.C.E., superhuman figures and messianism, dual messianism, the rebirth of Davidic messianism, and Christian messianism. Chapter 15, “The Righteous” (409–25), examines various aspects of “righteousness,” including the righteous in Ben Sira, the Teacher of Righteousness, and righteousness as a social category in the second half of the first century B.C.E. Chapter 16, “Life beyond Death: The Immortal Soul and the Resurrection of the Body” (426–38), shifts the discussion to the question of death, resurrection, and immortality of the soul. In chapter 17, “The Sacred and the Profane, the Impure and the Pure” (439–76), Sacchi covers a number of issues, including the sacred and impurity in the Hebrew Bible, the relationship between humans and God in the theology of the covenant, priestly legislation, Ezekiel and a

coherent theology of the sacred, the shift from the Persian to the Hellenistic age and the crisis of category, impurity and sin, impurity and sex, impurity and pagan morality, norms of purity, and, finally, Christianity's radicalization of Isaiah's ideas on impurity. Sacchi briefly discusses the lunar and solar calendars and the relation between the two in chapter 18, "The Two Calendars" (477–84). Chapter 19, "Jesus in His Time" (485–95), concludes the body of the work and addresses Jesus' historical situation, Jesus and the theology of promise, his point of departure, the Son of Man and justification, and Jesus' death.

A translator's note (23), a list of abbreviations (24–25), an introduction (27–44), a bibliography (496–516), and an index of references (517–29) and of authors (530–33) fills out the work.

The book is important for several reasons. First, unlike, for instance, E. Schürer's *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, it covers both the Persian and the Hellenistic parts of the Second Temple period. Second, it treats the Second Temple period both from a historical (parts 1–3) and from a systematic perspective (part 4). It incorporates the newest insights from historical research and gives enough space to religiously and theologically relevant topics. Third, it promotes the idea that Christianity was originally only one of many sects in the Jewish world of the day. Fourth, it includes the newest insights on, to cite but one example, the Enochic and Qumran literature in the latest efforts to rewrite Jewish history. Fifth, it approaches the period thematically rather than ideologically, thus leaving open the possibility of different interpretations of the writings in questions. Furthermore, this book shows, as do other publications, the shift that research on the Second Temple period has taken. It moves research beyond the understanding that the Second Temple period merely forms the Jewish background of the New Testament. Thus, it constitutes an independent field between Hebrew Bible and New Testament and Christian origins. It integrates biblical studies, Qumran studies, and Hellenistic Judaism and concentrates more on the independent religious identity and the theological contents of the relevant writings. The breadth of the period and the material covered may sometimes lead to theses rather than to arguments, but the integrative approach of the book is of great value. There are few footnotes and references to secondary literature, but one can be sure that Sacchi knows contemporaneous research as few others. The book is surely a welcome addition to Lester Grabbe's two-volume *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992–94).