

Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity

The Reception of Enochic Literature



CAMBRIDGE

Annette Yoshiko Reed

FALLEN ANGELS AND THE HISTORY OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

This book considers the early history of Jewish–Christian relations through a focus on traditions about the fallen angels. In the *Book of the Watchers*, an Enochic apocalypse from the third century BCE, the “sons of God” of Gen 6:1–4 are accused of corrupting humankind through their teachings of metalworking, cosmetology, magic, and divination. By tracing the transformations of this motif in Second Temple, Rabbinic, and early medieval Judaism and early, late antique, and Byzantine Christianity, this book sheds light on the history of interpretation of Genesis, the changing status of Enochic literature, and the place of parabiblical texts and traditions in the interchange between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In the process, it explores issues such as the role of text-selection in the delineation of community boundaries and the development of early Jewish and Christian ideas about the origins of evil on the earth.

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*To my father, Dr. Steven R. Reed,
who taught me how (and why) to think.*



Contents

<i>Preface</i>	page viii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	x
Introduction	1
1 Angelic Descent and Apocalyptic Epistemology: The Teachings of Enoch and the Fallen Angels in the <i>Book of the Watchers</i>	24
2 From Scribalism to Sectarianism: The Angelic Descent Myth and the Social Settings of Enochic Pseudepigraphy	58
3 Primeval History and the Problem of Evil: Genesis, the <i>Book of the Watchers</i>, and the Fallen Angels in Pre-Rabbinic Judaism	84
4 The Parting of the Ways? Enoch and the Fallen Angels in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity	122
5 Demonology and the Construction of Christian Identity: Approaches to Illicit Angelic Instruction among Proto-Orthodox Christians	160
6 The Interpenetration of Jewish and Christian Traditions: The Exegesis of Genesis and the Marginalization of Enochic Literature	190
7 The Apocalyptic Roots of Merkabah Mysticism? The Reemergence of Enochic Traditions in Rabbinic Judaism	233
Epilogue	273
<i>Bibliography</i>	278
<i>Index of Modern Authors</i>	297
<i>Index of Primary Sources</i>	300
<i>Subject Index</i>	310

Preface

This book is a revision of my dissertation, which was written in the Department of Religion at Princeton University under the supervision of Martha Himmelfarb, Peter Schäfer, and John G. Gager. I cannot imagine a more stimulating intellectual environment in which to study, nor kinder people with whom to work. I offer them my warmest thanks for their support and inspiration, academic and otherwise. The dissertation and book also benefited much from feedback from, and conversations with, Adam H. Becker, Raʿanan Boustan, Peter Brown, Patricia Crone, Fritz Graf, Elaine Pagels, John C. Reeves, and Burt Visotzky. For their comments and advice, I am grateful to Kirsti Copeland, David Frankfurter, Paula Fredriksen, Bob Kraft, Eileen Schuller, Michael E. Stone, and Peter Widdicombe. Funding for the dissertation on which this book is based was provided by the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University. Earlier versions of several chapters were presented at the Center’s Religion and Culture workshop as well as at the conference *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Imagined Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* and in the Early Jewish–Christian Relations and Pseudepigrapha sections of the Society of Biblical Literature’s annual meetings. Extended versions of some of the arguments in Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 7 have been published in different forms in earlier articles: “From Asael and Šemiḥazah to Uzzah, Azzah, and Azael: 3 Enoch 5 (§§7–8) and the Jewish Reception-History of 1 Enoch” (*Jewish Studies Quarterly* 8 [2001]: 1–32); “The Textual Identity, Literary History, and Social Setting of 1 Enoch: Reflections on George Nickelsburg’s Commentary on 1 Enoch 1–36; 81–108.” (*Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 5 [2003]: 279–96); “The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Etiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr” (*Journal of Early Christian Studies* 12 [2004]: 141–71); and “Heavenly Ascent, Angelic Descent, and the Transmission of Knowledge in 1 Enoch 6–16”

(*Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 47–66).

I would also like to express my appreciation to colleagues, students, and staff in the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster University – not least for fostering such an intellectually stimulating and supportive academic context that I was able to complete extensive revisions during my first year of full-time teaching. A grant from McMaster’s Arts Research Board, moreover, provided support for the preparation of the manuscript and indexes, and I am grateful to Christopher Cubitt, Marko Geslani, Jeremy Penner, Lily Vuong, and Susan Wendel, for their help. Warm thanks, as well, to Jonathan Geen for his aid during the final stage of reviewing proofs. Lastly, on behalf of myself and Cambridge University Press, I would like to thank the Koret Foundation Publication Program for their generosity in awarding this book a subvention to help defray the costs of publication.

To my parents, Steven R. and Michiko Reed, and to my husband, Dove C. Sussman, I owe greater debts than words can express.

Annette Yoshiko Reed

Hamilton, Ontario, November 1, 2004

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations of other sources follow P. H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, Mass., 1999) and H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (trans. M. Bockmuehl; Minneapolis, 1996).

1. SUBDOCUMENTS AND MANUSCRIPTS OF 1 ENOCH

- BW *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 1–36).
Sim. *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 En. 37–71).
AB *Astronomical Book* (1 En. 71–82).
BD *Book of Dreams* (1 En. 83–90).
EE *Epistle of Enoch* (1 En. 91–105/6/7).
“AW” “Apocalypse of Weeks” (1 En. 93:1–10; 91:11–17).
“AA” “Animal Apocalypse” (1 En. 85–90).
Gr^{Pan} Codex Panopolitanus; M. Black and A. Denis, eds. *Apocalypsis Henochi Graece: Fragmenta Pseudepigraphorum* (Leiden, 1970) 19–36.
Gr^{CB} Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus XII; Black and Denis, *Apocalypsis*, 37–44.
Gr^{Syn} Excerpts of BW in Sync. [see below]
Gr^{Vat} Codex Vaticanus Gr. 1809; Black and Denis, *Apocalypsis*, 36–37.

2. TRANSLATIONS AND COMMENTARIES OF 1 ENOCH

- Black, *Commentary*. M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition* (Leiden, 1985).

- Charles, *Commentary*. R. H. Charles, ed. and trans., *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* (Oxford, 1912).
- Fleming and Radermacher, *Henoch* J. Flemming and L. Radermacher, eds. and trans., *Das Buch Henoch, herausgegeben im Auftrage der Kirchenväter-commission der Königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1901).
- Knibb, *Commentary*. M. A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments*. 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978).
- Milik, *Commentary*. J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford, 1976).
- Nickelsburg, *Commentary*. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, chapters 1–36, 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, 2001).
- Tiller, *Commentary* P. A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch* (SBLEJL 4; Atlanta, 1993).

3. EDITIONS AND COLLECTIONS OF OTHER MAJOR PRIMARY SOURCES

- AMB J. Naveh and S. Shaked, eds., *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1985).
- APOT R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*. 2 vols. (Oxford, 1913).
- Ber.Rabbati* *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*, ed. H. Albeck (Jerusalem, 1983).
- BHM A. Jellinek, ed., *Bet ha-midrash*, 5 vols. (Jerusalem, 1967).
- B-M A. E. Brooke and N. McLean, eds., *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Text of Codex Vaticanus* (Cambridge, 1906–40).

- CMC *Cologne Mani Codex*; ed. A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, *Der Kölner Mani-Kodex: Über das Werden seines Leibes* (Opladen, 1988).
- Gen.Rab. *Genesis Rabbah*; ed. H. Albeck and J. Theodor, *Bereshit Rabba mit Kritischem Apparat und Kommentar*. 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1965).
- Gött. *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum*; vol. I: *Genesis*, ed. J. W. Wevers (Göttingen, 1974).
- MSF J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem, 1993).
- OTP J. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2 vols. (New York, 1983–85).
- PGM K. Preisendanz and A. Henrichs, eds., *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, 2 vols. (2nd. ed.; Stuttgart, 1973–74).
- Stuckenbruck, BG L. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran* (Tübingen, 1997).
- Sync. George Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica*; ed. A. A. Mosshammer (Leipzig, 1984); trans., W. A. Adler and P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford, 2002).
- Yerahmeel *Chronicle of Yerahmeel*; trans. M. Gaster, *The Chronicle of Jerahmeel* (New York, 1971).

FALLEN ANGELS AND THE HISTORY OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Introduction

THE BOOK OF GENESIS TELLS US PRECIOUS LITTLE ABOUT THE FIGURE of Enoch. In the course of presenting a genealogical list of those who lived before the Flood, it notes his Sethian ancestry via Jared (5:19) and his fathering of Methusaleh (5:21). We find only hints of his special status: the other men in the genealogy merely live, propagate, and die, but Genesis states twice that Enoch “walked with God” (5:22, 24). And rather than tell his death in straightforward terms, it recounts that “he was no more, for God took him” (5:24).

The brevity of the biblical comments stands in stark contrast with the wealth of traditions about Enoch in Judaism and Christianity.¹ As early as the Second Temple period (536 BCE to 70 CE), Enoch attracts intensive interest within Judaism.² He becomes a scribe, sage, and even scientist. As visionary, he is taken up to heaven and travels with angels to the ends of earth. As witness and prophet, he exhorts against sin, predicts Israel’s history, and even intercedes for wicked angels. Moreover, books begin to circulate under his name, purporting to record the visions and teachings that the antediluvian patriarch passed on to his progeny and bequeathed to the righteous of future generations.

The present study tells the story of one of the earliest and most influential of these books, namely, the *Book of the Watchers*. Focusing on its distinctive traditions about the Watchers, or fallen angels,³ I will trace the long and winding fate of this apocalypse from its composition around the third century BCE

¹ VanderKam, *Enoch*; idem, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 88–100; Himmelfarb, “Report”; Adler, “Enoch”; Kraft, “Philo”; Alexander, “From Son of Adam.” For Manicheaism and Islam, Reeves, *Heralds*, 39–42, 183–98; Alexander, “Jewish Tradition,” 11–30; Erder, “Origin.”

² See Ch. 2 n. 86.

³ “Watchers” [עִרְרִין] denotes a class of angels and can refer to both heavenly angels and their fallen counterparts; Dimant, “Fallen Angels,” 32–33; Davidson, *Angels*, 38–39. Used in the context of BW, it typically denotes fallen angels.

and its widespread influence among pre-Rabbinic Jews (including members of the Jesus Movement), to its rejection by the Rabbinic movement, adoption by early Christians, suppression by later church leaders, and eventual loss to the West. In the process, the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* provides a lens through which to examine broader issues, such as the early history of Jewish and Christian reflection on the Problem of Evil, the relationship between “biblical” exegesis and “parabiblical” literature, the social dynamics of canonization, and the place of noncanonical texts and traditions in the interaction between Judaism and Christianity.

1. THE “BOOK(S) OF ENOCH” AND THE *BOOK OF THE WATCHERS*

From the Middle Ages to early modern period, the early Enochic pseudepigrapha⁴ were largely lost to the West. To an even greater degree than in ages past, the mystery surrounding Enoch came to be associated with lost books and secret scrolls, wisdom suppressed and writings forgotten. Even as the books themselves were gone, the ancient allusions remained. It could not have escaped the attention of Christian Kabbalists that early Christian literature and Jewish mystical texts like the *Zohar* both mentioned “book(s) of Enoch”; Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) even professed to have bought such a book at a very high price, to the amusement of his more skeptical colleague, Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522).⁵ Likewise, occultists such as John Dee (1527–1608) sought direct access to the secrets revealed to Enoch, appealing to the precedent of this ancient visionary when claiming to have received angelic revelations of their own.⁶

Excerpts from the *Book of the Watchers* also survived in the chronographical literature of Syriac Christianity and Byzantium. When the Renaissance scholar Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609) first published portions of George Syncellus’ *Ecloga Chronographica* in 1606, some readers were struck by the passages that the ninth-century chronographer quotes “from the first book of Enoch concerning the Watchers.”⁷ Although dismissing its claim to antediluvian antiquity, scholars of the time soon recognized this “book of Enoch” as the source of the scattered allusions to Enoch’s prophecies about the fallen angels in the NT and early Christian literature.⁸

⁴ I use the terms “pseudepigraphon” and “pseudepigraphical” in a literary sense, to mean a text composed in the name of another.

⁵ Schmidt, “Traces,” 45–46.

⁶ Harkness, *John Dee’s Conversations*, esp. 166–67; Laycock, *Complete Enochian Dictionary*, esp. 14.

⁷ Sync. 11.19: ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου βιβλίου Ἐνώχ περὶ τῶν ἐγρηγόρων; see n. 30.

⁸ See Adler, *Time*, 6–7.

Rumors about the continued preservation of Enochic literature in Ethiopia finally led, after several failures and false starts, to the Western rediscovery of the *Book of the Watchers* and other early Enochic pseudepigrapha in 1773, when three manuscripts containing *Maṣḥafa Henok Nabi* were brought to Europe by James Bruce.⁹ The publication and translation of this work – later dubbed *Ethiopic Enoch* or *1 Enoch* to distinguish it from an Enochic pseudepigraphon preserved in Slavonic (*2 Enoch*) – prompted further investigation into this intriguing book and its influence on early Christians,¹⁰ later facilitated by the discovery of a Greek manuscript containing *1 En.* 1:1–32:6 in 1886–1887.¹¹

Thanks largely to the pioneering research of R. H. Charles (1855–1931), it was established that *1 Enoch* is a collection of at least five separate writings and that Syncellus’ quotations derive from the first one (thus dubbed the *Book of the Watchers*).¹² Speculations about the date, provenance, and original language of these books varied until the discovery of Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch* among the Dead Sea Scrolls and their publication by J. T. Milik from 1951 to 1976.¹³ The distribution of material in the eleven fragments confirmed Charles’ theory that *1 Enoch* is a collection of originally distinct documents. In addition, the paleographical evidence of the earliest fragments suggested that two of these documents, the *Astronomical Book* (*1 En.* 72–82) and the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 En.* 1–36), date from the third century BCE, making them our oldest known apocalypses and among our most ancient nonbiblical examples of Jewish literature.¹⁴

The recognition of the antiquity of the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers* has revolutionized scholarship on the apocalyptic literature. Although the *Astronomical Book* may be older, the *Book of the Watchers* has proved most helpful in illuminating the emergence and development of the genre. Scholars who focus on formal literary features have studied its descriptions of Enoch’s ascent to heaven and his tours of heaven and earth,¹⁵ whereas those who seek to characterize an apocalyptic ideology have pointed to its interest in the Problem of Evil.¹⁶

⁹ Bodl 4, Bodl 5, and Paris 32. See further Flemming and Radermacher, *Henoch*, 2.

¹⁰ Charles, *Commentary*, xxvii–xxx.

¹¹ Codex Panopolitanus, also called the Akhmim MS or Gizeh Fragment.

¹² Charles, *Commentary*, xlvi–lii; Milik, *Commentary*, 22.

¹³ 4QEn^{a,b,c,d,e,f,g}, 4QEnastr^{a,b,c,d}, Milik, *Commentary*.

¹⁴ 4QEnastr^a and 4QEn^{a,b}. Milik, *Commentary*, 164–65, 273–74; Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 7.

¹⁵ E.g., Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 1–9, 47–59; idem, “Towards the Morphology,” 1–19.

¹⁶ E.g., Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 47–71, 82–87, 93–104; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 19–22.

As modern research integrates the evidence of this apocalypse into our understanding of Second Temple Judaism, scholars have increasingly taken up the challenge of investigating the later reception-history of Enochic texts and traditions. An initial effort was made by Milik in the introduction to the *editio princeps* of the Aramaic fragments from Qumran.¹⁷ Although ambitious in scope and invaluable as a resource for further study, Milik's account of the *Nachleben* of the writings in *1 Enoch* suffered from his idiosyncratic ideas about the date and provenance of texts like the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 En.* 37–71), *2 Enoch*, and *3 Enoch*.¹⁸

Nevertheless, it remains that Milik is one of the few scholars who have attempted to trace the reception-history of these texts fully in both Judaism and Christianity.¹⁹ Like their early modern counterparts, most scholars have focused on the influence of early Enochic texts and traditions on Christianity, while limiting their consideration of Judaism mainly to the pre-Christian period. Inquiries into the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* have mostly centered on the quotation of *1 En.* 1:9 in the NT Epistle of Jude and the allusions to *1 En.* 6–16 in Jude, *1 Peter*, and *2 Peter*. From that point forward, the focus has fallen on the fate of these early Jewish texts in the church. Building on H. J. Lawlor's 1897 article on "Early Citations from the Book of Enoch," scholars such as James VanderKam, William Adler, Birger Pearson, and Sebastian Brock have discussed the use of "book(s) of Enoch" by late antique and early medieval Christians, ranging from proto-orthodox Church Fathers to Alexandrian, Syriac, and Byzantine chroniclers.²⁰ In light of the authoritative status of *1 Enoch* in the Ethiopian church, there has also been much research on the prehistory of this specific collection.²¹

By contrast, the Jewish *Nachleben* of the Enochic literature has remained largely unexplored. Prior to the discoveries at Qumran, Gershom Scholem

¹⁷ Milik, *Commentary*, 70–138.

¹⁸ Milik, *Commentary*, 89–100, 107–16, 125–35, and critiques in Knibb, "Date"; Greenfield and Stone, "Enochic Pentateuch," 51–52, 55–60; idem, "Books and Traditions," 98–103; Black, *Commentary*, 181–93; VanderKam, *From Revelation* 359–61.

¹⁹ In her 1978 dissertation on the fallen angels, Dimant included evidence from Second Temple Judaism and later midrashic and medicinal literature alongside some early Christian texts; apart from early Jewish literature, however, her concern lay less in the reception-history of Enochic writings than on the different versions of the underlying "legend." In Nickelsburg's recent commentary, the treatment of Rabbinic Judaism and the Hekhalot literature make up less than a single page (*Commentary*, 81), in contrast to more than twenty dedicated to the Christian transformation of Enochic traditions (pp. 82–108).

²⁰ VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs"; Adler, *Time*, esp. 82–90, 119–21, 176–82; Brock, "Fragment"; Pearson, "Enoch."

²¹ E.g. Knibb, "Christian Adoption."

highlighted the affinities between *1 Enoch* and later Merkavah mysticism (i.e., chariot mysticism), treating both as products of the same esoteric stream of Judaism.²² Scholars such as Ithmar Gruenwald further explored the possible connections between early Jewish apocalypses and the late antique Jewish traditions in the Hekhalot literature, making special reference to Enoch's heavenly ascent and Throne-vision in the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 En.* 14). Yet, aside from the appeal to phenomenological parallels and the recourse to "secret" (and, hence, unrecoverable and invisible) channels of transmission,²³ there have been few efforts to deal with the *Nachleben* of early Enochic texts and traditions in post-70 Judaism.

Despite ample evidence for their influence, there has yet to be a synthesis that considers developments in Second Temple, Rabbinic, and early medieval Judaism alongside early, late antique, and Byzantine Christianity. Towards this goal, this study will trace the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* from its composition in the third century BCE until the early Middle Ages, by focusing on its distinctive treatment of the fallen angels as corrupting teachers of humankind.

2. ANGELIC DESCENT, ILLICIT INSTRUCTION, AND THE ORIGINS OF EVIL

While describing the proliferation of human wickedness that prompted God to cleanse the earth with the Flood, Genesis recounts:

When humans began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God [בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים] saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took wives from them as they chose. . . . The *Nephilim* were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the *Gibborim* of old, men of renown. (Gen 6:1–4)²⁴

The *Book of the Watchers* provides our earliest extant evidence for the exegesis and expansion of this tantalizing terse passage.²⁵ Before recounting Enoch's heavenly ascent and otherworldly journeys, the apocalypse describes

²² Scholem, *Major Trends*, 43–45.

²³ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, esp. 45.

²⁴ The origins and meaning of Gen 6:1–4 fall outside the purview of our inquiry; see Hendel, "Of Demigods," 13–26; Soggin, "Sons," 135–36; Kilmer, "Mesopotamian," 39–44. Translations from biblical literature here and throughout follow JPS.

²⁵ The relationship between *1 En.* 6–16 and Gen 6:1–4 is, of course, much more than a matter of exegesis; see Ch. 1.

the descent of angelic Watchers from heaven, their impure relations with human women, and the bloodthirsty violence of their progeny. Throughout these chapters, the biblically based theme of sexual mingling is interwoven with an extrabiblical tradition that levels a far more dire accusation against Asael and other Watchers: according to the *Book of the Watchers*, their revelation of secret knowledge caused “all manner of wickedness” to be adopted by humankind, thereby accounting for the antediluvian proliferation of sin.²⁶

The motif of illicit angelic instruction is central to the *Book of the Watchers*, shaping its unique approach to issues such as the origins of evil and the limits of human knowledge. Insofar as this motif represents a distinctive feature of the apocalypse, it also provides an heuristic focus for research into its reception-history. Jewish and Christian references to the fallen angels abound, but the tradition that their teachings corrupted humankind is relatively rare. In contrast to the Watchers’ sexual misdeeds, their pedagogical transgressions are not readily derived from Genesis. Unlike traditions about their binding and imprisonment, this motif occurs rarely in other pre-Rabbinic texts.²⁷ Moreover, even despite the popularity of the *Book of the Watchers* in the first centuries after its composition, the instruction motif is absent or suppressed in almost all Second Temple Jewish sources and in the NT. As we shall see, even authors who are otherwise dependent on this apocalypse seem reticent to accept its assertion that sinfulness has a supernatural origin, arising neither from a primeval act of human disobedience, nor from an evil inclination in the human heart, but from a breach of heavenly harmony.

An investigation of this motif has the potential to illumine the history of interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 as well as the history of the transmission and reception of early Enochic texts and traditions. Accordingly, this study surveys the occurrences of this motif in Jewish sources, ranging from the *Book of the Watchers* to medieval midrashic collections, and in Christian sources, ranging from the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr to Syncellus’ *Ecloga Chronographica*. For each source, I will attempt to determine the relationship to the *Book of the Watchers* on internal literary grounds and also with reference to external evidence for its circulation in specific groups, communities, and geographical locales. By triangulating different types of evidence, I will chart the various channels through which the *Book of the Watchers* was transmitted, both before

²⁶ On BW’s relationship to Gen 2–3, see Ch. 1.

²⁷ To my knowledge, the motif occurs in only two other texts composed before the second century CE: *Jubilees* and the *Similitudes*; see Ch. 3.

and after its exclusion, first from the biblical canon of the Rabbis, and later from the OT of the Western Christian orthodoxy.

The *Book of the Watchers* provides an ideal subject for such an inquiry. We possess codicological evidence from more than one stage and language of its transmission as well as from different geographical areas and religious communities. The discoveries at Qumran yielded at least five separate manuscripts that contain fragments of the Aramaic original, ranging in date from the middle of the second century BCE to the first century CE.²⁸ Not only do these fragments help us to recover the original text, but they provide us with invaluable evidence for the social settings of its early reception. Even as the evidence of later Enochic pseudepigrapha (e.g., *2 Enoch*, *Similitudes*) attests the *Book of the Watchers*' circulation in other settings, the Qumran fragments allow us to locate the use of this book within the life of a specific community of Jews in the Second Temple period.

In addition, two witnesses preserve parts of the *Book of the Watchers* in Greek translation. Erik Larson has persuasively argued that this and other Enochic writings were translated into Greek by Jews in the first century BCE.²⁹ Both of our extant witnesses, however, are of Christian provenance. Not only do our Greek witnesses preserve almost all of the *Book of the Watchers*, with duplications both within and between them,³⁰ but they evince a surprisingly lively interest in Enoch and the fallen angels among different Christian groups in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. An Egyptian manuscript from the fifth or sixth century CE, Codex Panopolitanus, contains two incomplete manuscripts of the *Book of the Watchers*, bound together with apocryphal Petrine writings (also incomplete). Like the Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus XII, which contains the *Epistle of Enoch*, Pseudo-Ezekielian writings, and passages from Melito of Sardis, this manuscript attests the practice of collecting Enochic books together with material of Christian authorship. These manuscripts thus provide important material and contextual evidence for the Christian reception-history of this work. As Michael Knibb notes, “the fact that extracts

²⁸ 4QEn^{a,b,c,d,e}. Milik, *Commentary*, 139–243; Knibb, *Commentary*, 6–15; Nickelsburg, “Books of Enoch at Qumran,” 100–3; idem, *Commentary*, 9–11. In March 2004, Esther and Hanan Eshel identified yet another Aramaic MS of BW from Qumran, a fragmentary papyrus preserving 1 En. 8:4–9:3 and dating from 50–25 BCE. Further information will be published in “Six New Fragments from Qumran,” forthcoming in DJD vol. 11.

²⁹ Larson, “Translation,” 198–203; Knibb, “Christian Adoption,” 401; see Ch. 3. Enochic pseudepigrapha may have also circulated in Latin translation, but the evidence is, as Nickelsburg rightly concludes, “slim and far from compelling” (*Commentary*, 14); see Ch. 4 n. 105, 109.

³⁰ 1 En. 1:1–32:6 in Gr^{Pan}, duplicating 19:3–21:9; 1 En. 6:1–10:15, 15:8–16:2, 26:9–27:7 in Gr^{Syn} (Sync. 11.19–13.19, 24.10–27.7), duplicating 9:1–5.

from the Enochic corpus were copied with other Christian works shows that they were thought to be consonant with Christian beliefs and were part of the Christian tradition.”³¹

In addition, as noted above, the Byzantine chronographer Syncellus preserves lengthy quotations from the *Book of the Watchers*. Although he warns the reader that this work is spurious, he nevertheless preserves it, as a traditional proof-text in the chronographical discussion of early human history. His quotations from the *Book of the Watchers* shed light on its use in yet another setting, in which doubts about its authenticity were outweighed by its value for supplementing the information about primeval times in the Hebrew Bible and Hellenistic historiography.³²

We also have numerous manuscripts of the Ge‘ez (ancient Ethiopic) translation of the *Book of the Watchers*. In contrast to the Greek version, this translation was made by Christians for Christians. The Ge‘ez version reflects the use of Greek sources and alone preserves the entirety of the *Book of the Watchers*.³³ This apocalypse here comprises the first thirty-six chapters of a larger compilation of Enochic pseudepigrapha, called *Maṣḥafa Henok Nabi* in the Ethiopian Church and *1 Enoch* within modern Western scholarship.³⁴ Although our earliest catalogued Ge‘ez manuscripts date from the 15th century, the translation has its origins in the period between the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Aksumite Kingdom in Ethiopia in the mid-fourth century CE and the decline of the Aksumite power in the sixth.³⁵ The fact that the rendering of Enochic writings into Ge‘ez was part of a larger, state-sponsored project of scriptural translation may hint at their continued authority in other, geographically proximate Christian circles even at a time when Enochic pseudepigrapha were being excluded from the biblical canons created by ecclesiarchs in the Roman Empire.

There are also a number of references to the *Book of the Watchers* in Jewish and Christian literature, as well as explicit comments about Enochic books and discussions about their authority and authenticity. Such statements cluster in

³¹ Knibb, “Christian Adoption,” 402.

³² Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, liv–lv.

³³ VanderKam (*From Revelation*, 380–95) argues persuasively against Ullendorf (*Ethiopia*, 61–62) and Knibb (*Commentary*, 37–46), who suggest that Aramaic readings may have also influenced the present form of the text.

³⁴ Some MSS contain only *1 Enoch* (e.g., Berl; Bodl 4; BM Add. 24185; Abb 99; Paris 32; Garrett MS [Princeton Ethiopic 2]; Vat 71; Westenholtz MS; Ul). In others, it is copied with biblical books and/or with books such as *Jubilees* (e.g., BM 485); see Charles, *Commentary*, xxi–xxiv; Knibb, *Commentary*, 23–27.

³⁵ Ullendorf, *Ethiopia*, 55–56; Knibb, “Christian Adoption,” 403; Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 17.

the writings of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity but occur in later sources too. Examples can be found in texts composed in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Syriac, showing that Enochic texts and traditions circulated across a surprisingly broad geographical range.

Our evidence, moreover, suggests that many Jews and Christians accepted the book's attribution to Enoch and that some granted the *Book of the Watchers* a degree of authority akin to biblical texts. Readers in the modern West may encounter this apocalypse as an "extracanonical" work, but much of its ancient audience appears to have felt otherwise. Consequently, the fascinating fate of this apocalypse also provides us with an opportunity to explore issues pertaining to Scripture, canon, and authority in Judaism and Christianity, such as the formation of Jewish and Christian biblical canons, the continued influence of parabiblical texts on biblical exegesis, and the role of text-selection in the delineation of community boundaries, both between and within religious traditions.

3. ORAL AND LITERARY CHANNELS OF TRANSMISSION

There are many scholarly studies that trace the interpretation of a single passage or motif.³⁶ For the most part, however, histories of exegesis focus on biblical passages, and scholars assume oral tradition as the main conduit for the transmission of extrabiblical lore. The latter tendency is particularly prominent in treatments of so-called legends such as the story of the fallen angels; the relevant texts are commonly approached as imperfect reflections of pure, oral forms of myths or stories, such that literary evidence from widely divergent eras can be readily conflated.³⁷ By contrast, the present study focuses on a tradition first found in a now noncanonical apocalypse and tries to trace the trajectories of its influence in more concrete terms. In the process, I seek to locate the Jewish and Christian use of parabiblical texts within the production, redaction, and collection of religious literature in specific social, cultural, and political contexts.

Since the days of A. Dillman and R. H. Charles, scholarship on the "OT Pseudepigrapha" has been patterned on biblical criticism. The search for the oral myths that shaped the *Book of the Watchers* has deep roots in the

³⁶ Most relevant for our purposes are studies about the history of interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 (Dexinger, "Judisch-christliche"; Wagner, "Interpretations"; Wickham, "Sons") and about extrabiblical traditions concerning fallen angels (Delcor, "Myth"; Dimant, "Fallen Angels"; Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*; Wey, *Funktionen*; Bauckham, "Fall").

³⁷ E.g., Dimant, "Fallen Angels," 49, 101–2.

form-critical quest to recover the ancient “legends” behind the Hebrew Bible. The presumed priority of oral tradition has been no less influential in research on the continuities between Second Temple Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism, albeit for different reasons: internalizing the classical Rabbinic concept of the Oral Torah as an unbroken tradition paralleling the literary transmission of the Written Torah (e.g., *b.Shabb.* 31a; *b.Eruv.* 54b), researchers often base their inquiries into parabiblical texts and traditions on the assumption that midrashim and aggadot, by their very nature, circulate orally.³⁸

Scholarship on Second Temple Judaism rightly draws from both the study of the Hebrew Bible and the study of Rabbinic Judaism. Any interdisciplinary approach, however, inevitably risks dependence on outdated or inadequate models. Biblical scholarship has increasingly highlighted the shortcomings of Textual Criticism, Source Criticism, and Form Criticism when pursued in isolation from efforts to understand the final literary product; inasmuch as the older approaches privilege the Ur-text and the underlying “legend,” they can inculcate a dismissive attitude towards the text as text, tacitly dismissing its redactors as artless tradents. Thanks in part to fresh insights from the field of Literary Criticism, research on the Hebrew Bible has begun to focus more on the final forms of texts and to explore the role of redaction in the literary production of meaning.³⁹ At the same time, the Rabbinic concept of the Oral Torah has been the subject of sophisticated studies that have drawn important distinctions between the rhetorical function of this trope in the legitimization of Rabbinic authority, on the one hand, and the social realities of Rabbinic culture, on the other.⁴⁰

That is not to say, of course, that we should dismiss the importance of orality in Judaism (or, for that matter, Christianity). Recent research, however, has exposed the naïveté of scholars who treat the oral tradition only as a storehouse of common motifs from which ancient authors drew and/or approach texts as merely calcified deposits of oral traditions. The relationship between orality and textuality was often so fraught in premodern times, precisely because the two spheres were so tightly intertwined.⁴¹ The composition and transmission of texts necessitated the skills of the scribe. Accordingly, some of the texts in our survey emerged from strictly scribal milieux. Others were more likely authored by oral dictation, reflecting a certain degree of wealth on the part of the “writer” but not literacy *per se*.

³⁸ E.g., Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*, 266–68.

³⁹ E.g., Sternberg, *Poetics*, 1–23; Alter, *Art*, 12–20.

⁴⁰ Esp. Jaffee, *Torah*.

⁴¹ Esp. Talmon, “Oral,” esp. 121–24, 148–56; Jaffee, *Torah*, passim; Gamble, *Books*, esp. 14–17, 28–32; Elman and Gershoni, *Transmitting*, 4–19.

In the case of the reception of texts, the oral component was even more pronounced and even further intertwined with textuality. Inasmuch as reading was primarily an oral and aural experience, oral traditions shaped and were shaped by literature, just as the aural reception of writings affected their literary transmission.⁴² Any exclusively oral components in this matrix now lie beyond our access. Nevertheless, we may find hints of the dynamic interaction of orality and textuality in the surprising fluidity in the form and content of many ancient writings as well as in the ongoing reinterpretation of texts and redeployment of motifs, both biblical and extrabiblical, to fit the changing needs of different communities.⁴³

It is inadequate, in my view, only to look *behind* a text for the pure, oral forms of interpretative motifs or extrabiblical “legends.” Rather, we should see the text, first of all, as emerging from a larger matrix that included both oral and literary components and, secondly, as continually shaped by the changing settings of its recitation and performance. In concentrating on the literary transmission of traditions, I am not denying the continued oral circulation of traditions. Rather, I am questioning the validity of understanding oral transmission and textual activity as separate spheres and of privileging the former in our analyses of ancient literature. If we adopt a more nuanced understanding of orality and textuality, it becomes difficult to justify the scholarly recourse to oral tradition as *deus ex machina*, particularly when ungrounded and unverifiable appeals to oral transmission result in an ahistorical view of the circulation of religious traditions.⁴⁴ It is certainly easier to use oral transmission as a blanket explanation for the surprising continuities between diverse texts, but one risks overlooking the fascinating implications of textual transmission and literary borrowing for our understanding of the development of religious communities and the dynamics of the interchange between them.

In the case of some midrashic and aggadic motifs, oral transmission may still provide the most plausible explanation for the reappearance of the same tradition in different times and places. I will suggest, however, that this is not the case for the motif of illicit angelic instruction. Not only does this motif first occur in an extremely ancient text (i.e., third century BCE), but we have evidence for the continued transmission, circulation, and use of this text in the later centuries. The oral reading of the *Book of the Watchers* in changing settings may help to account for the sustained period of redactional activity

⁴² Niditch, *Oral World*, passim; Jaffee, *Torah*, 17; Talmon, “Oral,” 122–58; Gamble, *Books*, 30, 203–5.

⁴³ Jaffee, *Torah*, 18–20; Elman and Gershoni, *Transmitting*, 4–8.

⁴⁴ Schäfer, “Once again,” 91.

that led to its present form as well as for its continual recontextualization into new literary settings afterwards. During its composition and its subsequent transmission, oral performance surely facilitated its reinterpretation in terms of other traditions about Enoch and the fallen angels, both oral and written. In other words, the influence of the *Book of the Watchers* on later authors was literary, but it was “literary” in a sense that encompasses the oral/aural dimensions of ancient textual production, reception, and transmission, rather than merely the result of mutual dependence on a reservoir of motifs transmitted exclusively from mouth to ear.

My focus on literary transmission also has practical motivations, which reflect the constraints of our extant evidence. Even if so many ancient works had not been lost to us, our understanding of early Jewish and Christian literature would still reflect the concerns of relatively elite authors, due to the social stratification of literacy in the ancient world.⁴⁵ Accordingly, my questions are literary questions, pertaining primarily to the production and transmission of writings amongst learned Jews and Christians. My choice to focus on the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, rather than the development of the angelic descent myth more broadly, reflects my skepticism about our ability to reconstruct the beliefs of most Jews and Christians from the scant evidence that we now possess. Likewise, my statements about changing attitudes towards the *Book of the Watchers* claim only to concern the groups who were either responsible for literary production or had access to those who were. It is likely that these groups had some impact on the broader populace, but our data rarely allow us to map this influence with any degree of certainty.

This caution is especially warranted insofar as our extant literature reflects the interests not only of groups with access to literacy but of very specific groups. We owe the survival of some texts to fortuitous archaeological finds, but most were copied and preserved by the “winners of history”: those movements that would eventually come to dominate Judaism and Christianity as we now know them. Although my study touches on “gnostics,” “Jewish-Christians,” Mandaean, and Manichees, I have chosen to focus on developments in Rabbinic Judaism and Western Christian orthodoxy. I make no claim to represent the full diversity of biblically based religious movements in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, and any omissions on my part should not be read as normative judgments. Rather, I have attempted to structure this inquiry to reflect the limitations of our extant evidence, both in my choice of sources and in the questions that I bring to them.

⁴⁵ Niditch, *Oral World*, 39–59; Jaffee, *Torah*, 15–16.

4. JEWS AND CHRISTIANS IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

This study argues that the *Book of the Watchers* influenced many different pre-Rabbinic Jewish groups – including, but not limited to, the authors of later Enochic pseudepigrapha, the Qumran community, and the Jesus Movement. Around the second century CE, we find a shift in the use of the text. Abandoned by early Rabbinic Jews, it continues to be read and copied by Christ-believing Jews and other early Christians. Like so much of the Jewish literature composed during the centuries of Ptolemaic, Seleucidic, Hasmonean, and Roman rule in Palestine prior to the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism, the *Book of the Watchers* owes its preservation to Christian copyists. Nevertheless, the adoption of the text may not have been only unidirectional: many centuries after Rabbinic Judaism and the “Great Church” excluded the early Enochic writings from their respective canons, some Jews may have rediscovered this ancient Jewish work due to the mediation of Christians.

This interplay highlights another way in which the present study departs from earlier research, namely, the scope of my inquiry. Other studies have either cited *1 Enoch* as the Jewish “background” to Christian traditions or have limited their analyses to inner-Jewish developments. Such approaches embody an understanding of Jewish and Christian history that sees Jewish traditions as relevant primarily for illuminating Christian Origins and/or views post-Christian Judaism as a self-enclosed entity, almost wholly shut off from external influence. The present work, however, is based on different views of the relationship between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

Traditionally, research into late antique Judaism and Christianity proceeded on the assumption of their “Parting of the Ways” in the first or second century CE. When studying later periods, scholars have typically examined these religions in isolation, assuming that their separation was decisive and that their subsequent interaction was limited to mere polemics and mutual misperception. Our evidence, however, tells of the continued interpenetration of Jewish and Christian traditions long after the second century. This has led scholars from a variety of fields increasingly to question the regnant model of a single, early, and determinative separation between the two religions.⁴⁶ Although we still await new models for understanding the complex interactions between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, it has become clear that we lose too much by

⁴⁶ E.g., Boyarin, *Dying*, 1–19; Becker and Reed, *Ways*.

studying one tradition without reference to the other. Long after the death of Jesus, the destruction of the Second Temple, and the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the histories of Judaism and Christianity remain meaningfully intertwined.

This perspective is embodied in the structure of the present study, which focuses equally on Judaism and Christianity and which investigates the interrelation between developments in the two traditions throughout their early histories. After analyzing the motif of illicit angelic instruction in the *Book of the Watchers* (Ch. 1), I will consider traditions about the fallen angels first in pre-Rabbinic Judaism and the Jesus Movement (Chs. 2–3) and then in early Rabbinic Judaism and proto-orthodox Christianity (Chs. 4–5). Next, I will turn to the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* in late antique Christianity (Ch. 6), and I will conclude with a consideration of early medieval Judaism (Ch. 7).

Within this chronological framework, I will address the broader issues raised by each stage in the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*. The first chapter focuses on the literary and theological function of the instruction motif in the *Book of the Watchers* itself. In contrast to earlier investigations, I will here use the redaction-history of this composite text to shed light on its final form, stressing the role of redaction in the production of literary meaning. This perspective highlights the importance of the instruction motif in the apocalypse as a whole and shows how this motif contributes not only to its reflections on human sin and suffering, but also to its exploration of the epistemological ramifications of revelation.

The second and third chapters locate the *Book of the Watchers* within pre-Rabbinic Judaism, inclusive of earliest Christianity. Here, I will focus on the different social settings of its composition as well as the earliest stages in its transmission. Due to its popularity among the Qumran sectarians and its influence on later Enochic works, its authors/redactors and early readers have often been situated on the periphery of “mainstream” Judaism. By contrast, I will stress the scribal and priestly milieu in which this apocalypse took form and point to its widespread influence on early Jewish understandings of antediluvian history. Moreover, I will show that there is a remarkable unanimity in the way that most Jews from this period – including followers of Jesus – approached the Enochic myth of angelic descent: a variety of authors draw from the *Book of the Watchers*’ extrabiblical elaborations of Gen 6:1–4, but the motif of illicit angelic instruction is generally ignored in favor of other approaches to explaining the origins of sin and suffering. This unanimity suggests that we cannot speak in terms of a Christian “appropriation” of this Jewish apocalypse; here, as often elsewhere, the discontinuities between

nascent Christianity and early Judaism are best approached in terms of the profound continuities on which they are predicated.

The fourth and fifth chapters focus on developments in the second and third centuries, investigating the factors that led to the eventual preservation of the *Book of the Watchers* primarily in Christian circles. Around the second century, Rabbinic Jews appear to have abandoned the Enochic books and polemicized against the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4. At the same time, the *Book of the Watchers*' distinctive version of the angelic descent myth was being embraced by early Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr. Within his writings, the motif of illicit angelic instruction resurfaces once again to play a pivotal role in the etiology of human culture and its tragic distance from the divine. Justin not only reinterprets the Enochic myth of angelic descent, but he locates it within a Christianized history of culture in which demonology contributes to the construction of a Christian identity in contradistinction to both Jews and pagans. It is this redeployment of the instruction motif, I will argue, that renders the Enochic myth of angelic descent newly relevant for Christians living in the turbulent centuries between the Bar Kokhba Revolt and the Edict of Milan, thereby helping to explain the popularity of this apocalypse among “Church Fathers” such as Tertullian.

The sixth chapter centers on another critical moment in the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*: the rejection of the Enochic pseudepigrapha by late antique ecclesiarchs in the Roman Empire. Whereas most inquiries into the formation of the Christian canon concentrate on books that are now canonical, I will here consider the dynamics of canonization by focusing on a contested text. First, I will show how the third- and fourth-century debates about the authority of the Enochic books often appealed, both positively and negatively, to their omission from the Jewish canon of scriptures.⁴⁷ Then, I will explore an interesting shift in the dynamics of Jewish–Christian relations, as exemplified by the strained attempts by some Christians to justify the rejection of the Enochic pseudepigrapha even despite Jude’s quotation of the *Book of the Watchers* as Scripture in his canonical NT Epistle. Lastly, I will consider the settings of the continual use and preservation of this apocalypse, exploring the tensions between canonicity and textual authority.

The final chapter returns to focus on Judaism, tackling the puzzling reemergence of early Enochic traditions in post-Talmudic sources. Scholars of Jewish mysticism have often read the affinities between the *Book of the Watchers* and the late antique Jewish mystical works of the Hekhalot corpus as proof for

⁴⁷ E.g., Tertullian, *Cult.fem.* 1.3.1–3; Origen, *Hom.Num.* 28; Augustine, *Civ.* 15.23.

the existence of an esoteric movement that flourished for centuries on the fringes of mainstream Judaism. I will critique this view by analyzing traditions about Enoch and the fallen angels in the Hekhalot macroform 3 *Enoch* and the so-called “Midrash of Šemḥazai and Azael.” In contrast to those who have explained the absence of Enochic traditions in the classical Rabbinic literature with appeal to their allegedly “esoteric” character, I will propose that 3 *Enoch*’s allusions to the *Book of the Watchers* reflect Christian influence during the Byzantine stage in the growth of this work. By means of an analysis of the “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael,” I will then consider the reemergence of Enochic motifs in late midrashic collections, asking whether these traditions may also betray the mediation of non-Jews, such as Christians, Manichees, and Muslims.

Throughout this inquiry, I will attempt to locate the complex *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* in the context of other attempts by Jews and Christians to delineate and defend their communities against a range of perceived “outsiders,” as well as other evidence for the continued interpenetration of traditions across creedal lines. Broadly speaking, this study seeks to explore how text-selection can function as a means of asserting religious identity and how social circumstances affect the degree of canonical consciousness in different groups at different times. In this manner, I hope to contribute to our understanding of the role of parabiblical texts and traditions in the continued interaction between Jews and Christians, well after the alleged “Parting of the Ways.”

5. THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS, 1 ENOCH, AND THE PROBLEM OF TEXTUAL IDENTITY

Especially in light of the textual focus of much of this study, it is important to begin by considering the scope and character of our witnesses to the *Book of the Watchers* and by clarifying what we mean when we call it a “text” and try to trace its reception.⁴⁸ The boundaries of modern books tend to be quite clear, but this was not always the case with the products of premodern literary production. As we shall see in Chapter 1, the *Book of the Watchers* was not the result of a single act of authorial creativity. Rather, this apocalypse was shaped by multiple stages of authorship, redaction, and compilation. This accounts for the polysemous character of the work in its final form and helps to explain

⁴⁸ For the below discussion, I am indebted to conversations with Peter Schäfer, as well as his published work on this topic (esp. *Hekhalot-Studien*, 13–16, 231; “Research on the Hekhalot,” 231–32; “Research into Rabbinic,” esp. 146–52; “Once Again”).

how it could later serve as the basis for so many different interpretations of angelic descent. Yet the complex literary history of the *Book of the Watchers* also raises questions about textual identity: if we are reticent to speak of the Ethiopic collection *1 Enoch* as simply a single “text,”⁴⁹ what of the no less composite *Book of the Watchers*?

Although we can discern several, originally distinct textual units and traditions within *1 En.* 1–36, the *Book of the Watchers* is not merely a conglomeration of diverse material about Enoch and the fallen angels. As the next chapter demonstrates, the redactional combination of these units has resulted in a coherent whole.⁵⁰ Moreover, our manuscript evidence suggests that it circulated as a distinct document at an early stage: among the Aramaic fragments of this apocalypse found at Qumran, the two oldest (4QEn^{a,b}) contain only the *Book of the Watchers* and attest the combination of its different subsections into a redacted whole by the early second century BCE at the very latest.⁵¹

When we turn to consider the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* in the following chapters, the issue of textual identity will be complicated in another way, due to its integration into larger collections. This is exemplified by *Maṣḥafa Henok Nabiy* (i.e., *1 Enoch*), an Enochic collection that functions as one text, canonical within the Ethiopian Church.⁵² This collection contains the following material:

Book of the Watchers (1–36; third century BCE)

Similitudes of Enoch (37–71; first century BCE/CE)

Ethiopic *Astronomical Book* (72–82; an epitome of the third-century BCE Aramaic version)

Book of Dreams (83–90; second century BCE)

Epistle of Enoch (91–105/6/7; second century BCE)

This version alone preserves the entirety of the writings therein. It can thus be tempting to read it as a single document and to interpret each of its composite parts in terms of the others, even despite the differences in date and provenance. In earlier Aramaic and Greek manuscripts, however, the *Book of the Watchers* was often copied or bound together with other works, in different

⁴⁹ I stress *1 Enoch's* identity as a collection due to my focus on diachronic developments. I do not mean to imply that the final product lacks a narrative and thematic cohesion of its own; on the contrary, the arrangement of this collection reflects unifying principles that enable it to function as a text (Knibb, “Christian Adoption,” 411; Dimant, “Biography”).

⁵⁰ Cf. Black, *Commentary*, 10, 12–18.

⁵¹ 4QEn^{a,b} preserve parts from three of its five subsections: *1 En.* 1–5, 6–11, and 12–16. See Milik, *Commentary*, 25; García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 69–72.

⁵² Cowley, “Biblical Canon,” 318–23.

configurations, the scope of which was not always limited to writings about Enoch or even antediluvian history.

From the oldest fragments of Enochic writings found at Qumran (4QEnastr^a; 4QEn^{a,b}), it appears that the Aramaic *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers* circulated independently in the third and second centuries BCE. Whereas the manuscript evidence suggests that *Astronomical Book* continued to be copied alone (4QEnastr^{b,c,d}), the fragments of the *Book of the Watchers* from the first century BCE (4QEn^{c,d,e}) evince its collection/compilation with other Enochic writings. For instance, the surviving fragments of 4QEn^c preserve 1 *En.* 1–6, 10, 13–15, 18, 31–32, 89, 104–7.⁵³ Although it is impossible to reconstruct the precise length of the manuscript or the exact scope of its contents, this evidence suggests that 4QEn^c contained the *Book of the Watchers*, together with part or all of the *Book of Dreams* and the *Epistle of Enoch*. Similarly, 4QEn^d and 4QEn^e contain portions from 1 *En.* 20–36, the former together with 1 *En.* 89 (BD) and the latter together with 1 *En.* 88–89 (BD).

Scholars have attempted to use this evidence to reconstruct the prehistory of the Ethiopic collection 1 *Enoch*. Based on 4QEn^{c,d,e} and 4QEnGiants^a, Milik proposed that the Qumran sectarians possessed an “Enochic Pentateuch,” a two-volume collection with the Aramaic *Astronomical Book* on one scroll and the *Book of the Watchers*, *Epistle of Enoch*, and *Book of Dreams* on another, together with the *Book of the Giants*.⁵⁴ In his opinion, this “Enochic Pentateuch” was meant to replace its five-fold Mosaic counterpart and served as the basis for the Ethiopic collection 1 *Enoch*. He proposes that the *Similitudes* (1 *En.* 37–71) was composed by Christians in the third century CE and was substituted for the *Book of the Giants* after the fourth, when the latter became associated with Manichaeism. Hence Milik dates the Greek archetype of 1 *Enoch* to the sixth or seventh century.⁵⁵

Milik’s theory of an Aramaic “Enochic Pentateuch” has been widely rejected, particularly after the convincing rejoinder penned by Jonas Greenfield and Michael E. Stone.⁵⁶ Questioning his interpretation of both the Qumran fragments and later Greek witnesses, Greenfield and Stone proposed a more fluid situation in which “diverse Enochic corpora were current in first century CE Palestine, some containing the *Similitudes* and others containing the *Book of*

⁵³ Milik also proposed that 4QEnGiants^a was originally part of this same scroll (i.e., 4QEn^c = 4Q204; *Commentary*, 310).

⁵⁴ Milik, *Commentary*, 298–339; cf. Dix, “Enochic Pentateuch.” Milik must propose two scrolls, due to the length of the Aramaic version of AB (*Commentary*, 58, 76, 182–84).

⁵⁵ Milik, *Commentary*, 76–77.

⁵⁶ Greenfield and Stone, “Enochic Pentateuch,” 55–60.

the Giants and still others containing material known to us only from random quotations.”⁵⁷

More recently, George Nickelsburg has offered another hypothesis, also based primarily on the configuration of texts in 4QEn^c. Whereas Milik sees this manuscript as evidence for an early Enochic collection, Nickelsburg interprets it as evidence for one stage in the growth of a new Enochic text, which in his view was unified by a testamentary structure. He suggests that 1 En. 1–36 (possibly lacking chs. 6–11) formed the core of this “Enochic Testament”, to which additional materials slowly accrued, eventually resulting in an Aramaic prototype of 1 *Enoch*. He leaves open the possibility that the *Book of the Watchers* may have circulated as an independent document in the third and early second centuries BCE. He argues, however, that these chapters were soon after supplemented by 81:1–82:4, 91, and possibly other parts of 92–105 (chapters now found in AB and EE respectively), resulting in an “Enochic Testament.”⁵⁸

As with Milik’s theories about the “Enochic Pentateuch,” Nickelsburg’s testamentary hypothesis has been critiqued on many grounds.⁵⁹ For our present purposes, what proves significant is the assumption that he shares with Milik, namely, that there must be a single, unilinear development connecting the collection of Enochic materials at Qumran with the Ethiopic collection 1 *Enoch*. This assumption leads Nickelsburg to downplay the evidence of our Greek witnesses, Codex Panopolitanus and Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus XII. As noted above, the former contains two incomplete manuscripts of the *Book of the Watchers*, bound together with Petrine writings, while the latter contains the entirety of the *Epistle of Enoch*, together with Pseudo-Ezekielian writings and passages from Melito of Sardis.⁶⁰ Not only does the latter shed doubt on Nickelsburg’s view that the *Epistle of Enoch* did not originate as a book separate from the *Book of the Watchers*, but the contents of both Greek manuscripts show that at least some ancient readers encountered the Enochic pseudepigrapha as discrete documents, which could be collected alongside other works in different configurations created for different purposes.⁶¹ In other words, 4QEn^{c,d,e} and the Ethiopic collection 1 *Enoch* may be examples

⁵⁷ Greenfield and Stone, “Enochic Pentateuch,” 63, also 52–53. Recently, Stuckenbruck has questioned Milik’s conclusion that 4QEn^a and 4QEnGiants^a were once part of the same scroll (*Qumran Cave 4. XXVI*, 10).

⁵⁸ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 22–26; see my comments in “Textual Identity.”

⁵⁹ E.g. Knibb, “Interpreting,” 439–42; Reed, “Textual Identity,” 283–88.

⁶⁰ Knibb, “Christian Adoption,” 407.

⁶¹ The continued circulation of Enochic collections is suggested by the 9th c. Stichometry of Nicophorus, which lists the scope of “Enoch” as 4,800 lines (slightly smaller than “Patriarchs”).

of a broader and more variegated phenomenon, akin to the literary activity that shaped the *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs*.⁶² Both Greek manuscripts, moreover, date from around the same time that the Enochic pseudepigrapha were translated from Greek into Ge'ez. Consequently, we cannot rule out the possibility that *1 Enoch* originated as an Ethiopian collection of Enochic writings or as a Greek collection current only in some Christian circles at the time.

Comments about Enoch's writings in early Jewish and Christian literature also suggest a situation more complex than Nickelsburg's theory allows.⁶³ We find many references to the "book of Enoch" (*T.Sim.* 5:4; *T.Levi* 10:5; Origen, *Princ.* 1.3.3, 4.4.8) and to the "scripture of Enoch" (Tertullian, *Cult.fem.*, 3.1–3) in the singular. Some of the same texts and authors, however, also refer to multiple "writings of Enoch" (*T.Levi* 14:1) and "booklets called Enoch" (Origen, *Hom.Num.* 28). Even when Syncellus writes of the "first book of Enoch, concerning the Watchers," it is unclear whether he is referring to the *Book of the Watchers* or to a larger text similar in shape to *1 Enoch*. We know that the *Book of the Watchers* was often copied and collected together with other Enochic pseudepigrapha, but this does not mean that we can draw a straight line from the Aramaic fragments from Qumran to the Ethiopian collection *1 Enoch*.

Nevertheless, it remains that Nickelsburg's hypothesis raises important questions about the textual identity of the *Book of the Watchers*. To what degree – and where and when – did ancient Jews and Christians encounter *1 En.* 1–36 as part of larger Enochic "text," as opposed to a discrete document that tradents commonly copied alongside certain other documents with related themes and concerns? Should we liken the compilation of Enochic writings to the redactional growth of a book like Isaiah, to which parts were consecutively added? Or should we compare it to collections of discrete texts with common themes and concerns, such as the NT? As demonstrated by the reception-histories of closely related writings, such as Ezra, Nehemiah, and the later Ezra apocalypses, there are many possibilities in between.⁶⁴ Like most ancient Jewish and Christian texts, Enochic pseudepigrapha did not have fixed

⁶² I.e., a Christian collection and redaction of originally Jewish texts, which themselves continued to circulate in other forms; Hollander and de Jonge, *Testaments*, 11–33. On *1 Enoch* as a Christian collection, see Black, *Commentary*, 11; cf. Knibb, "Christian Adoption," 410–11.

⁶³ Quotations from and allusions to BW and other Enochic pseudepigrapha abound, but they are usually prefaced by statements like "Enoch prophesied/said that" (Jude 14–15; Tertullian, *Idol.* 4.2–3) or by scriptural quotation formulae like "it is written that" (Barn 16:6). Even when authors seem to be referring to BW, it is impossible to ascertain the shape and scope of the book(s) that they knew.

⁶⁴ Bergren, "Transmission," 115–20.

titles until long after their composition, and it is likely that different readers and tradents encountered this work in different forms and settings.

This work, moreover, may have been transmitted in multiple forms. Text-critical scholarship on the Hebrew Bible has shown that, prior to the first century CE, many biblical books were far less stable than previously imagined; Jeremiah, for instance, circulated in two versions before the standardization of a single text-type soon after the destruction of the Second Temple.⁶⁵ In approaching the *Book of the Watchers* as a text whose reception-history can be traced, we must thus be willing to adopt a more flexible understanding of the “text” in antiquity, leaving open the possibility that it changed both shape and setting during the course of its transmission.

When we turn to examine the Christian use of the *Book of the Watchers* in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, we encounter the excerpting of portions (whether from a text of *1 En.* 1–36 that circulated as an independent document or from a larger collection that included these chapters) and their integration into other texts and collections. As is well known, Christian quotations of Jewish scriptures were often drawn from *testimonia*. Likewise, Syncellus’ extracts of the *Book of the Watchers* appear to have their ultimate origin in source-collections.⁶⁶ He preserves five quotations from the *Book of the Watchers* alongside other sources about antediluvian history, his chronographical predecessors, and his own comments. Although the *Ecloga Chronographica* is an authored product, it is thus no less anthological in character than 4QEn^{c,d,e}, Codex Panopolitanus, and *1 Enoch*, albeit in a different way.

In this, the redaction-history and reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* are hardly unusual. There are profound differences between the production and reception of books in premodern and modern times.⁶⁷ Our very concept of a text has been inextricably shaped by the invention of the printing press; the books that we read reflect the aims of their authors, their final form has been ratified by their publication, and their shape and contents remain identical, whatever the number of copies replicated. By contrast, the *Book of the Watchers* reflects the efforts of multiple authors and editors. Although its literary growth stabilized around the third century BCE, tradents continued to copy and translate this text for centuries afterwards, anthologizing it together with other writings and excerpting portions for inclusion in new works. This sustained period of literary activity is consistent with what we know of the

⁶⁵ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 27–36, 187–95, 319–27.

⁶⁶ Adler, *Time*, 229–31. Similarly, the brief Latin quotation from BD (*1 En.* 89:42–49) in Codex Vaticanus Gr. 1809 may derive from a source-collection (Knibb, *Commentary*, 17–18). See Ch. 4 n. 105.

⁶⁷ Graham, *Beyond*, 9–29; Beit-Arié, “Jewish Scribality,” 226–37.

textual histories of many biblical books, particularly prior to the first century CE. Even if counterintuitive to modern Western sensibilities, this lack of fixity also fits well with the performative dimension of texts in antiquity: silent reading by a lone individual was more the exception than the norm, and both the oral dimension of a text's transmission and the aural dimension of its reception facilitated continual reinterpretation and recontextualization.

Despite the increasing standardization of biblical texts and collections in Late Antiquity, the transmission of noncanonical literature continued to be marked by a similar fluidity. This is evident, not only in the complex literary histories of other Second Temple Jewish texts transmitted by Christians, but also in Jewish texts composed after 70 CE. If anything, Rabbinic and post-Rabbinic Jewish literature is even more complex in this regard. The Hekhalot literature exhibits such an extreme degree of textual fluidity that it can even be difficult to delineate discrete "texts." The classical Rabbinic literature is comparably more stable, but the anthological character of the Mishnah and the two Talmudim (and their complex relationship with other works) suggests that the boundaries between authorship, redaction, and collection were often blurred.⁶⁸ Peter Schäfer thus characterizes Rabbinic textual production as "an open continuum in which the process of emergence is not to be separated and distinguished without further ado from that of transmission, and the process of transmission from redaction," stressing that "emergence, transmission, and redaction overlap in various ways and overflow into one another."⁶⁹ This characterization appears to be confirmed by the evidence of classical midrashic collections (i.e., collections of biblical interpretations) as well as later *yalqutum* (i.e., larger anthologies of the same sort), which attest the ongoing practice of re-collecting and recontextualizing traditional materials.⁷⁰

Due in no small part to Greco-Roman influences, we find more examples in the early Christian literature of works attributed to individual authors, such as the so-called Church Fathers. Nevertheless, the dependence on source-collections shows that, even here, we cannot draw an absolute distinction between the author, on the one hand, and the tradent, redactor, and anthologist, on the other. Even here, we must allow for diverse modes of "authorial" creativity, which spanned the continuum from the composition of texts by

⁶⁸ E.g., Houtman, *Mishnah*; Becker, *Grossen Rabbinischen*, esp. 149–56.

⁶⁹ Schäfer, "Once Again," 89, also 90–94; the key phrase is "without further ado." See idem, "Research in Rabbinic," 145–94; cf. Milikowsky, "Status," 201–211. On copying, redaction, and collection as nexus for continued "authorship," Alexander and Samely, "Introduction," 5–16; Ta-Shma, "Open," 17–21; Alexander, "Textual," 159–74.

⁷⁰ Elbaum, "*Yalqut*," 133–34.

named authors to the redaction and collection of traditional materials (both Jewish and Christian in origin) by anonymous scribes.

As we explore the redaction-history and reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, we will encounter this text in different forms, which shift with its adoption by different groups and with its displacement into new social settings. Furthermore, we will be forced to grapple with different modes of “authorship” in much of the literature influenced by this apocalypse, both Jewish and Christian. Consequently, the reception-history of this book highlights the dangers of imposing our modern understanding of authors, books, and readers on an era that long preceded the invention of the printing press. The character of ancient literary production complicates our inquiry, but I hope that it will also offer an interesting opportunity to explore the ways in which Jews and Christians composed, redacted, reshaped, and transmitted texts in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.



Angelic Descent and Apocalyptic Epistemology: The Teachings of Enoch and the Fallen Angels in the *Book of the Watchers*

BEFORE EXPLORING THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TRANSFORMATIONS of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, we must first ask how the fallen angels and their teachings function within the *Book of the Watchers* itself. Our inquiry into the reception-history of this apocalypse necessitates a focus on the redacted form of the text, the form in which (most) Jews and Christians would encounter it. In light of its complex literary history, however, the contents of the apocalypse cannot be addressed apart from some discussion of the strands from which it has been woven.

As noted above, the *Book of the Watchers* appears to integrate at least five originally independent units into the larger narrative framework of an apocalypse. Some of these units are themselves composite, constructed from threads of even more ancient texts and/or traditions. In the apocalypse's present form, the combination and arrangement of these parts have resulted in the integration of traditions about two events with no connection in the book of Genesis: Enoch walking with God and being taken by Him (Gen 5:21–24) and the “sons of God” choosing wives from the “daughters of men” (Gen 6:1–4).

The first unit, *1 En.* 1–5, establishes Enoch's status as a visionary with unique access to heavenly knowledge and records his exhortations about the value of cosmological phenomena as models for ethical behavior. The second, *1 En.* 6–11, wholly concerns the fallen angels. Beginning with a paraphrase of Gen 6:1–4, this unit recounts the Watchers' descent from heaven, the tragic results for humankind, and the divine response to the earthly crisis – with no reference to Enoch at all. The next unit, *1 En.* 12–16, begins with an expansive retelling of Gen 5:24, which posits that Enoch ascended to heaven “before these things.”¹ This assertion occasions a lengthy account of Enoch's commission

¹ I.e., before the descent of the Watchers.

to rebuke the Watchers, first by the archangels and then by God Himself. The last two units (*1 En.* 17–19; 20–36) similarly focus on Enoch. Consistent with the cosmological concerns of the first unit, they detail the special revelations that the antediluvian sage received during his tours of earth and heaven.

Most notable for our purposes are the two units that most focus on the fallen angels: *1 En.* 6–11 and *1 En.* 12–16. The former is commonly thought to be the earlier of the two. Not only do chapters 6–11 make no mention of Enoch, but they are written as third-person narrative. In style, they thus recall biblical retellings such as *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon*, even as they differ from the pseudonymous first-person and second-person addresses that dominate the rest of the *Book of the Watchers*. These and other factors have led scholars to propose that *1 En.* 6–11 represents one of the most ancient strata in the *Book of the Watchers*, possibly even preserving a “literary unit of distinct origin” or a part of “an independent midrashic source.”² Citing the many repetitions and contradictions in its account of angelic descent, many have speculated that *1 En.* 6–11 contains even more ancient texts or traditions.³

The next unit, *1 En.* 12–16, appears to be a later composition. This unit uses the trope of prophetic rebuke to insert Enoch into the story of the Watchers.⁴ It was likely placed in its current context to serve as a transition between the account of angelic descent in *1 En.* 6–11 and the account of Enoch’s otherworldly journeys in *1 En.* 17 and following.⁵ Moreover, its lexical and thematic parallels with *1 En.* 6–11 suggests that it interprets some form of the earlier unit.⁶

By virtue of the inclusion and juxtaposition of these two units, the *Book of the Watchers* preserves earlier traditions about angelic descent alongside later attempts to understand them and to come to terms with the precise role of the Watchers in the origin and spread of earthly evils. The apocalypse thus preserves multiple stages in the interpretation of the angelic descent myth, such that its redaction-history is, in more ways than one, the beginning of the story of its reception and reinterpretation.

The present chapter will progress in three sections, mirroring different stages in the redactional growth of the apocalypse. We will begin with *1 En.* 6–11, focusing on the function of the motif of illicit angelic instruction within

² Nickelsburg, “Reflections,” 311; Dimant, “1 Enoch 6–11,” 323.

³ Charles, *Commentary*, 13; Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic and Myth,” 384–86; Dimant, “1 Enoch 6–11,” 323–24, 329; idem, “Fallen Angels,” 23–72; Hanson, “Rebellion,” 195–233.

⁴ Jansen, *Henochgestalt*, 114–17.

⁵ Newsom, “Development,” 313.

⁶ Newsom, “Development,” 315, 319; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 38; cf. Tigchelaar, *Prophets*, 156.

this composite unit and considering the significance of the topics of teaching associated with the Watchers. Then, we will turn to the interpretation of these chapters in the next unit, *1 En.* 12–16, examining the literary and epistemological functions of the instruction motif within the description of Enoch’s commission to rebuke the Watchers. This will be followed by an analysis of the significance of the fallen angels and the instruction motif within the *Book of the Watchers* as a redacted whole. In conclusion, we will consider the status that the apocalypse, in its final form, claims for itself vis-à-vis the material about Enoch and the “sons of God” in Genesis.

In using the redactional growth of the *Book of the Watchers* to shed light on its final form, this chapter departs from most previous scholarship on the traditions about the fallen angels in this apocalypse. Consistent with R. H. Charles’ foundational work on *1 Enoch*, modern research into the Enochic myth of angelic descent has commonly focused on the earliest unit, *1 En.* 6–11, and has approached these chapters from source-critical and form-critical perspectives. By isolating material that features different themes and angelic figures, scholars have sought to recover the originally independent traditions that lie *behind* this section of the *Book of the Watchers*.⁷

These studies have contributed much to our understanding of the formation of the *Book of the Watchers*. Yet their excavative interests have perhaps distracted from the task of explaining how the integration of multiple traditions about the fallen angels contributes to the meaning of the apocalypse as a whole. Inasmuch as source-critical and form-critical inquiries have tended to resolve the redundancies and inconsistencies in *1 En.* 6–11 by speculating about earlier versions of the angelic descent myth, they tacitly dismiss the redacted product as a muddled combination and conflation of originally coherent “legends.”

The limitations of such approaches have been highlighted by John J. Collins. Collins acknowledges the composite character of the *Book of the Watchers*, but he questions the anachronistic imposition of “a modern ideal of clarity or consistency” on this third-century BCE apocalypse.⁸ For Collins, the “breaks in the continuity, inconsistency in the explanation of evil and duplications of angelic functions” in *1 En.* 6–11 are not merely byproducts of its literary history. Rather, the composite form and elusive imagery of *1 En.* 6–11 reflect the broader aims that shaped the production of early Jewish apocalypses and should be

⁷ Charles, *Commentary*, 13; Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic and Myth,” 384–86; Dimant, “1 Enoch 6–11,” 323–24, 329; eadem, “Fallen Angels,” 23–72; Hanson, “Rebellion,” 195–233.

⁸ Collins, “Methodological,” 315–16; idem, “Apocalyptic Technique,” 94–97, 102; so also Tigchelaar, *Prophets*, 172–73; García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 69.

understood alongside other literary strategies common to the genre. Like the typological interpretation of events and the emphasis on recurring patterns in human history, the juxtaposition of multiple approaches to the fallen angels in *1 En.* 6–16 aims to “conceal . . . the historical specificity of the immediate situation beneath the primeval archetype,” helping to relieve contemporary anxieties through an “allegorization of crisis” that combines the mythological past, the conflicted present, and the eschatological future.⁹ Collins’ critique of source-critical and form-critical approaches to the *Book of the Watchers* leads us to move beyond questions about the origins of its composite parts, to consider also the purpose and effect of their present arrangement.

The challenge of engaging the *Book of the Watchers* as both a composite text and a redacted whole proves particularly pertinent for the present inquiry. To understand how later readers reconciled the different (sometimes dissonant) versions of the angelic descent myth in the revelations here associated with Enoch, we must first understand how they operate within the *Book of the Watchers*. Most significant, in this regard, is Collins’ suggestion that the inclusion of multiple traditions in *1 En.* 6–16 reflects “the essential polyvalence of apocalyptic symbolism which enables it to be reapplied in new historical situations.”¹⁰ In what follows, I will argue that one cannot understand the *Book of the Watchers*’ approach to angelic descent apart from an analysis of the new meanings generated by the juxtaposition of multiple traditions. Even as the redactors preserve a range of different approaches to the fallen angels, the arrangement of these traditions functions to communicate a coherent message. Not only does this polysemy enhance the paradigmatic quality of the *Book of the Watchers*, but it surely facilitated the adoption of the Enochic myth of angelic descent by a variety of later Jews and Christians for a surprisingly broad range of different aims.

1. SEX, SIN, AND INSTRUCTION IN *1 EN.* 6–11

In *1 En.* 6–11, we find a composite unit whose exuberant polysemy evades any easy explanation. This unit includes three descriptions of the Watchers’ transgressions, each with a different focus. The first, *1 En.* 6–7, most closely follows Gen 6:1–4: chapter 6 begins with a paraphrase of Gen 6:1 (v.1), followed by a description of the Watcher Šemiḥazah convincing a group of angels to swear an oath to travel to the earth and beget children with the “daughters of men” (vv.3–6). Chapter 7 tells of their cohabitation and defilement with

⁹ Collins, “Apocalyptic Technique,” 99–101.

¹⁰ Collins, “Apocalyptic Technique,” 98.

human women, to whom they teach magical and medicinal arts (v.1) and from whom Giants are born (v.2). The great violence of the Giants is then described (v.3; cf. Gen 6:11), culminating in the outcry of the earth against them (v.4).

The next chapter, *1 En.* 8, offers a second summary of angelic sin, which forefronts the extrabiblical tradition that the Watchers corrupted humankind through their teachings. This chapter is structured around a list of fallen angels that identifies the specific type of knowledge transmitted by each (vv.1–3). Although Šemiḥazah appears in the list, another Watcher, Asael, is most prominent. Here, it is his act of instruction that precipitates the spread of violence and promiscuity amongst humankind. Like the preceding summary, this account of angelic sin concludes with a description of the violence of the Giants and the human outcry against them (v.4).

In the description of the response to this outcry by heavenly archangels in *1 En.* 9, the reader encounters yet another summary of the sins of the fallen angels (vv.6–10). This summary is spoken by the archangels to God and is framed as their intercession in response to the outcry of the earth and/or the humans on it. The sins of the Watchers are thus described in the context of a petition for their punishment. Special attention is given to both Asael and Šemiḥazah, while the rest of the Watchers remain unnamed. As in *1 En.* 6–7 and *1 En.* 8, this summary concludes by recounting the outcry of humankind against the Giants.

Scholars have typically explained the narrative redundancies and thematic inconsistencies in *1 En.* 6–11 by isolating different strata and reconstructing multiple underlying “legends.”¹¹ Nickelsburg, for instance, begins from the observation that *1 En.* 6–11 contains verses that depict Šemiḥazah as the chief of the Watchers together with verses that depict Asael as their leader.¹² He correlates these two figures with what he sees as two distinct approaches to the origins of antediluvian sin and suffering.¹³ He reads the Šemiḥazah material as an early midrashic elaboration of Gen 6–9 that forefronts the Watchers’ sexual sins and the violence caused by their progeny.¹⁴ In his view, this material was later supplemented with material about Asael, which reflects an “independent myth about the rebellion of a single angelic figure” and blames the deterioration of earthly life on the revelation of forbidden knowledge.¹⁵

¹¹ See further Reed, “Heavenly Ascent,” 50–52.

¹² See chart in Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic,” 384; cf. Dimant, “1 Enoch 6–11,” 324, 326, 333.

¹³ Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic,” 397–404; idem, “Reflections,” 311; idem, *1 Enoch* 1, 171. Also Dimant, “1 Enoch 6–11,” 326–27; Hanson, “Rebellion,” 220–26.

¹⁴ *1 En.* 6:1–8; 7:2–6; 8:4–9:11; 10:1–3; 10:11–11:2; Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic,” 386–404; idem, *Commentary*, 166–68.

¹⁵ *1 En.* 8:1–2; 9:6; 10:7–8; Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 171.

Other scholarly reconstructions differ in their details, but virtually all share [1] the view of the motif of illicit angelic instruction as a secondary development within the Enochic myth of angelic descent and [2] an overarching interest in untangling the various traditions behind *1 En.* 6–11.¹⁶ In my view, it is likely that *1 En.* 6–11 was shaped by oral traditions about angelic descent and specific fallen angels, and it is significant that these traditions reflect far more than mere exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. Nevertheless, perhaps too many discussions of *1 En.* 6–11 have treated the Šemiḥazah and Asael material in isolation, preferring the logical cohesion of hypothetical sources or oral “legends” to the rich polysemy of the extant text. As Collins rightly notes, “we cannot purposefully discuss the meaning and function of the Šemiḥazah story apart from the Asael material” and, furthermore, “the fact that these distinct traditions are allowed to stand in some degree of tension is already significant for our understanding of the function of this book.”¹⁷

Here too Collins’ correctives prove particularly relevant for our inquiry into the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers*. Especially insofar as we have no evidence that the Šemiḥazah and Asael material in *1 En.* 6–11 ever circulated independently, we must take seriously their combination in the present form of these chapters. Moreover, the material about antediluvian history in *1 En.* 6–11 is no more polysemous than the material about the Flood in Genesis, and there is little reason to assume that the ancient readers of the *Book of the Watchers* were any less sophisticated than “biblical” exegetes in appreciating, negotiating, and interpreting multiple levels of meaning. For the present inquiry, the prehistory of *1 En.* 6–11 thus proves less significant than its present function in the *Book of the Watchers* and the range of meanings generated by its polyvalent account of angelic descent.

i. Approaches to Angelic Sin

When read from this perspective, the repetitions and contradictions within *1 En.* 6–11 provide important insights into the organizational principles that governed the selection and redactional arrangement of traditional material. Diverse traditions are not simply conflated, harmonized, nor resolved into a single story. Rather, one can discern an attempt to interweave the various strands into a meaningful whole through the imposition of a literary structure, however loose.

¹⁶ For a survey of scholarship, Tigchelaar, *Prophets*, 168–72.

¹⁷ Collins, “Methodological,” 316; idem, “Apocalyptic Technique,” 97.

It is striking, for instance, that all three summaries of angelic sin in this unit culminate with descriptions of the violence of the Giants against the creatures of the earth (7:3–5; 8:4a; 9:9) and the resulting outcry of either the earth itself (7:6) or humankind (8:4; 9:10). In addition, three themes are highlighted throughout: [1] the dangers of sexual impurity, [2] the corrupting potential of knowledge, and [3] the antediluvian proliferation of violence.

In the resultant admixture of traditions, the instruction motif is surprisingly prominent. References to the corrupting teachings of the Watchers occur throughout *1 En.* 6–11, and both of the major angelic figures, Asael and Šemiḥazah, engage in illicit pedagogy. Furthermore, this aspect of the Watchers' descent is explored in all three summaries of their sins: *1 En.* 7, *1 En.* 8, and *1 En.* 9:6–10.

The three passages each approach illicit angelic instruction from their own perspective, and they join the theme of corrupting knowledge in different ways with the themes of sexual impurity and violence. In the first, *1 En.* 7, the theme of sexual impurity functions as the main axis along which the transgression of the Watchers is articulated.¹⁸ The themes of knowledge and violence are subordinated to this theme, as follows:

<i>1 En.</i> 7		
Sexual Impurity	Knowledge	Violence
7:1 ab – Angels choose wives, with whom they defile themselves.	7:1 cd – Angels teach sorcery, spells, cutting of roots and herbs to their wives.	7:3–5 – Giants devour fruit of men's labor, then turn against humankind and all animals, devouring them and drinking their blood.
7:2 – Wives become pregnant and bear Giants.		
7:6 – Outcry: The earth makes accusation against the Giants.		

Although 7:1 depicts the angels teaching their wives “sorcery [חרשה], spells, and the cutting of roots and herbs,” this is presented as an almost incidental

¹⁸ Suter, “Fallen Angel,” 115–19; Molenberg, “Study,” 139.

moment within the central structuring tale of sexual transgression, which follows a clear narrative progression from plan to event to result. Continuing from the description of the angels' oath in the previous chapter (6:3–6), *1 En.* 7 recounts their transgression in their choice of human wives and sexual defilement with them (7:1 ab), then concludes with the disastrous results: the pregnancy of the women, the birth of the Giants, and the Giants' violent actions (7:2–5).

The second account, *1 En.* 8, brings the theme of knowledge to the fore, picking up and elaborating the passing reference to angelic teaching in 7:1. The themes of sexual impurity and violence remain significant, but these are narratively and structurally subordinated to the theme of knowledge:

1 En. 8

Sexual Impurity	Knowledge	Violence
8:1 b-2 – Asael teaches men about metalworking for self-adornment, as well as cosmetics, dyes, and precious stones. Knowledge of self-adornment leads to fornication.	8:1 a – Asael teaches men about metalworking for making weapons. 8:3 a-b – Šemiḥazah teaches spell-binding and cutting of roots; Hermoni teaches the loosing of spells, magic, sorcery, and sophistry. 8:3 c-g – Kokab'el, Ziq'el, Ar'teqif, Šimš'el, and Sahr'el teach cosmologically related auguries.	8:4a – Giants devour people.
8:4b – Outcry: Men cry out to heaven.		

This passage specifies the names of eight angels (cf. 6:7), along with the exact types of knowledge taught [𐤒𐤓𐤁] by each. The categories of revealed knowledge attributed to Asael, the first Watcher mentioned in *1 En.* 8, use the rubric of metalworking to connect the theme of knowledge with the themes of bloodshed and sexual impurity. Asael is initially depicted as teaching metalworking for the purposes of making weapons. This parallels the bloodshed described in 7:3–5, while also evoking Gen 6:5 in its effort to explain the role of the “wickedness of man” in causing the earth to be “filled with violence” (also Gen 6:11–12). In addition, the reference to metalworking allows for the integration

of the theme of sexual impurity – so central to *1 En.* 7 – into the exploration of forbidden knowledge in *1 En.* 8. Not only does Asael teach human beings how to make jewelry from silver and gold (8:1), but this is followed by other accoutrements of vanity, which further foster human promiscuity: “antimony, and eye-shadow, and all manner of precious stones and . . . dyes and varieties of adornment” (8:2).

In *1 En.* 8:1–2, forbidden arts are revealed to humankind as a whole, rather than just to the Watchers’ wives as in *1 En.* 7:1. This account thus stresses the shared culpability of Asael and his human students and, moreover, highlights the responsibility of both men and women. The Watchers teach corrupting skills; men forge weapons and make ornaments for their daughters; and all are depicted as “corrupting their ways” (cf. Gen 6:12).

The passing reference to angelic instruction in the earlier account of angelic sin is picked up in *1 En.* 8:3. Just as *1 En.* 7:1 told of angels teaching their wives “sorcery, spells, and the cutting of roots and herbs,” so *1 En.* 8:3 associates these same arts with two specific Watchers: Šemiḥazah transmits knowledge about “spell-binding¹⁹ and the cutting of roots,” whereas Hermoni teaches humankind about the “loosening of spells, magic, sorcery, and sophistry.”²⁰

The categories of knowledge attributed to the teaching Watchers in *1 En.* 8:3c–g concern divination. The names of the six angels here listed correspond to the natural phenomena whose auguries [נִחְשָׁוִים] they transmit to humanity. The “auguries of lightning” are taught by Bara’el; the “auguries of the stars” by Kokab’el; the “auguries of fire-balls” by Ziq’el; the “auguries of earth” by Ar’teqif; the “auguries of the sun” by Šims’el; and the “auguries of the moon” by Sahr’el.²¹

Unlike the teachings attributed to Asael, Šemiḥazah, and Hermoni, these categories have no clear connection to the events described in *1 En.* 7. And, whereas the description of Asael’s pedagogy in 8:1–2 stressed the corrupting results of his teachings, the description of the magical and divinatory skills transmitted by the other Watchers concludes with the statement that “they all began to reveal secrets to their wives” (8:3h), thereby stressing the transgression of epistemological boundaries through the revelation of hidden knowledge.

Whereas *1 En.* 7 and 8 present narrative summaries of the descent of the Watchers, *1 En.* 9:6–10 retells the sins of the Watchers in the form of the archangelic petition to God on behalf of the earth and its creatures (see 9:2–3).

¹⁹ 4QEn^a IV, 1: [חבר]וּ.

²⁰ 4QEn^b III, 2: [הרש לומ]שרא; 4QEn^a IV, 2: [ב]שפור וחטמו ותוש[וּן].

²¹ Black, “Twenty,” 227–235.

Nevertheless, this passage highlights the same three themes, and its summary of angelic sin similarly ends with a description of the violence of the Giants (9:9) and humankind's desperate cry to heaven (9:10):

<i>1 En. 9:6–10</i>		
Sexual Impurity	Knowledge	Violence
9:8abc – They cohabited and were defiled by human women.	9:6–7 – Asael taught unrighteousness and “revealed the eternal mysteries prepared in heaven and made them known to men.” Šemiḥazah taught spell-binding?	9:9 – The Giants were born, and the earth was filled with violence.
	9:8de – They revealed sins to the women and “taught them to make hate-charms.”	
9:10 – Outcry: Men cry out to heaven.		

Like *1 En. 8*, this account privileges the theme of knowledge. The archangelic report begins with Asael, whose sins are described wholly in terms of his illicit instruction of humankind. The archangels first condemn this wayward Watcher for teaching “wrongdoing²² on the earth” consistent with the focus on the corrupting results of his teachings in *1 En. 8:1–2*. They then state that Asael “revealed the eternal mysteries that are in heaven” (9:6b–c).²³ The archangelic summary deals with the negative effects of this Watcher’s teachings on human behavior, but it also suggests that the very act of revealing secrets to humankind was sinful.

The statements about Asael are followed by a condemnation of Šemiḥazah (9:7). There is no Aramaic extant for this verse, and the extant Greek (Gr^{Pan, Syn}) and Ge‘ez versions stress his leadership of the hosts of fallen angels. Matthew Black suggests that the texts are corrupt and reconstructs an Aramaic *Vorlage*

²² Gr^{Pan}: τὰς ἀδικίας. To which Gr^{Syn} adds “sins [τὰς ἀμαρτίας]” and “all manner of guile [δόλον] in the land” (9:6a; cf. 9:6c).

²³ Translation follows Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 202; see notes there.

similar in content to 7:1 and 8:3a. He proposes that the Aramaic original stated that this Watcher “instructed men in spell-binding” and identified him as the one whom God “appointed ruler of all spell-binders” (9:7).²⁴ If Black’s reconstruction is correct, the archangelic description of Šemiḥazah associates his transgression primarily with his act of teaching, as in 8:3a, rather than his leadership of the other Watchers and his part in their choice to descend to earth, as in 6:3–7.

Whether or not *1 En.* 9:6–7 denounces the corrupting teachings of Šemiḥazah along with Asael, it is striking that this passage describes the Watchers’ sexual misdeeds only after much attention to their pedagogical sins. The events of *1 En.* 6–7 are condensed into the statement that the Watchers “cohabited with the daughters of the earth and had intercourse with them and were defiled by the women” (9:8a). Moreover, this brief summary of the angels’ sexual sins is followed by yet another description of their transmission of knowledge: “and they showed them [f.pl.] all sins.”²⁵

As noted above, most scholars approach the motif of illicit angelic instruction as a secondary stage in the formation of *1 En.* 6–11, a later development from an initial concern with the sexual defilement of these wayward angels and the violence of their offspring. Our analysis has highlighted the importance of this motif in the present form of *1 En.* 6–11. The traditions originally associated with Šemiḥazah may well represent the original core of these chapters. Even so, their import has been radically altered by the accretion of material concerning the corrupting teachings of Asael and other Watchers.

The tensions between these traditions have not been completely effaced. Accordingly, the literary fissures and narrative dissonances in the present form of the *Book of the Watchers* have proved quite heuristic for modern scholars who have sought to reconstruct the traditions behind the text. These characteristics are no less useful for our purposes, albeit for different reasons: they invite us to explore the range of meanings from which later Jewish and Christian readers could draw.

The polyvalent account of angelic descent in *1 En.* 6–11 leaves some basic questions unanswered. For instance, what is the connection between the Watchers’ sexual misdeeds and their corrupting teachings? How does Asael’s transmission of cultural arts to human men and women relate to the other Watchers’ teachings of magical and divinatory arts to their wives? In addition,

²⁴ Black, *Commentary*, 131; cf. Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 202; Isaac in *OTP* 1.17; Charles, *Commentary*, 21.

²⁵ Gr^{Syn} adds that they “taught them to make hate-charms [μίσητρον].”

this unit allows for multiple answers to theological questions that would interest later Jews and Christians. Does the culpability for the antediluvian proliferation of human sin fall primarily on Watchers, or do we humans also share the blame? And, most importantly, what are the ramifications of angelic descent for the origin, ends, and nature of evil?

For our purposes, the question of the exact relationship between angelic descent and the antediluvian proliferation of human sin proves most relevant. Within *1 En.* 6–11, the juxtaposition of *1 En.* 7 and *1 En.* 8 results in an overdetermination in the explanation of evil. Both chapters account for the proliferation of promiscuity and bloodshed on earth before the Flood. Yet the two, as Nickelsburg notes, differ on the issue of culpability; whereas *1 En.* 7 accuses the Watchers of causing the antediluvian deterioration of earthly life, *1 En.* 8 shifts the blame away from the Watchers, positing instead the shared guilt of corrupting angels and corrupted humans.²⁶ The origin of this apparent redundancy can be readily explained through the theory that the two reflect originally distinct traditions, later intermingled by redactional activity. This, however, does not suffice to explain away the editorial choice to combine them, nor does it erase the conflicting views with which the text's readers are faced.

In the following chapters, we shall see how many Jews and Christians bypassed this difficulty by focusing wholly on the Watchers' sexual misdeeds. Some, however, chose to draw on the traditions about illicit angelic instruction in *1 En.* 6–11 and were thus forced to grapple with the question of how the sexual sins of the Watchers relates to their teachings. To this, the polyvalence of *1 En.* 6–11 allows two different answers. It is possible to read the narrative order of *1 En.* 6–8 as reflecting the chronology of events, assuming that the events described in *1 En.* 8 occurred after the Watchers came to earth to take wives. Following this interpretation, *1 En.* 7 describes how the activities of wayward angels engendered the archetypal ills of sexual impurity and violence, and *1 En.* 8 recounts their subsequent transmission from the fallen angels to humankind.

This, however, is not the only option. Alternately, Asael's teachings of cultural arts can be interpreted as a causal factor in the subsequent descent of Šemiḥazah and his hosts: the introduction of jewelry and cosmetics by Asael caused other angels to be tempted by the artificially enhanced beauty of human women and thus drawn down to earth.²⁷ Although this interpretation necessitates reading *1 En.* 8:1–2 as a "flashback" to the cause of the events described

²⁶ Nickelsburg, "Reflections," 311.

²⁷ Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth," 397–98; VanderKam, *Enoch*, 124–25.

in *1 En.* 6–7 (cf. 12:1),²⁸ it does resolve several other issues. For instance, by positing two stages of instruction, an exegete could readily reconcile the fact that Asael is depicted as transmitting cultural arts to all humankind, whereas the other Watchers teach magical and divinatory skills to their wives. The chronology is also consistent with the order of events in 9:6–10, where the archangels first recount Asael’s introduction of sin to humankind and only then describe the activities of Šemiḥazah and the sexual defilement of the Watchers with human women.

Nickelsburg has suggested a direct textual basis for the second interpretation. He uses Syncellus’ Greek version to reconstruct the fragmentary Aramaic of *1 En.* 8:1–2 as follows:

Asael taught men to make swords and weapons and shields and breastplates. And he showed them the metals *of the earth and gold* and the working of them.

And they made them into bracelets and ornaments for women, and he showed them silver and stibium and eyepaint and select stones and dyes. And the sons of men made them for themselves and their daughters and they transgressed and lead the holy ones astray. And there was much godlessness *on the earth.*

And they committed fornication and went astray, and made all their paths desolate.²⁹

As he and others have noted, this reconstruction may find support in one of our earliest extant references to the Enochic myth of angelic descent: in the second century BCE, the author of the “Animal Apocalypse” in the *Book of Dreams* metaphorically expresses angelic descent by depicting a single star falling from the sky, only later followed by other stars (*1 En.* 86:1–2).³⁰ The idea that Asael’s fall preceded and caused the fall of the other angels is, at the very least, an extremely early variant or interpretation.

One wishes that the text-history of *1 En.* 8 could be reconstructed with more confidence. Nevertheless, the presence of two possible – and equally viable – interpretations of the chronology of angelic descent in *1 En.* 6–11 is itself significant for our understanding of these chapters. This range of meanings points to the redactors’ reticence to harmonize completely the different

²⁸ Of course, this interpretation does not explain why Asael’s name is included among Šemiḥazah’s hosts at 6:7. Its prominence, however, is suggested by the fact that all of our extant translations render the name of this Watcher at 6:7 (Gr^{Pan.}: Ασέαλ; Gr^{Syn.}: Αζαλζήλ; Eth: *As’el, Asa’el*) differently than the name at 8:1 and following (Gr^{Pan., Syn.}: Αζαήλ; Eth: *Azaz’el*), thereby removing this difficulty.

²⁹ Translation follows Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic and Myth,” 397, with readings from Gr^{Syn.} italicized.

³⁰ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 195–96.

traditions underlying *1 En.* 6–11, and it exemplifies the polysemy that enabled the reapplication of the Enochic myth of angelic descent to new situations, problems, and concerns.

Most relevant, for later Jews and Christians, was the fact that the two chronologies have very different ramifications for the etiology of evil. If the corrupting teachings of Asael and other Watchers follow from their lust-motivated descent from heaven, the Watchers are wholly to blame for the degradation of earthly life and human morality in early human history. But, if Asael's teachings led to the descent of other angels, then humankind is no less culpable; Asael may have introduced violence and promiscuity, but his human students (and, more specifically, the corrupted women) embraced his teachings so enthusiastically that they in turn caused the fall of his angelic brethren. In either case, human wickedness is catalyzed by some breach in the supernatural sphere, but the polyvalent account of angelic descent in *1 En.* 6–11 allows for different understandings of the degree of human responsibility for the evils on the earth.

ii. Topics of Angelic Teaching

The instruction motif also serves a more mundane etiological function, helping to explain how specific types of knowledge and skills first came to be adopted by humankind.³¹ Although modern scholars have tended to focus on the *Book of the Watchers'* etiology of evil, the precise topics of angelic instruction prove no less significant for our understanding of *1 En.* 6–11. On the one hand, the choice of topics helps to illumine the concerns of its authors/redactors and original audience. On the other hand, they open the way for later interpreters to use the angelic descent myth to critique a variety of practices in their own times, ranging from “magic” and divination, to polytheism, philosophy, and feminine vanity.

In *1 En.* 6–11, the Watchers teach three types of knowledge: [1] cultural arts connected to metalworking and ornamentation (8:1–2), [2] magical skills such as sorcery and pharmacology (7:1 cd; 8:3ab), and [3] divination from cosmological phenomena (8:3c–g). Each category raises its own complex of issues, which resonate in different ways with biblical, Second Temple Jewish, and Greco-Roman traditions about the dawn of human civilization, the perceived

³¹ Molenberg downplays the etiological function of these stories and highlights their typological function (“Study,” 145), and Suter sees a tension between “the etiological possibilities of the myth” and “its paradigmatic function” (“Fallen Angel,” 132–33). In my view, these functions need not be conflicting or mutually exclusive.

value of these practices, and the relationship between human and divine knowledge.

The first category covers skills commonly seen to be emblematic of human civilization. Above, we noted how *1 En.* 8:1–2 uses Asael’s teachings of metalworking and cosmetology to explain the spread of violence and promiscuity among antediluvian men and women as results of their eager adoption of weapons, jewelry, and cosmetics. Dimant offers the intriguing suggestion that this description of illicit angelic instruction may also be linked to an early articulation of the Noachide Commandments. In her view, the topics of Asael’s teachings evoke the paradigmatic sins of idolatry, murder, and fornication – three sins often found among Rabbinic lists of the commandments that are binding for Gentiles (e.g., *b.Sanh.* 56a–57a; *Gen.Rab.* 34:8).³²

Dimant’s hypothesis fits well with some of the later interpretations of angelic descent (e.g., *Jub.* 7:20–21), but it falls short, in my view, as an explanation for the topics of instruction in *1 En.* 8:1–2. Even though the arts of metalworking are closely linked to the sin of idolatry in biblical and postbiblical texts,³³ it remains that *1 En.* 6–11 makes no mention of idolatry or worship of any sort; knowledge of metalworking is here used only for weapons and jewelry (8:1).³⁴

For exploring how *1 En.* 8:1–2 functions as an etiology of metalworking and cosmetics, the comparison with Rabbinic traditions is perhaps less helpful than the parallels in the Torah and in Hellenistic tradition. When viewed in these contexts, the description of Asael as introducing technological skills to humankind evokes a poignantly ambivalent attitude towards the emergence of human civilization. Nickelsburg, for instance, suggests that *1 En.* 8:1–2 may reflect interpretation of Gen 4:22–24, aimed at explaining exactly how Tubal-Cain learned to “forge all instruments of bronze and iron” (4:22). Even if such a direct exegetical origin is speculative, it is significant that the tainted etiology of metalworking and cosmetology in *1 En.* 8:1–2 expresses a view of civilization similar to that of Genesis, which critiques human learning by depicting the sons of Cain as the culture-heroes who invented metalworking, city-building, cattle-herding, and music.

We find a similar notion of human history as a progressive decline from blessed primitivism in Greco-Roman mythological and historical traditions.³⁵

³² Dimant, “1 Enoch 6–11,” 327–28.

³³ E.g. Isa 2:20; 31:7; Jer 10:4; Ezek 7:19; Hos 8:4; Wisd 13:10.

³⁴ The only explicit link between the fallen angels and idolatry occurs in *1 En.* 19:1 (see below); even there, we find no connection with metalworking.

³⁵ Most famously, Hesiod, *Op.* 109–201; see Lovejoy and Boas, *Primitivism*, esp. 24–31; Blundell, *Origins*, esp. 105.

These parallels raise the possibility that *1 En.* 6–11 drew not only from biblical literature, but also from the Hellenistic culture of its time. A number of scholars have suggested that the Asael tradition was influenced directly by Greek myths about Prometheus.³⁶ Asael and Prometheus both rebel against heaven and introduce skills to humankind. As punishment, both are bound. Moreover, *Prometheus Bound* includes the mining of “copper, iron, silver, and gold” (500) amongst Prometheus’ teaching of “every art possessed by man” (505).

David Suter, for instance, argues that *1 En.* 8:1–2 is a deliberate “allusion to Greek mythology” that expresses “both knowledge of and disapproval of Hellenistic culture.”³⁷ Consistent with his theory that *1 En.* 6–16 reflects the allegorical identification of fallen angels with impure priests,³⁸ he notes that priests were commonly teachers of knowledge; he thus proposes that this allusion was intended to critique the (mostly priestly) Jerusalem aristocracy who were responsible for “the Hellenization of Jerusalem society in the third century BCE.”³⁹

To be sure, both the notion of wayward angelic pedagogues and the specific topics of their instruction recall the ambivalent culture-heroes of Greek mythology, and this connection proves critical for understanding *1 En.* 6–11. Yet such traditions are simply so diffuse that thematic parallels need not suggest direct dependence on a specific text, let alone a deliberate allusion to Hellenism.⁴⁰ In a recent article, Fritz Graf has surveyed the numerous traditions about the supernatural origins of metallurgical and magical knowledge in the literature of the Greco-Roman world (including Jewish writings such as the *Book of the Watchers*); due to the quantity and diffusion of these traditions, he concludes that their common features reflect, above all, “the eastern Mediterranean literary Koine.”⁴¹

When *1 En.* 6–11 is placed in its broader context, it seems improbable that specific Greek parallels can explain the precise origins of the instruction motif.

³⁶ Bartelemus, *Heroentum*, 161–66; Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic and Myth,” 399, 403; idem, *Commentary*, 191–93; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 190.

³⁷ Suter, “Fallen Angel,” 115, 132–33.

³⁸ Nickelsburg (“Enoch, Levi,” 584–87) and Tigchelaar (*Prophets*, 195–203) make similar points, but only in the case of *1 En.* 12–16. In my view, their arguments better fit the textual evidence.

³⁹ Suter, “Fallen Angel,” 134–35.

⁴⁰ The same critique can be leveled against Bauckham’s view that, already in BW, “the pagan culture-hero is demoted to the role of fallen angels” and that this is “a polemical move intended to trace the whole of pagan culture back to an evil origin” (“Fall,” 316). This is certainly true for the early Christian apologists who are the focus of his article, but these later attitudes are not readily retrojected into the third century BCE.

⁴¹ Graf, “Mythical,” 322.

Nevertheless, such parallels can help us to recover the matrix of cultural connotations therein presupposed. For instance, some scholars of early Judaism have found it puzzling that *1 En.* 8 includes a seemingly beneficial civilized art such as metalworking alongside more socially marginal practices such as sorcery and divination.⁴² The lists of Prometheus' teachings in *Prometheus Bound* are instructive in this regard: divination, pharmacology, and metallurgy are treated as a single complex (484–500). Moreover, a similar set of teachings are associated with the Idaean Dactyls. Diodorus Siculus attributes an etiology of sorcery, mystery rites, and metallurgy to the fourth-century BCE Ephorus of Cyme in which the Dactyls are “sorcerers, who practiced charms and initiatory rites and mysteries” and who teach humankind about the “use of fire and what the metals copper and iron are, as well as the means of working them” (5.64.4–5; also Pliny, *Nat.* 7.61).⁴³ In attributing the introduction of metalworking, cosmetics, sorcery, and divination to Asael and other Watchers, *1 En.* 8 may reflect a shared set of cultural connotations, in which the mining of metals is seen as a mysterious and paradigmatically hubristic human activity (so too Job 28). This complex may help to explain the inclusion of cosmetology, since this discipline involved a manipulation of chemicals akin to pharmacology. Even as *1 En.* 8:2 implies a critique of female vanity as an emblem of humanity's civilized decline, it may ground its plausibility in the widespread suspicion of chemical skills in Greco-Roman culture.

Whereas the teachings of the fallen angel Asael highlight the corrupting power of the knowledge that shaped human civilization, the other topics of illicit angelic instruction in *1 En.* 6–11 invoke categories of wisdom explicitly forbidden in the Torah (esp. Deut 18:9–14). Just as the text attributes the human discovery of spells and sorcery to the teachings of Šemiḥazah, Hermoni, and other Watchers, so the transgressive nature of these angelic but fallen culture-heroes resonates meaningfully with the marginalization of such practices in the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism, and Hellenistic culture. Greek mythology, for instance, often associates the invention/discovery of sorcery and spells with marginal figures, such as Dactyls and *daimones*, who stand precariously perched on the border between human and divine.⁴⁴ Likewise, the etiology of sorcery and pharmacology in *1 En.* 6–11 aptly depicts these skills as wrongly

⁴² E.g., Newsom, “Development,” 314, 320–21.

⁴³ Graf, “Mythical,” 322–28.

⁴⁴ Gordon, “Imagining,” 178–81; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 179–81; Ferguson, *Demonology*, 33–59.

obtained by humankind, even as its appeal to the fallen angels ironically allows for the assertion of their authentically supernatural origin.

At first sight, the mantic teachings described in *1 En.* 8:3c–g seem similar in thrust and motivation. These teachings invoke the widespread distrust of the marginal yet powerful figure of the diviner, as found both in the Hebrew Bible and in Greco-Roman literature. As with spell-binding and sorcery, the practice of divination is explicitly prohibited in the Torah.⁴⁵

Yet, we also find a more positive view of divination in Israelite and early Jewish literature – and particularly in texts of the apocalyptic genre. For instance, the oldest material in the book of Daniel (chs. 2–6) celebrates its hero as a sage and diviner in the courts of foreign kings (1:20; 4:9; 5:11), drawing on Mesopotamian mantic traditions no less than biblical models like Joseph (Gen 41).⁴⁶ That similar traditions seem to have informed the characterization of Enoch in the *Astronomical Book* and the rest of the *Book of the Watchers*⁴⁷ makes it all the more striking that *1 En.* 6–11 denounces divination as ill-gotten knowledge.

Similarly, the modes of divination listed in *1 En.* 8:3 invoke and invert a common apocalyptic conceptualization of heavenly secrets: cosmological and meteorological phenomena.⁴⁸ The inclusion of knowledge about the sun, moon, earth, stars, lightning, and fire-balls amongst the teachings of the Watchers presents a striking contrast with the elevated status of cosmological wisdom in other parts of the *Book of the Watchers* (esp. 1–5; 17–19; 20–36), as well as the earlier Enochic apocalypse. The *Astronomical Book* attributes revelations to Enoch that concern the sun, moon, stars, earth, winds, and seasons. A similar correlation of the cosmic order with the proper patterns of human life can be found in *1 En.* 2–5, the nature poem at the beginning of the *Book of the Watchers*. In those chapters, Enoch exhorts the reader to “observe” and “consider” the “works of heaven” – the heavenly luminaries (2:1), the earth (2:2), and the weather fluctuations in the progression of seasons (2:3–5:1a) – because the orderliness of their cycles attests God’s act of Creation (5:1b) and provides humans with models for ethical steadfastness (5:4–9).⁴⁹ The descriptions of Enoch’s tours of heaven and earth in *1 En.* 17–36 exhibit similar concerns, including an interest in meteorological and celestial phenomena (esp. 36).

⁴⁵ Deut 18:10–12; also Isa 44:25–26; 47:12–13; 46:9–11.

⁴⁶ Müller, “Mantische Weisheit.”

⁴⁷ VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 52–75; Kvanvig, *Roots*, 160–213.

⁴⁸ Stone, “Lists,” 426–41; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 120–22.

⁴⁹ Hartman, *Asking*, esp. 66–70.

In those sections of the *Book of the Watchers*, the association of cosmology and revealed wisdom is used to praise God and to encourage human righteousness.⁵⁰ A very different attitude towards cosmological wisdom is implied by the depiction of fallen angels as improperly instructing humanity about the sun, moon, earth, stars, lightning, and fire-balls in *1 En.* 6–11. As Martha Himmelfarb observes,

. . . knowledge of the very phenomena that are signs of faithfulness in the introduction to the *Book of the Watchers* (i.e. 1–5; esp. 2:1–5:4) and cause for praise of God in the tour to the ends of the earth (i.e. 17–36) here contributes to the corruption of humanity.⁵¹

Within the redacted whole of the *Book of the Watchers*, this tension functions to generate interesting new levels of meaning, which we shall discuss below. First, however, we must ask why and how such divergent perspectives came to be combined in the first place.

If Nickelsburg and Dimant are correct to read *1 En.* 6–11 as an originally independent piece,⁵² this raises an intriguing possibility: the motif of illicit angelic instruction may have once been used to critique the very types of cosmological speculation and mantic wisdom that would later come to predominate in the redacted form of the *Book of the Watchers*.⁵³

Whereas the *Astronomical Book* and the other sections of the *Book of the Watchers* make positive claims about Enoch's reception and transmission of secrets from heaven, *1 En.* 6–11 inverts the conception of heavenly secrets as divine knowledge uncovered for salvific aims. This is perhaps most evident in *1 En.* 8:3h, which concludes the list of the Watchers' teachings with the summary statement: "And they all began to reveal secrets⁵⁴ to their wives." As noted above, *1 En.* 6–11 employs the rhetoric of secrecy in a surprisingly negative fashion.⁵⁵ Moreover, this unit uses the language of secrecy [יָרַם] and revelation [הִרְוֶה] to evoke and invert the positive association of divine mysteries with cosmological wisdom in other apocalypses.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 72–74.

⁵¹ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 77.

⁵² Nickelsburg, "Reflections," 311; Dimant, "1 Enoch 6–11," 323.

⁵³ See further Reed, "Heavenly Ascent," 54–59.

⁵⁴ 4QEn^a IV, 5, 4QEn^b III, 5: יִרְוֶה הַמִּסְתֵּרִים; Gr^{Syn}: ἀνακαλύπτειν τὰ μυστήρια.

⁵⁵ There is, as Molenberg notes ("Study," 140–41), only one reference to the positive revelation of knowledge in *1 En.* 6–11: God's instruction to Sariel to tell Noah about the impending Flood (10:2–3; see Gen 6:13–21).

⁵⁶ Note, for instance, the positive use of the term יָרַם in the oldest stratum of Daniel to denote the hidden meanings of dreams that God reveals [הִרְוֶה] to Daniel in visions (2:16–19, 26–30, 47; 4:9).

Its stance differs markedly from the rest of the *Book of the Watchers* and other early Jewish apocalypses. Interestingly, however, a similar skepticism towards the quest for hidden knowledge can be found in the biblical and postbiblical Wisdom literature. Consistent with the emphasis on the essential inscrutability of God and His Creation in books like Proverbs and Job,⁵⁷ Qohelet and the Wisdom of ben Sira level critiques against the apocalyptic claim to uncover the mysteries of heaven.⁵⁸ Writing soon after the *Book of the Watchers* (ca. 200–167 BCE), ben Sira warns his readers against overzealous speculation into divine secrets:

Seek not what is too difficult for you,
Nor investigate what is beyond your power.
Reflect on what has been assigned to you,
For you do not need *hidden things* [נסתרות; τῶν κρυπτῶν].
(Sir 3:21–22; see 20:30).⁵⁹

If 1 En. 6–11 reflects a similar attitude, only voiced in a different manner, how might we account for the integration of this tradition into materials whose attitude towards human knowledge and divine secrets are more classically “apocalyptic” (in both the generic and literal senses of the term)? Most relevant, in this regard, is Michael E. Stone’s analysis of the common topics and structures in the “lists of revealed things” found in the Wisdom literature and in early Jewish apocalypses.⁶⁰ Stone has shown that the same formulaic lists were used to catalogue topics of apocalyptic speculation and to stress the limits of human knowledge.⁶¹ Such textual parallels point to the close connections between those who enthusiastically embraced speculative wisdom and those who emphasized the dangers inherent in the unrestrained search for knowledge.

When viewed against the background of the shared scribal culture from which late Wisdom texts and early apocalypses both emerged, the speculative stance of the *Astronomical Book* and the majority of the *Book of the Watchers* does not look so different from the skeptical stance of Qohelet and ben Sira. Both sets of positions may reflect debates about the nature, scope, and aims

⁵⁷ Prov 30:1–4; Job 11:5–6; 28; 38–40; Perdue, “Wisdom,” 92–95, 98.

⁵⁸ Qoh 3:21; Sir 34:1–8; 41:4. Collins, *Seers*, 391–92. Although the dating of Qohelet is a topic of some debate, the possibility that this work was composed in the 3rd c. BCE makes its skepticism towards speculative wisdom especially intriguing.

⁵⁹ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 17–18. Argall suggests that these lines allude to the very circles that composed and circulated early Enochic materials (1 *Enoch and Sirach*, 74–76, 250).

⁶⁰ Stone, “Lists,” 414–52.

⁶¹ Stone, “Lists,” 435–39.

of human inquiry waged within a single, pre-Maccabean scribal discourse.⁶² If so, then it is possible that *1 En.* 6–11 took form among writers and redactors whose stance towards cosmological inquiry was more similar to Qohelet and ben Sira than to the scribes responsible for the *Astronomical Book* and the other sections of the *Book of the Watchers*. The continued interchange between such circles (see Ch. 2) further allows for the possibility that *1 En.* 6–11 was later adopted by scribes with more positive attitudes towards speculative wisdom.

2. KNOWLEDGE, SIN, AND SECRECY IN *1 EN.* 12–16

Whatever the precise derivation of *1 En.* 6–11, the task of interweaving its potentially “antispeculative” strands with the descriptions of Enoch’s revelations in *1 En.* 17–36 is masterfully achieved by the transitional chapters of *1 En.* 12–16. The sins of the Watchers are here described in the context of Enoch’s commission to rebuke them. This framework enables the integration of traditions about the fallen angels with traditions about the elevation of Enoch, thereby facilitating the combination of *1 En.* 6–11 with the material about Enoch in the rest of the *Book of the Watchers*. In this, the motif of illicit angelic instruction plays a pivotal role, serving as a nexus for the exploration of the epistemological issues raised both by the Watchers’ illicit pedagogy and by Enoch’s own access to heavenly secrets.⁶³

i. Two Perspectives on Angelic Sin and Secret Knowledge

Within *1 En.* 12–16, two passages elaborate *1 En.* 6–11’s descriptions of the sins of the Watchers, retelling the angelic descent myth by means of rebukes and instructions to rebuke. In *1 En.* 12:4–13:3, the “Watchers of great Holy One” tell Enoch to rebuke the “Watchers of heaven who have left the highest heaven” for their sexual misdeeds and the violent results (12:3–6). Enoch then rebukes Asael, noting their improper revelation of knowledge and the sinful results (13:1–2). In *1 En.* 15:2–16:4, the themes of sexual and

⁶² Most scholars concur that the celebration of Enoch’s scribal identity in BW and other Enochic pseudepigrapha corresponds to the self-conception of their authors/redactors; Collins, “Sage,” 344–47; Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 92–94.

⁶³ Newsom proposes that the instruction motif represents a later addition both to *1 En.* 6–11 and 12–16 (“Development,” esp. 319). For discussion and critique of Newsom’s theory, as well as a more detailed treatment of *1 En.* 12–16, see Reed, “Heavenly Ascent.”

epistemological transgression are combined in a dialogue attributed to God (15–16).

Interestingly, the archangels, Enoch, and God each rebuke angelic descent in different ways. The archangels are concerned about the departure of their brethren from the dwelling-place and activities proper to their kind. Although they cite the Giants' destruction of the earth (12:4), they neglect to mention the negative results of the angelic descent for humankind. By contrast, Enoch is entirely concerned with the effects on humankind, lamenting "all the deeds of godlessness, wrongdoing, and sin" that humans learned from Asael (13:1). Although he paraphrases the archangels' statements about the punishment of the fallen Watchers to Asael, he does not speak of their transgression of the physical boundaries and characteristic activities proper to angels.

God, by contrast, is portrayed as omniscient (cf. 9:5, 11), and He addresses both aspects of the Watchers' descent. Moreover, He is depicted as understanding these events on a much deeper level, grasping the implications of angelic descent for the proper order of His cosmos (15:4–7), the ramifications of the birth of the Giants beyond the antediluvian era (15:9–12), and the shared culpability of angels, women, and men in bringing about this lamentable situation (16:3).

For the interpretation of *1 En.* 6–11 in *1 En.* 12–16, this divine denunciation of the Watchers (15–16) proves most determinative. Not only is this version of events privileged as the direct speech of the all-knowing God, but it represents this unit's "last word" on the fallen angels. Different approaches to angelic sin are offered in *1 En.* 6–16. In the end, however, the exuberant polysemy of *1 En.* 6–11 and the modulation of different voices in *1 En.* 12–16 are both resolved through the final appeal to an omniscient, divine perspective in *1 En.* 15–16.

Evoking the concern for the orderliness of Creation in *1 En.* 1–5, 17–19, and 20–36, the dialogue attributed to God in *1 En.* 15–16 interprets angelic descent in terms of the inversion of the ideal relationship between identity and activity that properly delineates the heavenly and earthly realms. In 15:3, God denounces the once-immortal Watchers for "act(ing) like children of the earth" by bearing Giants for sons. This rebuke occasions a contrast between the proper types of action for spiritual and earthly beings: sex is an acceptable activity for "those who die and perish" (15:4–5), but it is categorically improper for "spirits that live forever and do not die for all generations forever" (15:6).⁶⁴

⁶⁴ On the nature and significance of their defilement, see Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 21; Dimant, "1 Enoch 6–11," 325; eadem, "Fallen Angels," 43, 73; Suter, "Fallen Angel," 119.

Likewise, the birth of the Giants is explored in terms of the mingling of “spirits and flesh” (15:8). Angels properly dwell in heaven, and humans properly dwell on earth (15:10), but the nature of the Giants is mixed. This transgression of categories brings terrible results: after their physical death, the Giants’ demonic spirits “come forth from their bodies” to plague humankind (15:9, 11–12; 16:1). According to *1 En.* 16, the angelic transmission of heavenly knowledge to earthly humans can also be understood as a contamination of distinct categories within God’s orderly Creation. As inhabitants of heaven, the Watchers were privy to all the secrets of heaven; their revelation of this knowledge to the inhabitants of the earth was categorically improper as well as morally destructive.

ii. The Descent of the Watchers and the Elevation of Enoch

Even as *1 En.* 12–16 includes the interpretation of illicit angelic instruction as improper due to its corruption of humanity, this unit thus privileges a concern with the proper epistemological boundaries between heaven and earth. On the level of the redacted text, the ramifications are striking. The “antispeculative” tendencies in *1 En.* 6–11 are not simply subsumed into the rest of *Book of the Watchers*. Instead, *1 En.* 12–16 treats this tension as generative.

The productive combination of conflicting traditions is achieved through the juxtaposition of Enoch and the Watchers. Above, we noted that *1 En.* 12–16 provides a transition between the angel story in *1 En.* 6–11 and Enoch’s otherworldly journeys in *1 En.* 17–36, by interweaving traditions about the fallen angels (cf. Gen 6:1–4) with traditions about Enoch (cf. Gen 5:18–24). More specifically, this unit is structured around a two-part contrast between the former, who descend to earth to corrupt humankind with their teachings, and the latter, who ascends to heaven to receive salvific knowledge.

Within *1 En.* 12–16, each statement about improper angelic instruction corresponds thematically and inversely to the events subsequently related about Enoch. The first reference to the Watchers’ teachings focuses on its corrupting effects on human ethics (13:1–2); this is followed by Enoch’s elevation to a potential intercessor for sinful angels and a prophet divinely commissioned to rebuke them (13:3–14:25). The second reference focuses on the epistemological ramifications of their transmission of secret knowledge to humankind (16:2–3); this is followed by Enoch’s elevation to a visionary with access to heavenly secrets (17–36):

Sins of the Watchers**Enoch's Elevation**

[Accounts of angelic descent in *1 En.*
6–11]

Stage 1: Physical Ascent (cf. Gen 5:24):
Enoch is “taken up” from earth (12:1–2).

Rebuke of Watchers for sexual sins and
violent results (12:3–6)

**Rebuke of Asael for the transmission
of *sinful* knowledge (13:1–2)**

**Stage 2: Angelic petition and divine
commission:**

Fallen Watchers request that Enoch petition on their behalf (13:3–4)

In dreams and visions, God commissions
Enoch to rebuke them (13:7–14:7); Enoch
sees throne-vision (14:8–24).

Rebuke of Watchers for sexual sins and
violent results (15:1–12)

**Rebuke of Watchers for the
transmission of *secret* knowledge
(16:2–3)**

[Stage 3: Revelation of knowledge to Enoch:
Account of Enoch's tours of heaven and
earth in *1 En.* 17–19]

The significance of this pattern becomes clear when we examine the progression more closely. In the first reference to the Watchers' illicit pedagogy (13:1–2), the instruction motif is explored along the axes of sin and punishment, stressing the inescapability of divine justice:

Nor shall forbearance, petition, or mercy be yours, because of the wrongs [ἁδικημάτων; *gef'a*] that you have taught, and because of all the deeds of godlessness [τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀσεβειῶν; *megebāra šerfat*], and the wrong-doing [ἁδικίας; *gef'*] and the sin [ἁμαρτίας; *xat'i'at*], which you showed to the children of men. (*1 En.* 13:2)

This passage communicates a link with human experience that is both causal and typological. The teachings of Asael caused wickedness to proliferate amongst humankind. And, just as Asael's punishment is inescapable, so his human pupils will be fairly punished for their own “deeds of godlessness” (13:2). In other words, the instruction motif here functions both as an etiology of human sin and as a paradigm to stress the essential inescapability of divine punishment.

These themes are developed further in the following passage (13:3–14:25), which explores Enoch’s role within the arithmetic of sin and punishment. The heavenly angels had previously requested that Enoch rebuke the fallen angels (12:1–6), and the fallen Watchers now appeal to him to write a petition on their behalf (13:3–4). Enoch’s special status as the “scribe of righteousness” who can mediate between different levels of heaven is then heightened even further, as God commissions him to “speak to the sons of heaven and rebuke them” (13:8; also 15:2; 16:2). Enoch learns that he was in fact “endowed, fashioned, and created to reprimand the Watchers” (14:3), and he is granted a vision of the heavenly Temple and God’s Throne and glory (14:8–24).⁶⁵

The second description of illicit pedagogy (1 *En.* 15–16) functions to introduce the next stage in Enoch’s elevation (1 *En.* 17–36). Whereas 1 *En.* 12:3–13:3 explored the implications of the improper teaching of Asael, 1 *En.* 15–16 addresses the teachings of a collective, anonymous group of angels. Similarly, the focus here shifts from the corrupting results of illicit angelic instruction to the very act of revealing forbidden knowledge. Whereas the rebuke of Asael in 1 *En.* 13:2 had emphasized the human wickedness catalyzed by this Watcher, 1 *En.* 16:3–4 suggests that the crux of the Watchers’ sin lies in the impropriety of certain heavenly secrets for human consumption. This example of improper revelation introduces the final stage in Enoch’s elevation: in the redacted form of the *Book of the Watchers*, the exploration of the Watchers’ improper revelation of knowledge in 1 *En.* 16 is directly followed by the proper revelation of heavenly secrets to Enoch during his tours of heaven and earth in 1 *En.* 17–36.

In the final lines of 1 *En.* 12–16, God tells Enoch to proclaim to the Watchers:

“You were in heaven,
 And there was no secret that was not revealed to you.
 Unspeakable secrets you know,⁶⁶
 And these you made known to women, in the hardness of your heart.
 And, by these secrets, females and mankind multiplied evils on the earth . . .
 You shall have no peace.” (1 *En.* 16:3–4)

On this dramatic note, the transitional unit comes to a close. Just as the account of angelic descent in 1 *En.* 6–11 had begun with the Watchers’ oath on Mount Hermon (6:6), so Enoch finds himself suddenly transported to a “place of storm-clouds and to a mountain whose summit reached heaven” (17:2). As the *Book of the Watchers* turns to describe Enoch’s otherworldly

⁶⁵ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 9–28.

⁶⁶ I here follow Black’s reconstruction and translation of 1 *En.* 16:3 (see *Commentary*, 155); compare Clement, *Strom.* 5.1.10.2.

journeys, Enoch learns the “places of the luminaries and the chambers of the stars and of the thunder-peals” (17:3), the positive counterparts to the celestial and meteorological divination taught by the Watchers in *1 En.* 8:3c–g. In this manner, the *Book of the Watchers* shifts from the topic of the fallen angels to Enoch’s tours of heaven and earth – and from the improper teachings of the Watchers to the divine revelations received by Enoch.

3. ENOCH, THE FALLEN ANGELS, AND THE ORIGINS OF EVIL IN *1 EN.* 17–36

We have seen how the redactional combination of *1 En.* 6–11 and *1 En.* 12–16 functions to generate new levels of meaning with respect to the epistemological and theological issues raised by angelic sin. Likewise, the combination of *1 En.* 12–16 and *1 En.* 17–36 shapes the image of Enoch that is communicated by the redacted form of the *Book of the Watchers*.

By placing *1 En.* 12–16 before the accounts of Enoch’s otherworldly journeys in *1 En.* 17–19 and *1 En.* 20–36, the redactors of this apocalypse emphasize the inextricable link between the revelations to Enoch and his predestined commission from God. Far from presenting the antediluvian patriarch as a model for any contemporary practice of “ascent-mysticism,” the *Book of the Watchers* stresses that its pseudonymous author was uniquely worthy to be brought up to heaven.⁶⁷ Enoch may be a paradigm for ethical action, but it is his exalted status that accounts for his reception of heavenly secrets. Together with the juxtaposition between Enoch’s special wisdom and the forbidden secrets revealed by the fallen angels, this assertion helps to attenuate the potentially radical epistemological ramifications of this one man’s access to knowledge through heavenly ascent, by contextualizing his reception of that knowledge within a broader consideration of the proper relationship between heavenly and human wisdom.⁶⁸

There are also two passages in *1 En.* 17–36 that function to enhance the depiction of the Watchers. First is 19:1–2, which asserts a connection between the Watchers, idolatry, and demons. Second is 32:6, which takes a dismissive approach to the story of Adam and Eve (Gen 2–3). Interestingly, both serve to facilitate the interpretation of angelic descent as an etiology of evil. Inasmuch as this issue becomes a central concern for later Jews and Christians, these passages prove important for our understanding of the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers*.

⁶⁷ Enoch’s ascent is not self-induced but rather a case of rapture; Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 103–14.

⁶⁸ The significance of this approach to Enoch for our understanding of the pseudepigraphy of BW is explored more fully in Reed, “Heavenly Ascent.”

The first, *1 En.* 19:1–2, is the only direct reference to the descent of the Watchers within *1 En.* 17–36. Here, the angel Uriel shows Enoch the prison of “the angels who had intercourse with women” and warns him that “their spirits [πνεύματα], taking on many forms, will harm humankind and lead them astray, to sacrifice to demons [ἐπιθύειν τοῖς δαιμονίοις], until the great judgment.”⁶⁹ Notably, *1 En.* 19:1–2 thus appears to presuppose a different understanding of angelic descent than the material in *1 En.* 6–11 and 12–16. Not only do these verses describe the Watchers’ sexual sins with no mention of their teachings, but they differ on the issue of the fate of the fallen angels. According to 19:1–2, it is the Watchers themselves, not their progeny (cf. 15:8–12), who are the evil spirits that continue to lead humankind astray even in the present day. Moreover, the demonic spirits of the Watchers here encourage idolatry – an accusation absent from *1 En.* 6–16.

The reference to the Watchers in *1 En.* 19:1–2 follows from a description of the punishment of the stars “which transgressed the commandment of the Lord at the beginning of their rising, because they did not come forth at their proper time” (18:15; cf. 21). Carol Newsom proposes that *1 En.* 17–18 preserves a “pre-existing piece of Enochic tradition” and that its references to the prison of the rebellious stars were only later interpreted in terms of the Watchers, by means of the addition of 19:1–2.⁷⁰ Her suggestions are intriguing, raising the possibility that this passage was added during the final stages in the redaction-history of the *Book of the Watchers* to further integrate the material about the Watchers in *1 En.* 6–16 with the material about Enoch in the rest of the apocalypse.

For our purposes, the exact origins of this tradition proves less relevant than its effect on the understanding of angelic descent in the redacted form of the *Book of the Watchers*. When read in its present form and setting, *1 En.* 17–18 echoes and expands the predictions of punishment in God’s commission of the archangels in *1 En.* 9–10 and in the three rebukes in *1 En.* 12–16. By emphasizing the Watchers’ just punishment for their sins, *1 En.* 17–18 encourages a paradigmatic reading of angelic descent as a warning for the human wicked. This, as we shall see, becomes one of the most influential features of the *Book of the Watchers*’ version of the angelic descent myth, adopted even by exegetes who reject its appeal to the fallen angels to explain the origins of human sin and suffering.

As in *1 En.* 6–11 and *1 En.* 12–16, however, typological and etiological interpretations of angelic sin are here combined. Whereas *1 En.* 17–18 stresses God’s

⁶⁹ Translation follows Gr^{Pan} (neither Aram nor Gr^{Syn} are here extant).

⁷⁰ Newsom, “Development,” 322–23.

punishment of the wayward “stars,” *1 En.* 19:1–2 explicitly blames them for bringing evils to the earth. This verse is no less influential among later Jews and Christians, many of whom would read *1 En.* 6–16 through *1 En.* 19:1–2. Not only do they add idolatry to the list of the Watchers’ illicit teachings in *1 En.* 8, but some even cite this verse to underline the causal connection between the fall of the angels before the Flood and the continued activities of demons on the earth.

Within the redacted form of the *Book of the Watchers*, the interpretation of angelic descent as an explanation for the origins of sin and suffering is facilitated, perhaps to an even greater degree, by the approach to Gen 2–3 within *1 En.* 32:6. The story of the Watchers in *1 En.* 6–16 makes clear that their descent from heaven precipitated the proliferation of both misery and moral decline among humans before the Flood. It is implied that *1 En.* 6–16 recounts the very origins of these evils, but we find no attempt to locate angelic descent within prior human history. In those chapters, the question of the relationship between the disobedience of Adam and Eve (Gen 2–3) and the Watchers’ corruption of antediluvian humans remains unanswered.

The comments about the Garden of Eden in *1 En.* 32:6 fill this lacuna. The Garden is one of many stops on Enoch’s tours of heaven and earth in *1 En.* 20–36. When Enoch arrives there, his angelic guide, Raphael, informs him:

This is the Tree of Knowledge from which your father of old and your mother of old ate, and they learned knowledge, and their eyes were opened, and they knew they were naked, and they were driven out of the Garden. (*1 En.* 32:6)

Not only is the Tree of Life displaced to another location (*1 En.* 24–25), but Raphael’s terse summary of Gen 2–3 strikingly neglects to mention the Serpent, God’s command not to eat the fruit of the Tree, and the disobedience of Adam and Eve. In other words, it omits the very details that other exegetes would use to transform this biblical narrative into an etiology of all human sin and suffering.⁷¹ This dismissive reference to Gen 2–3 thus functions to counter the biblical account of the progressive alienation of humankind from God (Gen 1–11) with the radical assertion that evil entered the earth from above. Within the redacted whole of the *Book of the Watchers*, the true genesis of human sin and suffering is attributed to the antediluvian activities of the fallen angels.

⁷¹ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 74; VanderKam, “Angel Story,” 153.

4. THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS AS SCRIPTURE AND EXEGESIS

In the following chapters, we shall see how later readers of the *Book of the Watchers* were forced to grapple, not only with its polysemy, but also with its complex relationship to Genesis. Before we turn to its *Nachleben*, it is thus helpful to consider how this apocalypse situates itself with respect to Genesis. Should we approach the *Book of the Watchers* as an example of scriptural exegesis? Or, should we see it as a work that aims to displace the Torah, by mounting its own claims to authority? Scholars have championed both options. In my view, however, neither proves sufficient to explain the status that this book claims for itself vis-à-vis Genesis.

In many ways, the *Book of the Watchers* fits the category of an expansive biblical retelling.⁷² Consistent with the growing authority of the Torah in post-exilic Judaism and the increasingly elevated role of the scribe in his capacity as Torah-interpreter,⁷³ this apocalypse frames its extrabiblical material about Enoch and the fallen angels as exegesis, by means of quotations from Genesis that serve as markers at key points in the apocalypse (esp. 1 *En.* 6:1–2; 12:1–2).

Furthermore, the *Book of the Watchers*' exegetical, theological, and historiographical choice to depict the angelic descent as the genesis of human wickedness is no less rooted in Genesis than the view that Adam, Eve, and the wily serpent initiated the spread of evil on the earth. The notion that the sins of Adam and Eve caused the "Fall of Man" and the equation of the serpent with Satan have now gained a normative aura due to their dominance in the Christian tradition.⁷⁴ Yet, this reading of Gen 2–3 is hardly inherent to the biblical passage, which only purports to explain how humankind came to know good and evil [שָׂרֵי הָרָע], why clothing was invented, how agricultural labor became a hardship, why childbirth is painful, why wives are subordinated to husbands, and why serpents and women dislike one another.⁷⁵ Moreover, as we will see

⁷² On the use of older scriptures in BW, see e.g., Pomykala, "Scripture Profile," 264–74; VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 281–89; Hartman, *Asking*, esp. 22–30; Hanson, "Rebellion," 195–202.

⁷³ Kugel, *Traditions*, 2–14; Himmelfarb, "Wisdom," 91–92.

⁷⁴ This development, moreover, owes much to Augustine's development of the doctrine of original sin in the fourth century CE (e.g., *Civ. Dei* 14); Pagels, *Adam, Eve*, 98–126. Contrast Rabbinic traditions about the origins of evil (see *Gen. Rab.* 17.2; *y. Sanh.* 72; *b. Sanh.* 20a; Urbach, *Sages*, 421–36).

⁷⁵ Jewish and Christian exegetes would readily add other elements to this list, such as human mortality (*Sir* 15:14, 17, 25:24; 2 *En.* 30:16; 4 *Ezra* 3:7; cf. *Jub.* 4:30), but only later did they develop the notion that Adam's sinfulness, and not just his punishment, was transmitted to humankind (4 *Ezra* 3:21–22; 4:30; 7:118; *L.A.E.* [Latin] 44:22; *Rom* 5:12; 1 *Cor* 15:21–22); Stone, 4 *Ezra*, 63–66; Kugel, *Traditions*, 96–98.

in Chapter 3, the idea that the sins of Adam and Eve marked the birth of human sinfulness does not gain popularity until the first century CE; indeed, strictly speaking, this etiology of evil postdates the *Book of the Watchers* and its angelic approach.⁷⁶

As noted above, the *Book of the Watchers* radically departs from Genesis' view of antediluvian history as the progressive alienation of sinful humans from their good Creator (Gen 1–9). Nevertheless, its supernatural account of the origins of evil is anchored in the very language of Genesis. Gen 2–5 describes a series of human transgressions, but it is only in Gen 6:5 that we find any global statement about evil: “The Lord saw that the evil [רע] of humankind was great on the earth and that every inclination [יצר] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil [רע] continually.”⁷⁷ That this statement occurs directly after Genesis' description of the deeds of the “sons of God” (Gen 6:1–4) readily explains how angelic descent could be seen as a cause for the proliferation of evil – if not its very origins – both by the authors/redactors of the *Book of the Watchers* and by some of the later Jews and Christians who used this text.

Although the *Book of the Watchers*' version of the angelic descent myth makes much sense as an interpretation of Gen 6, it would be misleading to conclude that this apocalypse subordinates its own message and authority to Genesis, as mere commentary to sacred Scripture.⁷⁸ The extrabiblical material in this apocalypse cannot be explained solely in terms of the exegetical responses to textual problems and narrative lacunae in Genesis.⁷⁹ Rather, the authors/redactors of the *Book of the Watchers* seem to have drawn on well-developed traditions about Enoch and the fallen angels, the origins of which may be ultimately no less ancient than the biblical source to which this apocalypse appeals.⁸⁰ This led Milik to propose that Gen 6:1–4 is itself dependent on 1 En. 6–11.⁸¹ Although his suggestion has been widely rejected, his hypothesis sharply highlights the problem, namely, the inadequacy of a simple dependence model to explain the complex relationship between Genesis and the *Book of the Watchers*.

⁷⁶ I thank Daniel Boyarin for pointing out to me the importance of this insight for my broader argument.

⁷⁷ Within Genesis, the word רע first occurs in chs. 2–3, but there it is used only in the context of the knowledge of “good and evil” (טוב ורע in 2:9, 17; 3:5, 22). The term does not occur again until Gen 6:5.

⁷⁸ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 24–29; cf. Beckwith, *OT Canon*, 360–66, 395–405.

⁷⁹ Kugel, *Traditions*, 180; cf. Alexander, “From Son of Adam,” 90–93.

⁸⁰ This is clearest in the case of traditions about Enoch; see Jansen, *Henochgestalt*; Grelot, “Légende”; VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, esp. 1–75; Kvanvig, *Roots*.

⁸¹ Milik, *Commentary*, 31. He also suggested that Gen 5:23 presupposes AB (p. 8).

Insofar as both texts are composite and preserve multiple and conflicting traditions about antediluvian history, they hint at the existence of a rich and varied body of Israelite traditions about the history of humankind before the Flood. It is possible that the terse and suggestive character of Gen 5:21–24 and Gen 6:1–4 is due to Genesis’ selective preservation of traditional material, which continued to be developed in the following centuries, in both oral and written forms. If so, then the *Book of the Watchers* may draw from Genesis as well as from other traditions at a later stage in their development, preserving elements selectively omitted from Genesis, even as it uses them to explicate this increasingly elevated scripture.⁸²

The oral recitation of cherished books like Genesis, in both liturgical and scholastic settings, probably facilitated the continued preservation of traditional lore about the antediluvian era, as well as the progressive emergence and spread of new material associated with Enoch and other biblical figures. As we shall see, the figure of Enoch continued to be a magnet for such traditions and to function as a vehicle for their articulation in writings (which were, in turn, read orally in settings conducive to the generation of new interpretations and the transmission of older traditions). Second Temple scribes used Enoch – like Abraham, Levi, Moses, and other heroes of Israelite history – to voice exhortations about ethics and purity, as well as to explain and expand the terse narratives found in earlier scriptures. Like Ezra and Baruch, this scribal hero simultaneously served as a mouthpiece for teachings not found in those scriptures, ranging from revelations about the nature of the cosmos to prophecies about its catastrophic destruction and re-Creation at the culmination of history.

Although the literary practice of pseudepigraphy jars with modern notions of authorship and authorial creativity, this broader perspective may help us to understand how ancient writers could deign to claim false authorship and why the audiences of such texts so readily accepted their attributions. Whereas earlier research tended to dismiss these literary practices as inherently derivative and deceptive, scholars such as James Kugel have rightly emphasized that the parabiblical literature of Second Temple Judaism did not spring full-formed from the imaginations of their authors.⁸³ The composition of new texts in the names of biblical figures seems to have been rooted in a broader matrix of midrashic, aggadic, and halakhic traditions, the contours of which were already familiar to their readers/hearers. Not only does this literature frequently integrate traditional materials, akin to those selectively preserved

⁸² Stone, “Enoch, Aramaic Levi,” 162–63.

⁸³ Kugel, *Traditions*, xvii–xix.

in the Hebrew Bible, but it attests the progressive development of exegetical motifs that interpret and expand older books. Consequently, this literature is best seen as the product of a dynamic process that shaped “biblical” texts no less than “extrabiblical” ones: the interplay between oral interpretative and literary traditions, by which older scriptures were continually reinterpreted and new works of revealed literature were progressively produced.⁸⁴

Of course, this does not negate the authorial agency of those who composed and redacted biblical pseudepigrapha. As we have seen, the selection, combination, and reinterpretation of traditional material makes meaning no less than the invention of stories and concepts; moreover, the evolution of the Enochic literary tradition (see Chs. 2–3) shows how readily new ideas could be interwoven with old ones. In considering the meaning of pseudepigraphical texts, we must thus focus on the texts themselves, since any exclusively oral “legends” behind them cannot be extracted from their written manifestations and, hence, from the authorial intent of those who composed and redacted them.⁸⁵ At the same time, however, we must acknowledge the mix of oral and textual traditions that served to ground the very plausibility of this mode of literary creativity and the acceptance of its products by ancient audiences.

This point proves especially important insofar as biblical pseudepigraphy was one of the most dominant modes of authorship in Second Temple Judaism. During this period, we find a variety of Jews from different circles, sects, and geographical contexts composing texts in the name of biblical figures and creating parabiblical writings to supplement the Torah and other authoritative books. Taken together, the continued production of “ancient” scriptures and the use of these new/old books by many Jews hints at a more inclusive understanding of scriptural authority than that which would later develop in Judaism and Christianity. It is especially important to remember that the authors (and early readers) of the *Book of the Watchers* did not conceive of “the Bible” in the same sense as later Jews and Christians. In the third century BCE, it is likely that the Torah already held a special level of authority amongst almost all Jews, but there was not yet a broader “biblical” canon and the notion of scriptural authority remained fluid.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism*, 23–26.

⁸⁵ In contrast to Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, the scribal discourse of Second Temple Judaism seems to have included very few attempts at differentiating between oral and literary components of religious discourse, probably because the two were simply too intertwined to try to separate, in the absence of a compelling reason to do so (Jaffee, *Torah*, 39–61; Talmon, “Oral,” 146–48).

⁸⁶ Ulrich, “Bible,” 51–59, 65; VanderKam, *From Revelation*, esp. 20–29.

The precanonical context of the early reception of the *Book of the Watchers* will prove pivotal in subsequent chapters, where we will discuss the dynamics of canonization in some detail (esp. Ch. 4). For our understanding of the authors of this apocalypse and the nature of their appeal to Genesis, it will suffice for now to quote James VanderKam's incisive remarks on the issue:

... at the early times in which the various parts of 1 Enoch and the unified Book of Jubilees were written the term "biblical" would not have the precision that was later given to it. Contrary to the view of R. Beckwith, it seems highly unlikely that the Hebrew canon had been closed in the time of Judas Maccabeus; 1 Enoch and Jubilees themselves and the popularity of both at Qumran are eloquent testimony to the fact that other works billed themselves as revelations and that their claims were accepted by at least some ancient Jews. Which works the authors of these books may have considered authoritative are not entirely clear, although it is obvious that Genesis had a special appeal for them and that they valued many others. Thus the Enochic pamphlets and the Book of Jubilees provide windows into the processes of interpreting older authoritative compositions at a time when the bounds of the Hebrew Scriptures were not set and when other writers were making revelatory claims for their literary efforts.⁸⁷

When seen from this perspective, it is not paradoxical that the *Book of the Watchers* roots its claim to record heavenly secrets in the "biblical" statements about Enoch, even as its expansions of Genesis are no less grounded in the "extrabiblical" claim of Enoch's status as revealer. The apocalypse supplements Genesis' account and simultaneously presents itself as equal in its status as revealed wisdom, but – within the world of this text – neither stance makes sense without the other.

The doubled character of the apocalypse's claims to authority has a notable impact on its reception-history. Most significantly, it helps to explain the range of attitudes towards the *Book of the Watchers* that we find among later Jews and Christians; some treat it as Scripture in its own right, while others value this work only insofar as it fills the lacunae left by Genesis' terse description of antediluvian history.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the fate of this apocalypse and the history of interpretation of Genesis remain tightly intertwined. Throughout our inquiry, we shall see how the Enochic myth of angelic descent shapes the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4, just as trends in the interpretation of Genesis impact the interpretation of the *Book of the Watchers*. We will see, for example, how

⁸⁷ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 277.

⁸⁸ *Jubilees* presents the most explicit statement of the former position (see Ch. 3), whereas the latter is articulated most clearly by Syncellus (see Ch. 6).

shifts in the status of the *Book of the Watchers* often corresponded to changing views about the identity of the “sons of God” of Gen 6:2; the two, however, are so intertwined that it proves difficult to isolate one as cause and the other as result.

Before turning to explore the reception-history of this apocalypse, we should also note an important methodological point raised by the complex relationship between the *Book of the Watchers* and Genesis, namely, the dangers of reading ancient texts through our knowledge of their present status. Especially since students and scholars most often find 1 *Enoch* in modern collections of noncanonical works (*APOT*; *OTP*), it can be difficult to imagine how ancient readers and hearers encountered these writings in the centuries before the codification of the Jewish and Christian canons that are reflected in our modern Western Bibles. For our inquiry into the reception-history of this apocalypse, however, it is critical that we resist the tyranny of canonical assumptions⁸⁹ that leads us to apply different standards when studying the “Bible,” “Apocrypha,” and “Pseudepigrapha.”

The example of the *Book of the Watchers* sharply highlights the limitations of this approach. We are accustomed to assuming that “biblical” texts are more ancient than “extrabiblical” ones, but this apocalypse predates the latest book in the Tanakh (i.e., Daniel) and, hence, the closing of the Jewish canon. Despite the scholarly tendency to relegate all noncanonical works to fringe groups, the *Book of the Watchers* appears to have been quite popular and – as we shall see in Chapters 2 and 3 – it seems to have circulated among a variety of groups in Second Temple Judaism, ranging from the “mainline” scribal circle of ben Sira to more “sectarian” groups like the Qumran community and the Jesus Movement. And, whereas modern scholars readily dismiss the pseudepigraphy of the *Book of the Watchers* as a literary trope (or, more skeptically, as a deliberately deceptive strategy), many of its ancient readers seem to accept the authenticity of its claim to preserve the words of Enoch – just as they accepted that Deuteronomy was “rediscovered” in the Temple in the time of King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:8–20).⁹⁰

⁸⁹ I owe this felicitous phrase to Bob Kraft, whom I thank for pushing me to explore these issues further.

⁹⁰ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 98–99.



From Scribalism to Sectarianism: The Angelic Descent Myth and the Social Settings of Enochic Pseudepigraphy

THE COMPOSITE NATURE AND COMPLEX REDACTION-HISTORY OF THE *Book of the Watchers* point to its origins, not in the vision of a single author, but rather in the hands of a series of authors, redactors, and tradents. The [previous chapter](#) surveyed some of the scribal concerns that dominate this apocalypse: we noted its elevation of Enoch as a “scribe of righteousness” (1 *En.* 12:3–4; 15:1) and its self-consciousness about the power of writing, as well as its “scientific,” exegetical, and epistemological interests. Most scholars infer from these features that the apocalypse emerged from a scribal milieu.¹ Important questions, however, remain unanswered: should we imagine these scribes as a closed group of apocalypticists, visionaries, or “Enochians,” who can be readily distinguished from other Jews? Or should we see their distinctive interests and concerns as part of a broader continuum of “normative” ideologies in the third century BCE, reflecting ongoing discussions about knowledge, purity, and piety within a single scribal discourse? And, most importantly, what was their relationship to the Jerusalem Temple and to the tradents responsible for the continued transmission of the texts that would eventually form the Tanakh?

We lack the evidence to reconstruct Judaism in the third century BCE with any degree of certainty.² Consequently, scholarly answers to these questions have often been shaped by the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*. Three factors have been determinative: [1] its influence on later works, most notably the other Enochic pseudepigrapha now collected in 1 *Enoch*, [2] its popularity among the Qumran sectarians, and [3] its eventual omission from

¹ See Ch. 1, n. 62.

² Stone calls this century the “dark ages’ of post-exilic Judaism” (“Enoch and Apocalyptic,” 95). Extant texts from this time include AB and BW as well as possibly *Aramaic Levi Document*, *Qohelet*, and *Tobit*.

the Rabbinic Tanakh and most Christian OTs.³ In different ways, each of these factors has facilitated the assumption that the apocalypse originated on the margins of “mainstream” Judaism.

However tempting such conclusions may be, our inquiry into the *Nachleben* of this text necessitates a greater degree of sensitivity to the possible differences between those who composed this text and those who later used it. The present chapter thus explores the social setting(s) of the composition of the *Book of the Watchers* with special attention to the differences in the settings of its subsequent reception, transmission, and reinterpretation.

We will first consider the social and historical context of its authors/redactors on the basis of the text itself and its commonalities with the earlier Enochic apocalypse, the *Astronomical Book*. We will then turn to our oldest extant evidence for the influence of its version of the angelic descent myth, analyzing references to Enoch and the fallen angels in the Wisdom of ben Sira and the second-century BCE Enochic writings preserved in the *Book of Dreams* (1 En. 83–90) and the *Epistle of Enoch* (1 En. 92–105).⁴ Most scholars reconstruct the social setting of the *Book of the Watchers* with primary reference to the latter two. By contrast, I will stress the differences between the Enochic writings from the third century BCE and those from the second, suggesting that it is problematic to reconstruct the social setting of the *Book of the Watchers* with primary reference to the “Enochic community” implied in these later works.

Central to my argument is a distinction between the character of scribal/priestly debates before and after the Maccabean Revolt. The redactional formation of the *Book of the Watchers* took place in Judaea in the wake of the conquests of Alexander of Macedon (333–323 BCE) and the wars of his successors, the Diadochi (323–302 BCE).⁵ In the decades after Alexander’s death, Ptolemy I Soter and Seleucus I each laid claims to the lands between their respective strongholds in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and for two centuries the fate of the Jews was entangled in the rivalry between the two Hellenistic dynasties that they founded.⁶ The tensions under Ptolemaic rule, however, pale in comparison to the political upheavals and religious schisms that shaped texts like the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*, written in the decades surrounding the Maccabean Revolt.

³ E.g. Stone, “Enoch, Aramaic Levi,” 167–68.

⁴ For an argument against Milik’s proposal that the earliest extant reference to BW is 4QLevi^a III, 6 (*Commentary*, 23), VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 113.

⁵ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 1.

⁶ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 6–18; Schäfer, *History*, 1–25.

We find few hints of any animosity towards Hellenistic culture or Hellenized Jews within the *Book of the Watchers*, and the polemical concerns that we do find speak less to the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism than to internal debates within the scribal/priestly stratum of Judaeen society.⁷ With the growing prestige of both the Torah and the Temple, it appears that competition between religious specialists intensified. Yet the polemics of the third and early second centuries BCE remained relatively mild; one can discern traces of debates that would become more divisive in the wake of the Maccabean Revolt, but the *Book of the Watchers* belongs to an earlier age, in which such concerns had yet to splinter Judaea's learned and literate classes.

In terms of socio-historical context, the Wisdom of ben Sira ironically exhibits more continuity with the *Book of the Watchers* than the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*. Although composed after the conquest of Judaea by Antiochus III (200 BCE), this text seems to have emerged from a relatively peaceful milieu in which scribes continued to flourish, serving an increasingly wealthy aristocracy in Jerusalem and benefiting from the political, economic, and religious power of the Temple. In Chapter 1, we noted ben Sira's distaste for the types of speculative wisdom found in the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers*. Below, we will examine the evidence for his familiarity with these works, even despite their association with the competing circles of scribes against whom he warned his students. In light of the conflicting assessments of speculative wisdom within different strata in the *Book of the Watchers*, I will propose that ben Sira's attitude towards apocalyptic epistemology is best seen as part of an internal debate within a single discourse of priestly scribalism.

The Enochic writings from the second century BCE self-consciously operate within the same literary tradition as the *Book of the Watchers*, and we find them anthologized together with this apocalypse, both in Enochic manuscripts from Qumran and in the Ethiopic collection *1 Enoch*. Even as their authors draw heavily from the earlier apocalypse, they depart from it in a number of ways and express a different understanding of the nature and purpose of Enoch's revelations. They console the persecuted righteous with eschatological prophecies about the imminent destruction of Israel's enemies, which include foreigners who attack the nation no less than those Jews said to corrupt it from within. In other words, these texts speak eloquently to the events surrounding the Maccabean Revolt, when Antiochus IV disrupted the Temple cult and proscribed elements of the traditional practice of Judaism, possibly with some initial support from Hellenized elites among the Jewish populace.

⁷ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 31.

If, as some scholars suggest, the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* emerged from the same scribal circles as this earlier apocalypse, then these events have clearly impacted their self-understanding vis-à-vis the rest of Israel, their attitudes towards the Second Temple, and perhaps even their social status. The *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* provide important evidence for the reinterpretation of the *Book of the Watchers* and its account of angelic descent to fit the needs of a new age. Nevertheless, their differences demonstrate the dangers of reading *1 Enoch* as a single document without some sensitivity to the evolving nature of the Enochic literary tradition and the progressive reinterpretation of Enoch and his role as an antediluvian revealer of heavenly secrets.

1. THE *BOOK OF THE WATCHERS* IN HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it was commonplace for scholars of Second Temple Judaism to locate the production of all apocalypses in “conventicles,” small groups of antiestablishment prophets or visionaries who cultivated secret wisdom, isolated from the community at large.⁸ Taking Daniel as the model for the genre as a whole, scholars speculated that powerlessness and persecution drove the composition of apocalypses; behind every apocalypse lurked a disenfranchised group whose members’ dissatisfaction with their lot in the present forced them to turn their attention to imagining otherworldly realms and the distant future.⁹ Past research thus privileged those apocalypses that focus on eschatological vindication and combed these texts for clues about the alienation, crisis, and suffering of their authors.

Since the discovery of Enochic fragments at Qumran, scholars have begun to question the idea that a single *Sitz im Leben* informs the many, diverse texts that fit the genre “apocalypse.”¹⁰ The idea that apocalypses answer specific situations of crisis and deprivation fits well with many historical apocalypses. This type of apocalypse first flowered during the Maccabean Revolt (Dan 7–12, “Animal Apocalypse” [BD], “Apocalypse of Weeks” [EE]) and returned to prominence again after the destruction of the Second Temple (4 *Ezra*, 2 *Baruch*,

⁸ E.g., Plöger, *Theocracy*; Hanson, *Dawn*; for a survey of scholarship, Cook, *Prophecy*, 1–17.

⁹ E.g., Hanson, “Prolegomena,” 407–8; *Dawn*, 10–12; cf. Carroll, “Twilight,” 3–35; Cook, *Prophecy*, esp. 12–17.

¹⁰ E.g., Davies, “Social World,” 252; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, esp. 1–21, 27–40.

Revelation).¹¹ Throughout the Second Temple period, however, we also find apocalypses that are not dominated by the historical and eschatological concerns commonly associated with “apocalypticism.” These works, often termed “ascent apocalypses” because of their inclusion of otherworldly journeys, focus their revelations on the spatial plane instead of the temporal plane, and they do not appear to respond to particular instances of religious persecution or political crisis.¹² This category includes our two earliest extant apocalypses, the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers*, both of which – as we have seen in the [previous chapter](#) – embody an apocalyptic epistemology that celebrates the didactic dimension of cosmological, geographical, and ouranographical knowledge.

Such insights have led scholars increasingly to distinguish between the literary, theological, and social phenomena to which the term “apocalyptic” can be applied. The historical apocalypses may be “apocalyptic” in both genre and eschatology, and the latter may often reflect their origins in oppressed groups, sects, or communities with fervent expectations of the Eschaton. The evidence of the ascent apocalypses, however, demonstrates that eschatological concerns were not determinative in the emergence and development of the genre, thereby cautioning against the conflation of the literary production of apocalypses and the social phenomenon of apocalypticism.¹³ Sociological insights about the cross-cultural phenomenon of millennialism prove helpful in understanding some apocalypses,¹⁴ but such models cannot be uniformly and ahistorically applied to the diverse apocalypses composed by Jews in the Second Temple period.¹⁵ In short, we can no longer assume that all apocalypses derive from disenfranchised groups in distress, however well this explanation fits the two apocalypses now in the Christian canon (Daniel; Revelation).

In the *Book of the Watchers*, we find relatively little interest in history and no sharp sense of Eschaton’s imminence. Furthermore, the eschatology that we do find is more akin to biblical prophecy than to the full-blown “apocalyptic eschatology” of later works such as Daniel, the “Animal Apocalypse,” and the “Apocalypse of Weeks.”¹⁶ Likewise, the *Book of the Watchers’* use of mythic

¹¹ Stone, “Book of Enoch and Judaism,” 491–92; Nickelsburg, “Nature,” 96–99; idem, “Revealed Wisdom,” 74–77.

¹² Collins, “Jewish Apocalypses,” 36–43; Himmelfarb, *Ascent*.

¹³ Stone, “Book of Enoch and Judaism,” 196; Knibb, “Prophecy,” 156–58; Davies, “Social World,” 252–53.

¹⁴ E.g., Nickelsburg, “Social Aspects” (on EE); Gager, “Attainment” (on Rev).

¹⁵ Cook, *Prophecy*, esp. 12–17.

¹⁶ VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 119. The same can be said of ben Sira, who has an expectation of the final restoration of Israel and punishment of the nations (36:1–17), but no sense of its immediacy; Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 168–69.

imagery does not seem aimed at communicating an esoteric interpretation of history to knowing “insiders.” Scholars such as Nickelsburg and Suter have tried to unlock the meaning behind the metaphor of angelic descent, treating its Watchers as ciphers for the Diadochi and for impure priests respectively.¹⁷ We have seen, however, that the *Book of the Watchers* is hardly univalent; on the contrary, our analysis of its polysemous account of angelic descent confirmed Collins’ suggestion that this apocalypse “does not explicitly address any crisis of the Hellenistic age or advocate specific conduct” but “provides a lens through which any crisis can be viewed.”¹⁸ Instead of assuming that this text derives from a persecuted and marginalized group,¹⁹ it may be more heuristic to focus on its continuities with broader trends in postexilic Judaism, viewing its appeal to the fallen angels in terms of the reemergence of ancient, mythic imagery in late biblical prophecy and understanding its interest in the origins of evil in terms of the concern for theodicy in Wisdom books like Job and Qohelet.²⁰

Even if we reject the imposition of a monolithic view of “Apocalyptic” on the *Book of the Watchers* and eschew the traditional tendency to privilege Daniel as the model for the genre, we may be tempted to reconstruct its social setting with reference to the later Enochic pseudepigrapha now collected alongside the *Book of the Watchers* in *1 Enoch*. In his recent commentary, for instance, Nickelsburg attempts to characterize the social, cultural, and religious perspective of *1 Enoch* as whole.²¹ In this, he depends most heavily on the “Animal Apocalypse” and “Apocalypse of Weeks,” two second-century apocalypses now integrated into the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* respectively.²² The ramifications for his reading of the *Book of the Watchers* are far-reaching. Interpreting the story of the fallen angels in *1 En.* 6–11 as an allusion to the Diadochi, Nickelsburg posits that its authors perceived a “sharp conflict between Israel and the nations,” which he likens to the sustained account of foreign hostility to the Jews in the “Animal Apocalypse.”²³ Likewise, he conflates the possible critique of impure priests in *1 En.* 12–16 with the explicit polemics against the Second Temple in the “Animal Apocalypse” and “Apocalypse of Weeks,” implying that all the Enochic authors rejected

¹⁷ Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic and Myth,” 390–91, 396–97; Suter, “Fallen Angel,” 115–35.

¹⁸ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 59.

¹⁹ Hanson, “Rebellion,” 218–20.

²⁰ Cross, *Canaanite*, 343–46.

²¹ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 37–70, as discussed further in Reed, “Textual Identity.”

²² This choice is shaped by Nickelsburg’s approach to BW, “AA,” and “AW” as three strata of a single text; nevertheless, one might still question his conflation of earlier and later material.

²³ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 63–64.

the Temple, its priesthood, and the efficacy of its sacrifices (if not of sacrifice in general). Despite the *Book of the Watchers'* integration of numerous motifs, models, and quotations from the Torah, he cites the absence of explicit statements about the authority of the Mosaic revelation as evidence that "the Sinaitic covenant and the Torah were not of central importance" for its authors; here again, the "Animal Apocalypse" provides the key for his understanding of *1 Enoch* as a whole and, hence, for reconstructing the worldview of the authors of the *Book of the Watchers* as well.²⁴

The *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* appear to have originated among Jews who saw themselves as wise and righteous in a manner distinct from the rest of the Jewish nation – and particularly from the priests who then controlled the Temple, which is deemed impure from its very foundation. Within these works, we find material which polemicizes against the powerful in Judean society and which evokes an image of their authors and audience as the chosen few, struggling against the impious many.²⁵ Insofar as these writings appear to reflect a cohesive sense of group-identity and to express some beliefs at odds with the community at large, one can speculate about their origins in separatist circles, imagining their authors as scribes and/or priests disenfranchised by the upheavals of power in the mid-second century BCE.²⁶

When we approach the third-century *Book of the Watchers* on its own terms, a different picture emerges. One important example is the attitude towards the Temple and priesthood in *1 En.* 12–16. In light of the extended contrast between Enoch and the Watchers that structures this section, it has been suggested that these figures are used to express positive and negative paradigms for priesthood. As Himmelfarb and others have shown, Enoch's elevation in *1 En.* 12–16 has distinctly priestly overtones; like a priest, he has the power to intercede for others (*1 En.* 13), and he gains access to the divine throne-room, which is located in a heavenly Temple, populated with angelic priests (*1 En.* 14).²⁷ Moreover, in the passage directly following Enoch's throne-vision, God rebukes the fallen Watchers for their defilement by "the blood of women"

²⁴ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 50.

²⁵ *1 En.* 93:2; 93:10; 94:8; 96:5. Nickelsburg, "Social Aspects," 652; Reid, *Enoch and Daniel*, 45–51, 62–69.

²⁶ This fits well with a sociological model that holds that apocalyptic movements or groups appeal especially to "people who have advanced or declined socially, who finding themselves in an ambiguous situation in relation to hierarchical structures, might be receptive to symbols of the world as itself out of joint and on the brink of radical transformation" (Meeks, *First Urban*, 173–74).

²⁷ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 20–21.

(1 *En.* 15:3–4), an accusation that some scholars read as the authors' critique of priests tainted by improper marriages.²⁸

If this passage was, in fact, meant to condemn impure priests of the text's own time, it is striking that the authors chose to situate it within a glorification of the Temple and the priesthood as heavenly. Above, we saw how 1 *En.* 12–16 juxtaposes Enoch's proper revelations with the Watcher's improper teachings, thereby mapping the limits of proper inquiry. Similarly, the parallel between wayward priests and fallen angels is here attenuated by the depiction of pure priests as truly angelic; any critique of certain priests is amply balanced with praise of priesthood in general. This, in my view, speaks against Nickelsburg's assumption that a negative appraisal of some priests must be read as a rejection of the Second Temple. More plausible is Himmelfarb's assessment of the *Book of the Watchers* as "tak[ing] seriously the priesthood's claims for itself and the importance of priestly duties and categories" and as expressing an attitude "at once critical of the reality that it sees in the temple and deeply devoted to the ideal of the temple understood in a quite concrete way."²⁹

The contrast with later Enochic writings is striking: if 1 *En.* 15 does indeed censure priests, its critique is implicit, limited to impure priests, and devoid of the polemical edge found in related texts from the second century BCE.³⁰ When taken together with the scribal and priestly characterization of the celebrated Enoch, this involved interest in priestly purity suggests the *Book of the Watchers* emerged from circles of scribes with an intimate connection to the priesthood, scribes who were not necessarily disenfranchised nor engaged in active conflict with the Temple authorities.³¹

It is possible (although not certain) that the *Book of Dreams* and the *Epistle of Enoch* emerged from the same scribal circles as the *Book of the Watchers* and *Astronomical Book* and that the differences between them reflect the evolving identity of a single group, which changed in response to new political, religious, and social circumstances.³² Whatever the socio-historical continuities

²⁸ Suter, "Fallen Angel," esp. 131–35; Nickelsburg, "Enoch, Levi," 586; Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 20–23. Tigchelaar suggests a specifically anti-Samaritan polemic (*Prophets*, 198–203).

²⁹ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 27.

³⁰ Note also the relatively mild critique of the priesthood in the *Aramaic Levi Document* (Himmelfarb, "Law").

³¹ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 22–23. Whereas earlier scholarship assumed a sharp dichotomy between priest and scribe in Second Temple Judaism (Bickerman, *From Ezra*, 67–71; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 78–83), recent reassessments of our evidence have shown otherwise (Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 287–96; Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 78–84; Jaffee, *Torah*, 20–22; Himmelfarb, "Wisdom," 89–94; Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 273–76; Olyan, "Ben Sira's Relationship"; Stadelmann, *Ben Sira*).

³² Tiller, *Commentary*, 116–26. That we also have Enochic pseudepigrapha that are no less dependent on BW even despite a lack of socio-historical and geographical continuity

underlying the literary affinities between Enochic pseudepigrapha, we cannot overlook the fact that, as Collins observes, “neither the Book of the Watchers nor the Astronomical Book, which appear to be the oldest Enochic writings, attests a particular group identity in its terminology.”³³ In my view, the existence of an Enochic “conventicle” in the third century BCE cannot be simply extrapolated from the evidence of these second-century apocalypses, and their perspectives on the Torah, the Temple, the priesthood, and the rest of Jewish society should not be conflated.

Such reconstructions are especially tempting in light of this apocalypse’s later popularity in the Qumran community. If it could be proved that the *Book of the Watchers* emerged from an antiestablishment and/or separatist group, we would have important evidence for the prehistory of post-Maccabean sectarianism.³⁴ As a result, the *Book of the Watchers* has often been read through the lens of later debates, which have led scholars to focus on elements that are simply not so prominent within the text itself.³⁵ Most notable in this regard are the calendrical issues that would prove so central for the Qumran community. Despite efforts to read its references to the sun and moon as evidence for its defense of a 364-day solar calendar, the *Book of the Watchers* contains no identifiable allusion to these issues. The same may even be true of the *Astronomical Book*; despite its importance in later calendrical controversies, there are reasons to doubt whether its description of the solar calendar was originally polemical in intent.³⁶

Although we lack evidence for the range of Jewish belief and practice at the time that the *Book of the Watchers* was composed, we have ample evidence for the unique political, religious, and social factors that shaped the varieties of Judaism in the following century. Consequently, it is perhaps unwise to retroject the debates of post-Maccabean Palestine back into the third century BCE. If we read the *Book of the Watchers* through the assumptions of its separatist character and peripheral status, we risk distorting our

(e.g., 2 *Enoch*) suggests that we can speak of an Enochic literary tradition without always assuming socio-historical continuity.

³³ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 72.

³⁴ In drawing these distinctions, I mean only to stress that ideological affinities do not necessarily imply socio-historical continuity. To be sure, parallels between BW and later sectarian literature expose trends in the Second Temple period. There is no doubt that Qumranites valued the Enochic pseudepigrapha, and these books influenced their beliefs, even when they interpreted them according to their own interests. It is a different thing, however, to suggest that the Qumran community *as a movement* evolved out of the circles responsible for BW, a hypothesis that requires proof beyond the assertion of ideological affinities.

³⁵ Stone, “Enoch and Apocalyptic,” 96–97.

³⁶ Lebram, “Piety,” 189–90; VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 78, 90–91.

image of this apocalypse, as well as our understanding of the era in which it arose.

How, then, can we illuminate the social settings of its redactional formation? In my view, it is best to begin with the features shared by the *Book of the Watchers* and the earlier Enochic apocalypse, the *Astronomical Book*. In contrast to the Enochic writings from the second century BCE, these third-century apocalypses are distinguished by their “scientific” interests in the cosmos.³⁷ In both, these concerns are inextricable from “religious” aims. The *Astronomical Book* uses astronomy for calendrical purposes that appear priestly in nature. The *Book of the Watchers* marshals geography and ouranography for the goal of ethical exhortation, using the majesty of the cosmos to proclaim the power of its Creator and citing the orderly cycles of the cosmos to encourage humans not to stray from His will.³⁸

The elaborate character of these traditions points to their origins in learned circles of scribes who cultivated knowledge of astronomy, geography, and ouranography as part of their religious discourse. Such interests are absent from the Tanakh, raising the intriguing possibility that later tradents rejected the religious value of these modes of inquiry. Nevertheless, it is not clear that the “scientific” speculations of the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers* were viewed as marginal in their own time. Just as Stone has cited parallels for the inclusion of similar “scientific” concerns in the bounds of religious knowledge in the Wisdom literature, so J. Z. Smith has pointed to the intensely scribal milieu in which the speculative wisdom of the apocalypses was cultivated.³⁹ In light of this evidence, P. R. Davies concludes that:

The social background of apocalyptic writings thus furnished is more fully described and precisely documented by the activity of politically “establishment” and culturally cosmopolitan scribes than of visionary “counter-establishment” conventicles . . . what determines the production of apocalyptic literature is not a millenarian posture nor a predicament of persecution, though these may be contributing factors. It is a scribal convention.⁴⁰

In other words, the “scientific” interests of the circles responsible for the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers* were probably only “esoteric” insofar as they were scribal.

³⁷ Stone, “Enoch, Aramaic Levi,” 161–62; Stone, “Enoch and Apocalyptic,” 96–97.

³⁸ Stone, “Book of Enoch and Judaism,” 195; idem, “Enoch and Apocalyptic,” 99.

³⁹ Stone, “Lists”; Smith, “Wisdom.”

⁴⁰ Davies, “Social World,” 263.

In this, both apocalypses are deeply indebted to ancient Mesopotamian lore. This is evident in the geography of the *Book of the Watchers*, but also in the astronomy of the *Astronomical Book*, which adheres to a Babylonian schema untouched by Hellenistic innovations.⁴¹ Stone has argued that the latter's use of "an out of date astronomy and an unworkable calendar" exposes the "separatist" and anti-Hellenistic character of the *Astronomical Book* and, by extension, those authors who produced this text and the *Book of the Watchers*.⁴² He may be correct that the calendar of the *Astronomical Book* reflects a "deliberate act of archaicism."⁴³ It is not obvious, however, why the "conscious rejection of Greek science" must render its authors as "separatists."⁴⁴ Hints of this "separatism" can be found nowhere else in the *Astronomical Book*, and we know too little about the calendrical issues in the Persian and Ptolemaic periods to rule out the use of a sacred, cultic calendar alongside a secular one.⁴⁵

In the end, the "scientific" interests of the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers* may say little about their status as either "sectarian" or "mainline" works at the time of their composition. It is true that the authors of the earliest Enochic apocalypses chose to adapt different types of Mesopotamian material than did other scribes. Their use of these traditions, however, fits well with trends found in postexilic works of prophecy and Wisdom now in the Tanakh; here too the ancient Near Eastern heritage of Israelite culture has been reinterpreted to fit Jewish monotheism and redeployed for the needs of a new age.⁴⁶

Given the current status of the *Astronomical Book* and *Book of the Watchers*, it may seem natural to place them on the periphery of the Judaism of their time, and Stone is not alone in seeking evidence to support this assumption. In my view, however, the other arguments are equally strained. Scholars such as Nickelsburg have reasoned that its appeal to a pre-Mosaic patriarch implies a rejection of the Sinaitic covenant, even despite our evidence for an overall growth in interest in biblical ancients within Second Temple Judaism. Downplaying the literary and epistemological ramifications of the pseudepigraphy of this text, others have treated its account of Enoch's ascent to heaven as "proof" for the practice of heavenly ascent by mystical visionaries akin to those described in the Hekhalot literature many centuries later; this interpretation

⁴¹ Grelot, "Géographie," 33–69; Neugebauer, "Astronomical," 58–61.

⁴² Stone, "Enoch, Aramaic Levi," 163.

⁴³ Stone, "Enoch, Aramaic Levi," 164.

⁴⁴ Stone, "Enoch, Aramaic Levi," 164–66.

⁴⁵ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 81–27.

⁴⁶ Cross, *Canaanite*, 345–46.

has fostered the assumption that these authors were “marginal” insofar as they were mystics or visionaries.⁴⁷ Even if this equation were not problematic in itself, it remains that the *Book of the Watchers* is hardly a manual for mystical ascent. On the one hand, Enoch’s experience is one of rapture, being snatched up into heaven at God’s behest. On the other hand, the text makes clear that Enoch’s ascent results from his unique and predetermined role as the “scribe of righteousness” and as a special mediator between earth and heaven; his is not described as an experience that can (or should) be replicated by readers of the book.

Although we have scant evidence for third century BCE Judaism, it is difficult to posit a separatist or socially marginal social setting for the production of the *Astronomical Book* and *Book of the Watchers*.⁴⁸ These apocalypses appear to have taken shape amongst scribes with certain distinctive viewpoints, but we find little basis for reconstructing already in the third century BCE an Enochic “conventicle,” whose members saw themselves as chosen in any manner different from other Jews. Rather, the most salient features of these apocalypses are their self-conscious scribalism and their development of a unique type of wisdom that combined “scientific,” exegetical, mythic, and ethical components. One cannot underestimate the economic and social preconditions for the cultivation of such learning, nor for the continued transmission of Mesopotamian lore alongside Israelite traditions. Together with the priestly interests of both apocalypses, these factors suggest that the production of the earliest Enochic writings fits most plausibly with scribes in the orbit of the Jerusalem Temple.⁴⁹

2. “WISDOM” AND “APOCALYPTIC”: BEN SIRA AND THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS

This understanding of the social setting of the *Book of the Watchers* is consistent with our earliest evidence for the use of this text, which occurs in the Wisdom of ben Sira. Ben Sira’s references to Enoch’s exalted status among humankind and to his escape from death (44:16; 49:14) are well known.⁵⁰ Also relevant, for our purposes, is his allusion to the expansion of Gen 6:1–4 in the *Book*

⁴⁷ Nidich, “Visionary,” esp. 156, 170–74; Halperin, “Heavenly Ascension,” 219; Stone, “Apocalyptic – Vision or Hallucination,” 421–28.

⁴⁸ Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 25.

⁴⁹ Even Boccaccini, who argues for a distinctive “Enochic Judaism” in conflict with “Zadokite Judaism,” emphasizes that the earliest “Enochians” were “an opposition party within the temple elites, not a group of separatists” (*Beyond*, 77–78).

⁵⁰ Argall, 1 *Enoch and Sirach*, 9–13.

of the Watchers. In the course of listing paradigmatic sinners as proof for God's punishment of the wicked (16:6–10), he states that: "He did not forgive the primeval princes/giants."⁵¹ Argall and others have argued that ben Sira presupposes traditions about the Watchers' failed attempts to gain forgiveness for their progeny from the *Book of the Watchers*.⁵² A. van der Kooij has observed that this hypothesis fits well with ben Sira's description of the ideal scribe as one who "devotes himself to the study of the Law of the Most High" but also "studies the wisdom of all of the ancients and occupies himself with prophecies" (Sir 39:1–3).⁵³

In past scholarship, the theologically based dichotomy of "Wisdom" and "Apocalyptic" was often mapped onto the social landscape of Palestinian Judaism prior to the Maccabean Revolt. In such reconstructions, "Apocalyptic" tended to be marginalized and contrasted with the more "normative" vision of Judaism represented by "Wisdom." Accordingly, the Wisdom sage ben Sira was often cited as exemplary of a moderate, traditionalist scribal class in service of the religious establishment of the Jerusalem Temple, while those responsible for the early Enochic pseudepigrapha were depicted as apocalyptic and antiestablishment visionaries.⁵⁴ In the [first chapter](#), we discussed the *Book of the Watchers*' own integration of speculative and antispeculative traditions. Ben Sira's possible use of the *Book of the Watchers* further shows the inadequacy of the traditional dichotomy between "Wisdom" and "Apocalyptic" to account for the relationship between different scribal groups in Second Temple Judaism.

There were no doubt tensions between various scribal circles in the early Hellenistic period. It is significant, however, that texts and traditions continued to circulate among them. This interaction may have been predicated on polemics rooted in competition for students, prestige, or patrons, but it also reflects the shared culture of priestly scribalism that united the authors, redactors, and tradents of "Wisdom" and "Apocalyptic" alike.⁵⁵ Argall, for instance, has pointed to the common concerns of ben Sira and the earliest Enochic apocalypses: "[1] the nature and function of revelation, [2] the physical structure of the cosmos and its relevance for ethics, and [3] the reality of future judgment and its implications for its present"; he thus concludes that

⁵¹ Sir 16:7: עָרַךְ יְהוָה אֱשֵׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם; οὐκ ἔξιλάσατο περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων γιγάντων.

⁵² 1 En. 13:4; 14:6–7; 15:3; Argall, 1 *Enoch and Sirach*, 230.

⁵³ Van der Kooij and van den Toorn, "Canonization," 34.

⁵⁴ E.g., Stone, "Enoch, Aramaic Levi," 167–68. Ironically, the Wisdom of ben Sira is actually much less conventional than BW in terms of Jewish literary practices, because it is an authored text (rather than a composite text) and is written in the author's own name (instead of anonymously or pseudonymously).

⁵⁵ Smith, "Wisdom," 106–8.

both are best categorized as works of “revealed wisdom.”⁵⁶ Similarly, Davies observes that “only if eschatology is made a *sine qua non* of apocalyptic literature can Ben Sira be excluded from the circles whose interests are reflected in apocalypses.”⁵⁷

The theological and epistemological differences between the Wisdom of ben Sira and the *Book of the Watchers* are perhaps best seen against the background of their social and discursive commonalities. Instead of drawing a simple contrast between the two, it may be wise to read the range of attitudes towards cosmological speculation in *1 En.* 6–11, the redacted form of the *Book of the Watchers*, and the Wisdom of ben Sira in terms of a lively debate about the nature and scope of religious knowledge among scribes in the pre-Maccabean period.⁵⁸

In my view, this situation of commonality and competition best explains ben Sira’s approach to the angelic descent myth. Seen from this perspective, it is not surprising that he might read Gen 6:1–4 through the expansions in the *Book of the Watchers*. Nor is it odd that he is selective in his use of these traditions. He omits any reference to the Watchers’ teachings and any hint of their culpability for the origins of evil. Instead, he focuses on their progeny, the Giants, and he cites them as examples of wicked and punished creatures, alongside humans like Korah, Sodomites, Canaanites, and disobedient Israelites. Borrowing those elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent that serve to stress the inevitability of divine retribution, ben Sira isolates the didactic potential of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, while avoiding any hint of dualism or determinism. In doing so, he neutralizes the more radical ramifications of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in much the same manner as would later Jews and Christians. His work thus stands as an important and early example of the ease with which traditions from *1 En.* 6–16 could be adapted and reapplied, even by authors who might disagree with the epistemology and theodicy of the *Book of the Watchers* as a whole.

3. ANGELIC DESCENT IN THE *EPISTLE OF ENOCH* AND *BOOK OF DREAMS*

By contrast, the Enochic writings from the second century BCE self-consciously operate within the same literary tradition as the *Book of the Watchers* but are shaped by a different historical context. Like Daniel, the *Book of Dreams*

⁵⁶ Argall, *Enoch and Sirach*, 3.

⁵⁷ Davies, “Social World,” 264.

⁵⁸ Cf. Argall, *Enoch and Sirach*, 254.

(1 *En.* 83–90) and the *Epistle of Enoch* (1 *En.* 92–105)⁵⁹ respond to the events surrounding the Maccabean Revolt, using a sage from the past to communicate and authenticate prophecies that speak to their turbulent times.⁶⁰ They contain few traces of the “scientific” concerns that characterize the earlier Enochic apocalypses. In place of the heavenly and earthly journeys of the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers*, we find schematized reviews of history, purportedly revealed to Enoch by means of visions, dreams, and heavenly books.

Their continuity with the *Book of the Watchers* is signaled by their shared appeal to the antediluvian patriarch Enoch and is also evident in their development of its eschatological, ethical, and historiographical themes. In depicting early human history as the beginning of a trajectory of decline, they recall the ambivalence towards civilization in 1 *En.* 8:1; the scope, however, is here expanded to include all human history, up to and beyond the time of the authors. Whereas the eschatological concerns of the *Book of the Watchers* were largely limited to the paradigmatic interpretation of the Flood as a precursor to the judgment of human sinners (esp. 1 *En.* 10–11), these second-century writings chart the connections between protology and eschatology along the entire axis of historical time – and, moreover, their authors seem to have seen themselves as living at the very brink of its culmination. Like the earlier Enochic apocalypses, these texts place exhortations to righteousness in the mouth of Enoch, but such words are thus granted a new significance, as fervent proclamations to repent before the coming Judgment.

Furthermore, these second-century writings express an exclusivist rhetoric and militarized ideology with no counterpart in their third-century predecessors. For instance, both include reviews of history (“Apocalypse of Weeks,” “Animal Apocalypse”) that appear to describe the formation of the very groups or movements to which their authors belonged (1 *En.* 90:6–7, 93:9–10).

⁵⁹ The end of EE appears to have been fluid, attracting first a unit about the birth of Noah (1 *En.* 106–107), and then “another writing of Enoch” that develops ideas about Gehenna (108).

⁶⁰ BD and EE are preserved in full form only in Ge’ez, due to their inclusion in 1 *Enoch*. Four of the Aramaic Enoch MSS from Qumran include fragments of BD (4QEn^{c,d,e,f,g}), while two include fragments of EE (4QEn^{c-8}). 7Q4 and 7Q8 may preserve small Greek fragments of EE (103:3–4). For EE, we also have a 4th c. Greek MS (i.e., Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus XII, preserving 97:6–107:3 and concluding with the subscription ἐπιστολὴ Ἐνώχ) and a small 6th/7th c. Coptic fragment (93:3b–4a + 5ab, 6c–7a + 8cd). By contrast, BD is extant in Greek only in eight verses (89:42–49) found in a 10th/11th c. tachygraphic MS (Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1809, fol. 216v), introduced by the title ἐκ τοῦ τοῦ Ἐνώχ βιβλίου χρῆσις. Milik claimed to find other Greek fragments of BD (85:10–86:2; 87:1–3) in a 4th c. papyrus (Oxy 2069, fr. 1; “Fragments grecs,” 321–43), but his reconstruction is highly speculative (Knibb, *Commentary*, 2:20). See further Larson, “Translation,” 160–91; Black, *Apocalypsis*, 36–37; Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 13–15.

Although their allusive imagery does not permit precise reconstruction, it is intriguing that both describe a religious awakening before the Maccabean Revolt, thereby suggesting some link to the deepening divisions within the priestly aristocracy in the preceding decades.⁶¹

One possibility is that some scribes from the circles responsible for the *Book of the Watchers* coalesced into a cohesive group at this time. It does seem plausible that the same types of traditionalists who would critique the involvement of impure priests in the Temple cult (1 En. 15 [BW]) might be mobilized by the increased Seleucid intervention in high priestly appointments, by the corruption in the priesthood under Seleucus IV (187–175 BCE) and Antiochus IV (175–164 BCE), and by the Hellenizing reforms instituted by the high priest Jason (ca. 175–172 BCE). Nevertheless, we should also leave open the possibility that these second-century authors appealed to Enoch because of their high esteem for the earlier books and other lore transmitted in his name, which constituted a common heritage from which different groups could draw in different ways.

It is in this context, I suggest, that we should understand their reinterpretation of traditions about the fallen angels from the *Book of the Watchers*. In light of the significant parallels between these Enochic writings, many scholars have conflated their approaches to angelic descent. Nickelsburg, for instance, asserts that the “myth of angelic rebellion” is “foundational and central to the Enochic tradition” and posits that the *Book of the Watchers*’ version of this myth is “presumed and alluded to throughout” the Enochic writings now collected in *1 Enoch*.⁶² Paulo Sacchi goes even further, treating the *Book of the Watchers*’ supernatural etiology of evil as both the fountainhead and the essence of apocalyptic ideology.⁶³ More recently, Gabriele Boccaccini has proposed that the Enochic myth of angelic descent represents the “generative idea of Enochic Judaism,” which he sees as a unified stream of early Jewish thought that birthed both the Qumran community and the Jesus Movement.⁶⁴

Analysis of the literary evidence reveals a more complex situation. Even in texts that are obviously dependent on the *Book of the Watchers*, we find efforts to suppress the idea that human sin and suffering originated with angelic descent. As we shall see, the Watchers and Giants are consistently cited as paradigmatic sinners, rather than active agents in the corruption of humankind, and the motif of illicit angelic instruction is absent from all but

⁶¹ See 1 QS VIII, 4–10; CD I, 7–9, and discussion in García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 78, 88–90.

⁶² Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 165.

⁶³ Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 94–108.

⁶⁴ Boccaccini, *Beyond*, 12–13, 72–74, 160.

a few sources. The [next chapter](#) sketches the contours of this pattern in more detail, surveying a broad range of pre-Rabbinic Jewish and Christian literature. For now, it will suffice to demonstrate that this trend can be discerned already in the *Epistle of Enoch* and the *Book of Dreams*, two works undeniably indebted to the *Book of the Watchers*.

Like the *Book of the Watchers*, the *Epistle of Enoch* and the *Book of Dreams* are composite texts that integrate several distinct units.⁶⁵ For our purposes, the relationships between the various units prove less significant than what they all share: even as they adopt certain elements from the story of the fallen angels in *1 En.* 6–16, they neutralize the *Book of the Watchers*' angelic etiology of evil, reasserting human responsibility for sin and suffering. This aim is most evident in their respective reviews of history, namely, the “Apocalypse of Weeks” in the *Epistle of Enoch* (*1 En.* 93:1–10; 91:11–17) and the “Animal Apocalypse” in the *Book of Dreams* (*1 En.* 85–90). The two are closely related,⁶⁶ and both exemplify the shift from cosmological to historical concerns in apocalypses from this time. Each claims to record Enoch's divinely received knowledge about the unfolding of historical events in the past, present, and future, using the strategy of *vaticinia ex eventu* to depict the conflicts of the present as predetermined and to legitimate predictions about the future. Moreover, each encodes its historical account in allusive imagery, thereby giving an esoteric luster to Enoch's predictions and limiting the proper interpretation to the ranks of the chosen and the wise.

Due to their comprehensive scope and systematic approach to history, these units may help us to understand how some second-century scribes located angelic descent within human history as a whole, reworking traditions from the *Book of the Watchers* to fit an eschatological framework. This comes through most clearly in the longer of the two reviews of history. As the second dream-vision in the *Book of Dreams*, the “Animal Apocalypse” (*1 En.* 85–90) tells the story of Jewish history through zoological metaphors. In its approach to protology and eschatology, it is deeply indebted to the *Book of the Watchers*.⁶⁷ Four entire chapters (86–89) are dedicated to angelic descent and its consequences, and they closely follow the progression of

⁶⁵ Tiller, *Commentary*, 96–100; VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 145, 161; García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 73–74, 90–93.

⁶⁶ On the debate over their precise relationship, see Tiller, *Commentary*, 96–98.

⁶⁷ The chronological framework means that “AA” treats themes from *1 En.* 6–9 at the beginning, as part of its metaphorical representations of antediluvian history (86:1–89:1) and themes from *1 En.* 10–11 at the end, as part of Enoch's prophecies about the future (90:21–24); Tiller, *Commentary*, 234–68, 367–71.

events in *1 En.* 6–11 (BW). As noted above, we here find the notion of a two-stage descent. The Watchers are represented by stars, one of which falls first (=Asael; 86:1), only later followed by others (86:1–3).⁶⁸ Those stars then transform into bulls and mingle with cows (=human women; cf. 7:1 [BW]).⁶⁹ Born from this unnatural union are elephants, camels, and asses (=the Giants), who attack and devour the cattle (=humankind), as well as one another (cf. 7:3 [BW]). The cattle lament, and four men intercede (=archangels of 9–10 [BW]). Following the exact order of God’s commission to the archangels in *1 En.* 10, the “Animal Apocalypse” describes these men binding the first star and casting it into a deep abyss (88:1), prompting the mingled progeny of the other stars to self-destruction (88:2), and finally imprisoning those stars (88:3).

In light of the close dependence on *1 En.* 6–11 (BW), it is striking that we find no reference to the illicit angelic instruction described in *1 En.* 7:1, 8:1–3, 9:6, 10:7–8, 13:1, and 16:3. The “Animal Apocalypse” seems to depict Asael as the first Watcher to descend to the earth, but his corrupting teachings are entirely omitted from its retelling of angelic descent. The contrast with the interpretation of *1 En.* 6–11 (BW) in *1 En.* 12–16 (BW) proves instructive. As we have seen, *1 En.* 12–16 explores the significance of the sexual sins of the Watchers and their corrupting teachings, consistent with its interest both in questions about divine justice and in issues pertaining to apocalyptic epistemology. The “Animal Apocalypse,” however, only treats the sexual sins of the Watchers and the violence of their progeny. If I am correct that the instruction motif serves an epistemological function in *1 En.* 12–16 that is inextricably intertwined with its interest in “speculative” wisdom, it is perhaps not surprising that a shift away from cosmological concerns might be accompanied by a reinterpretation of angelic sin in which their teachings diminish in prominence. In other words, the selective use of traditions from *1 En.* 6–11 in the “Animal Apocalypse” may reflect the predominance of historical and eschatological interests, connected with its more focused aims of stressing the justice of the divine plan that is

⁶⁸ Although he sees the idea of the two-fold descent as present in *1 En.* 8, Nickelsburg nevertheless interprets its presence in the “AA” as evidence for a variant form of the “legend” of the fallen angels (*Commentary*, 359–60; so also Dimant, “Fallen Angels,” 81–87). This multiplication of independent, oral traditions strikes me as unnecessary. It seems more plausible that this is simply an interpretation of the account of angelic descent in *1 En.* 6–11, whose polyvalence allows for multiple readings.

⁶⁹ The need for these “stars” to transform into “bulls” to have intercourse with the “cows” hints at some concern for explaining sex between angels and humans in practical terms (as does the rather graphic depiction of these stars-in-bull-clothing as having the genitalia of horses). Such questions would also engage many exegetes in the following centuries; e.g., *T.Reub.* 5.5–7; Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 8.12–13.

hidden in human history and of proclaiming the inevitable punishment of all sinners.

Although no longer conceived as teachers of wicked ways, Asael and the other Watchers still play significant roles within the account of historical decline in the “Animal Apocalypse.” Their effect on human history has been reconfigured to fit a new focus, namely, Israel’s perennial struggle to survive the onslaught of foreign nations. According to the “Animal Apocalypse,” there was great confusion and disorder among humankind after Asael’s descent. Here, this angel is blamed for a different sort of corrupting act; in an apparent allusion to the intermarriage of humans from the Sethite and Cainite lines, the text describes his transgression of the boundary between heavenly and earthly realms as the cause of improper sexual mingling: “All of them exchanged their pens and their pastures and their calves, and they began to moan [*ya’awayaw[u]*], one after the other” (86:2).⁷⁰

Corresponding to the reinterpretation of Asael’s corrupting influence is an alternative explanation for the origins of evil. Like the *Book of the Watchers*, the “Animal Apocalypse” downplays the importance of Adam and Eve’s activities in the Garden of Eden; in fact, it completely omits this episode from its retelling of biblical history. Here, however, the account of humanity’s decline begins with another paradigmatic sin: Cain’s murder of his brother Abel (1 *En.* 85:5; cf. Gen 4). In the “Animal Apocalypse,” angelic descent is thus a continuation of the trajectory of decline, and the guilt for engendering sin falls squarely on human shoulders.⁷¹

The text’s typological use of color exposes some element of determinism – albeit expressed in genealogical, rather than supernatural, terms. Cain and his progeny are symbolized by black bulls, while white animals represent Adam, Seth, and the rest of the chosen and righteous throughout Jewish history.⁷² The mingling of Watchers and women and the birth of hybrid progeny (elephants, camels, asses) is thus given a new level of meaning. This antediluvian event is presented as precursor to the improper mixing of different types of creatures, first in the intermarriage of Sethites with Cainites (86:2) and later in the intermarriage between Israelites and foreigners (89:75). This heightened sense of conflict between Israel and the nations resonates with the immediate historical context of the “Animal Apocalypse,” which seems to have been written during the midst of the Maccabean Revolt.⁷³ In response, it seems

⁷⁰ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 373; cf. Tiller, *Commentary*, 237–38.

⁷¹ This detail is neglected by Boccaccini, who thus reads the reference to the angelic descent as simply proof for “the ideological continuity” between BW and BD (*Beyond*, 82–83).

⁷² Bryan, *Cosmos*, 98–129.

⁷³ Tiller, *Commentary*, 61–82.

that the author pointedly takes up the task of answering the persecution of the righteous with assurances about their eventual triumph over their foreign oppressors.

Insofar as the “Animal Apocalypse” views all of Jewish history in terms of Israel’s ongoing struggles against foreigners who persecute and invade, the Giants too take on a new significance. The stress is placed on their antediluvian violence against humankind, which serves to prefigure the violence perpetrated by the nations against Israel. Just as these elephants, camels, and asses “bite and devour and gore” the cattle in the days before the Flood (76:5), so the predatory beasts that represent the nations (dogs, lions, wolves, vultures, etc.) constantly prey on the white sheep that represent the nation Israel (89:42, 55–58, 66–69; 90:2–4); here, the Giants’ violence against humankind is depicted as the first of many invasions.

This concern prompts yet another departure from the *Book of the Watchers*, namely the assertion of the Giants’ destruction in the Flood (86:6). By describing their death with finality, the “Animal Apocalypse” erases the connection between the Giants and present-day demons that was so central to the *Book of the Watchers* and its etiology of evil (1 *En.* 15:8; 19:1). Tellingly, however, this choice serves to enhance the typological power of what is here the first of many conflicts between the innocent and those invaders who attack them; the reader/hearer is consoled that, like the Giants, the nations shall be utterly destroyed.

The corresponding review-of-history in the *Epistle of Enoch*, the “Apocalypse of Weeks” (1 *En.* 93:1–10; 91:11–17),⁷⁴ goes even further in downplaying the significance of angelic descent for the origins of evil. In this brief but evocative apocalypse, the time between Creation and the Eschaton is systematized into ten weeks.⁷⁵ At the beginning of his discourse, Enoch describes the first week – the antediluvian period of history – as follows:

I was born the seven in the first week, and until my time, righteousness endured. After me, there will arise a second week, in which deceit and violence [4QEn^g 1 III, 24–25; וַחֲמִסָּה וַחֲקָרָא וַחֲשָׁרָא; cp. Eth. ‘*abiy ’ekuy wagwehlut*] will spring up, and in it will be the first end, and in it a man will be saved. (93:3–4)

⁷⁴ On this reconstruction, which is confirmed by 4QEn^g, see VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 368–73; Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 414–15, 438–39. “AW” dates to the period just before or just after the decrees of Antiochus IV. I here follow VanderKam, who has argued persuasively for the earlier date (ca. 170 BCE; *From Revelation*, 377–9; idem, *Enoch and the Growth*, 145–46; cf. Black, “Apocalypse of Weeks,” 464–69).

⁷⁵ Collins proposes that this schema may be an “elaboration of the seventy generations of 1 Enoch 10” (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 65).

This passage clearly refers to the deterioration of human ethics, the Flood, and the salvation of Noah as described in Gen 6–8. There is, however, no reference to the fallen angels or their progeny.

In the description of the tenth and final week, we may find an allusion to their punishment; the Ge'ez version states that eternal judgment “will be executed on the Watchers of the eternal heaven” (1 *En.* 91:15).⁷⁶ If this is not a later Ethiopic expansion, as Milik suggests,⁷⁷ it is striking that this apocalypse chooses to omit a description of the angels’ descent but nevertheless notes their punishment. If so, the author ironically downplays the Watchers’ role in engendering human sin and suffering, even as he retains the didactic value of their punishment as proof for God’s justice against any creature (even an angel!) who strays from the path of righteousness.

Although scholars debate whether the same scribe(s) authored the “Apocalypse of Weeks” and the *Epistle of Enoch*, we may be able to shed light on this omission with an important statement in the *Epistle’s* Second Discourse.⁷⁸ When preaching against the wicked, the text asserts that “sin [*xāti’ateni*] was not sent on the earth, but men created it by themselves” (98:4).⁷⁹ By placing this bold declaration in the mouth of Enoch, the *Epistle* decisively rejects the *Book of the Watchers’* approach to explaining human sin and suffering.⁸⁰ The *Epistle* proclaims explicitly what the “Animal Apocalypse” and “Apocalypse of Weeks” imply, forcefully reasserting human responsibility for earthly evils.⁸¹

Other references to the fallen angels in the *Book of Dreams* and the *Epistle of Enoch* seem to be shaped by the same concerns. Most striking is the first vision in the *Book of Dreams* (1 *En.* 83–84). This passage includes a description of Enoch’s vision of the impending Flood, which has notable lexical and thematic parallels with 1 *En.* 6–11 (BW).⁸² But all that remains of the Enochic myth of angelic descent is one line in his prayer of petition: “And now the angels of your heavens are doing wrong, and on human flesh is your wrath until the great day of judgment” (84:4). Some connection between the descent of the

⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the Aramaic is here fragmentary.

⁷⁷ Milik, *Commentary*, 269.

⁷⁸ I am inclined to follow García Martínez (*Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 79–86) and VanderKam (*Enoch and the Growth*, 146) in attributing “AW” to the same hands as EE, for lack of any convincing evidence or arguments to the contrary; cf. Black, “Apocalypse of Weeks,” 464–69; Nickelsburg, “Epistle,” 340; Dexinger, *Henochs*, 106–7.

⁷⁹ No Aramaic is extant for this verse, and Gr^{CB} is missing four lines.

⁸⁰ Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 146; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 67.

⁸¹ Tiller, *Commentary*, 96; García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 87–88.

⁸² Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 346–47.

angels and the spread of human wickedness may be implicit, but the stated connection between the two is as vague as in Gen 6. The text focuses almost exclusively on the sins and punishment of humans, pushing the actions of the Watchers and the Giants into the background.

The one partial exception to this pattern occurs in 1 *En.* 106–7, a unit affixed to the end of the *Epistle*, which recounts the birth of Noah. The presence of a parallel narrative in the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1 QapGen 11–v) suggests that both derive from a tale that circulated independently, whether in a “Book of Noah” or in a more diffuse body of Noachite literature and lore.⁸³ This unit recounts how Noah was born with an angelic appearance (106:2–3, 5–6), which caused his father Lamech to fear that “he is not from me, but from the angels” (106:6). His anxious comments to Methuselah suggest that Lamech suspects Noah of being the product of an illicit angelic/human union, like the Giants born from the sexual sins of the Watchers.⁸⁴ Methuselah then travels to the “ends of the earth” to call down his own father Enoch, who reveals that there is indeed a connection between Noah and the Watchers. This connection, however, is not the genealogical one that Lamech feared. Stressing that the Watchers’ progeny are “not like spirits, but fleshly” (106:14), Enoch predicts that God will bring a Flood on the earth and that Noah and his children will be the sole remnant (106:13–18). Although the connection between the Watchers and the corruption of the earth is not explicitly stated, this unit hints at a poignant chiasm: just as the world will be destroyed on account of the angels who wished to be men, so it will be saved on account of a man with the visage of an angel. Even here, however, the connection between angelic sin and earthly corruption remains implicit, and the motif of angelic instruction can nowhere be found. As in the “Animal Apocalypse,” the stress is placed on the sexual sins of the Watchers and its ramifications for the genealogy of early humans.

Despite its diversity, the material in the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* evinces a striking shift in the orientation of the Enochic literary tradition during the Maccabean era, marked by a turn from “scientific” to

⁸³ These chapters are present among the fragments of EE in 4QEnf (1–11), although they are separated from the rest of EE by 1½ spaces. On the relationship of these fragments to the “Book of Noah” mentioned in a variety of Jewish sources, see Dimant, “Fallen Angels,” 122–28; García Martínez, *Qumran and Apocalyptic*, 1–44; Stone, “Axis,” 136–41; Werman, “Qumran and the Book of Noah,” 171–81; Himmelfarb, “Some Echoes,” 127–36; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory*, 35–37.

⁸⁴ In the version in GenApoc, Lamech confronts his wife, and she assures him that “this seed is from you . . . and not from any stranger, nor from any of the Watchers, nor from any of the sons of heave[n . . .]” (1 QapGen 11, 16).

eschatological concerns and a heightened sense of the conflict between Israel and the nations, here understood in military, eschatological, and genealogical terms. The tension between their dependence on the *Book of the Watchers* and the need to “update” Enoch for the needs of a new age is poignantly embodied in their approaches to the fallen angels. Although firmly rooted in the *Book of the Watchers*, these versions of the angelic descent myth are selective and oriented towards different aims, and they counter its supernatural explanation for the origins of evil with a renewed emphasis on human responsibility.

4. THE EARLIEST STAGES IN THE RECEPTION-HISTORY OF THE *BOOK OF THE WATCHERS*

For our inquiry into the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers*, the material about the fallen angels in the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* proves relevant in multiple ways. First of all, these books attest a group or groups of scribes who granted a high level of authority both to Enoch and to this older Enochic book, reworking traditions from the *Book of the Watchers*, even as they produced new works to supplement its account of the revelations received by Enoch. They follow the *Astronomical Book* and *Book of the Watchers* in rooting their authority in this antediluvian scribe, but the legitimacy of their own acts of authorial creativity is also predicated on the status of the earlier Enochic apocalypses as authentic works of revealed wisdom. Insofar as these second-century works self-consciously operate within a literary tradition of Enochic pseudepigraphy, they simultaneously assume and assert the scriptural status of their third-century predecessors (at least in the eyes of the authors and intended audience) by couching the plausibility of their own pseudepigraphal compositions in their expanded accounts of the figure described so tersely in Gen 5:21–24.

Their redeployment of the angelic descent myth also anticipates a number of later developments. As we shall see in Chapter 3, subsequent authors are no less reticent about the *Book of the Watchers*' angelic etiology of evil, even as they embrace other elements in the Enochic myth of angelic descent, such as its typological treatment of the Watchers and the Giants as paradigms of the punished wicked. At times, these choices may reflect the influence of the *Book of Dreams* and/or *Epistle of Enoch* on the interpretation of the *Book of the Watchers*. Whether due to the perception of their shared “authorship” and/or the practice of copying these books in the same manuscripts, some exegetes seem to have read the *Book of the Watchers* through the lens of these later

works – and adopted a similar approach to the fallen angels, viewing them not as corruptors of humankind but as examples of sinful creatures akin to the human wicked.

No less notable is the complete absence of the motif of illicit angelic instruction from these second-century Enochic writings. In the course of our inquiry, we shall encounter many references to Enoch's words and prophecies and to the "scripture/book of Enoch." Even when they speak of angelic descent, it can often be difficult to ascertain whether such statements allude to the *Book of the Watchers*, the *Book of Dreams*, or the *Epistle of Enoch*, since the latter two soon became accepted as authentically Enochic compositions like their third-century predecessors (see *Jub.* 4:17–22). The presence of the instruction motif is useful in this regard, signaling the possibility that an author specifically used the *Book of the Watchers*, an excerpt from it, or a collection that incorporated this apocalypse.

We cannot, of course, assume the opposite. If anything, the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* starkly demonstrate that exegetes who knew and cherished the *Book of the Watchers* might nevertheless choose to omit the corrupting teachings of the Watchers from their own retellings of the angelic descent myth. As we have seen, this omission follows from a shift of interest in the Enochic literary tradition of the Maccabean era, which saw the "scientific" interests and the epistemological concerns of earlier Enochic authors recede in relevance. The suppression of the instruction motif may also be linked to a broader tendency to shift the blame for earthly sin and suffering from the supernatural sphere to the realm of human responsibility.

If so, this proves somewhat ironic, since the first traces of such concerns can be found in the *Book of the Watchers* itself – and precisely in those traditions about angelic pedagogy. The material about Asael there functions to attenuate the view that evil resulted solely from a breach in heavenly harmony, by asserting the participation of corrupted humans in the wickedness that prompted the Flood, alongside corrupting angels and their violent progeny. For later exegetes, however, it seems that the possibility that the Watchers played any causal role in teaching the ways of wickedness to humankind proved more troubling than their sins of leaving heaven, cavorting with human women, and begetting hybrid progeny that wreaked violence on the earth; the latter, as we shall see, could be readily reinterpreted to fit different notions of the history of human sin, including those that located the origins of evil long before the Flood, in the transgressions of Adam and Eve.

For our inquiry into the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, the Wisdom of ben Sira also proves important. When we turn to consider the

afterlife of our text in Second Temple Judaism, we find its influence precisely where we would expect it – in Enochic pseudepigrapha, in aligned works such as *Jubilees*, and in other texts preserved by the Qumran community. Indeed, the bulk of our extant evidence for the early Jewish transmission and collection of Enochic pseudepigrapha points to their popularity among sectarian groups in Judaea with fervent eschatological expectations (esp. the Qumran community and the Jesus Movement).⁸⁵

Nevertheless, traces of the Enochic myth of angelic descent surface in a broad variety of pre-Rabbinic sources. Jewish exegetes frequently equate the “sons of God” of Gen 6:1–4 with fallen angels and echo the extrabiblical expansions in the *Book of the Watchers*. At the same time, we find numerous references to Enoch, his prophecies, his special wisdom, and his escape from death in sources from the full spectrum of Second Temple Judaism, both in Israel and across the Diaspora.⁸⁶ Literature from this period also features explicit references to Enoch’s own writings,⁸⁷ suggesting that the spread of such traditions owes to the transmission of Enochic texts no less than the cultivation of oral lore related to the interpretation of Genesis. In addition, many later apocalypses integrate concepts, themes, and literary forms from the *Book of the Watchers*,⁸⁸ and the continued reproduction and circulation of this text are evinced by the presence of multiple manuscripts at Qumran, dating from the second century BCE to the first century BCE, and by its probable translation into Greek prior to the first century CE.⁸⁹

In other words, the influence of the *Book of the Watchers* was not limited to groups with a “sectarian” identity. Ben Sira’s familiarity with the apocalypse shows its use by the authors of the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* to be representative of only one trajectory of its transmission. Likewise, his allusion to the Enochic myth of angelic descent should serve to

⁸⁵ This pattern of attestation tells us less than it seems, since we owe virtually all of our knowledge of Second Temple Judaism to the discoveries at Qumran and to the preservation of Christians, including most of our early MSS of biblical texts and other works that scholars would never think to label “sectarian.”

⁸⁶ E.g., Sir 44:16; 49:14; Ps.–Eup. in *Praep.ev.* 9.17.8–9; 4Q227 2 (Ps-Jub); Wisd 4:10–15; *T.Sim.* 5:4; *T.Levi* 10:5, 14:1; *T.Dan.* 5:6; *T.Naph.* 4:1; *T.Benj.* 9:1, 10:6; *L.A.E.* 51:9; *T.Abr.* [B] 11:3–10; Heb 11; Jude 14–15 as well as BD, EE, BG, *Sim.*, and 2 *Enoch*. See also Jos., *Ant.*, 1.85, 9.28; *L.A.B.* 1:15–17; Philo, *Post.*, 43–43; *Mut.*, 33–34; *Abr.*, 17–19; *Praem.*, 10–27; *QG*, 82–86. For a summary, see VanderKam, *Enoch*.

⁸⁷ E.g., *Jub.* 4, esp. 4:17–19; *T.Sim.* 5:4; *T.Levi* 10:5; 14:1; *T.Dan.* 5:6; *T.Naph.* 4:1; *T.Benj.* 9:1.

⁸⁸ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, esp. 14, 29, 46, 78. It is generally agreed that BW was the most influential and widely read of the Enochic books from this time; so VanderKam, *Enoch*, 110–29, 143–47, 154–61, 170–80; idem, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 60–88; Wickham, “Sons,” 143–45; Bauckham, “Fall,” 316, 319–21.

⁸⁹ Larson, “Translation,” 198–203.

remind us that influence can be mediated by different means and that it is not necessarily limited to individuals or groups with the same worldviews, beliefs, or concerns. Despite the enthusiastic adoption of the *Book of the Watchers* by some “sectarian” groups and its eventual exclusion from the Rabbinic Tanakh and most Christian OTs, neither the creators nor the readers of these apocalypses should be relegated without further ado to the fringes of “mainstream” Judaism.



Primeval History and the Problem of Evil: Genesis, the *Book of the Watchers*, and the Fallen Angels in Pre-Rabbinic Judaism

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER CAUTIONED AGAINST THE ASSUMPTION THAT the authors and audience of the *Book of the Watchers* should be sought only on the margins of mainstream Judaism. There, we considered the reinterpretation of Enochic myth of angelic descent in three works, each of which exhibits a close connection with the *Book of the Watchers*; ben Sira reflects the same milieu of Judaeen priestly scribalism, while the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* self-consciously operate within the Enochic literary tradition. In these cases, it is not difficult to explain how these authors gained access to our text, nor why they might choose to use and rework it. Towards mapping the early Jewish reception-history of this book, the present chapter will chart the scope of this apocalypse's influence among other pre-Rabbinic Jews and measures the scale of its impact in different groups and locales.

Here too, questions about the status of the *Book of the Watchers* are important to investigate; for, as we shall see, the classical Rabbinic literature contains no reference to Enochic texts and few traces of Enochic traditions. As with so much of the Jewish literature composed during the Second Temple period, the *Book of the Watchers* would be preserved primarily in Christian circles. There are a range of possible explanations for this situation. At one extreme is the possibility that early Sages rejected this book despite its popularity in Second Temple Judaism; at the other is the possibility that some Christians adopted a book that most Jews never valued to begin with.

Before turning to consider Rabbinic Jewish and early Christian attitudes towards the *Book of the Watchers*, we must thus ask: just how widespread was its influence in the preceding centuries? The present chapter attempts to answer this question by surveying references to the fallen angels in sources from the second century BCE to the early second century CE.¹ In each case, we

¹ On the Watchers' sons, see Stuckenbruck, "Angels and Giants."

will weigh the evidence for an author's dependence on the distinctive version of the angelic descent myth in this apocalypse. Where the evidence allows, we will attempt to discern the attitude towards the book itself. To trace the trajectories of this text's transmission, these literary data will be correlated with other evidence for its continued reproduction, translation, and circulation. In the process, we will consider the major trends in the interpretation of the angelic descent myth during this period, exploring different approaches to the Problem of Evil and considering the complex relationship between the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* and the history of interpretation of Genesis.

Our survey will begin with *Jubilees*, a biblical retelling from the second century BCE that includes a version of the Enochic myth of angelic descent. From there we turn to references to the fallen angels in other works found at Qumran, investigating the influence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in this community and the impact of their collection of Enochic books on the interpretation of the *Book of the Watchers*. After discussing its translation into Greek and its use by Greek-speaking Jews in Israel and the Diaspora, we will consider texts that attest another important development in the transmission and reinterpretation of angelic descent, namely, the growing use of the story of Adam and Eve to explain the origins of human sin and suffering.

The sources surveyed in this chapter come from four of the most tumultuous centuries in Jewish history. Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that their authors seem so preoccupied with the Problem of Evil. The period between the Maccabean Revolt and the Bar Kokhba War saw a series of political upheavals in the Land of Israel, as well as the emergence of competing religious groups, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Jesus Movement. The seeds of Second Temple sectarianism were sown in the decades surrounding the Maccabean Revolt. Yet the Hellenizing reforms and high-priestly intrigues leading up the Revolt, the crisis of the Revolt itself, and the rise of Hasmonean power thereafter intensified debates about the nature of the chosen people, their relationship to other nations, and the proper foundations for political and religious authority.² One of the most charged issues was the means of ensuring the purity of the Jerusalem Temple after its defilement by the Seleucid appointment of corrupt high priests and its infamous "abomination of desolation" by Antiochus IV – as well as, for some Jews, the determination of festivals with reference to the cycles of the moon.³ It is this context, for instance, that informed the formation of the community at Qumran, in

² Baumgarten, *Flourishing*, 26–28, 83–91.

³ VanderKam, *Calendars*, 15–33, 43–116.

whose library we find multiple copies of the *Book of the Watchers*, together with the *Astronomical Book*, *Book of Dreams*, *Epistle of Enoch*, and a number of other texts influenced by the Enochic literary tradition.

The proliferation of competing visions of Judaism continued during the period of Hasmonean rule and escalated after Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem in 63 BCE, which ushered in the progressive imposition of Roman rule. Increasing economic pressures and political instability led to widespread dissatisfaction among the populace, which was given voice by numerous charismatic figures with messianic, apocalyptic, and/or revolutionary messages (Josephus, *B.J.* 2.254–65; *A.J.* 17–20) – most famously, Jesus of Nazareth. Although it is impossible to reconstruct whether Jews in the very first generation of the Jesus Movement knew Enochic texts and traditions, references and allusions to the *Book of the Watchers* can be found in some of Christianity's earliest writings, including several texts now in the NT.⁴

Despite the many changes in the centuries between the composition of the *Book of the Watchers* and the rise of the Jesus Movement, the patterns in the use of the Enochic myth of angelic descent remained surprisingly stable. Many exegetes seem to have read Gen 6:1–4 through 1 *En.* 6–16. With very few exceptions, however, Jewish and Christian texts from this period omit reference to illicit angelic instruction, focus on the Watchers' sexual sins, and downplay or reject the *Book of the Watchers*' assertion that angelic descent accounts for the origins of human sin and suffering. Whereas the authors/redactors of the *Book of the Watchers* had dismissed the significance of Gen 2–3 within the genealogy of human error, later Jews increasingly seek the origins of sin in the biblical tale of Adam, Eve, and the serpent and/or adopt less historiographical methods to explain the sway of evil on the human heart. In their reinterpretations of angelic descent, the corrupting teachings of the Watchers thus proved less significant than their sexual transgressions, the hybrid progeny that resulted, and God's punishment of all involved.

1. JUBILEES, THE QUMRAN COMMUNITY, AND THE COLLECTION OF ENOCHIC WRITINGS

For the most part, it proves difficult to determine whether or not authors familiar with the *Book of the Watchers* also knew other Enochic books; at times,

⁴ Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 123–24. Most obvious are Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter, but scholars have also argued for Enochic allusions in other NT texts (e.g., Sim, “Matthew 22,13a” [Matt]; Olson, “Those Who Have Not,” 492–510 [Rev]); Paul may or may not refer to the Enochic myth of angelic descent (Peerbolte and Lietaert, “Man, Woman,” esp. 86–92) – although early Christians readily interpreted 1 Cor 11:2–7 in this fashion (see Ch. 5).

we have some basis on which to speculate, but often we have none. In the early stages of the reception-history of this apocalypse, however, we encounter two major exceptions: *Jubilees* and the literature composed at Qumran. In both cases, we can place the use of the *Book of the Watchers* alongside the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*, as well as the Aramaic *Astronomical Book*. The former author appears to know all these books, although apparently not in a single collection. The latter group attests the practice of copying different Enochic writings together on the same scrolls. For our inquiry, their evidence thus proves especially significant, allowing us to explore the degree to which Enochic writings from the second century BCE influenced the interpretation of the *Book of the Watchers* and its version of the angelic descent myth.

i. Angelic Instruction in Jubilees

Jubilees, a biblical retelling commonly dated between 170 and 150 BCE,⁵ is closely aligned with the Enochic literary tradition. The author puts his expansive paraphrase of Gen 1 to Ex 12 into the mouth of Moses, but Enochic traditions pepper the work, and Enoch himself is a celebrated figure.⁶ Not only is he extolled as the “first among men . . . who learned writing and knowledge and wisdom” (4:17), but we are told that he now lives in the Garden of Eden, where he “writes down the judgment and condemnation of the world and all the wickedness of humankind” (4:23–25).

Most importantly, for our purposes, Enoch is credited with an impressive list of authorial achievements:

4:17 And he was the first among men that are born on the earth who learned writing and knowledge and wisdom *and who wrote down the signs of heaven according to the order of their separate months.*

4:18 And *he was the first to write a testimony* and he testified to the sons of men among the generations of the earth, and he recounted the weeks of the jubilees, and made known to them the days of the years, and set in order the months and recounted the Sabbaths of the years as we (i.e. the angels) made known to him.

4:19 While he slept he saw in a vision what has happened and what will occur – how things will happen for mankind during their history until the Day of Judgment. He saw everything and understood. *He wrote a testimony for himself and placed it on the earth against all mankind and for their history . . .*

⁵ VanderKam, *Textual*, 214–85; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 78–79; Goldstein, “Date,” 63–86.

⁶ *Jub.* 4:15–26; 5:1–10; 7:20–39; 10:1–17; 21:10. VanderKam, *Enoch*, 110–21.

4:21–22 He was, moreover, with God’s angels for six jubilees of years. They showed him everything on earth and in the heavens – the dominion of the sun – *and he wrote down everything*. He testified to the Watchers who had sinned with the daughters of men because they had begun to mix with earthly women so that they became defiled. Enoch testified against all of them.⁷

Grelot proposes that this passage refers to three specific Enochic writings: the *Astronomical Book*, *Book of the Watchers*, and *Book of Dreams*.⁸ VanderKam further suggests that the *Epistle of Enoch* should be added to the list.⁹

The “signs of heaven according to the order of their separate months” (*Jub.* 4:17) is indeed an apt summary of the *Astronomical Book*, and the contents of the *Book of the Watchers* are well described by *Jub.* 4:21–22,¹⁰ which depicts Enoch recording his travels with the angels “on earth and in the heavens” (cf. *1 En.* 17–36) and testifying against the Watchers (cf. *1 En.* 6–16; esp. 14:1). It proves a bit more difficult to identify the “testimony” mentioned in *Jub.* 4:18. The *Epistle* seems most like a testimony in style,¹¹ but the subsequent reference to calendrical wisdom does not readily fit. Because the original Aramaic version of the *Astronomical Book* was a good deal longer than the Ethiopic version and because we do not know its exact contents, it is possible that *Jub.* 4:17–18 refer to this text in its original form.¹² Similarly, *Jub.* 4:19’s reference to Enoch’s dream-vision about “how things will happen during their history until the Day of Judgment” could point either to the *Book of Dreams*, which claims to record two of Enoch’s visions, or to the *Epistle*, particularly the “Apocalypse of Weeks” and surrounding verses.¹³ Whatever the exact identification of these allusions, it remains that echoes of the *Epistle of Enoch* and the *Book of Dreams* can be found elsewhere in *Jubilees*, making it probable that the author knew and used these two works.

The account of Enoch’s literary activity in *Jubilees* 4 suggests that its author accepted the attribution of Enochic pseudepigrapha – so much so, in fact, that he viewed the production of such works as an important part of biblical history. *Jubilees* describes Enoch’s acts of authorship during its retelling of Gen 5:21–24, depicting his writing as an integral component of the story of

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, translations of *Jubilees* follow VanderKam, *Book of Jubilees*.

⁸ Grelot (“Hénoch,” 484–88) built on Charles’ earlier suggestion that *Jubilees* refers to *1 En.* 6–16, 23–36, 72–90 (*Book of Jubilees*, xlv, lxviii–lxix).

⁹ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 312–25; idem, *Enoch*, 114–17.

¹⁰ Cf. Grelot, “Hénoch,” 485–86.

¹¹ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 316–17; idem, *Enoch*, 114.

¹² Grelot, “Hénoch,” 484–85; Milik, *Commentary*, 11.

¹³ Grelot (“Hénoch,” 485) and Milik (*Commentary*, 45) argue for the former; VanderKam (*Enoch*, 115) prefers the latter.

his life, for which Genesis provides only a partial description. According to *Jubilees*, the author of Genesis (here presumed to be Moses, also the putative author of *Jubilees*) was fully aware of these books, and he learned of them in the same way that he came to know about the teachings in the Torah: this too was revealed to him on Mt. Sinai (*praef.*; 1:1–7).¹⁴ In effect, the author resolves any potential tension between Genesis' statements about Enoch and the more expansive traditions in Enochic pseudepigrapha, by assuring his contemporaries that they can use the latter as trustworthy supplements to the former.

A similar understanding of the status of Enochic books vis-à-vis Mosaic books is reflected in *Jubilees*' approach to angelic descent, which draws both from Genesis and from the early Enochic pseudepigrapha. It is clear, for instance, that the author reads Gen 6:1–4 through *1 En.* 6–16 (BW).¹⁵ Indeed, it may be more accurate to say that the author reworks the *Book of the Watchers* just as he reworks Genesis, selectively expanding, omitting, and reinterpreting passages to fit his own aims.

Within *Jubilees*, references to the Watchers cluster in four contexts: [1] the retelling of Gen 5–6 in *Jub.* 4–5, [2] Noah's testament in *Jub.* 7:20–39, [3] the story of Cainan's discovery of divinatory writings in *Jub.* 8:2–4, and [4] the material about Noah, Mastema, and the demons in *Jub.* 10. For our purposes, the first proves most significant. Not only is it the only one with any basis in Genesis, but it occurs within a retelling of early human history, akin to the passages that we examined from the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*.

In comparison, *Jubilees* is more expansive and stays closer to the text of Genesis. This, for instance, accounts for the first major departure from the *Book of the Watchers*: the author begins with the story of Adam and Eve, here credited with the first sin (*Jub.* 3; cf. Gen 2–3).¹⁶ Like the “Animal Apocalypse” and *Epistle of Enoch*, he moves the origins of sin into the sphere of human responsibility; the Watchers, as Collins rightly notes, “are not ultimately responsible for human sin, since Adam fell long before they came on the scene.”¹⁷

Also notable is the first reference to angelic descent. When paraphrasing the genealogical notices in Gen 5, *Jubilees* states that Enoch's father Jared was given his name “because during his lifetime the angels of the Lord who were called Watchers descended to earth to teach humankind to do what is just and

¹⁴ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 439–48.

¹⁵ VanderKam, “Angel Story,” 153–70; cf. Dimant, “Fallen Angels,” 92–103.

¹⁶ VanderKam, “Angel Story,” 153–54.

¹⁷ Collins, *Seers*, 291.

upright on the earth” (4:15). The author here expands on the etymology of Jared implicit in *1 En.* 6:6 (BW), but his explanation of the impetus for angelic descent counters both of the two scenarios presented by the polyvalent account in *1 En.* 6–11. Contrary to the description of the descent of Šemiḥazah and his hosts in *1 En.* 6, the author of *Jubilees* stresses that the angels were sent to earth on a divinely sanctioned mission; they did not leave heaven for their own lustful aims. And, contrary to the description of Asael’s corrupting teachings in *1 En.* 8:1–2, he depicts their pedagogical activities as wholly positive in aim and content.

The next reference to the Watchers is similarly brief. In the course of an expansive paraphrase of Gen 5:21–24, *Jubilees* notes that Enoch “testified to the Watchers who sinned with the daughters of men; for, they had begun to mix with earthly women, so that they became defiled” (4:22). As before, the author betrays his dependence on the *Book of the Watchers* even as he departs from it. He follows *1 En.* 15 in stressing the defilement of the Watchers, but he focuses wholly on their sexual sins and omits any reference to corrupting teachings.

Even before *Jubilees* retells Gen 6:1–4, the reader/hearer knows that the Watchers were sent to earth by God to teach righteousness (4:15) and only later succumbed to lust for human women (4:22). The ramifications are striking: in the *Book of the Watchers*, human sin and suffering resulted from the descent(s) of Asael, Šemiḥazah, and other Watchers; their teachings corrupted humankind (*1 En.* 7:1; 8:1–3; 9:6), and their sexual dalliances resulted in the Giants’ antediluvian rampage (7:2–5; 9:9) and in the earth’s infestation by evil spirits (15:8–16:1; 19:1–2). *Jubilees*, however, progressively absolves the Watchers from blame. By depicting their intentions as good and their descent as divinely mandated, *Jubilees* characterizes these angels not as evil so much as weak and thus disobedient.¹⁸ As VanderKam notes, *Jubilees* “protects the reputation of heaven by distancing it from evil.”¹⁹ As a result, however, the wicked angels seem more like wayward men.

Jubilees’ retelling of Gen 6–9 (*Jub.* 5–7) integrates numerous elements from *1 En.* 6–16.²⁰ The author interweaves material from Gen 6 and *1 En.* 6–11, reworking the former no less than the latter. The account of the events leading up to the Flood (*Jub.* 5) juxtaposes the story of human sin and punishment (5:2, 20–32; cf. Gen 6:5–7) with the story of the Watchers’ sexual misdeeds

¹⁸ This mirrors its approach to Adam and Eve; although they are here the progenitors of human sinfulness, *Jubilees* portrays them as transgressing God’s will primarily because of poor judgment (Halpern-Amaru, *Empowerment*, 12–15).

¹⁹ VanderKam, “Angel Story,” 155.

²⁰ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 318–23.

with human women (5:1; cf. *1 En.* 7), their binding and imprisonment (5:6; cf. *1 En.* 10:4–5, 11, 13), and the slaying of their hybrid progeny (5:7–10; cf. *1 En.* 10:9–10, 12). Here, however, the connection between angelic and human transgression is not elaborated (cf. *Jub.* 7:20–23); as in the first vision in the *Book of Dreams* (*1 En.* 83–84), the causal link between the Watchers' sexual misdeeds and the proliferation of human wickedness is no clearer than in Gen 6.²¹

The motivations for this choice are exposed by the homiletical interpretation that concludes the account (*Jub.* 5:13–18). This passage places the imprisonment of the Watchers and the watery punishment of earthly creatures on the same level, as two pieces of evidence that prove the same principle: "There is no injustice" (5:13). God judges the great and the small alike, and He shows no favoritism (5:15–16), even to his own angels. Interestingly, the text then turns to stress the special situation of Israel:

Regarding the Israelites it has been written and ordained: "If they turn to Him in the right way, he will forgive all their wickedness and will pardon their sins." It has been written and ordained that He will have mercy on all who turn from all their errors once each year [i.e., on Yom Kippur]. (*Jub.* 5:17–18)

From a rhetorical standpoint, the example of the fallen angels underlines the need for Jews to turn from their wicked ways, because they alone – of all creatures, whether on earth or in heaven – have the option of repentance. As in later Rabbinic traditions about Israel and the angels (see Ch. 6), the elevation of the former corresponds to a diminishment in the status of the latter. Not only are angels fallible, but they, unlike the Jews, have no hope of divine reprise.

The typological parallel between angels and humans also serves another aim, namely, to support *Jubilees'* extended polemic against intermarriage. As Betsy Halpern-Amaru has demonstrated, the Watchers here function as the negative exemplars of those who marry "whomever they choose" (5:1; 7:21) with no thought to the maintenance of genealogical purity.²² Accordingly, the author betrays some anxiety about the lineage of humans from that time. He describes the sexual mingling of angels and women only after assuring us that Noah's line is free from such corruption (cf. *1 En.* 106–7; 1 QApGen ii, 1) and marked only by proper unions (which means, at this stage in history,

²¹ That this was a deliberate reinterpretation of *1 En.* 6–11 is suggested by *Jubilees'* statement that, when all creatures on the earth "corrupted their way and their prescribed course," "they began to devour one another" (*Jub.* 5:2). In BW, the Giants do the devouring, and the creatures of the earth simply suffer (*1 En.* 7:3–5).

²² Halpern-Amaru, *Empowerment*, 147–59.

marriage between cousins; 4:27–28, 33). Subsequent to the description of the Watchers' sexual exploits, however, the genealogical lines become muddled, and the orderly patterns of the earlier birth notices become disrupted, thereby evoking a chaotic situation akin to the mingling after Asael's descent in the "Animal Apocalypse" (*1 En.* 86:2).

What lies implicit in the pattern of birth notices becomes explicit in the account of Noah's testament to his sons and grandsons in *Jub.* 7:20–39.²³ Noah cites the example of the Watchers to exhort his progeny to avoid the three sins that caused the Flood: fornication, impurity,²⁴ and injustice (7:20). He explains that it was "due to fornication that the Watchers had illicit intercourse, apart from the mandate of their authority, with women. When they married whomever they chose they committed the first [acts] of impurity" (7:21). This impurity caused blood to be spilled on the earth (7:22–23; cf. *1 En.* 7:3–5 [BW]), which, in turn, caused the minds of humankind to be filled with nothing but thoughts of injustice (7:24; cf. Gen 6:5). The point is clear: at the root of the evils that led to the Flood lies the impurity caused by the improper choice of marriage partners. The typological interpretation of angelic sin thus echoes the implicit critique of impure priests in *1 En.* 12–16 (esp. 12:4; 15:2–12; BW). *Jubilees*, however, uses this typology to address the marriage practices, not only of priests, but of all Israel – and its critique is anything but implicit.

The connection between immorality and genealogical impurity is developed in the following chapter, which begins with an extrabiblical tale about Cainan. It is here that we find *Jubilees*' sole reference to illicit angelic instruction. After describing Cainan's lineage, the text recounts his mastery of writing and his discovery of "an inscription that the ancients had incised in a rock" (8:2–3). We are then told that he "read what was in it, copied it, and sinned [*ras'a*] on the basis of what was in it; for, in it was the Watchers' teaching by which they used to observe the omens of the sun, moon, and stars, and every heavenly sign" (8:3). The topics of instruction evoke *1 En.* 8:3c–g, again suggesting dependence on the *Book of the Watchers*. This makes it all the more striking, however, that the author of *Jubilees* chooses to displace illicit angelic instruction from his account of the antediluvian decline in human morality; the teachings of the fallen angels corrupt humankind generations

²³ As Halpern-Amaru notes, Noah himself "assumes the teaching role that had initially been delegated to the angels" (*Empowerment*, 22).

²⁴ Cf. VanderKam, who translates *rek'wes* as "uncleanness."

later, as a result of their preservation on materials that survived inundation by water.²⁵

Like the *Book of the Watchers*, *Jubilees* uses the motif of illicit angelic instruction to critique celestial divination as ill-gotten wisdom. Nevertheless, the teachings are given a diminished role both in the account of angelic sin and in the history of human decline. The Watchers' mission of promulgating beneficial teachings attenuates their corrupting influence, and the latter is divorced from the narrative context of the Flood, such that the causal thread between angelic pedagogy and the antediluvian spread of human sin is severed. Of all the teachings attributed to the fallen angels in the *Book of the Watchers* – metalworking, cosmetics, sorcery, pharmacology, spell-binding, celestial divination, and generally “all manner of sin” – *Jubilees* includes only one. In effect, the author has transformed the motif of illicit angelic instruction from an etiology of sin into an etiology of divination.

Furthermore, *Jubilees* reads a new level of meaning into the Watchers' illicit pedagogy. The tale of Cainan's corruption concludes with a genealogical notice that describes his choice to marry outside of the house of Shem, taking a wife from the house of Japheth, progenitor of the Greeks (8:5).²⁶ His corruption by the Watchers' teachings is tied to a propensity for exogamy, akin to the paradigmatic “intermarriage” between the “sons of God” and “daughters of men.”

Jubilees takes a similar approach to the issue of angelic culpability for human suffering. As in 1 *En.* 15:8–16:1 (BW), the demons that plague humankind are the spirits of the Watchers' hybrid sons (*Jub.* 10:5), and, as in 1 *En.* 19:1 (BW), the demons help to spread idolatry (*Jub.* 11:4–5). Yet, the meaning of these traditions has changed with their displacement into a different narrative context. When the “polluted demons began to lead astray the children of Noah's sons,” Noah pleads with God to bind them in the “place of judgment” so that they may not “rule over the spirits of the living” (10:1–6). This occasions *Jubilees'* rather off-handed revelation of a link between the Watchers and present-day demons, inasmuch as Noah's petition alludes to the Watchers as “the fathers of these spirits” (10:5).

In response to the petition, God orders the angels to bind all the evil spirits (10:7). Just then, an objection is raised by Mastema, the “leader of the spirits”:

²⁵ This common trope usually serves a positive aim, explaining how civilizations preserved their wisdom to the present day (e.g., Berossus in Sync. 53–56; Pliny, *Nat.* 7.61.57; *Book of Sothis* in Sync. 40.31–41.9; Iamblichus, *Myst.* 8.5; Jos., *Ant.* 1.69–70); see Adler, *Time*, 55–65; Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 29–31.

²⁶ Halpern-Amaru, *Empowerment*, 23–25.

Lord creator, leave some of them before me; let them listen to me and do everything that I tell them, because if none of them is left for me I shall not be able to exercise the authority of my will among humankind. For they are meant for destroying and misleading before my punishment, because the evil of humankind is great. (*Jub.* 10:8)

Taking both petitions into account, God arrives at a compromise. He leaves one-tenth of the demons unbound (10:9), and He orders the angels to teach Noah “all their medicines” (10:10) so that “he could cure by means of the earth’s plants” (10:12). Noah records these in a book that he passes on to Shem (10:13–14), thereby ensuring that his progeny will have protection against the onslaught of demons. When the reader is later told that people in the time of Seroh/Serug “began making graven images and polluted likenesses” with the help of the “cruel spirits” who “lead them astray” (11:4–5), it is clear that the demons are testing humankind and tempting them to sin; their encouragement of idolatry is not an extension of the Watchers’ corrupting teaching but part of Mastema’s activity as divinely sanctioned *satan*.

Although *Jubilees* integrates a number of elements from the Enochic myth of angelic descent, it takes a very different approach to the question of the culpability of the fallen angels for the suffering inflicted by their children after the Flood. In 1 *En.* 15–16 (BW), God rebukes the Watchers for the human misery caused by the demons “from the day of the slaughter and destruction and death of the Giants, from the soul of whose flesh the spirits proceed . . . until the day of the consummation of the Great Judgment” (16:1). *Jubilees* concurs on one point: the demons are the spirits of the Watchers’ hybrid sons. The Watchers, however, are no longer held responsible for demonic activity on earth after the time of Noah. All the demons would have been imprisoned during Noah’s lifetime, were it not for Mastema (*Jub.* 10:11). Consistent with the biblical concept of the *satan* [השטן] as divinely appointed accuser of humankind (Job 1:6–2:7; 1 Chron 21:1; Zech 3:1–2), Mastema receives permission from God to enlist the demons in the punishment of wicked humans. *Jubilees* even stresses that there would be no need for him and his demons to torment humankind, if not for one fact: “The evil of humankind is great.” In the end, the author pins this too on the human propensity to sin, further downplaying the role of the fallen angels in the origins of evil.

The *Book of the Watchers* was clearly a privileged source and intertext for the author of *Jubilees*, and his description of Enoch’s composition of this text (4:21–22) suggests that he granted it an authority akin to Genesis itself.

Insofar as he also appears to accept the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* as true records of Enoch's words (4:18–19), it is perhaps not surprising that he interprets the *Book of the Watchers* along much the same lines: he recasts angelic descent so as to downplay the Watchers' role in the corruption of humankind, to reassert human responsibility, and to demote the fallen angels from supernatural corruptors to fallible creatures, whose sins and punishments are comparable to those of humans. Like the "Animal Apocalypse" (BD), *Jubilees* also projects contemporary anxieties about intermarriage back into primordial times, citing the mingling of Watchers and women as proof of the dangers of exogamy.

Jubilees' apparent motivation for reconceptualizing angelic descent is also consistent with the second-century Enochic writings, namely, the assertion of human responsibility. Like the references to the fallen angels in the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*, its reworked version of the angelic descent myth reads like a narrative exploration of the dictum that "sin was not sent upon the earth, but men created it by themselves" (1 *En.* 98:4 [EE]). Not only does *Jubilees* undermine the *Book of the Watchers'* angelic etiology of sin and suffering, but it uses strands from the Enochic myth of angelic descent to weave an alternative answer to the Problem of Evil. Far from positing that the effects of angelic transgression still ripple to this day, *Jubilees* explains present-day sin and suffering with appeal to the *satan* Mastema and his demons, who torment humankind in accordance with the will of a just God in full control of His orderly cosmos.²⁷

ii. *The Fallen Angels and the Use of Enochic Literature in the Qumran Community*

Multiple copies of *Jubilees* were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, along with the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic books. Not surprisingly, we also find quite a few references to the fallen angels among the other texts in the library of the Qumran sectarians. These include two other works that antedate the foundation of the community, namely, the *Genesis Apocryphon* and the Qumran *Book of Giants*, as well as several sources of probable sectarian provenance, such as the *Ages of Creation* and the *Damascus Document*.²⁸

²⁷ VanderKam also notes the striking absence of angelic descent myth in the divine prediction of the course of human history in *Jub.* 1 and in the apocalypse in *Jub.* 23 ("Angel Story," 154).

²⁸ DSS translations follow García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, unless otherwise noted.

We have already noted the use of the Watchers in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which has parallels with the traditions about Noah in *1 En.* 106–7. In both cases, the fallen angels serve as a foil for the elevation of Noah, and the focus falls on their sexual sins, which occasion Lamech’s anxiety about the angelic appearance of his son (*1 QApGen* II, 1).²⁹

The Qumran *Book of Giants* exhibits an even closer connection to the Enochic literary tradition.³⁰ Analysis of this text, however, is notoriously difficult. It seems to have been a source for the *Book of the Giants* written by Mani (216–276 CE), and it exhibits striking similarities with later midrashic material (see Ch. 7). The early Jewish version, however, survives only in fragments. Even from our limited evidence, its debt to the *Book of the Watchers* rings clear.³¹ However one chooses to reconstruct its literary structure, it seems that the Qumran *Book of the Giants* essentially retells *1 En.* 6–16 (BW) from the perspective of the Watchers’ sons.³² In contrast to the anonymous Giants of the *Book of the Watchers*, they are here given names (Ohyah, Hahyah, Maḥaway, Gilgamesh, Ḥobabish, Aḥiram) and are even granted visions about the impending judgment on them.³³ The prophetic dreams elicit much fear from the Giants, who send one of their kind to seek the counsel of Enoch.³⁴ That they are destroyed nonetheless underlines the inevitability of God’s just punishment of all sinners, functionally paralleling the failed petition of the Watchers in *1 En.* 12–16 (BW).³⁵

The surviving fragments allow some insights into the role of the Giants in this text, but they tell us frustratingly little about its approach to the fallen angels. The fragments include references and allusions to their descent from heaven, their defilement with human women, and their punishment.³⁶ From the extant evidence, we can only speculate about whether the Qumran *Book of the Giants* contained any reference to angelic instruction, whether negative (as

²⁹ The first column (“column zero”) is fragmentary, but it may have contained a retelling of the angelic descent myth, as suggested by the possible reference to *שמי חיה* therein; I thank Bruce Zuckerman for informing me about this possibility.

³⁰ Milik assumed that BG was also an Enochic pseudepigraphon (*Commentary*, 57). Yet as Stuckenbruck notes, we have no evidence that this text was written in Enoch’s name (*BG*, 25–27).

³¹ Stuckenbruck, *BG*, 24–25; for dating, pp. 31, 119–23; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 51–56.

³² As Stuckenbruck notes: “Without the expansive traditions from the *Book of the Watchers* (based on the biblical narrative in Gen 6:1–4), the mythical content of the BG fragments would not be comprehensible” (*BG*, 27). For a survey of different reconstructions, see pp. 13–24.

³³ 2QEnGiants ar; 6QpapEnGiants ar II; 4QEnGiants^b II, 4–10.

³⁴ 4QEnGiants^b II, 21–III, 11.

³⁵ 2QEnGiants ar; 4QEnGiants^b II, 4–7; 6QpapEnGiants ar II; Stuckenbruck, “Angels,” 367–68.

³⁶ See esp. 4QEnGiants^a ar frag.7A–8; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 67–69.

in BW)³⁷ or positive (as in *Jubilees*).³⁸ We do find one hint, however, that the material about Asael in the *Book of the Watchers* has been reinterpreted: the Qumran *Book of the Giants* generally follows the earlier work for the names of the Watchers, as suggested by the surviving references to Šemiḥazah and Baraq'el.³⁹ But the name of Asael,⁴⁰ the chief angelic teacher in the *Book of the Watchers*, is rendered as Azazel.⁴¹

Notably, this name-change effaces any etymological association with the teaching of technical skills (i.e., עשאר as related to עשה), evoking instead the enigmatic creature or demon mentioned in Lev 16 [עזאזל].⁴² According to one reconstruction, the Giants Ohyah and Hahyah cite the punishment of Azazel as part of their plea for leniency against the Giants and the rest of the Watchers, apparently arguing that their own sins have already been expiated.⁴³ If so, then the Watcher's role strikingly parallels the scapegoat "sent away to the wilderness of Azazel" in the ritual of atonement prescribed by Lev 16.

A similar orthographical variant is found in *Ages of Creation* (4QAgEsCreat A frag.1 7–10):

Peshar about Azazel [עזאזל] and the angels wh[o came to the daughters of men] [and s]ired themselves giants [גבורים]. And concerning Azazel [it is written . . .] [to love] injustice and to let him inherit evil for all [his] ag[e . . .] (of the) judgments and the judgment of the council of [. . .]

³⁷ Milik reconstructs 1QEnGiants^a ar frag.14 ([. . .] וידעו ר[.]) to read "and they knew mysteries [רזי]," suggesting that this fragment once contained a parallel to 1 En. 16:3 (*Commentary*, 98); this reading, however, finds little support, either in the fragment itself or in the surrounding verses, which speak instead to the Giants' destructiveness (Stuckenbruck, *BG*, 58–59). By contrast, Mani's BG – consistent with the trends in the 2nd and 3rd c. CE (see Ch. 3) – does seem to have included the motif of illicit angelic instruction. References are preserved in two fragments: Coptic M: (" . . . the Egregoroi of Heaven . . . descended to earth. They did all deeds of malice. They revealed the arts in the world, and the mysteries of heaven to the men. Rebellion and ruin came about on the earth") and Sogdian H: (" . . . and what they had seen in the heavens among the gods, and also what they had seen in hell, their native land, and furthermore what they had seen on earth – all that they began to teach to the men"); Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 81.

³⁸ Some see the image of gardeners in the Giants' dream as hinting at a schema akin to *Jubilees*, in which the Watchers had a positive role and were only later corrupted by lust (Stuckenbruck, *BG*, 113–16).

³⁹ 4QEnGiants^a ar frag.1, 2 and frag.8, 5.

⁴⁰ 4QEn^a frag.1 III, 9; עכאר; 4QEn^b II, 26; 4QEn^c frag.1 II, 26; עשאר.

⁴¹ 4QEnGiants^a ar frag.7 I, 6; עזאזל[.].

⁴² Black, "Twenty," 231–32. Since the Ge'ez versions of BW consistently render this name as Azazel, studies prior to the discovery of the Aramaic fragments (and some after) often assumed that the relationship between BW's teaching Watcher and Leviticus' Azazel was more straightforward than we now know. E.g., Tawil, "Azazel," 45; Helm, "Azazel," 218–22; for a more nuanced approach, Grabbe, "Scapegoat."

⁴³ Milik, *Commentary*, 313; Grabbe, "Scapegoat," 155; cf. Stuckenbruck, *BG*, 80–81.

As Nickelsburg notes, the use of the *peshet* form to interpret the Enochic myth of angelic descent further suggests the authoritative status of the *Book of the Watchers* in the Qumran community.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of the text permits only conjectures about whether or not this text included any reference to Asael/Azazel's corrupting teachings. Nevertheless, it is intriguing that the author distinguishes this Watcher from the rest, singling him out as the one who "inherits evil."

Although the paucity of evidence precludes any certain conclusions, it is possible that the presence of atonement themes within the *Book of the Watchers* (1 *En.* 10; cf. *Jub.* 5:17–18) prompted some exegetes to conflate the two figures into a single angel/demon.⁴⁵ We shall explore these connections further in Chapter 7, when we consider the traditions about Azael/Azazel in later Jewish sources. For now, it suffices to note that the association of Asael with Azazel and the name "Azazel" both have precedents in Second Temple sources.⁴⁶

In the *Damascus Document*, we find an approach that is even more common in Second Temple Jewish literature: the citation of the Watchers in a didactic context, as paradigms of creatures that sin and face punishment just like wicked humans. As we have seen, the *Book of the Watchers* provides models for the typological use of the fallen angels, albeit intertwined with an etiological approach to angelic descent. By contrast, the *Book of Dreams*, *Epistle of Enoch*, and *Jubilees* forefront the former to the virtual exclusion of the latter. Likewise, in the course of exhorting its audience not to stray from the

⁴⁴ Nickelsburg, "Books of Enoch at Qumran," 106.

⁴⁵ *Apoc. Abr.* 14:5; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.15.6; Grabbe, "Scapegoat," 153; Hanson, "Rebellion," 220–26. Hanson argues that this theme is original to the Asael material in 1 *En.* 6–11; for critiques of his argument, Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth," 401–3; Dimant, "1 Enoch 6–11," 336; Suter, "Fallen Angel," 133; Molenberg, "Study," 138–3. *Jubilees* uses the story of the Flood to discuss Yom Kippur but makes no reference to the association between Asael/Azazel and atonement. Moreover, the form of the name in *Ages of Creation* [עֲוֹנוֹת] may betray an attempt to combine the Enochic עֲוֹנוֹת/עֲוֹנוֹת with the biblical עֲוֹנוֹת. Both lend support to Grabbe's conclusion that an initial connection between Asael and Azazel is debatable, even though they were soon brought together ("Scapegoat," 154).

⁴⁶ One intriguing case is the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, in which Azazel takes on the role of the major demonic figure, like Mastema, Belial, the Prince of Darkness, and Satan in other texts (see esp. 14). This text even blames him for revealing forbidden secrets (14:4). Although some scholars speculate that the core of this text is a Jewish apocalypse written in Hebrew in the late 1st or early 2nd c. CE, I here omit it from my inquiry into Jewish literature from this period. The extant Slavonic betrays redactions and additions by the Bogomils (Rubinkiewicz in *OTP* 1:682–83). Azazel seems to have had a special appeal for these medieval dualists; indeed, most of the passages that Rubinkiewicz cites as probable interpolations – including two that can be pinpointed with certainty to the period of this text's Slavonic transmission – concern this angelic/demonic figure (20:5, 7; 22:5; 29:3–13). In light of the cultivation of Enochic texts and traditions by both Manichees and Bogomils, it is likely this apocalypse's depiction of Azazel has been significantly shaped by later Bogomil redaction.

path of righteousness, the *Damascus Document* instructs its readers/hearers as follows:

And now, sons, listen to me and I shall open your eyes so that you can see and understand the deeds of God, so that you can choose that which pleases Him and reject that which He hates, so that you can walk perfectly in all His ways and not follow after thoughts of the guilty inclination [יצר אשמה] and after eyes of lust [עיני תוהו]. For many have gone astray due to these; brave heroes have stumbled because of them, from ancient times until now. (CD-A ii, 14–17; see 4Q266 2 ii, 13–17)

Strikingly, the Watchers are the first examples:

Because they walked in stubbornness of their hearts, the heavenly Watchers fell [נפלו עירי השמים]; on account of it they were caught [נאדחו], since they did not keep the commandments of God [לא שמרו מצות אלה]. And their sons, whose height was like that of cedars and whose bodies were like mountains, fell [נפלו]. (CD-A ii, 17–19; see 4Q266 2 ii, 17–19)

The rest of the list consists of humans, alternating between those who “walked in stubbornness of their hearts” and those who “kept the commandments of God.” It thus becomes clear that the author presents the Watchers as victims of the same propensity for guilt and lust that infects people – and not as active agents in the spread of human sin. The *Damascus Document* reserves the latter role for Belial (CD-A iv, 12–18), who fights against the Prince of Lights (CD-A v, 17–19) in the divinely ordained battle between good and evil. As in *Jubilees*, the fallen angels take on a radically diminished role in the history of human sin at the same time as a single demonic figure emerges who operates under the aegis of God, in stark contrast to the angelic rebels of the *Book of the Watchers*.

We can assert with some confidence that the authors of the *Ages of Creation* and the *Damascus Document* were familiar with the *Book of the Watchers*. Most scholars concur that this and other Enochic books functioned as Scripture in the Qumran community, as did *Jubilees*.⁴⁷ In fact, in light of the apparently authoritative status of these texts, some have expressed their surprise that we do not find more material about the fallen angels among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition to the texts listed above, there is a brief reference in 4Q227 (4QpsJub^c? frag.2, 1–6), which notes that Enoch testified against the Watchers

⁴⁷ This is suggested both by the number of copies found at Qumran and by the influence of these texts on the sectarians' own compositions and ideology; see further Flint, “Noncanonical,” 116–21.

(cf. *Jub.* 4:21).⁴⁸ Other texts (esp. 4Q510 frag.1, 5) may presuppose that the demons, or a class of demons, are the sons of the fallen angels.⁴⁹

The *Damascus Document* may help us to understand this pattern. It is perhaps not coincidental that the author follows the lead of the *Book of Dreams*, *Epistle of Enoch*, and especially *Jubilees* (a text that he explicitly cites as authoritative; CD-A xvi, 3) in understanding the angelic descent myth. The issue of theodicy aptly highlights the possible appeal of this approach: the *Book of the Watchers'* etiology of sin and suffering jars with the dominant view at Qumran, a dualistic explanation for evil that reasserts God's control over the universe.⁵⁰ As we have seen, however, *Jubilees* and the second-century Enochic writings already provide models for countering the view that earthly evils originated from a breach in the harmony of heaven. In short, members of the Qumran community need not have looked far for a way of reading the *Book of the Watchers* that neutralized its radical solution to the Problem of Evil.

Such a harmonizing mode of interpretation would have likely been facilitated by the practice of anthologizing Enochic books. As noted above, the earliest copies of the *Book of the Watchers* discovered at Qumran (4QEn^{a,b}) predate the establishment of the community and attest the circulation of this apocalypse as an independent document. The MSS from the first century BCE (4QEn^{c,d,e}) contain the *Book of the Watchers* copied alongside the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* (and, in the case of 4QEn^c, possibly the *Book of the Giants*). This demonstrates the continued relevance of our text within the life of the community and may also shed light on how it was read and interpreted.⁵¹ Indeed, 4QEn^{c,d,e} embody an attitude towards the relative authority of the *Book of Watchers*, *Book of Dreams*, and *Epistle of Enoch* akin to that found in *Jubilees* 4: all these pseudepigrapha are seen to preserve the words of Enoch, such that second-century Enochic writings are granted the same status as their third-century predecessors.

Ironically, the scriptural status of *Jubilees* and the early Enochic pseudepigrapha in this community may help to explain why so few Qumran texts mention the Watchers.⁵² Simply stated, the products of the Enochic literary

⁴⁸ A fragmentary account of angelic descent may be preserved in 1QNoah (1Q19 frag.1).

⁴⁹ Nickelsburg, "Books of Enoch at Qumran," 104–9.

⁵⁰ Collins, *Seers*, 292–96. Davidson suggests that the Qumranites were simply less interested in the *original* cause of sin, focusing instead on present responsibility for sin (*Angels*, 294–97).

⁵¹ Milik's hypothesis that the MS evidence points to the Qumranites' progressive loss of interest in Enochic books (*Commentary*, 7) has been convincingly refuted by Nickelsburg ("Books of Enoch at Qumran," esp. 101, 104).

⁵² See Davidson, *Angels*, 179, 294–97; VanderKam, *Enoch*, 121–30; Alexander, "Demonology," 333–35; Reimer, "Rescuing," 336–342.

tradition may have been important to the Qumran community for other reasons, such as Enoch's long-standing association with the 364-day calendar (AB; *Jub.*), his predictions about the triumph of the chosen (BW, esp. 1–5; BD; EE), and the concept of the Flood as a protological precursor to the Eschaton (BW, esp. 10–11; BD; EE; BG?).⁵³ If they read the *Book of the Watchers* in terms of the dominant concerns in the *Book of Dreams*, *Epistle of Enoch*, and *Jubilees*, they may have viewed angelic descent as simply less significant for an understanding of the present state of affairs than one might imagine from interpreting this apocalypse in isolation.

2. THE ANGELIC DESCENT MYTH AND THE NACHLEBEN OF THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS

Collins outlines the following as prevalent explanations for human sin and suffering in Second Temple Judaism:⁵⁴

1. The corruption of humankind by the fallen angels (e.g., BW)
2. The Two Spirits doctrine, which attributes the activity of evil to the plan of an all-powerful God (esp. Qumran literature; cf. 2 Sam 19:9; Sir 33:14–15)
3. The equation of evil with primordial chaos (e.g., Daniel)
4. The disobedience of Adam and Eve, interpreted as the first sin and as a cause for the human propensity to stray from righteousness (e.g., 4 Ezra 3:14–22; 4:30; 7:118; Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 15:21–22; cf. 2 Baruch)
5. The idea of the wicked inclination in the human heart (e.g., 4 Ezra 3:21–22, 25–26; 4:30), which anticipates the Rabbinic concept of the “evil inclination” (יצר הרע), e.g., *Ber.Rabb.* 9:7; 26:4; *b.Sukkah* 52b; *b.Ber.* 61 a; *b.Qidd.* 30b).

So far, we have seen that the *Book of the Watchers'* version was notably less influential than other aspects of the apocalypse, even among those who knew and cherished this book.

Other texts from the period follow the same basic pattern. References to the fallen angels abound, but the angelic descent myth is rarely used to explain the origins of evil. Moreover, like the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*, texts

⁵³ Nickelsburg, “Books of Enoch at Qumran,” 109–12. As Stone has noted, the library of the Qumranites preserves very few traditions about Adam and Eve, but it exhibits an enormous interest in Enoch and Noah, suggesting the “sect’s concentration on the period from Enoch to Noah” as the Urzeit that most meaningfully spoke to their present circumstances, living on the cusp of the Endzeit (“Axis,” 145).

⁵⁴ Collins, *Seers*, 292–98.

tend to focus on the sexual transgressions of the Watchers while omitting reference to their corrupting teachings. Insofar as the former have a firm basis in Gen 6:1–4 and the latter do not, it may be tempting to conclude that authors merely adopted an angelic interpretation of this biblical passage, either because they did not know the *Book of the Watchers* or because they dismissed its more detailed account as an extrabiblical elaboration. Interestingly, however, we find only a few examples in which this seems to be the case (e.g., Philo, Josephus, on whom see below). The same texts that omit the instruction motif consistently cite the binding, imprisonment, and/or punishment of the Watchers, elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent with no counterpart in Genesis. This suggests that, in the pre-Rabbinic period, traditions about the fallen angels form part of the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* no less than the history of interpretation of Gen 6:1–4.

The proliferation of such traditions demonstrates the influence of the *Book of the Watchers*' traditions about the fallen angels. Yet it also complexifies our inquiry into the reception-history of this apocalypse. During this period, the Enochic myth of angelic descent was widespread enough that an individual exegete need not have known the *Book of the Watchers* to be familiar with some traditions from *1 En.* 6–16 (BW). The same is true for later Jews and Christians, who could have encountered certain components of its polyvalent narrative in any number of other texts, including but not limited to the *Book of Dreams*, *Epistle of Enoch*, and *Jubilees*.

Before we turn to consider the afterlife of the *Book of the Watchers* in post-70 Judaism and early Christianity, we must thus isolate those elements most unique to its account of angelic descent. This necessitates expanding the scope of our survey to encompass not only authors who probably used our text, but also those who may have learned of its traditions through the mediation of other sources (either written or oral) and those who may only be familiar with the terse account in Gen 6:1–4. In what follows, we shall continue to ask questions about the use of the *Book of the Watchers* by specific authors and its circulation in particular geographical locales, charting the reception-history of this book from the second century BCE to the first century CE. This line of inquiry, however, will be supplemented with a consideration of the influence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, in a broader sense, on pre-Rabbinic Judaism.

i. 2 Enoch, Jude, and the Greek Translation of the Book of the Watchers

One important example is *2 Enoch*, an Enochic pseudepigraphon now preserved in Slavonic. Although it is only extant in forms transmitted by

Christians, scholars commonly speculate about its Jewish origins, and its content and ideology have led some to suggest a provenance among Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt in the first century CE.⁵⁵ Like the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*, this text operates in the literary tradition of Enochic pseudepigraphy, expressing its revelations through the voice of Enoch and integrating elements from older Enochic texts. Whereas historical and eschatological concerns dominated the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*, *2 Enoch* builds on – and even expands – the “scientific” interests of the *Astronomical Book* and *Book of the Watchers*, using Enoch to reveal knowledge about the origins and structure of the cosmos.

The evidence of *2 Enoch* therefore militates against the assumption that the Enochic literary tradition was univalent, developing only in the directions represented by the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*. In form and content, *2 Enoch* stands close to the *Book of the Watchers*, and the author may have known the *Astronomical Book*, as well. But we find no evidence for his familiarity with second-century Enochic writings. From *2 Enoch*’s interpretation of angelic descent, it seems most likely that that he encountered the *Book of the Watchers* as an independent document and read its account of angelic descent without reference to these later Enochic works.

The author of *2 Enoch* draws as much, if not more, from the account of Enoch’s otherworldly journeys in *1 En.* 17–36 as from the account of angelic descent in *1 En.* 6–16.⁵⁶ As in *1 En.* 19 (BW; see also 21), the discussion of the Watchers is here occasioned by Enoch’s visit to the places of their punishment during his tour of heaven.⁵⁷ Enoch first encounters angels who are imprisoned in the second heaven because they “turned away from the Lord” and “did not obey the Lord’s commandments but of their own will plotted together and turned away with their prince and with those who are under restraint in the fifth heaven” (7:3). These ask Enoch to pray on their behalf, but he refuses, asking “Who am I, a mortal man, that I should pray for angels?” (7:5).

In the fifth heaven, Enoch meets the Watchers (here called “Grigori,” following the Greek translation of עִרְרָי as Γρηγόριοι). They are depicted as sad and silent, not joining the rest of the heavenly hosts in song (18:1–2). When Enoch inquires about them, his angelic guides respond with a loose paraphrase

⁵⁵ Andersen in *OTP* 1.94–97; Collins, *Between Athens*, 252–53; Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 38, 43–44; cf. Vaillant, *Livre*, ix–xiii. Translations of *2 Enoch* follow Andersen in *OTP* 1.102–213.

⁵⁶ As Himmelfarb notes, “The contents of the seven heavens in *2 Enoch* represent an interpretation of the Book of the Watchers’ account of the fall of the Watchers and its revelations to Enoch” (*Ascent*, 83, also 38–40; Vaillant, *Livre*, ix).

⁵⁷ For a summary of parallels with BW, see VanderKam, *Enoch*, 158–61.

of *1 En.* 6 (BW),⁵⁸ describing the Watchers' descent and sexual sins with no mention of their teachings (cf. *1 En.* 7:1; 8). Enoch answers by assuring the Watchers that he has prayed for their brethren, and he convinces them to join in singing the heavenly liturgy (18:8–9). In *2 Enoch*, this marks a key moment in Enoch's own transformation from [1] a human who sees himself as categorically subordinate even to sinful angels, to [2] a human who can petition God on behalf of angels, to [3] an angel himself (19:17–19). *2 Enoch* thus parallels the *Book of the Watchers'* account of the progressive elevation of Enoch, even as it surpasses this earlier work in emphasizing his uniqueness.⁵⁹ Even as the punishment of the Watchers stands as proof of God's justice, *2 Enoch* uses it as an opportunity for Enoch to intercede and be elevated, as in the description of Enoch's petitions and commissions in *1 En.* 12–16 (BW).

In the NT Epistle of Jude, a Syro-Palestinian text written in the late first or early second century CE, we find a description of the Watchers more akin to the *Damascus Document*.⁶⁰ In the course of listing examples of God's punishment of the wicked from biblical history (5–8), Jude cites the example of the wicked angels (6):

And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling [ἀπολιπόντας τὸ ἴδιον οἰκητήριον], He has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day [εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις ὑπὸ ζόφου τετήρηκεν].

Again, the wayward angels occur in a list alongside human sinners. That their sins are described between the wicked Israelites in the generation of the Exodus (6) and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (7; cf. *Sir* 16:7–9; *T.Reub.* 5; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.36.4) further suggests that the author saw them as exemplars of the punished wicked, rather than active agents in the spread of human sin.

It is not improbable that traditional lists of paradigmatic sinners circulated at this time, akin to the lists of the biblical heroes found in many texts (*Neh* 9; *1 Macc* 2:51–61; *Sir* 44–50; *Heb* 11). In this particular case, however, we know that the author was dependent on the *Book of the Watchers*. A few verses later, Jude quotes directly from it:

⁵⁸ The short version (A) reads: "These are the Grigori, 200 princes of whom turned aside, 200 walking in their train, and they descended to the earth, and they broke the promise on the shoulder of Mount Hermon, to defile themselves with human wives" (*2 En.* 18:2–5).

⁵⁹ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 40–41.

⁶⁰ Neyrey, *2 Peter*, 29–31. Translations from NT here and elsewhere follow NRSV.

It was also about these that Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied [προεφήτευσεν], saying, “See, the Lord is coming with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all, and to convict everyone of all the deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him” [1 *En.* 1:9]. (Jude 14–15)

Not only is the quotation introduced in the same style as biblical prophecies, but Jude attributes 1 *En.* 1:9 to Enoch himself, thus suggesting that he viewed this book as authentically Enochic in authorship. This leaves us with little doubt that Jude accepted the authority of the *Book of the Watchers* as a work of revealed wisdom, akin to other books of ancient prophecy.⁶¹

Insofar as Jude’s epistle came to be numbered among the Christian scriptures in the NT, his epistle came to play a major role in the Christian reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, as we shall see in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. For now, this text proves significant as a witness to an important development in the pre-Rabbinic period: Jude 14–15 is our earliest known quotation of the *Book of the Watchers* in Greek and thus marks the *terminus ad quem* for its translation.⁶²

From comparisons of the extant Greek (Gr^{Pan,Syn}) with the Aramaic fragments from Qumran, James Barr and Erik Larson have suggested that this translation belongs to the same basic stage and stratum of Greek translations as LXX Daniel (ca. 100 BCE).⁶³ Larson dates the translation to the first century BCE – an approximate date quite consistent with Jude’s use of the Greek version of this text in the following century.⁶⁴ Moreover, this dating fits well with theories that place 2 *Enoch* in first-century CE Egypt.⁶⁵ Indeed, if we accept

⁶¹ Neyrey, 2 *Peter*, 79–81. Some NT scholars have gone through rather impressive contortions to attempt to explain away Jude’s quotation of this book. See e.g., Beckwith, *OT Canon*, 401–403; Charles, “Jude’s Use,” 144.

⁶² There are slight differences between Jude’s quotation of 1 *En.* 1:9 and Gr^{Pan}, which scholars have resolved in different ways (e.g., Lawlor, “Early,” 165–66; Bauckham, “Note,” 136–38).

⁶³ Barr, “Aramaic-Greek Notes [I]”; “Aramaic-Greek Notes [II]”, esp. 191; Larson, “Translation,” 198–203; Larson argues that, despite their differences, a single Greek translation lies behind Gr^{Pan} and Gr^{Syn}. By contrast, Black follows Dillman and Charles in suggesting that Gr^{Pan} preserves a recension of the Greek translation on which the Ethiopic was based, whereas Gr^{Syn} draws upon “an independent Greek version, in some respects more faithful to its Semitic base” (*Commentary*, 4). Due to our scant evidence and the divergences therein, VanderKam also concludes that more than one Greek translation was made (*From Revelation*, 384–86).

⁶⁴ Larson suggests a possible range from 150 BCE to the turn of the era (“Translation,” 203), necessitating a Jewish provenance. Notably, because of the early date of Jude’s epistle, it would seem to go without saying that the translation he used was Jewish, just like the other Greek translations of Jewish scriptures used by early Christians (p. 202; cf. Black, *Commentary*, 4; Aalen, “St. Luke’s Gospel,” 1–13).

⁶⁵ Insofar as its extant Slavonic is based on a Greek *Vorlage*, the author’s use of a Greek translation of our text seems likely, whatever the date we choose to assign to this enigmatic work.

this date and provenance for 2 *Enoch*, then we can even speculate about the circulation of the Greek version of the *Book of the Watchers* as an independent document (as in Gr^{Pan}), already in the earliest stages of its transmission.⁶⁶

ii. *The “Sons/Angels of God” in Other Greek Jewish Texts*

The case of 2 *Enoch* also raises the possibility that other Greek-speaking Jews had access to the *Book of the Watchers* in translation. Interestingly, however, the Enochic myth of angelic descent seems to have been less influential in the Diaspora. This suggests that the translation may have been embraced foremost by Greek-speaking Jews in Judaea and its environs, where the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic books had already circulated in Aramaic for at least two centuries. For instance, Jude assumes that his audience knows the story of the Watchers’ sins and punishment, and he cites aspects of the angelic descent myth drawn from 1 *En.* 6–16 (BW), while alluding in no way to Gen 6:1–4.

We find a parallel in 2 Peter, a closely related epistle that is dependent on Jude and may share the same Syro-Palestinian provenance.⁶⁷ 2 Peter pairs the Watchers with the Sodomites and uses the punishment of both to argue that God will “keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment, especially those who follow the defiling desires of the flesh [τοὺς ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ μισασμοῦ πορευομένους] and who despise authority” (2:9–10a).

⁶⁶ Both Barr and Larson consider the translations of all parts of 1 *Enoch* – or, rather, the three books extant in Greek (BW, BD, EE) – as a single issue. Barr does not comment on this choice. Larson notes that our Greek witnesses demonstrate the independent circulation of these books in later times, but he cites similarities in vocabulary and translation-style to propose that Gr^{Pan} (BW), Gr^{Syn} (BW), Gr^{CB} (EE), and Gr^{Vat} (very small excerpt of BD) all bear witness to the same translation (“Translation,” 347–48). This would imply that the Greek translation was made from an Enochic collection, presumably akin to 4QEn^{c,d,e} (although Larson does not think the text was translated at Qumran) or the Ethiopic collection 1 *Enoch* (so Black, *Commentary*, 11). Just as I am not wholly convinced that BW was only translated into Greek on one occasion, so I do not think that our evidence allows for a similarly unified conclusion concerning the scope of the original translation – especially since we have so little of the Greek version of BD. From the evidence that Larson lays out, one might suggest that BW and EE belong to the same strata of translation, but it stretches the evidence, in my view, to conclude that they once belonged to exactly the same book and that this book included BD and perhaps even other Enochic works.

⁶⁷ 2 Peter’s statement about their punishment parallels Jude’s quite closely: “God did not spare the angels when they sinned [εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἔφεισάτο], but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment” [ἀλλὰ σειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν τηρουμένους; 2:4]. In this, as in many other aspects, 2 Peter is probably directly dependent on Jude (Neyrey, 2 *Peter*, 120–22).

2 Peter thus draws an even closer connection between the Watchers and the Sodomites, presenting them as twin paradigms of the sexually impure. We have seen that the theme of defilement was long associated with the sins of the Watchers. In this case, what proves significant is that 2 Peter assumes this knowledge on the part of his audience, implying but not explaining what these angels share with the inhabitants of Sodom.

In contemporaneous Greek texts from the Diaspora, we find hints of a very different situation: there are as many allegorical and euhemeristic interpretations of Gen 6:1–4 as there are interpretations that equate the “sons of God” with fallen angels and expand on their deeds with reference to the Enochic myth of angelic descent. This proves especially striking since some of these exegetes read from copies of LXX Genesis that rendered “sons of God” [בני האלהים] with “angels of God” [οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ]. In *On the Giants*, for instance, Philo of Alexandria quotes the latter version of LXX Gen 6:2, yet he goes on to interpret the “angels” as a symbol of the sensual pleasures (6.1). Josephus also seems to use a copy of LXX Genesis that reads “angels” [ἄγγελοι] rather than “sons” [υἱοί] at 6:2. He, however, asserts that their children were not Giants in any supernatural sense; they were just strong and audacious men whom the gullible Greeks mistook for mythical beings (A.J. 1.73).

In both cases, we might question whether the authors knew the Enochic myth of angelic descent at all. More likely, they were simply interpreting LXX Gen 6:1–4 in the same rationalizing manner that many of their philosophically oriented contemporaries explained away traditional Greek tales about gods, Giants, Titans, and other mythical creatures of old. That Josephus uses the Giants to critique the credulity of Greeks, not Jews, suggests that we should not read his comments as a polemic against Enochic texts and traditions. His reading of Gen 6:1–4 fits more plausibly with his broader attempt to correlate the biblical account of early human history with Greco-Roman mythology and historiography and to depict the Jews as an honorably ancient nation, which had been keeping accurate records long before the upstart Greeks.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ In this, Josephus follows earlier Jewish historians who engaged in the competitive historiography of the Hellenistic age. For instance, Pseudo-Eupolemus (*Praep.ev.* 9.17.8–9) uses the Giants to help harmonize Jewish, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Greek tales about primeval history; although he seems to draw on equation of *Nephilim* and *Gibborim* with γίγαντες in LXX Gen 6:4, we find no reference to the Watchers, nor any other hint of dependence on the BW. Although Pseudo-Eupolemus’ association of Enoch and astronomy may presuppose AB (so Milik, *Commentary*, 9), it is significant that his reference to the genealogical connection

In later centuries, Christian chronographers similarly employed the *Book of the Watchers'* version of the angelic descent myth to correlate biblical and pagan histories into a single timeline of primordial history (see Ch. 6). In this early period, however, we find only one clear-cut case in which the Enochic myth of angelic descent was used for such historiographical aims, namely, the *First Sibylline Oracle*.⁶⁹ In its current form, this work is an early Christian oracle from the second century CE (ca. 150). Kurfess and Collins argue convincingly, however, that this oracle consists of a pre-70 Jewish core that later underwent Christian redaction.⁷⁰ They suggest a provenance of Asia Minor, at least for the Jewish stratum.

The Watchers are here interpreted euhemeristically and depicted as the second of four generations before the Flood, in a schema influenced by traditions about the progressive creation of different races in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (109–74). After describing the first generation's descent into Hades, the oracle describes the second generation:

. . . They practiced skills
of all kinds, discovering inventions by their needs.
One discovered how to till the earth with plows,
another carpentry, another was concerned with sailing,
another astronomy [ἄστρονομεῖν] and divination from the flight
of birds [ὄνειροπολεῖν τὰ πετεινά],
another pharmacology [φαρμακίη], again another magic [μαγική].
Different ones devised that which they were each concerned,
enterprising Watchers [Γρήγοροι], who received this appellation
because they had a sleepless mind in their hearts
and an insatiable personality. They were mighty, of great form,
but nevertheless they went under the dread house of Tartarus
[Ταρτάριον (cf. Gr^{Pan} 1 En. 20:2)]
guarded by unbreakable bonds to make retribution,
to Gehenna of terrible, raging, undying fire. (1 *Sib.Or.* 90–103)

between the Giants and Abraham uses the former as an emblem of the latter's antiquity; in light of the apologetic aims of his work, it seems more plausible that he here appeals to Greek traditions about the ancient Giants; his appeal to the Giants is thus like his appeal to Atlas, whom he argues is the Greek equivalent of Enoch.

⁶⁹ Translations of 1 *Sib.Or.* follow Collins in *OTP* 1.335–44.

⁷⁰ Kurfess, *Sibyllinische*, 151–65; Collins, "Sibylline," 331–32. The oracle does show clear signs of having been "updated," and it is not difficult to see the fissure between the Jewish and the Christian (or the less and more obviously Christian) strata. Kurfess is no doubt correct that the original number of races was ten (*Sibyllinische*, 282), as in the second, fourth, seventh, and eight Sibyllines (which all, as Flusser notes, evoke the schema in the "AW"; "Four Empires," 162).

The oracle credits the Watchers with a list of discoveries, thereby recalling the motif of illicit angelic instruction in the *Book of the Watchers*. At first sight, their discoveries seem only to be stock items in Greco-Roman discourse about the origins of civilization; indeed, topics like agriculture, architecture, astronomy, navigation, and medicine are common in Greek and Roman lists of the teachings of divine and semidivine culture-heroes gods, as well as lists of the inventions of early humans.

Interestingly, however, the text betrays its debt to the Enochic myth of angelic descent in its choice of a name for the men of this generation (Γρήγοροι, Greek for “Watchers”) and in its description of their fate. The latter echoes the account of their punishment in the *Book of the Watchers*, specifically *1 En.* 10. There, God commissions the archangel Michael, instructing him: “Bind [ῥῆσον] them for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth . . . then they will be led away to the fiery abyss [εἰς τὸ χάος τοῦ πυρὸς], and to the torture, and to the prison where they will be confined forever” [εἰς τὸ δεσμωτήριον συνκλείσεως αἰῶνος] (*1 En.* 10:12–13).

This leads us to look more closely at the discoveries of these Watchers. Parallels with the teachings of the Watchers in the *Book of the Watchers* include pharmacology and spells, which number among the skills that the Watchers teach to their wives in *1 En.* 7:1b and the topics of Hermoni’s instruction in *1 En.* 8:3b.⁷¹ Also significant is the inclusion of astronomy – especially since the Greek translations of *1 En.* 8:3c–e render the topics of the Watchers’ instruction so as to credit them with introducing, not only divination from specific celestial bodies, but also the study of the stars more broadly.⁷²

If the authors of this oracle did indeed know the *Book of the Watchers*, then it is striking that they take the opposite path as most exegetes. There is no reference to the Watchers’ sexual sins and no hint of any link with Gen 6:1–4. Instead, the oracle offers an interesting twist on the instruction motif: the Watchers retain their responsibility for introducing skills that mark the origins of human civilization, but they do so as human inventors, rather than angelic corrupters.

That other Diaspora Jews were, at the very least, familiar with the contours of the Enochic myth of angelic descent is suggested by the terse reference to

⁷¹ At *1 En.* 7:1b, Gr^{Pan} and Gr^{Syn} include φαρμακεία and ἐπαιδοαί (Gr^{Pan} adds ῥιζοτομία). In Gr^{Syn}, pharmacology [φαρμακείας] is among the list of Hermoni’s teachings (*1 En.* 8:3b), and both Gr^{Pan} and Gr^{Syn} here include spells [Gr^{Pan}: ἐπαιδῶν λυτήριον; Gr^{Syn}: ἐπαιδιδᾶς]. Notably, Gr^{Syn} reflects an assimilation of this Watchers’ name to his teaching: φαρμαρός.

⁷² Gr^{Pan} gives Baraqel’s teaching as astrology [ἀστρολογίας] and Zikel’s as teaching the study of the stars [ἀστεροσκοπία; so Eth], while Gr^{Syn} credits the former with the study of the stars [ἀστροσκοπία; so Eth] and the latter with the study of the heavens [ἀεροσκοπία].

the Watchers in 1 Peter (ca. 60–100 CE; Rome?). As in Jude, 2 Peter, and the *First Sibylline Oracle*, the author presupposes Enochic traditions about their imprisonment that are absent from Gen 6:1–4:

He (i.e., Christ) was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit – in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison [τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν], who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark. (1 Pet 3:18–20)

Nevertheless, his approach falls closest to that in 2 *Enoch*; the punishment of the Watchers serves, not only as a warning to human sinners, but also as a means to elevate the one who visits their otherworldly prison. Insofar as the visitor in this case is Christ, 1 Peter represents a rare case in which the use of the Enochic myth of angelic descent by followers of Jesus departs in any discernable way from its use by other Jews. It is striking, however, that 1 Peter differs only in his use of this Enochic tradition in the service of Christology. And, if his audience was familiar with the story to which he alludes, they would know that Jesus here walks in the footsteps of Enoch, witnessing against the wicked before God’s wrath once again cleanses the earth of wickedness.

iii. *Competing Etiologies of Evil: Adam, Eve, and the Fallen Angels*

In both Hebrew and Greek sources from this time, we find another trend in the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 and the interpretation of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, namely, the growing use of the story of Adam, Eve, and the Serpent as an etiology of evil. In many of the texts examined above (BW, BD, EE, 1 Pet), the Flood was privileged as the period of primordial history that most illuminated the present and the future. In the first century CE, however, more and more exegetes turn their focus from the era of the earth’s first destruction to the era of its Creation.

Most notable is 2 *Baruch*, an apocalypse written soon after the destruction of the Second Temple. Although extant only in Greek, Syriac, and Arabic, these versions appear to reflect an original Hebrew *Vorlage*, probably of Palestinian provenance.⁷³ In this apocalypse, Baruch is treated to a vision of a cloud of waters that alternate between “black” and “bright” (53). In his *angelus interpres*, Ramael explains that this alternation symbolizes the ups and downs of human history (54–76). He interprets the first “black” waters as follows:

⁷³ Translations of 2 *Baruch* follow Klijn in *OTP* 1.632–51. On date, original language, and provenance, see pp. 615–17.

And as you first saw the black waters on top of the cloud which first came down to earth; this is the transgression which Adam, the first man, created. For when he transgressed, untimely death came into being, mourning was mentioned, affliction was prepared, illness was created, labor accomplished, pride began to come into existence, the realm of death began to ask to be renewed with blood, the conception of children came about, the passion of parents was produced, the loftiness of men was humiliated, and goodness vanished. What could, therefore, have been blacker than these things? (56:5–8)

As in other contemporaneous works (esp. 4 *Ezra*), the sin of Adam takes on a paradigmatic role that anticipates its later status in the Christian genealogy of evil.

Although 2 *Baruch* falls short of positing Adam's direct responsibility for the sinfulness of his descendants, it underlines his culpability for inaugurating sin. Moreover, this text asserts humankind's responsibility for their own sins by blaming them even for the fall of the angels:

And from these black waters again black were born, and very dark darkness originated. *For he who was a danger to himself was also a danger to the angels.* For they possessed freedom in that time in which they were created. And some of them came down and mingled themselves with women. At that time they who acted like this were tormented in chains. But the rest of the multitude of angels, who have no number, restrained themselves. And those living on the earth perished together through the waters of the flood. (2 *Bar.* 56:9–16)

We are not told exactly how Adam's sin led to that of the angels. Yet, the text stresses that their descent did not cause human sin. The causal arrow points the other way: it was humankind who corrupted the angels.⁷⁴

In this, 2 *Baruch* may presuppose a tradition similar to the explanation given in the *Testament of Reuben*, one of the units in the *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs*, a second-century Christian collection, redaction, and reworking of earlier Jewish testamentary material.⁷⁵ Like 2 *Baruch*, the *Testament of Reuben* posits human culpability for angelic descent. Here, women are singled out for blame:

⁷⁴ The author of 2 *Baruch* also stresses that most angels remained obedient to God; the sins of a few cannot be generalized to the rest. Also notable is the theme of the angels' free will, another interesting way in which the Watchers are assimilated to wicked humans. See Ch. 5 on this theme in early Christian sources.

⁷⁵ Translations of *T.12* here and elsewhere follow Kee in *OTP* 1,782–828. For a treatment of its present Christian form, see Ch. 4.

Accordingly, my children, flee from sexual promiscuity and order your wives and daughters not to adorn their heads and their appearances so as to deceive men's sound minds. For every woman who schemes in these ways is destined for eternal punishment. For it was thus that they charmed the Watchers, who were before the Flood. As they continued looking at the women, they were filled with desire for them and perpetrated the act in their minds. Then they were transformed into human males, and while the women were cohabitating with their husbands they appeared to them. Since the women's minds were filled with lust for these apparitions, they gave birth to Giants. For the Watchers were disclosed to them as beings high as the heavens. (*T.Reub.* 5:4–6)

This argument about the power and danger of feminine vanity seems to assume a two-stage model of angelic descent. In *1 En.* 8:1–2 (BW), Asael taught “antimony and eye-shadow, and all manner of precious stones and . . . dyes and varieties of adornment”; according to Nickelsburg's reconstruction (see Ch. 1), Asael's human students then “led the holy ones astray” (so Gr^{Syn}). The *Testament of Reuben* makes no mention of the tainted origins of feminine adornments. Instead, it seems to isolate the second stage of angelic descent and draw out its didactic potential: if heavenly angels can be tempted by women, how much more so human men?⁷⁶

In the case of *2 Baruch*, we find little supporting evidence to suggest direct literary dependence on the *Book of the Watchers*. It is intriguing that a text of the apocalyptic genre makes an effort to undermine the angelic etiology of evil that emblemizes one of our earliest apocalypses. Yet the only element of the Enochic myth of angelic descent that the author cites – the binding of the Watchers in chains – is the one most commonly integrated into other pre-Rabbinic texts. This raises the possibility that he presupposes the account of angelic descent in another text, or perhaps even oral traditions linked to the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 (cf. *T.Naph.* 2–3).

By contrast, the *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs* integrates details from the Enochic myth of angelic descent not attested in pre-Rabbinic Jewish literature. Furthermore, the *Testaments* contain multiple references to Enoch's words (*T.Benj.* 9:1) and writings (*T.Sim.* 5:4; *T.Levi* 10:5, 14:1; *T.Jud.* 18:1; *T.Dan* 5:6; *T.Naph.* 4:1; *T.Zeb.* 3). The statements placed in the mouth of Enoch do not correspond to material in extant Enochic books, but we can thus be sure that the authors/redactors at least knew of the existence of an Enochic literary tradition and viewed Enoch's writings as a special source of wisdom; in fact, the writings of this pre-Sinaitic sage are here the very scriptures used by the sons of Jacob and, in one case, Enoch is credited with a saying from the Torah

⁷⁶ A similar tradition may be presupposed in 1 Cor 11 (see n.4).

(Deut 25:9 in *T.Zeb.* 3). We may also find allusions to the *Book of the Watchers*, which raise the possibility that the authors/redactors of the *Testaments* may have been familiar with this and other Enochic books but simply used Enochic material – and Enochic pseudepigraphy – for their own aims.⁷⁷

iv. Angelic Instruction in the Similitudes

In our survey so far, we have encountered few exegetes who drew on the *Book of the Watchers*' account of angelic instruction. Those who did radically reinterpreted its significance. *Jubilees* attributed positive teachings to the Watchers and limited their corrupting teachings to divination; the *First Sibylline Oracle* depicted them as inventive humans; and the *Testament of Reuben* discussed the results of Asael's teachings about cosmetics and adornments with no reference to any corrupting angel.

There is, however, one major exception to this pattern, namely, the *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 *En.* 37–71). This Enochic pseudepigraphon can now be found in 1 *Enoch* alongside the *Astronomical Book*, *Book of the Watchers*, *Book of Dreams*, and *Epistle of Enoch*. Nevertheless, the Enochic fragments discovered at Qumran contain no traces of this text, and internal factors suggest that it was composed much later than the others, possibly in the mid-first century CE. Like 2 *Enoch*, the *Similitudes* demonstrate that the Enochic literary tradition spread well beyond the circles responsible for the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch* and that its products continued to circulate in other circles, even after the Qumran community embraced some Enochic books and compiled them into collections. Moreover, it is significant that the *Similitudes*, like 2 *Enoch*, are closely aligned with the *Book of the Watchers*.⁷⁸ This evidence further suggests that the *Book of the Watchers* was largely determinative in the growth and spread of multiple branches of the Enochic literary tradition.

References to the teachings of the Watchers occur frequently within the *Similitudes*. Its understanding of illicit angelic instruction draws from 1 *En.* 12–16 (BW) no less than 1 *En.* 6–11 (BW). The text repeatedly denounces the Watchers for revealing forbidden secrets, and in many passages, it even depicts their corrupting teachings as the crux of their sin, downplaying their sexual dalliances with the daughters of men.⁷⁹ One important example is its explanation of the causes for the Flood:

⁷⁷ Lawlor, "Early," 168–72.

⁷⁸ Following Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 59–61, 136; cf. Suter, *Tradition*, 11–33.

⁷⁹ For instance, Enoch is repeatedly told the reasons for the Watchers' imprisonments in terms that focus on their revelation of forbidden secrets: because they "descended to the earth and revealed what was hidden to the children of the people, and led the children of the people

And an edict has gone forth from the presence of the Lord of spirits concerning those who dwell on the earth, that their end is imminent because they have learned all the secrets of the angels and all the oppressive deeds of the *satans*, and all their secret powers, and all the powers of those who practice sorcery, and the power of spells, and the power of those who make idols of every created thing, and how silver comes forth out of the dust of the earth and how mixed metals originates in the earth . . . (1 *En.* 65:6–7)

The Watchers are blamed for spreading magic, as in 1 *En.* 7:1 and 8:2–3 (BW), and for teaching humankind about metalworking, as in 1 *En.* 8:1–2 (BW). The *Similitudes* expand the former to encompass the “secret powers” of angels and demons, while connecting the latter to idolatry; consequently, this text evokes the association of the Watchers and the worship of idols in 1 *En.* 19:1. Here, however, the wayward angels take the blame for the antediluvian proliferation of sin, and no mention is made of their sexual sins with human women nor of the hybrid progeny that resulted.

The only reference to the Watchers’ sexual sins occurs in 1 *En.* 69. This enigmatic chapter begins with a loose paraphrase of the list of fallen angels in 1 *En.* 6 (BW; 69:1–3). This is followed by a second list (69:4–25), which discusses their teachings (cf. 1 *En.* 8). Although the first includes some names familiar from the *Book of the Watchers*, this is true for none of the six names in the second. The second list begins with two Watchers, Yeḡon and Asb’el, who are blamed for persuading the other angels to “defile their bodies with the daughters of men” (69:4–6). It is unclear whether the reader is meant to assume that this event occurred during the lifetime of Jared, Enoch’s father, since the text describes the third Watcher, Gaderel, as follows:

This one is he who showed the children of the people all the blows of death, who misled Eve, who showed the children of the people the instruments of death: the shield, the breastplate, the sword for warfare . . . Through their agency, [death] proceeds against the people who dwell on the earth, from that day forevermore. (1 *En.* 69:6–8)

This Watcher’s teachings echo those of Asael in 1 *En.* 8:1–2 (BW), but he is blamed for the seduction of Eve in a manner that evokes the equation of the Serpent with Satan in later literature.

The description of the other Watchers also departs from earlier Enochic tradition in striking ways. Contrary to the elevation of the scribe and the

astray to commit sin” (64:2), because they “revealed to them (i.e., humankind) the things that are secret” (65:11), and because that they “revealed oppression” (67:4).

celebration of scribalism in the *Book of the Watchers*, we are told that Penume corrupted humankind by teaching them how to write. Along with teaching “the bitter and the sweet” and “all the secrets of their wisdom,” Penume “caused the people to penetrate writing and ink and paper,” even though “humans are not created for such purposes to take up their beliefs with pen and ink” (69:8–10). Again, the text echoes extrabiblical traditions about Gen 2–3, explaining that God created humankind “permanently to maintain pure and righteous lives” and that we would be free from death if not for knowledge (69:11–12).

The rest of the corrupting deeds and teachings in this list find no counterpart in the *Book of the Watchers*; they may instead reflect other types of traditions associated with these particular angels/demons (e.g., “magical” lore). Kasadya instructs humankind in the “flagellations of all evil – of the souls and demons, the smashing of the embryo in the womb so that it may be crushed” (69:12), while Kasb’el reveals the secret name of Michael and the oath that contains it, wherein lies the power to sustain the cycles of the cosmos (69:14–26).

The *Similitudes* clearly draw from angelological/demonological traditions not present in the *Book of the Watchers*. But it is the seemingly anachronistic assertion about a Watcher’s seduction of Eve (69:6) that exposes its main departure from the earlier apocalypse. Angelic descent here floats free from its moorings in the period directly preceding the Flood and, hence, from Gen 6:1–4. This choice may partly reflect this text’s lack of historiographical concerns, but it also fits well with the growing dominance of the story of Adam and Eve as an explanation for the origins of sin.⁸⁰ The *Similitudes* may preserve an intermediary stage in an interesting development, namely, the gradual transference of traditions about the antediluvian descent of the angels onto the figure of the Serpent/Satan.

The very use of Gen 2–3 as an etiology of sin may have originated as part of the broader tendency noted above, namely, the assertion of human responsibility for sin over against supernatural explanations for the origins of evil. Ironically, as Creation began to rival the Flood as the *Urzeit* that exegetes investigated for knowledge of the *Endzeit*, the story of Adam and Eve came to serve as a new locus for traditions about the role of the supernatural in engendering human sin. Just as the *Similitudes* conflate the corrupting teachings of the Watchers with the Serpent’s seduction of Eve, so elements of

⁸⁰ An earlier chapter states that the “armies of Azazel” will be punished “on account of their oppressive deeds which [they performed] as messengers of Satan” (54:6).

the Enochic myth of angelic descent emerge in extrabiblical expansions about the very tale that some exegetes, such as the author of *2 Baruch*, once used to suppress it.

In Revelation, for instance, traditions about the Watchers are effectively transferred to the beginning of time, to the fall of Satan and his hosts.⁸¹ In place of Asael, the Serpent/Satan becomes the paradigmatic corruptor of humankind (Rev 20:2), and he too is said to lead hosts, like Šemiḥazah in *1 En.* 6 (Rev 12:9). These fallen angels share the fate of the Watchers, namely, to be bound and imprisoned for a period before his destruction by fire (Rev 20:2–3, 10; cf. *1 En.* 10:12–13).⁸² The two accounts of angelic descent would coexist for some time, particularly in the Christian tradition, where – in contrast to Rabbinic Judaism – Adam, Eve, and the Serpent took on increasingly more importance within salvation-history. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the following chapters, centuries would pass before this etiology of evil completely displaced the Enochic myth of angelic descent, either as an explanation of the origins of human sin or as an account of the breach in heavenly order that caused the earth to be filled with demons.

3. GEN 6:1–4 AND THE RECEPTION-HISTORY OF THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS

From the texts surveyed above, it is clear that we cannot understand the early Jewish (and, hence, earliest Christian) history of interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 apart from the widespread influence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent.⁸³ Although a few exegetes took euhemeristic or allegorical approaches to Gen 6:1–4 (e.g., Philo, Josephus, *1 Sib.Or.*), the angelic interpretation of “sons of God” [בני האלהים] is dominant, and a range of authors readily adopted elements from the *Book of the Watchers’* version of the angelic descent myth. In some cases, a text’s comments about the fallen angels make little sense without foreknowledge of the traditions in *1 En.* 6–16 (*1 Sib.Or.*, Jude, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, *Sim.*).

Interestingly, the Enochic myth of angelic descent may have also influenced the text-history of LXX Genesis. Although the Old Greek translation

⁸¹ Rev 12:9; also Rev 9:1; Luke 10:18. Traditions about the fall of Satan were supported with appeal to Isa 14 and Ezek 28. Interestingly, neither proof-text is used in early Jewish exegeses of Gen 6:1–4 (Davidson, *Angels*, 297).

⁸² Grabbe perhaps overreads the evidence when he suggests that Rev 20’s description of the binding of Satan is meant to evoke traditions, not only about the Watchers, but specifically about the figure of Asael as interpreted through Azazel in Lev 16 (“Scapegoat,” 160–61).

⁸³ See further Dexinger, “Judisch-christliche,” 155–75.

(ca. 300 BCE) likely read “sons of God” [οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ] at Gen 6:2 and Gen 6:4,⁸⁴ primary and secondary witnesses attest the existence of MSS that read “angels of God” [οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ] at Gen 6:2.⁸⁵ As noted above, both Philo (ca. 20 BCE–50 CE) and Josephus (ca. 37–100 CE) appear to use copies of LXX Genesis that contained this reading. In light of Philo’s direct quotation of this version of Gen 6:2, the *terminus ad quem* for this scribal change can be placed in the early first century CE.⁸⁶

Although our evidence does not allow any firm conclusions, it is intriguing that Philo evinces the existence of copies of LXX Genesis with this reading around the same time that the *Book of the Watchers* began to circulate in Greek translation. Despite a general tendency for scribes in the first century BCE and first century CE to revise LXX translations towards consonance with proto-Masoretic Hebrew text, it seems that some changed their Greek copies of Genesis to fit the dominant interpretation of this passage, “correcting” the Old Greek to reflect an understanding of Gen 6:1–4 more consonant with the Enochic myth of angelic descent.⁸⁷ Perhaps they assumed that the angelic interpretation of the verse was, in fact, the *peshat* of this passage.

⁸⁴ Wevers reconstructs this reading as original (LXX Gen [Gött.] pp. 108–9; idem, *Notes*, 74–78). Note that Wickham (“Sons,” 141) and Stroumsa (*Another Seed*, 127) mistakenly critique B-M for “reconstructing” οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ at LXX Gen 6:2; Neither apparently realized that B-M is a diplomatic edition, which thus reproduces the text of Codex Alexandrinus for the lemma (i.e., since Codex Vaticanus is here not extant).

⁸⁵ This reading is found at Gen 6:2 in Codex Alexandrinus (A; 5th c.) and Codex Bodelianus (E; 9–10th c.), as well as eight minuscules (here listed with B-M and Gött. sigla). Five were collated in B-M: m/72 (Ox., Bodl. Libr. Canon gr. 35; 12th c.), i/56 (Paris, Bib. Nat. Gr 3, 1096), n/75 (Oxf. Univ. College 52, 1125), h/55 (Rom. Bib. Vat., Regin. Gr I; 10th c.), y/121 (Venedig, Bibl. Marc. Gr. 3; 10th c.), and three additional MSS in Gött.: 458 (Messina, Bibl. Univ. S. Salv. 62; 12th c.), 71 (Paris, Bibl. Nat. Gr 1; 13th c.), 392 (Grottaferrata, Bibl. Della Badia, A γ I; 10th c.). In only one of these MSS (m/72) is ἄγγελοι used to render the parallel phrase in Gen 6:4, although another MS (v/344; Athos, Παντοκράτορος 24; 10th c.) includes it as a marginal notation for this verse. This reading also occurs in the margins of Syro-Hexaplaric MSS (Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum*, 22). On the secondary witnesses, see Wickham, “Sons.”

⁸⁶ Our evidence does not support the identification of this reading with any specific recension of LXX Genesis. Some of the relevant minuscules cluster in small groups: n/75 and 458 make up a group with many scribal errors, which may be Lucianic in character (Wever’s *n*-Gruppe), and 71, y/121, and 392 are often treated together because they are all influenced by A (*γ*-Gruppe). The rest vary in text-type; E and 55 are mixed, m/72 is Hexaplaric, and i/56 is one of five MSS that is consonant with Vaticanus where Vaticanus is extant, despite numerous corrections (*f*-Gruppe); see Wever’s notes in LXX Gen [Gött.] pp. 56–61.

⁸⁷ Dexinger suggests this variant in LXX Gen 6:4 reflects the dominant stream of interpretation at this time, but he also offers another possible explanation. This translation may have simultaneously served to downplay the potentially polytheistic connotations of the phrase “sons of God.” He sees the rendering of the “sons of God” as angels and the “sons of God” as men by later translators (e.g., Symmachus) as part of the same trend: the progressive “domestication” of this passage to fit a monotheistic framework; “Jüdisch-christliche,” 162–63.

Interestingly, we find one clue that this was not merely a formulaic rendering of בְּנֵי הַאֲזַדְהִים,⁸⁸ but rather a scribal change possibly influenced by the *Book of the Watchers*. In our LXX MSS, “angels of God” [οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ] occurs almost exclusively at Gen 6:2, the same verse that is paraphrased in *1 En.* 6:2 (BW).⁸⁹ By contrast, we find only one case in which οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ translates the second occurrence of בְּנֵי הַאֲזַדְהִים in this pericope, which occurs in a verse (i.e., Gen 6:4) with no counterpart in the *Book of the Watchers*.⁹⁰

Whether or not this speaks to the influence of our text during this period, it points us to yet another possible channel of transmission: elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent may have been transmitted orally, as part of the interpretative tradition surrounding Genesis.⁹¹ How, then, can we determine which texts reflect the actual use of the *Book of the Watchers*, as opposed to other texts and/or the oral interpretative traditions surrounding Gen 6:1–4?

When dealing with certain books, we can be fairly certain that their authors knew and used this apocalypse. This is clearly the case for the writings that self-consciously operate in the Enochic literary tradition and adopt much material from the *Book of the Watchers* (BD, EE, BG, *2 En*, *Sim*). *Jubilees*, although formally a Mosaic pseudepigraphon, can also be placed in this category, due to its heavy dependence on the *Book of the Watchers* and its allusion to – and legitimization of – Enochic books. We can presume much the same for those references to Enoch and/or the fallen angels in literature composed at Qumran, in light of the number of copies of this apocalypse in their library (at least five) and the range of their dates (second to first centuries BCE) – as

⁸⁸ Cf. LXX Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; also LXX Deut 32:8.

⁸⁹ See A, E, h/55, i/56, m/72, n/75, y/121, 458, 71, 392. Gr^{Pan}: καὶ ἐθεάσαντο αὐτὰς οἱ ἄγγελοι υἱοὶ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐπεθύμησαν αὐτάς (cf. Gr^{Syn}: καὶ ἐπεθύμησαν αὐτὰς οἱ ἐγγρήγοροι καὶ ἀπεπλανήθησαν ὀπίσω αὐτῶν). Also striking is Julius Africanus’ paraphrase of a reading found in some MSS of LXX Gen 6:2 (Sync 19.24), namely, “angels of heaven” [οἱ ἄγγελοι οὐρανοῦ], which echoes Gr^{Pan}.

⁹⁰ I.e., m/72; cf. marginal notation in 344. We find the exact same pattern in the daughter translations of LXX that contain this reading (i.e., Boharic and Gééz).

⁹¹ As noted above, my consideration of oral tradition is limited to interpretative traditions associated with the reading of scriptures in liturgical and scholastic settings. At least during this period, this is the only mode of oral transmission that we can locate in a social context. Even if oral legends about the fallen angels continued to circulate in other settings, both the legends and the settings are beyond our capacity for reconstruction. By contrast, we know that the oral recitation of scriptures affected both literary transmission and production; for instance, both the LXX and the Targumim (and, by extension, the extrabiblical elaborations therein) likely have their roots in the oral reading and interpretation of scripture in the synagogue. Since this mode of oral transmission was closely tied to textual production and transmission (and, hence, to the circles responsible for both), it proves more helpful in explaining our literary evidence than ungrounded speculations about oral legends that allegedly spread with no connection to the performance, production, and transmission of texts.

well as its collection together with the *Book of Dreams* and *Epistle of Enoch*, two writings whose contents are even more consonant with the community's self-understanding and ideology. Likewise, Jude's quotation of *1 Enoch* and his reference to the imprisonment of the fallen angels evince his use of the *Book of the Watchers* and, more specifically, its Greek translation.

With the single exception of *2 Enoch*, these texts all appear to be of Palestinian provenance. We thus have support for the circulation of the *Book of the Watchers* in that area from the second century BCE (BD, EE, *Jubilees*, BG?) to first century CE (*Sim.*, Jude). The first century BCE also sees notable literary activity on the *Book of the Watchers*. It is still being copied at Qumran, and it was likely translated into Greek around the same time as LXX Daniel or, at the very latest, before the late first century CE. The evidence for its circulation in the Diaspora is less decisive: *2 Enoch* may attest the circulation of its Greek version in Egypt already in the first century CE, many decades before its use by Alexandrian Christians like Athenagoras, Clement, and Origen (see Chs. 4–5). Likewise, the *First Sibylline Oracle's* dependence on the *Book of the Watchers* is not certain, but it may hint at the circulation of our text in Asia Minor in the first and/or early second century.

The evidence for the circulation of the *Book of the Watchers*, both in Aramaic and in Greek, lends plausibility to the possibility that contemporaneous references to the fallen angels – particularly those in texts of Palestinian provenance – also reflect some knowledge of this apocalypse (esp. *Gen.Apoc.*, 2 Peter, *T.12*). If it was indeed accepted as authoritative by some authors and communities, then others need not have a copy of the apocalypse in front of them to recall parts that they heard when it was read aloud, whether in scholastic or liturgical settings. Of course, some caution is warranted. Even as the proliferation of traditions about the Watchers in pre-Rabbinic literature points to the widespread influence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in Second Temple times, it sharply highlights the dangers of assuming that all references to the fallen angels derive from this apocalypse. There are reasons to believe that this interpretation retained an association with Enoch and his writings for quite some time, as we shall see in the following chapters. But elements of the complex of traditions about the Watchers in the *Book of the Watchers* were no doubt mediated through other channels as well, both written and oral.

From the patterns in the usage of our text, we may be able to identify some of these elements. Even as texts from this period employ the angelic descent myth for different aims, most follow the same basic pattern: they focus on the Watchers' sexual sins and their punishment by God, while omitting reference

to their corrupting teachings and downplaying their causal role in the origins of evil.

Consequently, the motif of illicit angelic instruction provides an heuristic focus for our inquiry into the *Book of the Watchers*' later reception-history. Some elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent could be independently derived from Gen 6:1–4 (e.g., the Watchers' sexual sins). Others can be found in a broad variety of pre-Rabbinic texts (e.g., their binding and imprisonment). By contrast, the instruction motif is rare enough that its occurrence signals the possibility of direct dependence on the *Book of the Watchers*.

Explicit references to illicit angelic instruction occur in only two other sources from this time, *Jubilees* and the *Similitudes*, both of which are closely aligned with the *Book of the Watchers*. For our broader inquiry, the former proves more significant. Although *Jubilees* inverts the instruction motif and limits the Watchers' corrupting teachings to the topic of divination, this text would have a lively *Nachleben* in later centuries, which often runs parallel to the *Book of the Watchers*. Both seem to function as Scripture at Qumran but are omitted from the Rabbinic Tanakh and most Christian OTs (see Chs. 4–5). Both are accepted as canonical within the Ethiopian Church and preserved in excerpts within the Christian chronological tradition (see Ch. 6). Moreover, traditions from both reemerge in Jewish literature from the post-Talmudic period, even despite little evidence for their use by Rabbinic Jews in the intervening centuries (see Ch. 7).

Although the *Similitudes*' approach to angelic instruction more closely parallels the *Book of the Watchers*, we find virtually no evidence for the influence of this text on later Jews or Christians. This book is now canonical in the Ethiopic church as part of the collection *1 Enoch*, but we find no traces of its circulation in either a Semitic original or Greek translation – no fragments of the text, nor quotations from it; it is even arguable whether we find any allusions to it.⁹² We must always remain attentive to the possibility that some later references to angelic teaching derive from this book. Nevertheless, this possibility is rarely supported by any corroborating evidence for the circulation and use of this text in the relevant times and settings.⁹³ Hence, when later authors integrate a theme that occurs in both texts, their dependence on the *Book of the Watchers* is usually the more plausible option, due to the ample

⁹² From the silence of our sources, we cannot conclude that *Sim.* did not circulate in Greek at all, but we can speculate that it did not circulate as widely as BW, BD, and EE, for which we do have both primary and secondary evidence.

⁹³ Note Bauckham's comments about BW, *Sim.*, and the use of the instruction motif by early Christians ("Fall," 317, 319, 322).

supporting evidence for the use of this text in specific groups, geographical settings, and literary traditions.⁹⁴

As we now turn to consider the later Jewish and Christian reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, we will again narrow our focus to deal mainly with authors who likely knew this apocalypse and with literature that contains the instruction motif. During the course of inquiry, however, we should not lose sight of an important point raised by our survey of pre-Rabbinic literature: in exploring the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, we are considering only part of its *Nachleben*. For, as we have seen, its approach to the fallen angels – like its treatment of Enoch, his heavenly ascent, and the supernal Temple – had an influence that rippled beyond those who read, heard, copied, and collected this text.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ It is always treacherous to make arguments based on the patterns in our extant evidence, since we have no way of knowing what did not survive. In this case, I feel that the difference in quantity between our extant evidence for the use of BW and our extant evidence for the use of *Sim.* so happens to be large enough to justify this assumption. It is not as if we have slightly more evidence for the transmission of the former than the latter. Our evidence for the use of the former is large by the standards of nearly any ancient text (it is, as is often noted, the best attested text among the so-called “OT Pseudepigrapha”), while virtually nothing survives to tell of the influence of the latter.

⁹⁵ Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, esp. 14, 29, 46, 78.



The Parting of the Ways? Enoch and the Fallen Angels in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity

ABOVE, WE CONSIDERED TEXTS FROM THE FIRST AND EARLY SECOND century CE as part of our evidence for pre-Rabbinic Judaism, without distinguishing between authors who did and did not believe that Jesus was the messiah. This reflects the character of our evidence. References to the fallen angels in Second Temple Judaism and the NT literature follow the same basic pattern: early Enochic traditions about the Watchers' sexual sins and their punishment were widespread, but even texts that were clearly dependent on the *Book of the Watchers* consistently omitted reference to their transmission of corrupting teachings to humankind. The only exceptions that we found were two texts closely aligned with the *Book of the Watchers*: *Jubilees* and the *Similitudes*. By contrast, the relevant Christian sources all followed the majority of Jewish sources in their exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 and their use of this apocalypse.

This finding fits well with what we know about the Jewish origins of the Jesus Movement and early Christianity. In the century after the death of Jesus, this messianic movement became gradually displaced from its original Galilean and Jerusalemite contexts, but the beliefs and practices of the earliest Christians (whether ethnic Jews or Gentile converts) continued to be shaped by the diverse forms of Judaism that flourished both in Israel and in the Diaspora. In the NT and early Patristic literature, we can discern the first traces of a long process by which some Christians forged systems of belief and practice that distinguished them first from other Jewish groups and progressively from “Judaism” more broadly. Nevertheless, the earliest Christian approach to Gen 6:1–4 is one of many examples that serve to remind us of the profound continuity with Judaism that served as the very ground for such innovations.

In scholarship on Christian Origins, it was once common to treat Jesus and/or Paul as founders of a new “religion” that was, by definition and from its

very origins, separate from Judaism. Research in the past century, however, has rendered this assumption no longer tenable. Particularly in the wake of World War II, scholars such as George Foot Moore, Marcel Simon, Lloyd Gaston, and John G. Gager have worked vigilantly to expose the theological biases and tacit anti-Semitism that too often buttressed the scholarly theories of the past.¹ At the same time, new methodologies have offered fresh perspectives on familiar texts, enabling scholars to analyze the NT literature without anachronistically imposing the opinions of later theologians or viewing these (Jewish) texts through the lens of their current status as Christian Scripture.²

Moreover, the recovery of new archeological evidence for Jewish life in Roman Palestine and the document discoveries in the Judean Desert have enabled us to place the Jesus Movement firmly within its first-century Jewish milieu. Scholars still debate the details. They have found, however, that it fits very well with the multiform Judaism of the pre-Rabbinic period. Whether Jesus himself should be termed a Wisdom teacher, political revolutionary, or apocalyptic prophet, the Jesus Movement was one of many revitalization movements within Judaism at that time, and his followers' views – on topics ranging from purity to eschatology, halakhic observance to biblical exegesis, and even the place of Gentiles in the World to Come – resonate with internal debates among Jews in Second Temple times.³

We have seen how the earliest Christian approach to the fallen angels conforms to this pattern, but it remains to explore its ramifications for our understanding of the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*. If pre-Rabbinic Jewish and proto-Christian interpretations of this text are so similar, why would the *Book of the Watchers* eventually be preserved in Christian circles but not Jewish ones? This is the question that will occupy us in the present chapter, as we turn to consider the conflicting approaches to Enoch, the Enochic literature, and the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in proto-orthodox Christianity and early Rabbinic Judaism. Around the second century CE, Rabbinic sages seem to be developing alternate approaches to the “sons of God” and condemning the interpretations of Gen 5:21–24 and Gen 6:1–4 that lie at the very heart of the *Book of the Watchers* and its distinctive version of the angelic descent myth. By contrast, we find a striking number of references to Enochic texts and traditions in Christian writings from the period, and Enoch himself is often celebrated as prophet whose escape from death prefigures the resurrection of the Christian pious.

¹ Moore, “Christian Writers”; Simon, *Verus Israel*; Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*; Gager, *Origins*; idem, *Reinventing*; also Stendahl, “Paul”; Ruether, *Faith*.

² For a survey, see Koester, “Epilogue.”

³ See further Reed and Becker, “Introduction,” 11–15.

This chapter will argue that both developments are best understood as facets of a broader phenomenon. The Jesus Movement and the rest of Jewish society underwent significant changes during and after a series of catastrophic events in the late first and early second centuries, centering on two failed revolts in Roman Palestine: the Jewish War (66–70 CE) and the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–35 CE). The destruction of the Second Temple after the former and the depopulation of Judaea after the latter resulted in a radical decentralization of religious authority; thereafter, disputes would no longer center on the purity of the Temple and its priests. Priestly lineage continued to carry residual prestige, and scribes still served important legal and religious functions, but alternate models of religious authority, some of which had already begun to emerge in the Second Temple period, developed to fit the needs of the new socio-political situation.⁴

The most celebrated products of these efforts are the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism and the Jesus Movement's transformation into something that we can call "Christianity." Among some Christian communities at this time, the polemical rhetoric forged in inner-Jewish debates began to be reinterpreted in terms of a new approach to religious identity, which sought to define a "Christian" as something other than a "Jew" and to claim for the Church the status of *verus Israel*.⁵ The Rabbinic movement redefined Jewish identity to no less a degree. It would be centuries before the Rabbis dominated the discourse on Jewish belief and practice, but their earliest documents attest their equally innovative efforts to reinvent "normative Judaism" in their own image.⁶

⁴ Jaffee, *Torah*, 65–67; Fraade, *From Tradition*, 73–74; Heszter, *Social Structure*, 450–75, 480–89; Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 105–61.

⁵ Some but not all. Ignatius' comments in *Magn.* 10.3 provide the parade example for those who claim that "Jew" and "Christian" became clear-cut and mutually exclusive religious identities already in the first century CE. Counterexamples abound, from this period and well beyond, thus cautioning against the assumption that there was a single, unilinear development from the Jewish/gentile Jesus Movement into a Christianity that was by definition not Jewish. Rather, the articulation of both Jewish identity and Christian identity remained surprisingly fluid, and the repeated efforts by certain Christians to discourage those among them from adopting Jewish practices (e.g., *Didascalia* 26), frequenting synagogues (e.g., Origen, *Hom. Lev.* 5.8; Chrysostom, *Adv. Jud.*), and calling themselves "Jews" (e.g., Augustine, *Ep.* 196; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 10.16) testify to the limited effect of such pronouncements. Kimelman, "Identifying"; Boyarin, *Dying*, esp. 6–19, 22–41; Cohen, *Beginnings*, 25–68; Lieu, "Parting," 110–14; Saldarini, "Social World," esp. 118–20.

⁶ Contrary to the traditional view that the Rabbis took up the mantle of the preservers of "normative" Judaism soon after the destruction of the Temple, I here follow two recent trends in scholarship on the formative era of the Rabbinic movement: [1] the emphasis on the limited nature and scope of early Rabbinic authority in the second and third centuries (Heszter, *Social Structure*, esp. 185–227, 386–404, 460–66; Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 110–28) and [2] the exploration of Rabbinic efforts at self-definition and the Sages' strategies for legitimating their own authority vis-à-vis those who they deemed "heretics" (see Boyarin, "Tale," esp.

These developments laid the groundwork for the institutional structures of late antique Jewish and Christian “orthodoxies,” but the second and third centuries CE were marked by chaos and competition no less than regrouping and consolidation. At this point in time, neither Rabbinic sages nor proto-orthodox Christians yet held the dominance to which they so eagerly laid claim. They happen to be the best attested voices of this period, due to their eventual success in legitimizing their particular views of religious authority, establishing institutional structures, and recasting both the normative present and the generative past in terms of their respective ideologies. Our evidence, however, suggests that these groups preserve only two poles of a broader continuum of biblically based religiosity in the second and third centuries CE, and we find, even in their own literature, clues to the critical role of controversy and competition in the development of both movements.⁷

Only if viewed in isolation can the parallel processes of self-definition in these groups be generalized into a broader “Parting of the Ways” between “Judaism” and “Christianity.” Neither the Rabbinic movement nor proto-orthodox Christianity held the authority to speak for an entire “religion,” and both took form against a cultural landscape that continued to be characterized by multiple varieties of Judaism. When approached from this perspective, it is the parallels between these groups that prove most striking. Both were shaped by their common heritage in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism but also by their concerns to define and delineate the boundaries of the chosen people – a task simultaneously necessitated and enabled by the loss of the Temple, the locus of power and contestation that had served to unify (however loosely) the heterogeneous streams of Second Temple Judaism. Moreover, the ultimate success of both groups lay in their ability to reconceptualize the diversity of Judaism – and the forms of Christianity to which it gave birth – as a struggle between normativity and deviance, thereby allowing for a range of conflicting views to coexist in the former by defining the acceptable bounds of discourse with reference to the latter.

As we shall see, such concerns are poignantly evident in early Rabbinic and proto-orthodox Christian approaches to Gen 6:1–4 and the *Book of the*

21–30; idem, “Justin,” esp. 438–49; Janowitz, “Rabbis,” esp. 449–50, 461; Hayes, “Displaced Self-Perceptions,” esp. 254–55). Both, as we will see below, have notable ramifications for our understanding of the relationship between Jews and Christians during this era.

⁷ The role of heresiology in the construction of Christian “orthodoxy” has become a matter of consensus (Koester, “Apocryphal,” 105–30; Williams, “Does It Make Sense,” 1–14; Pagels, “Making”). By contrast, scholars of Jewish Studies are only beginning to read the Rabbinic literature critically with an eye to the strategies by which the Rabbis claimed legitimacy over against competing groups and figures, as well as their self-definition vis-à-vis those whom they saw as “heretics”; see esp. Boyarin, *Borderlines*.

Watchers. Moreover, their differences shed light on the particular ways in which early Rabbis and proto-orthodox Christians reworked older Jewish traditions in order to develop new approaches to biblically based belief, Temple-less worship, the nation Israel, and the nature of scriptural authority. In order to understand the conflicting views that arose in early Rabbinic Judaism and proto-orthodox Christianity, it is best to begin by situating them in the context of their common origin. We will first question whether the earliest Christian use of the *Book of the Watchers* should be conceived as the Christian “appropriation” of a text from Jews, rather than the ongoing use of this book in groups with an evolving Jewish/Christian identity, or simply the Christian appeal to one of many texts that belonged to their common heritage. Then, we will revisit the thorny issue of the formation of the Jewish biblical canon, asking whether the early Christian use of the *Book of the Watchers* was predicated on its noncanonicity among other Jews and exploring how the beginning of the canonical process in Rabbinic Judaism relates to the abandonment of the Enochic pseudepigrapha in Rabbinic circles. Only then will we consider how these two groups parted ways with regard to the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 and the use of Enochic literature.

1. THE JEWISH CANON AND THE CHRISTIAN “APPROPRIATION” OF JEWISH PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

Due to its eventual preservation in Christian circles, scholars often include the *Book of the Watchers* in lists of early Jewish texts that were appropriated by Christians. From our findings in the [previous chapter](#), we might question the heurism of this language. During the course of our inquiry, we will encounter cases in which one group borrowed texts (or portions of texts) from another, and we will see just how radically their interpretation can change when plucked from one religious discourse and integrated into another, distinct discourse. By contrast, early followers of Jesus used the *Book of the Watchers* in common with many other Jews and interpreted it in the same ways (see Ch. 3).

Furthermore, the language of borrowing implies that the two traditions were already distinct and that Jews and Christians did not share the same texts to begin with. If we take seriously that Christianity emerged from within Judaism, we must approach the issue from another direction and leave open two other options: [1] that the Christian use of this text resulted from its continuous use in some (originally and still meaningfully “Jewish”) groups and [2] that the *Book of the Watchers* was considered authoritative by many Jews at

the time that the Jesus Movement originated, in which case its “appropriation” by Christians should surprise us no more than their use of the other Jewish works that would eventually make up the OT, the expanded Christian counterpart(s) to the Tanakh of Rabbinic Judaism.

i. The Book of the Watchers in “Continuous Communities”

In considering the first possibility, the *Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs* proves most significant, both as an example of continuous transmission and as support for the continuous transmission of Enochic texts and traditions. Above, we approached this text as a mine for the early Jewish testamentary traditions that it likely preserves. We must also, however, address the ramifications of the Christian collection and redaction of this material. The scholarly debate surrounding the provenance of this text highlights its value for our inquiry. Some scholars, noting the *Testaments*’ consonance with Second Temple Judaism, read it as an originally Jewish text and consider only the obviously “Christian” (e.g., Christological) passages as products of Christian redaction.⁸ Others, focusing on its present form, stress that we have no evidence for the circulation of such a testamentary collection in pre-Christian Judaism, and they focus on the final form of the text, a Christian work that integrates Jewish material so seamlessly that different strata cannot be untangled.⁹

The dispute, however, is largely based on the assumption that it should be easy to distinguish a “Jewish” text from a “Christian” one in this period—as well as the notion that the *Testaments* can either serve as evidence for early Judaism or for early Christianity but not for both. Inasmuch as Christianity began as an inner-Jewish movement, one might ask why we should be so surprised that a second-century Christian text stands in such radical continuity with pre-Christian Judaism. Once we remove the problem of definition, we see that both arguments are persuasive precisely because they differ mainly in their point of focus.

David Frankfurter has recently proposed a concrete socio-historical setting to explain the continuity that has puzzled so many scholars. He suggests that the *Testaments* and certain other Christianized Jewish texts may have arisen from “continuous communities,” Jewish sects that evolved to take on aspects of Christian identity. In many cases, the result was what we might label “Jewish-Christianity”: types of biblical-based religiosity that do not conform

⁸ E.g., Becker, *Testamente*.

⁹ E.g., de Jonge, *Testaments*, 117–28.

to a system of definition that treats “Jew” and “Christian” as mutually exclusive identities.¹⁰ In the case of the *Testaments*, he suggests a group in Syrio-Palestine with scribal sensitivities and a sharp concern for priestly issues, which may have appealed particularly to priests (and we might add scribes) disenfranchised by the destruction of the Second Temple.¹¹

The possibility that the *Testaments* emerged from such a community proves significant for our inquiry into the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers*. As noted above, the text includes passages that presuppose the Enochic myth of angelic descent but also multiple references to Enoch’s writings and prophecies. In a sense, the *Testaments* embody the radical continuity that we found between pre-Rabbinic Jewish and early Christian approaches to the fallen angels. Of course, not all early Christian groups evolved out of Jewish ones with their community boundaries and cherished texts intact. If some did, however, this raises an interesting possibility: the group responsible for the final form of the *Testaments*, or an “evolving community” like it, may have served as one channel through which both our text and the common interpretations of it could be mediated to other Christians with less cultural continuity with Judaism.¹²

This need not be the only explanation for the transmission of the *Book of the Watchers* to and by Christians. Particularly during the early period, they could have gained access to this text in a number of ways, in light of its wide circulation, its translation into Greek, and the ample contacts between members of the Jesus Movement and other Jews. Nevertheless, its possible use in and transmission by “continuous communities” proves important to note, since Enochic texts and traditions would continue to enjoy a special popularity among “Jewish-Christian” groups, even centuries later. For instance, Enochic traditions can be found in multiple strata of the Pseudo-Clementine literature (*Rec.* 1.29, 4.26–27; *Hom.* 8.12–18). No less suggestive is the Elchaasite background of Mani, one of the most avid champions of Enochic literature.¹³ Although we have too little evidence to speak confidently about the continued cultivation of early Jewish apocalyptic traditions in “Jewish-Christian” communities, we should keep this possibility in mind throughout our inquiry, as

¹⁰ Throughout this inquiry, I use the term “Jewish-Christian” simply to denote communities or texts that do not fit into an “either/or” conception of Judaism and Christianity. Insofar as the beliefs and practices of such groups surely differed, this term speaks more to the paucity of scholarly terminology than to the complex reality “on the ground.” I do not mean to conflate all both/and approaches into one monolithic “Jewish-Christianity.”

¹¹ Frankfurter, “Beyond”; idem, “Early Christian Apocalypticism,” 424.

¹² E.g., Justin Martyr; see Ch. 5.

¹³ See Chs. 6–7.

one of several explanations for the transmission of the *Book of the Watchers* between different groups – particularly once the boundaries between exclusively Jewish and exclusively Christian communities began to become more charged.¹⁴

ii. *Scriptural Authority and “Canonical Consciousness”
in the Pre-Rabbinic Period*

Although we cannot know exactly how Jude and other followers of Jesus gained access to this text, their use of it raises a further question: in appealing to the *Book of the Watchers*, did they deliberately embrace a text that was noncanonical among other Jews? In other words, should the earliest Christian use of Enochic pseudepigrapha be seen as one of a series of strategies by which this movement distinguished itself from the rest of Israel? To answer these questions, we must ask when and how the Jewish biblical canon was closed.

Recent scholarship has rejected the traditional notion that the Rabbis codified the final shape and scope of the Tanakh at the so-called Council of Yavneh, as well as the corollary theory that this council marked the end of all sectarian disputes among Palestinian Jewry and the transfer of the mantle of orthodoxy to the Rabbinic movement.¹⁵ In the resultant reassessment of the formation of the Jewish biblical canon, two theories have emerged to fill the vacuum left by the deconstruction of the Yavneh myth. The first holds that the closing of canon occurred in the Maccabean era, long before the rise of the Rabbinic movement. The second suggests that the process of canonization was prolonged, beginning after the destruction of the Second Temple and unfolding for decades, or even centuries, thereafter. For our inquiry into the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, this debate has notable ramifications. If the Jewish canon was closed in the mid-second century BCE, the use of Enochic literature by the Qumran community must be seen as the self-conscious adoption of noncanonical texts by sectarians, whose construction of a counter canon further isolated them from the rest of Israel. Following this logic, Jude’s quotation of the *Book of the Watchers* would signal a similar self-understanding on the part of the Jesus Movement, or some of its segments, which forged an identity distinct from Judaism by embracing the very texts that “mainline” Jews rejected.¹⁶ If the codification of the canon occurred later,

¹⁴ On this possibility, applied to a broader range of traditions, see Boyarin, “Justin,” 457–60.

¹⁵ Schäfer, “Sogennante Synode,” esp. 54–64, 116–24; Cohen, “Significance”; Boyarin, “Tale,” 21–62; idem, “Justin,” 127–32.

¹⁶ So VanBeek “1 *Enoch*,” 93–115.

however, then we must seek other models for understanding the use of the *Book of the Watchers* by early Christians as it relates to the Rabbinic Jewish abandonment of Enochic pseudepigrapha.

Scholars such as Sid Leiman and Roger Beckwith have argued that the contents of all three parts of the Tanakh – Torah, Neviim, and Ketuvim – were already set by the mid–second century BCE.¹⁷ Their key proof-text is a passage in the second letter prefixed to 2 Maccabees:

The same things are reported in the records and in the memoirs of Nehemiah, and also that he founded a library [καταβαλλόμενος βιβλιοθήκην] and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings [ἐπισυνήγαγεν τὰ περι τῶν βασιλέων βιβλία καὶ προφητῶν καὶ τὰ τοῦ Δαυίδ καὶ ἐπιστολὰς βασιλέων περὶ ἀναθεμάτων]. In the same way Judas also collected all [the books] that had been lost on account of the war which had come upon us, and they are in our possession. So if you have need of them, send people to get them for you. (2 Macc 2:13–15)

On the basis of this passage, Leiman concludes that Judas Maccabeus (d. 161 BCE) was responsible for “the closing of the Hagiographa [i.e., Ketuvim], and with it the entire biblical canon.”¹⁸ Similarly, Beckwith proposes that Judas compiled a list of writings around 164 BCE and that this list served as the basetext for a *baraita* recorded many centuries later in the Babylonian Talmud (*b.B.Bat.* 14b), which is our earliest source to enumerate the exact number and order of books now in the Jewish biblical canon.¹⁹ In his view, Judas’ canon was thus identical in content to our present-day Tanakh (and, hence, the Protestant – but not the Catholic – OT).²⁰

In response, scholars such as James VanderKam and Albert Sundberg have stressed that 2 Macc 2:13–15 simply does not say what these scholars wish to make it say.²¹ Even if we could trust the historicity of this letter, a claim about the collection of lost books is not the same as a statement about the creation of a list of Holy Scriptures. Moreover, their preservation in the Temple is not enough to prove the status of the books as “canonical” – let alone to specify the exact identity of these lost books and to support the reconstruction of a list identical to *b.B.Bat.* 14b. Yet another problem is raised by the Book of Daniel, inasmuch as its time of composition (ca. 164 BCE) falls uncomfortably close

¹⁷ Leiman, *Canonization*; Beckwith, *OT Canon*.

¹⁸ Leiman, *Canonization*, 29–30.

¹⁹ Beckwith, *OT Canon*, 152–53.

²⁰ To his credit, Beckwith is explicit about his theological investment in this topic (*OT Canon*, 9–13).

²¹ Esp. Sundberg, “Reexamining,” 81; VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 17–18.

to the date proposed for canonization (ca. 164/163 BCE).²² Furthermore, even though the list in the Babylonian Talmud is cited as a tannaitic tradition, it remains that our earliest evidence for the exact contents and order of the Tanakh occurs in a work compiled by Rabbinic Jews in Babylonia between the fifth and sixth centuries.²³

Other arguments used to buttress this theory are no less strained.²⁴ Most notable is the citation of early references to different categories of Scripture as “proof” for a canonical collection that corresponded exactly in shape and scope to our tripartite Tanakh. Even in the parade example, the prologue to the Greek version of the Wisdom of ben Sira (ca. 116–110 BCE), this is far from clear. Here, ben Sira’s grandson refers to authoritative texts other than the Law and the Prophets variously as “the others that followed them,” “the other books of our ancestors,” and “the rest of the books.” Beckwith interprets these phrases as denoting “a closed collection of old books,” arguing that they attest a stage at which “the Hagiographa were still a newly formed collection” but had “not yet acquired a proper title.”²⁵ Yet the elusive language of these statements could equally bespeak a reticence to define the boundaries of scriptural authority in concrete terms. Even more questionable is the underlying assumption that such references attest the existence of a canon that included the exact texts now found in the Torah, Neviim, and Ketuvim. More likely, these sources evince only the development of a system of speaking about textual authority that distinguishes between different types of scriptures – probably rooted in attempts to articulate the relationship between the Torah, which possessed a uniquely authoritative status at least since the time of Ezra,²⁶ and a variety of other writings that began to be granted similar levels of sanctity during the Second Temple period.²⁷

The theory of Maccabean canonization has also been faulted for its failure to address the diversity of Judaism in the Second Temple period. It is perhaps telling that Beckwith and Leiman choose to privilege a Talmudic prooftext

²² Beckwith evades this problem by implying that Daniel may actually be earlier in date (*OT Canon*, 73, 77), a suggestion that finds little support from scholarship on this text.

²³ Sundberg, “Reexamining,” 82.

²⁴ See further Sundberg, “Reexamining,” 78–82; McDonald, *Formation*, 32–54; VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 11–19.

²⁵ Beckwith, *OT Canon*, 152.

²⁶ The impact of Persian imperial policy on the status of the Torah is also notable (Stone, “Three Transformations,” 441; Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 19–22), suggesting that the elevation of other writings to comparable levels should also be analyzed in terms of socio-political factors no less than theological ones.

²⁷ That such efforts at categorization can precede the codification of an actual canon is clear from the later example of the two-fold Christian canon; we find a distinction between the “OT” and “NT” centuries before the determination of the exact works therein.

above the evidence from Qumran, which attests a more inclusive understanding of scriptural authority.²⁸ That they downplay the relevance of the latter for our knowledge of the nature of textual authority in “mainline” Judaism hints at a deeper problem: such studies construct a monolithic pre-Rabbinic Judaism and anachronistically define what is “normative” on the basis of much later Rabbinic views. From our evidence, it is difficult to support the underlying assumption, namely, that the Pharisaic sect and/or the “mainline” Judaism of Second Temple Judaism simply evolved into Rabbinic Judaism, taking the canon with it.²⁹ More likely, the multiformity of pre-Rabbinic Judaism persisted even after the destruction of the Temple, defining the religious landscape from which the Rabbinic movement (and early Christianity) emerged.

This exposes an underlying problem of approach, which we will also encounter when we consider the formation of the Christian canon in Chapter 6. Some studies begin by assuming the inevitability of certain present-day canons and then go about seeking evidence to prove the earliest possible acceptance of such a collection as canon. This approach is facilitated by a lack of precision in terminology. Cross-cultural inquiries into canonization have demonstrated the need to distinguish between different levels of textual authority. A text (like a national story or oral tradition) can function as “Scripture” in the sense of a privileged guide for a community, without the existence of a “canon,” a closed group of scriptures with an exclusive and self-legitimizing level of authority.³⁰ The emergence of “Scripture” and the formation of “canons” are distinct socio-historical phenomena with different causes and effects that must be examined in their own right. To paraphrase Bruce Metzger, one cannot equate the existence of a group of authoritative texts with the authoritative delineation of a group of texts, even if the former eventually led to the latter.³¹ To speak of a “canon” at this point in time is thus anachronistic and, moreover, distracts from the need to analyze the specific social, historical, and theological dynamics of canonization – a process that occurred later, first among Rabbinic Jews and then among different groups of Christians.³²

²⁸ Ulrich, “Bible,” 51–66.

²⁹ On the problems with assuming that Rabbinic Judaism developed exclusively from Pharisaism, see Schäfer, “Vorrabbinische Pharisäismus,” 172–75; Cohen, “Significance,” 36–38. On the apologetic underpinnings of the view that all pre-Rabbinic forms of Judaism, except for the Jesus Movement, share a common normatively “Jewish” core (which just happens to stand in radical continuity with the Rabbinic movement), see Alexander, “Parting,” 2.

³⁰ Smith, “Canons,” 299–306.

³¹ Metzger, *Canon of NT*, 282.

³² Brakke, “Canon,” 396–98.

Consequently, we cannot simply assume that any evidence for the “scriptural” status of now canonical texts attests to the existence of a “canon.” Notably, scholars like Beckwith and Leiman tend to focus their inquiries on materials that are now canonical and to apply different criteria to texts that are now noncanonical. Treatments of the formation of the Tanakh, for instance, frequently cite the fact that copies of all but one of the texts therein (i.e., Esther) were found at Qumran, without noting that these were found alongside copies of other works, such as *Jubilees* and the early Enochic pseudepigrapha, which outnumber most “biblical” books in attestation.³³ Likewise, they make much of the quotation of now canonical texts in early Jewish and NT literature, but they fail to apply the same logic to books that would be excluded from the Tanakh. Beckwith, for instance, must struggle to explain away Jude’s quotation of the *Book of the Watchers*; he even admits that “if 1 Enoch were a canonical book one would be inclined to regard this as an endorsement of its canonicity.”³⁴

We cannot doubt that the postexilic period saw the emergence of a concept of Scripture, first applied to the Torah and then to other writings, and that different Jewish groups shared a core group of texts, which included many of the books that Jews and Christians would later canonize.³⁵ It is a very different thing, however, to assert that pre-Rabbinic Jews knew a fixed “canon,” a closed group of texts that held an exclusive claim to authority, granted to no other. Our evidence suggests that the boundaries of scriptural authority remained fluid, and other texts continued to vie for this elevated status, functioning as Scripture for some Jews but not for others.³⁶ This fluidity is evident in the range of scriptures used by different groups, no less than in the dominant modes of literary production in Second Temple Judaism (see Ch. 1).

Instead of refracting the early reception-history of texts through our knowledge of their later status, we might better view the Rabbinic biblical canon and the Christian OT canons as selections from a broader class of texts that different groups considered scripturally authoritative in pre-Rabbinic times.³⁷ Some of the contested texts eventually became canonical in both Judaism and Christianity; we might cite Esther’s absence from Qumran,³⁸ or the continued

³³ As VanderKam notes, “Only Genesis (15), Exodus (15), Deuteronomy (25), Isaiah (19), and Psalms (30) are represented in more manuscripts” than *Jubilees* and the early Enochic pseudepigrapha; *From Revelation*, 25.

³⁴ Beckwith, *OT Canon*, 402, see also 395–405.

³⁵ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 23.

³⁶ Zevit, “Canonization,” 140–41; Ulrich, “Bible,” 51, 65–66;

³⁷ VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 25–26.

³⁸ Scholars commonly cite its reference to the lunar calendar as the main reason for this omission. Yet it is not difficult to imagine other reasons that these pietists might be suspicious of Esther,

debates over the status of Qohelet and the Song of Songs among Rabbinic Jews.³⁹ Others became canonical only for Christian communities. Indeed, there are a number of books omitted from the biblical canon of the Rabbis, which are found within Christian OT canons – including texts such as the Wisdom of ben Sira, 1–4 Maccabees, Judith, and Tobit, but also *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*.⁴⁰

Modern scholars typically call the additional scriptures accepted by Catholics “apocryphal” instead of “biblical,” while those books adopted by other ancient Churches (Greek Orthodox, Slavonic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox) are relegated to the category of “pseudepigrapha,” alongside texts that seem never to have been canonical in any community.⁴¹ This terminology makes sense in the context of 16th century European debates between Reformers and Catholics. But the distinction between “biblical” and “apocryphal” texts says little about the status of these texts in pre-Rabbinic times – and the contemporary categories of the Bible, the Apocrypha, and the Pseudepigrapha tell us even less. The differences between (and among) ancient Jewish and Christian canons more likely reflects the fluid nature of scriptural authority in the Second Temple period and beyond.⁴²

The scant evidence for an official canon in pre-70 Judaism also suggests a lack of interest in defining the precise limits of scriptural authority. Strikingly, we only find evidence for the emergence of “canonical consciousness” – a sense of the need to delineate the bounds of the written scriptures – in texts composed after the destruction of the Second Temple. Most notable are Josephus’ comments in *Against Apion* (ca. 100 CE), the first to limit the scriptures to a set number of books (i.e. 22; *Ap.* 1.37–43).⁴³ Likewise, the Mishnah (ca. 200 CE) attributes a ruling to R. Akiva, which asserts that Jews who read from “outside books” [ספרים החיצונים] have no place in the World to Come, thereby implying an exclusivistic concept of Scripture (*m.Sanh.* 10:1).

and we should not be too quick to conclude its absence from the DSS is only a function of the Qumran community’s sectarianism. Esther is missing from Melito’s 2nd c. list of the Jewish scriptures (Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 4.26.13–14) and even from some 4th c. Christian lists of OT texts: for instance, the *Synopsis Scripturae Sacrae* lists Esther as noncanonical, while Jerome places it in the category between “canonical” and “apocryphal,” alongside *Wisd*, *Sir*, *Judith*, and *Tobit*. See Beckwith, *OT Canon*, 295–97 and further citations there.

³⁹ See *m.Yad.* 3.5; also *m.Ed.* 5.3; *t.Yad.* 2.14; *b.Meg.* 7a; *b.Shabb.* 13b, 30b, 100a; *b.Hag.* 13a; *Lev.Rab.* 28.1.

⁴⁰ For a complete list, Flint, “Noncanonical,” 87.

⁴¹ Flint, “Noncanonical,” 80–89; Stone, “Categorization,” 167–77; Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism*, 38–39.

⁴² VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 25–26.

⁴³ Beckwith’s theory that *Jubilees* attests to an earlier view of a 22-book canon (*OT Canon*, 365) is based on a highly problematic reconstruction of *Jub.* 2:23; see VanderKam, *From Revelation*, 18–19.

Below, we will discuss the latter in more detail. For now, it suffices to note that our first hints of “canonical consciousness” arise around the same time that we find increasing standardization in the *texts* of biblical books. If scholars are correct that “it is in times of ‘intra-cultural polarization’ and incertitude that canons are created,”⁴⁴ we might speculate that the catalyst for the stabilization of the Jewish scriptures can be found, not in Antiochus’ persecutions, but rather in the destruction of the Second Temple.⁴⁵ Even then, however, we do not find an official canon, inasmuch as no single body held the authority to make one. Indeed, some Jews would retain a more inclusive understanding of the scope of revealed writings, as evident both in 4 *Ezra*’s understanding of the 24 revealed books accessible to all Jews and the 70 revealed books reserved for the wise (14:26, 45) and in the continued flexibility in the Christian use of Jewish scriptures.

Like the emergence of the concept of Scripture in postexilic Judaism and the widespread acceptance of a shared core of texts, the growing “canonical consciousness” in the first century should be viewed as an important stage in the prehistory of the biblical canon.⁴⁶ None of these developments, however, can be conflated with canonization – a process that began in the following centuries, first in Rabbinic Judaism and later in Christian communities. We will discuss the dynamics of canon formation below and consider its effects on the fate of the *Book of the Watchers*, which would be excluded first from the Rabbinic Tanakh and later from most Christian OTs but accepted as canonical in the Ethiopian Church.⁴⁷ For our present purposes, what proves significant is that the Jesus Movement did not inherit a biblical canon from the Jews, because there was not yet a “canon” to inherit.⁴⁸ As Eugene Ulrich notes, the scriptures were just as multiform as the Judaism (and, hence, the Christianity) of this early period.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Schaper, “Rabbinic,” 100.

⁴⁵ Schaper, “Rabbinic,” 97–102.

⁴⁶ We know of many cases in which a set number became traditional, even though its exact contents remained fluid. Note, for instance, the range of Christian attempts to arrive at the number 22 for the books of the OT by counting books in a variety of ways (McDonald, *Formation*, 108–16, 268–73).

⁴⁷ Beckwith questions its canonicity even there (*OT Canon*, 478–500), arguing that it was not included in the earliest Ethiopian canon (i.e., prior to 13th c. revisions). The reasoning is a bit complex: he excludes 1 *Enoch* because, unlike Jubilees, it included one part (i.e., *Sim.*) that was never “canonical” within a Jewish group, but he simultaneously cites the so-called canonicity of AB, BW, EE, and BD among the Essenes to shed doubt on its inclusion into the canon.

⁴⁸ McDonald, *Formation*, 25–133. Since Sundberg (*OT*, 3–48), scholars have rejected the notion of an “Alexandrian canon,” a fixed canon of the Scriptures in Greek translation that was authoritative amongst Diaspora Jews. For a summary of the current consensus, see Schaper, “Rabbinic,” 93–95.

⁴⁹ Ulrich, “Bible,” 65.

In embracing the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic pseudepigrapha, it is likely that early Christians were simply drawing on the broader body of scriptures that some Jews considered as authentic products of divine revelation, others found useful, and still others rejected entirely. The *Book of the Watchers* did not have the unquestioned authority of a book like Genesis. The same can be said, however, for many now canonical books, including Esther, Qohelet, and the Song of Songs. Moreover, our evidence for the use of the *Book of the Watchers* in the Second Temple period resembles that of “biblical” texts from its time. There are numerous allusions to the *Book of the Watchers* in early Jewish and Christian literature, across different geographical locales and different groups; we find multiple copies of this text at Qumran; it seems to have been translated from Greek around the same time and in the same style as the Book of Daniel; and it is quoted as Scripture by Jude and later Christians. This evidence suggests that the exclusion of this apocalypse from the Tanakh and most Christian OTs was not an inevitable development from its status in Second Temple Judaism.

2. ENOCH, ENOCHIC BOOKS, AND THE EXEGESIS OF GEN 6:1–4 IN RABBINIC JUDAISM

Consequently, the next question that we must ask is, not why Christians continued to read and transmit this text, but why Rabbinic Jews did not. As noted above, Enochic traditions are almost wholly absent from the classical Rabbinic literature, and these texts – in stark contrast to earlier Jewish and contemporaneous Christian sources – contain no references to Enoch’s writings.⁵⁰ We find no quotations of the *Book of the Watchers*, nor any debates about its status. There is thus little doubt that the Enochic pseudepigrapha fell outside the bounds of Scripture for even the earliest Rabbis.

It is possible that the Rabbinic movement simply ceased to copy Enochic literature without any thought to the loss of books that they held to be insignificant.⁵¹ In early Rabbinic sources, however, we do find some traces of possible efforts to suppress Enochic traditions and to counter those who accepted them. Most notable are the statements against the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, which was, by that time, well established in Jewish tradition.

⁵⁰ By “classical Rabbinic literature,” I mean the Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud), Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), and midrashic collections compiled between the Mishnah and the Bavli.

⁵¹ It is important to recall that the transmission of texts in antiquity was both a laborious and an expensive endeavor, and it is to this that we owe the loss of many texts. If no motivation existed to continue producing new copies to replace the old, a text could just fall out of circulation.

In his analysis of the Aramaic translations of Gen 6:1–4 in the Targumim, P. S. Alexander shows that the second century saw a “widespread reaction in Judaism against the interpretation of *bene Elohim* as angels.”⁵² In support, he cites a tradition preserved in *Genesis Rabbah*, a midrashic collection compiled in the fifth century:

And the sons of God [בני אלהים] saw the daughters of men. R. Simeon b. Yohai called them “sons of judges” [בני דייניא]. R. Simeon b. Yohai cursed [מקלל] all who called them “sons of God” [בני אלהים]. (*Gen.Rab.* 26.5)

According to Alexander, the attribution of this tradition to the second-century sage R. Simeon finds corroboration in a contemporary Christian source. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr places the following statement in the mouth of his interlocutor, a Jewish refugee from the Bar Kokhba Revolt:⁵³

The utterances of God are holy, but your expositions are mere contrivances [τετεχνασμένοι] . . . indeed, even blasphemies [βλάσφημοι], for you assert that angels sinned and apostatized from God [πονηρευσαμένους και ἀποστάντας τοῦ θεοῦ]!” (*Dial.* 79)⁵⁴

Alexander rightly calls our attention to the suddenness of this development, its discontinuity with earlier tradition, and the polemical tone of these passages; inasmuch as the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 “was prevalent in Judaism in the previous three centuries,” we must ask why both R. Simeon and Justin’s “Trypho” so fervently condemn it.⁵⁵ This leads him to ask “why the reaction to the old exegesis took place precisely when it did.”⁵⁶

⁵² Alexander, “Targumim,” 62.

⁵³ Alexander notes that R. Simeon and Trypho would have been contemporaries (“Targumim,” 62). Since “Trypho” is a fictional Jew, based as much on Justin’s interlocutory needs as on his interactions with Jews of the time, it is perhaps more important that R. Simeon and Justin were contemporaries.

⁵⁴ We cannot, of course, always assume that the comments that Justin puts in Trypho’s mouth echo the views of Jews (let alone Rabbinic Jews) of his time. Other parallels, however, suggest that Justin was aware of Jewish traditions in Palestine. This fits well with Justin’s upbringing in Samaria, as well as with his aim of simultaneously using Judaism as a foil for his definition of Christian identity and providing Christians with exegetical ammunition for debates against “real” Jews (see Ch. 5). In this case, it is notable that Trypho’s comments lack any clear impetus, and they – unlike many things that Trypho “says” – do not serve to further Justin’s argument about the Jews’ blindness to Christological prophecies in their own Scriptures. The statement is presented with no context, and it furthers no argument (for one theory as to why, see Goodenough, *Theology*, 199–200). Translations of Patristic literature have been revised from ANF and NPNF unless otherwise noted.

⁵⁵ Alexander, “Targumim,” 62.

⁵⁶ Alexander, “Targumim,” 68.

Alexander notes in passing that the angelic interpretation persisted among Christians and that the Christian use of Enochic pseudepigrapha played a role in their exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. Yet he looks elsewhere to identify the Jews against whom R. Simeon speaks. In promoting an alternate interpretation of “sons of God” and condemning the “old exegesis,” he proposes that the Rabbis were reacting to the cultivation of angelology by “some group who assigned to angels excessive importance and powers” as part of a “broader interest in the esoteric and the occult.” He thus suggests some link between these “circles of scholars . . . teaching esoteric, gnostic doctrine” and the later Hekhalot literature. In Chapter 7, we will consider this and similar theories in more detail. It suffices for now to question the logic of Alexander’s suggestion. Our analysis of pre-Rabbinic Jewish sources showed that, if anything, the identification of the “sons of God” with angels tended to facilitate the demotion of angels to the status of fallible creatures and, consequently, their comparison with human sinners and their subordination to the human righteous (paradigmatically Enoch). Hence, it is difficult to understand how the suppression of the “old exegesis” of Gen 6:1–4 would help to stamp out angel veneration.

In my view, Christians seem more likely candidates, in light of their continued cultivation of Enochic texts and traditions. Although the rejection of the angelic interpretation of “sons of God” does not necessarily imply the exclusion of the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic pseudepigrapha, our evidence suggests that, at this time, the two tended to go hand in hand. In Christian literature from this period, we find the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 alongside statements that grant scriptural authority to the words and writings of Enoch (see below). Moreover, concurrent with the Rabbinic polemic against the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, Christian sources attest the Jewish rejection of Enochic literature. In the late second or early third century, for instance, Tertullian asserts that the “Scripture of Enoch [*scripturam Enoch*] . . . is not admitted into the Jewish archives [*armarium Iudaicum*]” (*Cult.fem.* 1.3.3). When discussing the “booklets that are called Enoch” [*in libellis qui appellantur Enoch*] in his *Homilies on Numbers*, Origen similarly notes that these texts “do not appear to have authority among the Jews [*non videntur apud Hebraeos in auctoritate haberi*].”

Furthermore, early Enochic traditions about Gen 5:21–24 seem to suffer a fate similar to the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4.⁵⁷ In both *Genesis*

⁵⁷ The classical Rabbinic literature contains both positive and negative depictions of Enoch (Himmelfarb, “Report,” 259; cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:58–59). The negative ones, however, counter traditions in the early Enochic pseudepigrapha, while the positive ones draw on traditions not attested therein (e.g., Enoch’s early death as God’s attempt to take him while he was still righteous [*Gen.Rab.* 25.1; *Qoh.Rab.* 7.15]; Enoch as one of the “beloved sevenths”

Rabbah and Targum Onqelos, we find statements that deny Enoch's status as a revealer of special wisdom by stressing that he died an ordinary death instead of being translated into the heavens (*Gen.Rab.* 25.1; *Tg.Onq.* Gen 5:24). Notably, the former depicts the tanna R. Yose and the amora R. Abbahu each answering claims that "we do not find death mentioned for Enoch," as made by a woman [*matrona*] and a group of "heretics" [*minim*] respectively.⁵⁸ The case of the *minim* proves particularly intriguing. Not only do they use a style of exegetical argument familiar from Rabbinic midrash ("It says here that [Enoch] was 'taken' [תקף; Gen 5:24], and it also says that Elijah was 'taken' [תקף; 2 Kgs 2:11]), but, as Himmelfarb observes, "the heretics are here on the offensive, and the rabbis are faced with the necessity of providing scriptural refutations for a position with a certain basis in Scripture."⁵⁹

As in the case of Gen 6:1–4, early Rabbis seem to reject the traditional interpretation of a passage in Genesis, which others continue to support. This raises the possibility that the two reflect efforts to de-legitimize Enochic traditions, aimed against those who persisted in cultivating them. Indeed, it is striking that these Rabbinic approaches to Enoch and the "sons of God" both function to undermine the Enochic literary tradition at its very roots. By reading Enoch's death into Gen 5:24 and reading the fallen angels out of Gen 6:1–4, they effectively sever the exegetical threads that tie the Enochic pseudepigrapha to the Torah.

What, then, may have motivated these efforts? On the one hand, we know that these texts were embraced by many Christians and that "Jewish-Christians" lived in proximity to the early Rabbis in the second and third centuries.⁶⁰ On the other hand, it would be naïve to imagine that the religious landscape of Roman Palestine was populated only by Rabbis and Christians. Neither can we assume that the Rabbis were anywhere as preoccupied with Christianity as Christians were with Jews and Judaism; the Rabbinic category of *minut* ("heresy") encompassed a variety of non-Rabbinic Jews, not limited to Christ-believing Jews.⁶¹

[*Pesiq.Rab.Kah.* 23.10; *Lev.Rab.* 29.11; *MHG* Gen 5:24]). That traditions about Enoch's escape of death, like the traditions about the fallen angels, will reemerge in the post-Talmudic literature (see Ch. 7) seems to strengthen the argument for an early effort at suppression, which lost momentum in later times, once its original polemical motivations were no longer relevant.

⁵⁸ On the former, see Ilan, "Matrona"; cf. Gershenzon and Slomovic, "Second-Century"; on the latter, see Lachs, "R. Abbahu."

⁵⁹ Himmelfarb, "Report," 260.

⁶⁰ Saldarini, "Social World," esp. 145–54.

⁶¹ The *minim* of the Mishnah are never non-Jews, and gentile Christians seem only gradually to be conflated into this category (as are, eventually, other kinds of gentiles). On the range of

Just as the early Rabbinic discourse about *minut* reflects a broader concern for conflating a range of opponents by stressing their deviation from the Sages' particular definition of the norm,⁶² so it proves significant that they could have disliked Enochic texts and traditions for a number of reasons that have nothing to do with Christianity. Characteristically, our Rabbinic sources do not contain explicit statements about this matter, akin to the assertions we find in contemporaneous Christian writings. Nevertheless, it proves helpful to examine two relevant mishnaic rulings: the interdiction against apocalyptic and cosmological speculation in *m.HHag.* 2.1 and the condemnation of Jews who "read in outside books" in *m.Sanh.* 10.1. Although neither speaks directly to the Rabbinic attitude towards the Enochic pseudepigrapha and those who read them, both help to illuminate the broader context of these developments.

i. Strictures on Apocalyptic Speculation

When considering the *Nachleben* of the early Jewish apocalyptic literature in post-70 Judaism, scholars typically focus on the issue of eschatology. The omission of most ancient apocalypses from the biblical canon and the relative lack of eschatological themes in the classical Rabbinic literature are often treated as two facets of the same phenomenon: the Rabbinic reaction against apocalypticism, particularly in the wake of the Bar Kokhba Revolt.⁶³ Here, however, we are concerned with an apocalypse with relatively little interest in eschatology and no hint of messianism. As noted in Chapter 1, there is reason to believe that the tradents who formed the Tanakh were no less suspicious of the "scientific" speculations of ascent apocalypses like the *Book of the Watchers*. When viewed from this perspective, it is striking that the only canonical Jewish apocalypse, Daniel, teems with eschatology but is distinguished from other texts of the genre by its striking lack of "scientific" material.⁶⁴

Rabbinic opponents termed *minim*, see Kimelman, "Birkat ha-minim," esp. 228–32; Kalmin, "Christians," esp. 163–65; Janowitz, "Rabbis," 449–62; Boyarin, "Tale," 55–60.

⁶² Janowitz suggests that we should see in Rabbinic anecdotes about debates with *minim* "not the presenting of a fixed doctrine, but the indexing of the rabbi as the person in charge" ("Rabbis," 460).

⁶³ E.g., Neusner, "Beyond Myth." Alternately, scholars characterize the apocalyptic literature and Rabbinic culture as essentially incompatible, contrasting the former's interest in the otherworldly and the distant future with the latter's concern for social ethics and the well-being of Israel in the here-and-now (Ginzberg, "Some Observations," esp. 115, 134–35; Saldarini, "Uses," 407).

⁶⁴ Ginzberg, "Some Observations," 135; Stone, "Book of Enoch and Judaism," 488–89; idem, "Lists," 440–43.

The principles underlying this selectivity may be illuminated with reference to *m.Hag.* 2.1, which outlines a series of rulings about the limits of public exegesis and human inquiry:

It is not permitted to expound [איך דורשין] the laws of prohibited sexual relationships [עריית] among three, nor Ma'aseh Bereshit among two, nor the Merkavah among one, unless he is wise [חכם] and understands on his own. Anyone who speculates about [מסתכסר ב-] four things, it would be merciful for him if he had not come into the world: what is above [מה למעלה], what is below [מה למטה], what is before [מה לפני], what is after [ומה לאחר]. Anyone who has no concern for the honor of his Creator, it would be merciful for him if he had not come into the world.

This mishnah is notoriously slippery, and much scholarly literature has been dedicated to interpreting the exact meanings of Ma'aseh Bereshit (“the work of Creation”) and ha-Merkavah (“the Chariot”) as well as to determining their connection to Jewish practice in second-century Roman Palestine.⁶⁵ Our present purposes do not permit an inquiry into this much debated issue. For us, it suffices to note that, while the mishnah seeks only to limit the public exposition of Ma'aseh Bereshit and ha-Merkavah, it mounts an outright condemnation of speculation into “what is above, what is below, what is before, what is after.”

This four-part phrase aptly describes the complex of concerns that we find explored in apocalypses: an interest in the cosmos, from the heights of heaven to the very ends of the earth (above, below), and an interest in the meaning of history, stretched along the entire axis of historical time (before, after).⁶⁶ The suspicion of apocalyptic claims to knowledge is, of course, hardly new. We have encountered this already in ben Sira's dictum about the dangers of overzealous speculation into hidden things (Sir 3:20–21) – which later Rabbis would, in fact, quote approvingly in support of this very mishnah (*y.Hag.* 2.1; *b.Hag.* 11 b).⁶⁷ As with ben Sira centuries earlier, this ruling seems to respond to individuals or groups engaged in such speculations,⁶⁸ and it is plausible that those Jews who composed and transmitted apocalypses should be counted among its targets. In addition, this evidence helps to explain why the Rabbinic movement

⁶⁵ Halperin, *Merkabah*; idem, *Faces of the Chariot*; Schäfer, “In Heaven”; Alexander, “Preemptive Exegesis.”

⁶⁶ Cf. Sed, *Mystique cosmologique*, 11–13.

⁶⁷ Another factor may have been the use of such “scientific” speculation in support of the 364-day solar calendar, which may have impacted the fate of the early Enochic pseudepigrapha in particular.

⁶⁸ There is, notably, a difference of degree: ben Sira simply warned against excessive speculation into secrets, whereas the Mishnah asserts that those who speculate into such topics should wish never to have been born!

abandoned most of the early Jewish apocalyptic literature, including apocalypses with little eschatological or messianic content. Even if we are wary to pin down the exact practices denounced by *m.Hag.* 2.1, this mishnah may shed light on the attitudes towards apocalyptic speculation that contributed to the abandonment of the *Book of the Watchers* by the Rabbinic movement.

ii. Canonical Consciousness and the Oral Torah

The role of text-selection in the delineation of Rabbinic identity is further illuminated by *m.Sanh.* 10:1 (cf. *t.Sanh.* 12.9–10):

All Israel has a portion in the World to Come [כָּס יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ שָׂהֵם הַדֶּקָּה לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא], for it is written: “Your people are all righteous; they shall inherit the Land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, so that I may be glorified” (Isa 60:22).

The following, however, have no portion therein: He who maintains that resurrection cannot be proved from the Torah, [he who maintains that] the Torah was not divinely revealed, and an Epicurean [אֶפִּיקוּרֹס].

R. Akiba added: He who reads in the “outside books” [הַקְּרֹא בַסְּפָרִים הַחִיצוֹנִים].

Also one who whispers over a wound and says, “I will bring none of these diseases upon you which I brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord who heals you.” (Ex 15:26)

Abba Saul says: Also, one who pronounces the divine name as it is spelled (i.e., the Tetragrammaton).

R. Akiva’s statement about “outside books” occurs in a list of beliefs and practices that exclude Jews from the World to Come and, by extension, from “all of Israel.”⁶⁹ It is significant that, in mapping the limits of acceptable belief and practice, this mishnah does not merely reassert commonly held beliefs. The very first exception has partisan overtones, evoking Josephus’ description of the conflicting approaches to resurrection among the Pharisees and Sadducees (*B.J.* 2.165).⁷⁰ This suggests that the mishnah functions, not only as a proscription of certain practices (e.g., the use of the Torah for medicinal/magical

⁶⁹ Schiffman argues that the core of this tradition was a Pharasaic polemic against Sadducees (“Tannaitic,” 140–41). Even so, the redacted and expanded form of the unit can still serve a broader function. Indeed, the very coinage of the term *minut* as a designation for “heresy” (a usage first found in the Mishnah; Goodman, “Function,” 503–4) signals the development of a different approach to sectarian disputes than had existed in Second Temple times, when – as Boyarin notes – Josephus could speak of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes as different “schools” of Jews (“Justin,” 444–45).

⁷⁰ For affirmations of resurrection and its basis in the Torah, see *m.Ber.* 1.5, 5.2; *t.Ber.* 1.12, 3.9; *t.Hul.* 10.6. For the attribution of the opposing view to *minim*, see *m.Ber.* 9.5, *t.Ber.* 7.21.

aims), but also as a statement against certain Jewish groups. In effect, the early Rabbis here define “all Israel” so as to question the “Jewishness” of competing visions of Judaism and to promote their vision as the only one that is really “Judaism.”⁷¹

So too is the condemnation of the use of “outside books” best seen as a response to the continued use of certain texts by other Jews. Most notable is the case of the Wisdom of ben Sira, which some Rabbinic sources treat as the paradigmatic “outside book,” even as others quote from this work with the same formulae used for citing Scripture.⁷² Together with the Bavli’s suggestion that R. Akiva here speaks of the “books of the *minim*” [ספרי מינים], this has led some scholars to read this mishnah as a ban of those very texts – whether Jewish “apocrypha” or Christian compositions – used by their Christian contemporaries.⁷³ Once again, however, we should perhaps be wary of reading mishnaic rulings as pointed only towards Christians. Just as Rabbinic literature uses *minut* to denote a range of forms of deviant yet biblically based religiosity, so it is probable that other non-Rabbinic Jews, aside from Christ-believing Jews and other kinds of Christians, continued to embrace a larger number of scriptures than the Rabbis.

Instructive is the contrast with *4 Ezra*, an apocalypse composed in Hebrew in the late first century (ca. 81–96 CE), possibly also in Palestine.⁷⁴ Here, Ezra famously recounts God’s re-revelation of sacred books after the destruction of the First Temple:

And when the forty days ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying: “Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them are the springs of understanding, the fountains of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.” (14:45–47)

Scholars commonly cite this passage alongside Josephus’ comments in *Against Apion* to assert the existence of a fixed canon of 22/24 books by the late first century. Perhaps more striking, however, is the author’s attitude towards the other books. Not only does he grant them the same revealed status as the 24, but he reserves them for the wise and depicts them as special sources for salvific knowledge. Stone suggests that the author meant to include the

⁷¹ Boyarin, “Justin,” 440–42; cf. Schiffman, “Tannaitic,” 143–44.

⁷² See *y.Ber.* 11 b; *y.Naz.* 54b; *Gen.Rab.* 91.3; *Qoh.Rab.* 7.11; *b.Ber.* 48a; Leiman, *Canonization*, 91–102.

⁷³ Moore, “Definition”; Ginzberg, “Some Observations,” 129.

⁷⁴ Translations follow Stone, *4 Ezra*; on date and provenance, see pp. 10–11.

products of the apocalyptic literary tradition in which he himself worked.⁷⁵ In a broader sense, the reference to a large number of hidden books – and a numerologically meaningful 70 – may be meant as a means to defend an inclusive understanding of Scripture against those who would limit scriptural authority to only a small group of texts.

By providing a blanket explanation for the (re-)surfacing of allegedly ancient books in postexilic times, *4 Ezra* appears to justify what earlier Jews like Qumranites took for granted. That he does so with appeal to the set number of the *public* scriptures indicates his awareness of other Jews' efforts to deny the legitimacy of other books (like *4 Ezra* itself) that claim authorship by biblical figures. *M. Sanh.* 10:1 represents the opposite position in the same argument. If *4 Ezra* encourages the continued use and composition of pseudepigraphical literature, the view attributed to R. Akiva achieves the opposite, cautioning Jews about the dangers of reading any texts apart from (what the Rabbis deem to be) Scripture.

This stance, however, cannot be dismissed merely as traditionalism, authoritarianism, or skepticism. Rather, it is tightly tied to the issue of Rabbinic legitimacy. It is surely not coincidental that the Mishnah's anxiety about the proper limits of textual authority coincides with the radical expansion of the authority of the Sages themselves, an authority that they would progressively elevate to the status of the Torah revealed on Mt. Sinai.

The contrast with *4 Ezra* is again illuminating. This apocalypse defends an inclusive concept of scriptural authority and adopts a literary practice (i.e., parabiblical pseudepigraphy) that stands dependent on such a concept. Moreover, the author retains a model of religious authority familiar to us from the literature of Second Temple times: he exalts the scribe and equates revelation with writing. The Mishnah, however, embodies a new understanding of both religious and textual authority. This work legitimates its view of proper Jewish practice and belief, not with appeal to biblical figures, but rather to the teachings of the Sages. In the Mishnah, the hand of the author/redactor is no less invisible than in the pseudepigraphical literature of Second Temple times, but in a radically new way: the redactor chains together and juxtaposes Rabbinic teachings, thereby evoking the dynamic discussion of a community engaged in generative debate, while effacing his own creative role in expressing a message through the selection and arrangement of these traditions.⁷⁶ In contrast to

⁷⁵ Stone, *4 Ezra*, 439–41.

⁷⁶ Stern observes that the resultant image of harmony is an “illusion created by the redaction of Rabbinic literature,” which aimed to articulate a “fantasy of social stability, of human community in complete harmony, where disagreement is either resolved agreeably or maintained peacefully”; this ideal responds to a very different reality, in which “Rabbinic society, far from

the self-conscious scribalism of so much Second Temple literature, the result is a text that effectively denies its own textuality, in favor of the ideal of oral discourse.

Seen from this perspective, one of the most striking things about *m.Sanh.* 10.1 is its lack of appeal to Scripture. This mishnah cites a prophetic prooftext (Isa 60:22) for the assertion that “all Israel has a place in the World to Come,” but none of the exceptions that follow (which, in fact, convey the main message of the text) are anchored in Scripture. The names of R. Akiva and Abba Saul suffice to grant authority to the damning statements about those excluded from the World to Come. The irony, then, is that the “canonical consciousness” of early Rabbis may actually reflect the changing nature of textual authority in this tradition. Works like the *Book of the Watchers* and *4 Ezra* appeal to biblical figures and mimic the language and style of older scriptures, drawing their legitimacy from sacred books and simultaneously reasserting the authority of those books – and of writing in general. By contrast, the style of the Mishnah and later Rabbinic works finds no counterpart in biblical literature and stresses instead the emergence of consensus through (oral) debate and the (oral) transmission of teachings from teacher to student. Within Rabbinic tradition, the scriptures are elevated and their sanctity celebrated, but their supremacy is simultaneously challenged by this very discourse. In the end, the ramifications are far more radical than the biblical pseudigraphy of Second Temple literature. Whereas *Jubilees’* expansive paraphrase of Genesis and Exodus claimed to record an angel’s revelations to Moses (1:1–7), Rabbis would transmit their own teachings in their own names and, increasingly, claim for them a status equal to the written Torah; as part of the Oral Torah, these teachings too were said to have preceded the rest of Creation and served as the very blueprint for the visible world (*Gen.Rab.* 1.1), even before God gave the Torah – in both of its parts – to Moses on Mt. Sinai.⁷⁷

We cannot be certain whether the exact contents of the Rabbinic Tanakh were already fixed at the time of the Mishnah.⁷⁸ The text, for instance, includes an unresolved debate about whether or not the Song of Songs and Qohelet “defile the hands” (*m.Yad.* 3.5), and the use of this halachic criterion for Holy

being so harmonious and unified, was often rent by dissension and acrimonious, prolonged disputes among sages” (*Midrash and Theory*, 33–34).

⁷⁷ Of course, the concept of the Oral Torah and its divine origins developed only gradually; Schäfer, *Studien*, esp. 162.

⁷⁸ Around 180 CE, Melito tells of his travels to Palestine, in order to discover the contents of the “OT,” and the list that he gives conforms to the Rabbinic Tanakh with the exception of Esther’s omission (Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 4.26.13–14). By contrast, Origen’s third-century list of the “22 books according to the Hebrews” conforms exactly to *b.B.Bat.* 14b (Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 6.25).

Scripture may even signal a different understanding of canonicity from that which later developed in Christian communities.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the Rabbinic enterprise appears to be built on the assumption that the gates of scriptural authority were closed and that a new era had begun. Both in content and style, the writings of the Rabbis suggest that they saw themselves as living in a different time, far removed from the age of inspired *literary* activity.⁸⁰

Instead of composing texts in the style of earlier scriptures, they develop a new mode of literary production, compiling works that invoke the authority of charismatic teachers and evoke the oral transmission of teachings from generation to generation of students. By no means could someone mistake the Mishnah for an ancient biblical text and affix it to an earlier Scripture, in the same way that 4 *Ezra* was sometimes appended to *Ezra*.⁸¹ Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that we here find a sense that the scriptures are a closed group of ancient texts, rather than an open group of texts to which new writings could accrue. Even as Rabbis would read meaning into each letter and word of Scripture, they saw themselves as actively engaged in the creation/discovery of new revelations of their own, not by continuing the modes of literary production in biblical texts, but by their own role in unfolding the oral counterpart to God's written revelation – and recording them in writings that eventually gained a scripture-like authority of their own.⁸²

Neither is it surprising, then, that they might be distrustful of non-Rabbinic figures and groups that continued to conceive of religious authority with older scribal, priestly, and/or prophetic models and to use texts, such as Enochic pseudepigrapha, that verified the relevance of these models even in the absence of the Temple.⁸³ The writings of the Rabbinic movement are not forthcoming about other Jewish groups, and their eventual dominance would ensure that their works are virtually our only examples of Jewish texts from this period that were not embraced by Christians. Nonetheless, we can find traces of early Rabbinic efforts to forge a system of Jewish belief and practice that deliberately

⁷⁹ Also *m.Yad.* 4.6; *t.Yad.* 2.19; Leiman, *Canonization*, 14–16, 128–31.

⁸⁰ This view is summed up by the dictum: “The language of the Torah is one thing, the language of the Sages another” (*m.Avod.Zar.* 58b; *b.RoshHash.* 5a, 15a; *b.Menah.* 65a); see Talmon, “Oral,” 136–39.

⁸¹ Bergren, “Transmission,” 115–20.

⁸² Talmon, “Oral,” 138–39; Jaffee, *Torah*, 100–25.

⁸³ This is not to deny that the Rabbinic movement included both scribes and those of priestly heritage, but rather to specify that their inclusion shifted the primary locus of their authority from their skills in literacy and their genealogy respectably to expertise in Torah. Moreover, non-Rabbinic priests and scribes continued to make claims to the status of religious specialists, which were successful enough that Rabbis were forced to contest them; Hezser, *Social Structure*, 70–71, 267–69, 467–75, 480–489.

displaced other visions of Judaism, which were no less rooted in earlier Jewish tradition.⁸⁴

Whereas the traditional scholarly account of Jewish history equated the rise of the Rabbinic movement with the emergence of a unified consensus out of the multiplicity of the pre-Rabbinic period, new research (thanks in part to new archeological evidence) has suggested that the situation was more complex. When the Temple fell, the diversity of Second Temple Judaism did not collapse with it, and there was no decisive council to crown the Rabbis the arbiters of “mainstream” Judaism. Rather, we might better imagine a range of non-Rabbinic Jews – including but not limited to Christ-believing Jews and other Christians – against whom they mounted their claims to normativity, which only gradually found acceptance.⁸⁵ Seen from this broader perspective, the conflicting views of Enochic texts and traditions among early Rabbis and proto-orthodox Christians preserve two different poles in a broader continuum. In light of the widespread use of the *Book of the Watchers* in pre-Rabbinic literature and its scriptural status among some groups of Second Temple Jews, it is likely that other Jews also continued to use these books, at least in the early period. In attempting to undermine the biblical basis for the Enochic tradition, early Rabbis may thus be reacting to a number of groups that continued to use these and other apocalypses, including Christ-believing Jews. Yet, it is not their Christianity (or Christology, or even messianism) that is at stake here. Rather, in this critical era of Rabbinic self-definition, Rabbis seem to counter those who retain elements of earlier Jewish tradition, other than those that they themselves adopt and adapt to fit the new needs of the time.

3. ENOCH, ENOCHIC BOOKS, AND THE FALLEN ANGELS IN PROTO-ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

By contrast, Christians continued to draw from the broader set of Jewish scriptures in circulation among non-Rabbinic Jews and to compose, redact, and collect texts penned in the names of ancient biblical figures, even as they adopted other modes of literary production, ranging from the composition of pseudepigrapha in the names of apostles to the adoption of a range of Greco-Roman genres by “Church Fathers” who wrote in their own names.

⁸⁴ Hezser, *Social Structure*, 467–89; Janowitz, “Rabbis,” 460–61.

⁸⁵ Kalmin has shown that the tannaitic sources consistently acknowledge the temptations that *minut* posed to the Rabbi (“Christians,” 160–62), in contrast to post-tannaitic sources that depict Rabbis as readily winning debates with the *minim* (pp. 163–64).

If our extant evidence is any measure, virtually all Christian exegetes in the second and third centuries adopted the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4.⁸⁶

In Christian sources composed prior to the Council of Nicea (325 CE), the number of references to the fallen angels rivals that in Second Temple Judaism. Like their pre-Rabbinic predecessors, Christian authors do not hesitate to integrate extrabiblical details from the Enochic myth of angelic descent, often with appeal to the words, deeds, and writings of Enoch.⁸⁷

The allusions to the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic pseudepigrapha in the NT suggest that the authors of the Epistle of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter were not the only members of the Jesus Movement who continued to cultivate Enochic texts and traditions. Likewise, our evidence from proto-orthodox Christian literature is not limited to traditions about Enoch and the fallen angels. We also find references to Enoch's writings and prophecies, suggesting some link between the popularity of the angelic descent myth, the celebration of Enoch as a pre-Christian Christian, and the continued use of Enochic books by a surprising number of Christians at this time. A few of the allusions seem to refer to other Enochic pseudepigrapha, including unidentifiable or nonextant works.⁸⁸ The majority, however, point to the continued popularity of the *Book of the Watchers*,⁸⁹ making it likely that the circulation of this book contributed

⁸⁶ There are only two extant exceptions – Origen and Julius Africanus – and both treat the angelic interpretation as the dominant position to which they present alternatives; see Ch. 6.

⁸⁷ E.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.2; Clement of Alexandria, *Ecl.* 53.4; Tertullian, *Idol.* 4.2.

⁸⁸ VanderKam identifies the following as possible references to other extant Enochic books: Tertullian's loose quotation of *1 En.* 99:6–7 (EE) in *Idol.* 4.3 (in the context of Enoch's prophecies) and his allusion to *1 En.* 82 (AB) in *Cult.fem.* 1.3.1 (in the context of describing the transmission of the "Scripture of Enoch"); Origen's possible allusion to AB in *Hom.Num.* 28 (when discussing the contents of the "booklets [pl.] called Enoch"); see "1 Enoch, Enochic motifs," 48–59. To this, we should add Anatolius' comments about the calendrical system of the Jews being confirmed by the "book of Enoch," which likely alludes to AB (Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 7.32.19). In certain cases, words are attributed to Enoch with no clear connection to the extant Enochic books, leading scholars to debate whether they are very free paraphrases of passages or even themes therein or whether they refer to nonextant Enochic books. These include *T.12*'s Enochic sayings as cited above, plus Barn 4; Clement, *Ecl.* 2.1; Tertullian, *Idol.* 15.6. On the identification of these allusions, see Lawlor, "Early," 171, 182; VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 36–40, 44–45; Reeves, "Enochic Citation." Lawlor and Reeves doubt that Clement's reference to Enoch's words at *Ecl.* 2.1 derive from any part of *1 Enoch*, while VanderKam follows Dillman, Charles, and Black in identifying it as an allusion to *1 En.* 19:3 (BW).

⁸⁹ Alongside the possible allusion to *1 En.* 19:3 noted above, VanderKam notes the following: Clement's paraphrase of *1 En.* 19:3 in *Ecl.* 2.1 and his allusion to *1 En.* 7:1–8:3 in 53.4 (both introduced as things Enoch "said"), and his allusion to *1 En.* 16:3 in *Strom.* 5.1.10.1–2; Tertullian's paraphrase of *1 En.* 19:1 in *Idol.* 4.2 (introduced as something Enoch "prophesied" [*praedice*]), allusions to *1 En.* 8:1 in *Cult.fem.* 1.3 and 2.10; Origen's possible allusion to *1 En.* 2–5 in *Princ.*, 1.3.3 and quotation of *1 En.* 21:1 followed by *1 En.* 19:3 in 4.4.8; the reference to *1 En.* 6:6 in his commentary to John 6:25; note also his discussion about Celsus' use of the book of Enoch when countering this pagan's interpretation of angelic descent in *Cels.* 5.52–55. Also Lawlor, "Early," esp. 186–87.

to the spread of the Enochic myth of angelic descent – both directly and indirectly, and through both oral and written channels of transmission.⁹⁰

i. The Angelic Reading of Gen 6:1–4 and the Enochic Myth of Angelic Descent

Even though ecclesiarchs in the Roman Empire eventually followed their Rabbinic counterparts in formulating alternative approaches to Gen 6:1–4, we find no evidence that the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 was a “marginal” or “heretical” position in the second and third centuries. In fact, this view is propounded by some of the most influential proto-orthodox writers of the time, including Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Bardaisan, Tertullian, Commodian, Cyprian, and Lactantius.⁹¹ If anything, it appears to have been more dominant among the so-called “Church Fathers” than among the so-called “heretics” against whom they wrote.⁹²

One important example is Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–200 CE). In his heresiological opus *Adversus haereses*, Irenaeus cites the future punishment of the “angels who transgressed and became apostates” [ἀγγέλους τοὺς παραβεβηκότας καὶ ἐν ἀποστασίᾳ γεγονότας] in “everlasting fire” [εἰς τὸ αἰώνιον πῦρ], when asserting that all the “ungodly, unrighteous, wicked, and profane among humankind” will share the same fate (*Haer.* 1.10.1; cf. *1 En.* 10:13–14 [BW]).⁹³ Many details of this reference to the fallen angels are familiar from our survey of pre-Rabbinic literature: Irenaeus focuses on the future punishment of the fallen angels, presupposing a narrative detail with

⁹⁰ Bauckham explains the dominance of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in second- and third-century Christianity as “largely due to the widespread popularity and authority of the book of Enoch” (“Fall,” 316). We might add that the use of Enochic texts and traditions clusters in the same areas in which the Greek translation of BW seems to have circulated in the first century. References to Enoch, Enochic books, and the Enochic myth of angelic descent are found mostly among Alexandrian authors (Barnabas, Athenagoras, Clement, Origen) and also those with connections to Syro-Palestine (Jude, 2 Peter, *T.12*, Justin) and Asia Minor (*1 Sib. Or.*; Irenaeus). Its use by North African authors (Cyprian, Commodian) appears to reflect the influence of Tertullian (so Lawlor, “Early,” 217).

⁹¹ For a survey of the sources, VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 62–84; Wagner, “Interpretations,” esp. 145–55.

⁹² The interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and use of the Enochic myth of angelic descent by “gnostics” and “Jewish-Christian” groups fall outside the scope of the present inquiry. It suffices to note that, whatever conclusions scholars may be tempted to draw from phenomenological parallels between “Apocalypticism” and “Gnosticism” (esp. Stroumsa, *Another Seed*), our evidence suggests that the Enochic myth of angelic descent was less influential among “gnostic” authors than among proto-orthodox ones in this period (Wagner, “Interpretations,” 142–45; Brakke, “Seed of Seth”).

⁹³ That Irenaeus here speaks of the angels that fell before the Flood, rather than Satan and his hosts, is clear from two other passages, in which he references the sinful angels in the context of the life of Enoch (*Haer.* 4.16.2) and the Flood (4.36.4).

no counterpart in Gen 6:1–4, and he parallels the punishment of these angelic sinners with the fate of wicked humans.⁹⁴ At the same time, *Haer.* 1.10.1 attests the progressive integration of the eschatological elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent into a distinctively Christian view of the Eschaton. In the [previous chapter](#), we noted 1 Peter’s assertion that Christ testified against the imprisoned Watchers after his resurrection. By contrast, Irenaeus asserts that Christ will execute judgment against the fallen angels and the human wicked at the End of Time. Whereas the former implicitly paralleled the postresurrection activities of Christ with Enoch’s role in the days before the Flood (cf. *1 En.* 12–13 [BW]), the latter focuses on the eschatological future and, consistent with early Christian trends in the Christological interpretation of Jewish scriptures, grants Christ the role that the *Book of the Watchers* had reserved for God (*1 En.* 10).⁹⁵

Most striking, however, is the context of Irenaeus’ statement. It is found in his celebrated summary of the beliefs shared by all authentically apostolic churches (*Haer.* 1.10.1), one of several passages in his writings that reflect early Christian efforts at defining “orthodoxy” by declaring a certain set of beliefs as its emblems (also 1.22.1). Much like *m.Sanh.* 10:1, *Haer.* 1.10.1 constructs normativity through the very act of describing certain beliefs as a shared consensus. Even as Irenaeus interprets the diversity of authentically Christian communities in terms of their unified support of a core group of doctrines, he simultaneously defines those who disagree with any part as “heretics” with no share in the apostolic faith.

This means, of course, that we cannot take Irenaeus’ statement at face value; we cannot simply assume that all “mainline” second-century Christians embraced this element of the Enochic myth of angelic descent as part of the Christian truth. Nevertheless, it is significant that Irenaeus himself considers the future punishment of the Watchers to be an integral part of the one, apostolic, “orthodox” version of salvation-history and lists it among the teachings that the Holy Spirit “proclaimed through the prophets” [διὰ τῶν

⁹⁴ Also *Haer.* 4.36.4: “He justly brought on the Deluge for the purpose of extinguishing that most infamous race of men then existent – who could not bring forth fruit to God, since the angels that sinned [*cum angeli transgressors commixti fuissent eis*] had commingled with them – and so that He might put a check upon the sins of these men.” This passage is followed by another example of the punished wicked, whose pairing with the Watchers is familiar from early Jewish sources: the Sodomites.

⁹⁵ This view of Christ’s role in the eschatological punishment of the Watchers may have its roots in a Christological reading of *1 En.* 10. That passage speaks of “the Most High, the Holy and Great One” sending an angel to warn Noah, while “the Lord” sends angels to punish the Watchers and Giants. Just as some Christians read OT references to “the Lord” as referring to Christ, so it is possible that exegetes read a similar division of divine labor into BW too.

προφητῶν κερυχὸς].⁹⁶ Insofar as he implies that the denial of this prophecy excludes the believer from the apostolic Church, we may further speculate that it must have been, if not a matter of total consensus, at least widespread enough that he could claim it as such.

We cannot discount the possibility that some early Christians encountered certain elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent as simply part of biblical history, due to the transmission of selected traditions about fallen angels in oral interpretative traditions accompanying the reading and exposition of other scriptures. As in pre-Rabbinic Judaism, Gen 6:1–4 was likely the primary locus for the transmission of such traditions. If the hermeneutical and homiletical comments of proto-orthodox authors provide any clues to the oral components of the Christian exegetical tradition, it is possible that the Enochic myth of angelic descent also came to play a role in the oral exposition of Christian scriptures, including but not limited to Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter.⁹⁷

As one might expect, early Christian authors utilize elements of the *Book of Watchers*' version of the angelic decent myth, not only in their comments about Enoch, the "sons/angels of God," and the era of the Flood, but also in their discussions about the statements about the wicked angels in these NT Epistles.⁹⁸ We can only speculate about the degree to which the literary works of early Christian writers reflected (and affected) the liturgical, homiletical, and didactic use of scriptures in their communities. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to imagine why elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent might have been transmitted in the course of the oral exposition of these writings – particularly once they came to be read in communities with members and proselytes who were not familiar with the Jewish traditions to which these texts so tersely allude.

ii. *Enoch and the Status of Enochic Books in the Second and Third Centuries CE*

As in pre-Rabbinic Judaism, the proliferation of traditions about the fallen angels in early Christianity speaks to the influence of the *Book of the Watchers* even beyond the bounds of its own transmission-history. Nevertheless, the patterns in our extant evidence suggest that the Enochic myth of angelic

⁹⁶ Although it is possible that the inspired status of this tradition owes to its presence in Jude, 1 Peter, and/or 2 Peter, these books number among the few NT texts that Irenaeus nowhere cites in *Haer.*

⁹⁷ See Ch. 5 on the use of the Enochic myth of angelic descent to interpret 1 Cor 11:10.

⁹⁸ See Ch. 6.

descent remained closely linked both to the authority of Enoch himself and to the writings attributed to him, which continued to circulate in a variety of locales (esp. Syrio-Palestine, Egypt, North Africa). There are also reasons to believe that, in the centuries before ecclesiastical efforts at defining a canon, some Christians treated the *Book of the Watchers* as a prophetic text, which – like “biblical” books – could be culled for ancient testimonies to the life of Christ and the teachings of the church.

Above, we noted Jude’s quotation of 1 *En.* 1:9 (BW) as a prophecy of Enoch and Irenaeus’ inclusion of elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent among the revelations that the Holy Spirit “proclaimed through the prophets” (*Haer.* 1.10.1). Similarly, Athenagoras summarizes the Enochic myth of angelic descent when discussing things that “the prophets have declared” (*Leg.* 24–26). Tertullian not only describes the origins of the demons in the fall of the angels as part of the instruction found “in our sacred books” (*Apol.* 22), but he cites “prophecies” of Enoch, taken from both the *Book of the Watchers* and the *Epistle of Enoch*, as teachings transmitted by the Holy Spirit through Scripture (*Idol.* 4).⁹⁹ Furthermore, authors of the time sometimes allude to Enochic writings alongside biblical books with no hint of a difference in status.¹⁰⁰

The example of Jude suggests that the use of the Enochic literature by proto-orthodox Christian authors follows from its popularity in some sectors of the Jesus Movement (also Barn 4:3), which itself reflects the continued cultivation of Enochic texts and traditions in certain Jewish groups in the first century. At the same time, the early Patristic evidence attests an interesting shift in the perception of these books, namely, the view of Enoch as a prophet and the citation of passages from his writings as prophecies.¹⁰¹ This characterization of Enoch no doubt developed from early Jewish traditions concerning his predictions about history and its culmination (esp. BD, EE). Yet its effect on the perception of Enochic pseudepigrapha speaks no less to the evolving conception of scriptural authority in early Christianity.

Beginning in the second century, Christian writings increasingly came to be elevated to the status of Scripture, necessitating (among other things) the development of new models for understanding the ancient texts that Christians inherited from Judaism. The notion of Enoch as prophet forms parts of a broader phenomenon: the Christian use of the category of prophecy to describe pre-Christian witnesses to Christ and the teachings of the

⁹⁹ Tertullian’s support of the Enochic literature predates his Montanist phase (VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 41–42, 49–50).

¹⁰⁰ E.g., Athenagoras, *Leg.* 24; Clement, *Ecl.* 2.1; Tertullian, *Idol.* 4.2–3, 15.6; Origen, *Princ.* 4.4.8; VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 35–60.

¹⁰¹ For Tertullian, he is “the oldest prophet” (*Idol.* 15.6).

Church – including but not limited to biblical prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Consistent with its roots in the citation of prophetic prooftexts to buttress the Jesus Movement’s claims about their messiah, this expanded view of prophecy is used to articulate a distinctively Christian understanding of Jewish history as precursor to its culmination in Christ.

Although biblical figures could still be called “prophets” irrespective of their association with any inspired writings, the term was closely associated with the purported authors of Jewish scriptures – so much so that “the prophets” or “the prophetic writings” could denote the whole of the pre-Christian literary witness to Christ (e.g., Justin, *1 Apol.* 67.3–4). In the case of Enoch, his new-found status as prophet appears to be linked to the circulation of books in his name. This status impacted the reception of Enochic books no less than the use of these books informed the Christian understanding of Enoch himself, as a man who was far more important than the passing reference to him in Gen 5:21–24 might have us believe.

If Barr is correct that the category of “prophets” remained fluid in early Christianity and encompassed “any non-Torah book that was holy scripture,”¹⁰² we cannot rule out the possibility that, in some communities, Enochic writings numbered among those “writings of the prophets” that were publicly read alongside the “memoirs of the apostles” when early Christians gathered to worship (Justin, *1 Apol.* 67.3–4). There was little liturgical standardization at this time, and a surprising number of authors seem to treat “the book(s) of Enoch” as Scripture, accepting its Enochic authorship and attributing its truths to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰³ Moreover, it is likely that, already in this early period, excerpts from the Enochic literature found their way into Christian *testimonia*, alongside other passages from other pre-Christian “prophets” that proved useful for preaching and teaching.¹⁰⁴

We cannot assume, of course, that every author who cites our text assumes its status as Scripture.¹⁰⁵ Here, it proves helpful to note two facets of the

¹⁰² Barr, *Scripture*, 55. See Matt 5:17; 7:12; Luke 24:47; Acts 28:23; John 1:45; cf. Luke 24:44.

¹⁰³ E.g., Tertullian, who explicitly defends the scriptural status of this book; see Ch. 6.

¹⁰⁴ The Greek excerpts from BW in Syncellus likely derive from a chronographical source-collection, as does the paraphrase of *1 En.* 6 in Michael Syrus’ chronicle and the brief Latin quotation from BD (*1 En.* 89:42–49) in Codex Vaticanus Gr. 1809, which may also come from a collection of extracts of Enochic writings (Knibb, *Commentary*, 17–18). Portions of the Enochic literature seem to have circulated in Latin and Syriac only in the form of excerpts.

¹⁰⁵ From the surviving references and allusions to BW, it is impossible to extrapolate every author’s attitude towards this book – let alone to determine whether an author expresses opinions that are typical of his community, common only to the learned strata thereof, or merely idiosyncratic. We can, however, use the patterns in our evidence to speculate about the range of ways in which this book was used by Christians in the second and third centuries, with reference to the function(s) of prophetic writings in early Christian communities.

Christian notion of the prophet: [1] the prophet as pre-Christian witness to Christ and [2] the prophet as a divinely inspired figure, whether of the past or the present day. In many cases, the two were inextricably intertwined and mutually validating – as seems logical to moderns accustomed to thinking in terms of “the Bible” as an inviolate whole. In practice, however, it seems that a text could function as a scriptural proof-text without necessarily being granted a sacred status of its own, beyond its value as an ancient testimony that lends support to the Gospel.

It is probable that the range of Christian attitudes towards the *Book of the Watchers* encompassed this intermediate status. We find many more authors who treat Enochic pseudepigrapha as viable sources for pre-Christian testimonies than authors who elevate them to the status of inspired writing. This pattern conforms to the dominant modes of discourse in early Christian literature, in which Jewish scriptures of all sorts were used primarily as proof-texts, and it may also reflect the embryonic status of efforts at negotiating the relative status of Jewish scriptures and Christian writings. Some Christians likely viewed the *Book of the Watchers* as useful but not inspired. Even if it was read liturgically in some circles, its use in others was probably limited by its value for specific homiletical, hermeneutical, and historiographical arguments.

The latter may have been facilitated by the circulation of isolated passages from this apocalypse in *testimonia*, which could be used as the basis for oral preaching and literary composition without any knowledge of the text as a whole or any reflection on its status in relation to now canonical (i.e., retrospectively “biblical”) books. The evidence of Codex Panopolitanus shows that some circles cherished this apocalypse enough to reproduce it. Its integration into *testimonia*, however, would have resulted in the circulation of parts of the *Book of the Watchers* well beyond the bounds of the circles that cultivated Enochic texts and traditions.¹⁰⁶ Our evidence from the first and second centuries does not allow us readily to distinguish between the two, since authors do not comment on their choice to use this text.¹⁰⁷ Only in the third century do we find any explicit statements about the status of the Enochic literature, and, when we do, the discussions revolve around the absence of these books

¹⁰⁶ Among passages that are the most likely candidates for inclusion in early *testimonia* are verses that were used to explain Hebrew words and names, which often occur in the works of authors who do not seem to have known or valued our text (e.g., the comments on Jared in Origen, *Comm. John* 6.25 and Epiphanius, *Pan.* 1.4 and Hilary’s comments on Mt. Hermon in his homily on Ps 132:6).

¹⁰⁷ However we might speculate about the attitudes towards BW, this silence points to a striking lack of self-consciousness about the use of Enochic material alongside “biblical” material in the first and second centuries.

from the canon of “the Jews.” The opinions voiced likely reflect the range of attitudes towards this book among earlier Christians. As we shall see in Chapter 6, the example of Tertullian shows that some Christians fervently defended the scriptural status of this text, whereas the example of Origen suggests that even those who questioned their authenticity continued to cite passages as prooftexts. Both, however, assume their value as pre-Christian witness.

It would be anachronistic to conclude that some early Christian communities viewed this text as “canonical,” while others saw it as “noncanonical.” Rather, the various attitudes towards this book may be best considered in terms of the precanonical context of proto-orthodox Christianity. It is not until the third century that we find hints of self-consciousness about the use of Enochic literature in proto-orthodox circles – and, notably, this occurs concurrently with a general growth of “canonical consciousness” about the use of Jewish scriptures and a shift in the discussion about the scriptural legacy from Judaism, away from the need to defend the use of any Jewish texts against the challenge of Marcion, to an increasing concern to correlate the books that they did use with those accepted among the Jews (see Ch. 6).¹⁰⁸

For many early Christians, however, the “book(s) of Enoch” seem to have functioned as Scripture. This could mean different things in a precanonical context, prior to ecclesiastical attempts to define which texts could be used in liturgical settings, which could be mined for pre-Christian testimonies to the teachings of the Church, and which should not be read publicly at all. For our inquiry into the status of the *Book of the Watchers* in the second and third centuries, what proves significant is that the use of this text – whether in whole or in parts, whether as Scripture and/or prooftext – had become just as fully integrated into proto-orthodox Christian practice as the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 through the Enochic myth of angelic descent.

4. TEXT-SELECTION AND COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

The [next chapter](#) will propose that the “christianization” of both the Enochic myth of angelic descent and the *Book of the Watchers* owes much to the redeployment of the motif of illicit angelic instruction by early Christian apologists. Before we turn to examine this distinctively Christian approach to the interpretation of our text, we should stop and consider the broader ramifications of the continuities between Second Temple Jews and proto-orthodox Christians with regard to their use of Enochic texts and traditions. In many ways, the

¹⁰⁸ McDonald, *Formation*, 100–33.

status of the *Book of the Watchers* in early Christianity follows naturally from its position in pre-Rabbinic Palestine: its connections to Genesis remained firmly in place, as exegetes interpreted Gen 5:21–24 in terms of Enoch’s escape from death and Gen 6:1–4 in terms of the fall of the angels. In the absence of a closed biblical canon, it seems that some Christians granted a scriptural authority to the Enochic literature akin to books that later became canonical. And, even among those who did not, elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent had an impact on the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4.

Moreover, the Christian innovations discussed above are all rooted in earlier Jewish trends. The belief that Christ will punish the Watchers at the Eschaton represents a Christological variation of the traditions in *1 En.* 10. The notion of Enoch as prophet follows from the eschatological exhortations voiced in Enochic pseudepigrapha such as the *Book of the Watchers*, *Book of Dreams*, and *Epistle of Enoch*, as well as the use of *vaticinia ex eventu* in the latter two. Even the range of attitudes towards the Enochic literature finds precedents in pre-Rabbinic Judaism.

However tempting it may be to fall into a familiar dichotomy, imagining that the Rabbis were the guardians of Jewish tradition and the Christians were the innovators who created a new “religion” by borrowing selected elements from Judaism, our findings in this chapter caution against an uncritical adoption of the conventional wisdom. In the exegesis of Gen 5:21–24 and Gen 6:1–4 and in the use of the angelic descent myth, proto-orthodox Christians were ironically more “traditional” than their Rabbinic counterparts. Contrary to the usual assumptions, Rabbinic biblical exegesis is here marked by its departures from earlier Jewish tradition, while Christian biblical exegesis stands in radical continuity with the trends in pre-Rabbinic Judaism. Perhaps even more striking is the fact that, in their interpretations of Gen 6:1–4, proto-orthodox Christians from a variety of geographical areas (Egypt, Syrio-Palestine, Asia Minor) followed the dominant trajectories in pre-Rabbinic Palestine. By contrast, Rabbinic Jews opted for an euhemeristic approach that finds its only surviving precedents in Greek literature written by Diaspora Jews – and, moreover, by Jews like Josephus and the putative author of the Jewish core of the *First Sibylline Oracle*, who adopted these approaches as part of their attempts to conform the Jewish account of early human history to the standards of Greco-Roman historiography.

The revolutionary nature of the Rabbinic enterprise should serve to remind us that, in negotiating between tradition and innovation, Christians were engaging in the same tasks of religious self-definition as others Jews of their time – even if, for some, this meant constructing a “Judaism” against which to

contrast their own identities. Like their Rabbinic counterparts, they developed certain aspects from their shared heritage of pre-Rabbinic Judaism, downplayed or abandoned others, and constructed new frameworks through which to understand their own place in the history of Israel. The parallel aims of these two endeavors mitigates the assumption that “the Christians” simply appropriated texts and traditions from “the Jews,” leading us to focus instead on the elements of continuity that are present even in Christian innovations on earlier Jewish traditions.

That is not to say, of course, that proto-orthodox Christians were any less selective than early Rabbinic Jews in their preservation of elements from their shared heritage of Second Temple Judaism. Nor were their selections of these elements any less based in efforts to define the true nature of Israel against those who voiced alternate views, including both Jews and so-called “heretics.” Consequently, the elements of continuity in the *Book of the Watchers*’ reception-history in pre-Rabbinic Judaism and proto-orthodox Christianity provide a necessary foundation for our inquiry into the early Christian *Nachleben* of our text, but they do not suffice to explain why this text continued to be copied in early Christian circles.

Several of the developments mentioned above shed light on the reasons for the preservation of Enochic texts by early Christians. In the [previous chapter](#), we noted the translation of the *Book of the Watchers* into Greek by early Jews, and the circulation of copies of LXX Genesis that rendered “sons of God” [בני האלהים] with “angels of God” [οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ]. The former ensured that our text was accessible to even the earliest Greek-speaking Christians,¹⁰⁹ while the latter probably fostered the perception that the Enochic myth of angelic descent was simply part of biblical history. The Christological use of the Enochic myth of angelic descent and the view of Enoch as a prophet may have both contributed to the integration of Enochic texts and traditions into the framework of Christian salvation-history. Moreover, the inclusion of material from the *Book of the Watchers* in *testimonia* may have facilitated the circulation of Enochic material, even in those communities with no geographical or cultural continuity with Jews who used these books.

Before we turn to the “christianization” of traditions about the fallen angels, we should note one more contributing factor: the Christian view of Enoch as an

¹⁰⁹ There is little evidence for a full Latin translation of BW; indeed, the book was falling into disfavor just around the time that the texts were being translated *en masse* into Latin, and earlier authors like Tertullian seem to have used it in Greek (Lawlor, “Early,” 208, 210, 213, 222–23).

ancient exemplar of the uncircumcised righteous. Characteristic is Irenaeus' description of the antediluvian sage in *Haer.* 4.16.2:

Enoch too, pleasing God without circumcision, discharged the office of God's legate to the angels although he was a man [*cum esset homo Dei legatione ad angelos fungebatur*; cf. *1 En.* 12–13], and was translated (cf. LXX Gen 5:24), and is preserved until now as a witness of the just judgment of God, because the angels when they had transgressed fell to the earth for judgment [*quoniam angeli quidem transgressi desciderunt in terram in iudicium*], but the man who pleased [Him] was translated for salvation.

Like *1 En.* 12–13 (BW; also *Jub.* 4:21–22), Irenaeus cites Enoch's commission to rebuke the fallen angels and contrasts the elevation of Enoch with the descent of the Watchers.¹¹⁰ This early Jewish tradition, however, takes on a new significance. Even as his elevation of Enoch echoes the *Book of the Watchers*, Irenaeus enlists the sage in the service of an argument that proves pivotal for the proto-orthodox definition of Christian identity over against Judaism: the appeal to biblical history to assert that righteousness does not stand contingent on circumcision or the Sinaitic covenant.

As in early Jewish sources (Sir 44:16; 49:14), Enoch is found in Christian lists of the righteous of early biblical history, alongside figures like Noah and Abraham (Heb 11; *1 Clem* 9–10). Yet, for proto-orthodox authors, Enoch's escape from death also served a special function, as a proof-text to counter the biblical evidence cited by those – both outside of the Church and within – who viewed Torah-observance as necessary for salvation. It did not escape the notice of proto-orthodox Christians that Enoch's escape from death predates the institution of circumcision in the days of Abraham and the revelation of the Torah in the days of Moses. Tertullian, for instance, asserts in his *Answer to the Jews* that Enoch was “uncircumcised and not observant of the Sabbath” yet he was “translated from this world without first tasting death, in order that, as a candidate for eternal life, he might by this time show us that we too may please God without the burden of the law of Moses” (2). Insofar as Enoch was counted among the ranks of the pre-Christian Christians and cited to argue the antiquity of the proto-orthodox Christian view of piety as distinct from the observance of the whole of the Torah,¹¹¹ he is not perceived as a figure in

¹¹⁰ VanderKam states: “None of his other examples [i.e., of the pre-Abrahamic righteous] in this passage go beyond the givens of Genesis; only the lines about Enoch do. This suggests that Irenaeus understood Gen 5:21–24; 6:1–4 in light of *1 Enoch* and placed its account of Enoch on the same plane as the other scriptural references” (“*1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs*,” 42).

¹¹¹ Also Justin, *Dial.* 19, 23, 43, 45, 92; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.16.2, also 1.27.3, 5.5.1; Tertullian, *Adv.Jud.* 4.

Jewish history at all. In this schema, he becomes a Christian who lived before the time of Christ; if he is a prophet, he is one to whom “the Jews” have no claim.

We would be naïve to imagine that all Jews followed the Rabbinic movement in abandoning Enochic texts and traditions. We might even question whether the use of these texts by Christians played any special role in their initial rejection by early Rabbis. Nevertheless, for our understanding of the role of text-selection in the delineation of community boundaries, it proves no less significant that many Christian authors perceived “the Jews” as differing from them in this regard. For them, the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the use of Enochic writings seem to have been marked as characteristically “Christian” as opposed to “Jewish” practices. To modern ears, this might sound odd, in light of the Jewish origins of the apocalypse and in light of the scholarly tendency to see their use by Christians as part of the Christian “appropriation” of Jewish literature. Yet, to those Christians who accepted the pseudepigraphical attribution of the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic books, it may have seemed natural that the records of the revelations to this pre-Sinaitic prophet formed part of the special heritage of the Church.



Demonology and the Construction of Christian Identity: Approaches to Illicit Angelic Instruction among Proto-Orthodox Christians

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER EXPLORED THREE FACETS OF THE PROTO-Orthodox Christian relationship with Judaism: continuities with pre-Rabbinic Judaism, parallels with the emergent Rabbinic movement, and efforts to delineate an identity distinct from “the Jews.” This, of course, forms only half of the story of the construction of a Christian collective identity in the second and third centuries. The other half – the Christian encounter with Greco-Roman culture – had no less of an impact on the interpretation of the Enochic myth of angelic descent and the continued transmission of the *Book of the Watchers* in Christian circles. It was due, in large part, to the challenge of Greco-Roman culture that proto-orthodox Christians made their most radical break with earlier Jewish interpretations of this apocalypse, namely, their appeal to the fallen angels and their teachings to explain the corruption of humankind.

In this chapter, we will begin with the earliest extant Christian example of this motif, as found in the writings of the second-century apologist Justin Martyr. Just as the *Book of the Watchers* uses the teachings of the Watchers to warn its readers against overzealous speculation into cosmological secrets (see Ch. 1), so Justin adapts the motif of illicit angelic instruction to transform the angelic descent myth into a pointed critique of his pagan contemporaries. Insofar as his account of angelic descent includes both the teachings of the Watchers and their sexual sins, Justin follows the *Book of the Watchers* more closely than earlier Jews and Christians.¹ Yet he radically shifts its ramifications

¹ Goodenough posits Justin’s dependence on a tradition “which had long been incorporated from Judaism to Christianity” (*Theology*, 200). As we have seen, however, there is ample evidence for widespread use of Enochic pseudepigrapha by Christians in the 1st–3rd centuries. In light of the numerous and significant parallels, I see no need to posit a Christian source to mediate these traditions. Moreover, Justin frequently cites Enoch as a paradigm of a righteous man living before and without the Law (*Dial.* 23; 43; 45; 92).

by adding a new element: the equation of the fallen angels and their progeny with the pagan pantheon of gods (cf. LXX Ps 95:5).² As a result, he is able to utilize the Enochic myth of angelic descent to locate the corruption of Greco-Roman culture firmly within biblical history.

This chapter will propose that Justin's redeployment of the instruction motif played a determinative role in the "christianization" of the Enochic myth of angelic descent. Earlier Jewish approaches to Enochic traditions about the fallen angels continued to be developed, as we have seen in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, Justin's interpretation rendered the Enochic myth of angelic descent newly relevant for Christians of his own time as they struggled to define an identity based in their similarities and their differences, not only with Jews and Judaism, but also with the Greco-Roman world that surrounded them.

After analyzing Justin's version of the angelic descent myth, we will consider its influence on early Christian ideas about the fallen angels. After Justin, the instruction motif becomes a common argument in the arsenal of antipagan polemics and a common component of Christian demonologies. A number of proto-orthodox authors echo his views, and some even turn again to the material about the Watchers' teachings in *1 En.* 6–16 (BW) to build on them. In the process, the explanatory power of the instruction motif is brought to bear on a surprisingly broad variety of issues, ranging from the problem of "heresy" and the dangers of feminine vanity to the puzzle of the partial truths in Greek philosophy.

1. THE MOTIF OF ILLICIT ANGELIC INSTRUCTION IN THE WRITINGS OF JUSTIN MARTYR

Writing in the wake of the Bar Kokhba Revolt, Justin was faced with the challenge of disassociating Christians from contemporary Jews, while simultaneously stressing their continuity with the respectably ancient history of Israel. If shorn of any connection to Judaism, Christianity could be dismissed as a suspiciously new *superstitio* that deserved to suffer persecution due to its destabilizing effects on Roman society. If perceived as simply another group of Jews, however, Christians risked falling prey to the same charges of chronic rebelliousness against the Roman Empire. Marcion and his followers eagerly jettisoned the Jewish heritage of the church, while various "Jewish-Christians"

² Justin's innovation on the early Jewish exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 is not the association of the Watchers and their sons with demons (cf. Goodenough, *Theology*, 199; Droge, *Homer*, 56). Rather, it is his equation of the fallen angels and the pagan gods.

approached Christ-devotion as an option within Judaism. Justin's choice to navigate the precarious straits between these two extremes largely determined the stance of the late antique Christian orthodoxy that denounced all other alternatives as "heresy."

Justin's concern for constructing Christian identity in terms of both Judaism and Greco-Roman culture can be seen in the range of his extant works. His two *Apologies* are explicitly addressed to prominent Romans, and Justin there defends Christian beliefs in terms of their similarities with Greco-Roman values and promotes Christianity as the true philosophy. Although the intended audience of his *Dialogue with Trypho* remains a topic of debate,³ this text is primarily concerned with defining the nature of Christian piety through an extended contrast with Jewish sinfulness, depicting the church as legitimate heir to the biblical heritage of the Jews.

Scholars have long noted that the fallen angels play a surprisingly prominent role in Justin's apologetic arguments against pagans, and they have contrasted his theory of the demonic inspiration of Greco-Roman culture with his more charitable approach to Hellenistic philosophy as containing some seeds of truth sown by Christ/*Logos*. In what follows, I will further suggest that the significance of his redeployment of the angelic descent myth cannot be understood apart from a comparison with his treatment of the Jews.⁴

i. The Retelling of the Angelic Descent Myth in 2 Apol. 5

References to the fallen angels can be found in all of Justin's extant works, but the only narrative account of angelic descent occurs in 2 *Apol.* 5. Here, the angelic descent myth functions as an etiology for the injustice and disorder on the earth. The text begins by describing the persecution of Christians under Urbicus (1.1; also 2.1–20). Justin blames the persecution on "foul demons [φᾰύλοι δαίμονες] who hate us and who keep such people as these in subjection to themselves and serve them as judges, inciting them, as rulers moved by evil demons [ὡς ὄν ἄρχοντας δαιμονιῶντας], to put us to death" (2 *Apol.* 1.2). When he then glorifies Christians who fearlessly face martyrdom, secure in their faith that death will free them from oppression by "evil rulers," he is forced to explain why they do not choose to kill themselves and return their saved souls to God. For Justin, the answer lies in the essential goodness of God and His creation: "We have been taught that God did not make the world aimlessly, but for the sake of the human race" (2 *Apol.* 4).

³ Rajak, "Talking," 79–80; Skarsaune, *Proof*, 258–59, 429, 433.

⁴ For a more detailed analysis of Justin's appeal to the fallen angels, see Reed, "Trickery."

His retelling of the Enochic myth of angelic descent follows directly on this assertion and functions to explain why evil holds sway in a good world and how the demons came to infiltrate the Roman structures of power. The origin of evil is here presented as a breach in cosmic harmony; just as the nature poem in *1 En.* 2–5 (BW) exhorts the reader to consider the orderliness of the heavenly luminaries (2:1), seasonal weather changes (2:1, 3; 3:1–4:1), and cycles of vegetation (5:1) as models for ethical steadfastness, so Justin here cites the elements of heaven, the fruitfulness of agricultural produce, and the predictable rotation of the seasons as evidence for the governance of divinely instituted Natural Law (*2 Apol.* 5.2; cf. *1 En.* 5:1–2).

In describing angelic descent, he similarly draws on *1 En.* 15–16, the rebuke of angelic sin that the *Book of the Watchers* privileges as the speech of God. There, God is depicted as articulating the Watchers' sin in terms of their transgression of the distinct roles that He intended for angels and humans respectively: the essence of their transgression was their choice not to follow their true nature but to act instead "like the children of earth" (*1 En.* 15:3–4). Likewise, Justin describes the cosmic situation prior to the angel's descent in terms of God's delineation of separate realms of human and angelic responsibility within His orderly creation. Just as God "subjects earthly things to human beings," so He entrusted "the care of humankind and the things under heaven" to the angels (*2 Apol.* 5.2).

According to *2 Apology*, the harmonious relationship between humanity, creation, and the angels was breached when "the angels [ἄγγελοι], transgressing this order [παράβαντες τήνδε τὴν τάξιν], yielded to women in lust [γυναικῶν μίξεσιν ἠττήθησαν] and begat children, who are those called demons [οἱ λεγόμενοι δαίμονες]" (5.2). Justin here follows *1 En.* 15:8–16:1, which posits that, even after the destruction of the Giants' bodies, their "evil spirits" [πνεύματα πονηρὰ] continue to roam the earth, causing suffering among humankind. In calling them δαίμονες, Justin echoes the Greek translation of *1 En.* 19:1, even as he invokes the Greco-Roman concept of the *daimon* as an intermediary figure who is neither as divine as the gods nor as lowly as humans.⁵

Justin's emphasis on the fallen angels' transgression of proper roles and his equation of their sons with demons has precedents in other pre-Rabbinic sources. The former can be found in the *Testament of Naphtali*, which denounces the Watchers for "departing from Nature's order" (3:5), and in the Epistle of Jude, which calls them "the angels who did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling" (6). The latter occurs also in *Jubilees*

⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 179–81; Ferguson, *Demonology*, 33–59; Hanson, *Studies*, 164–65.

(10) and may be presupposed in the demonology of the Qumran community (4Q510 1, 5).

Such traditions may have also shaped Justin's articulation of the angelic descent myth.⁶ Nevertheless, his special debt to the *Book of the Watchers* becomes clear when he turns to explore the ramifications of angelic descent for human history. Whereas earlier exegetes had downplayed the Watchers' teachings and treated their sins as comparable to human transgressions, Justin asserts their active corruption of humankind and emphasizes their pedagogical role in promulgating wickedness on earth.

According to 2 *Apol.* 5.4, the fallen angels enslaved humankind "by magical writings [διὰ μαγικῶν γραφῶν]," "by fears and the punishments that they occasioned," and "by teaching them to offer sacrifices and incense and libations." The assertion of enslavement through magic recalls the description of their instruction of humankind in sorcery, spells, and celestial divination in 1 *En.* 7:1, 8:3, and 9:7 (BW). Likewise, the association of the Watchers with idolatry and pagan sacrifice parallels 1 *En.* 19:1 (BW), where the angel Uriel shows Enoch the prison of "the angels who had intercourse with women" and warns him that "their spirits [πνεύματα], taking on many forms, will harm humankind and lead them astray, to sacrifice to demons [ἐπιθύειν τοῖς δαίμονιαις]."⁷

Just as the *Book of the Watchers* accuses Asael of causing human violence and promiscuity by means of his introduction of weapons, jewelry, and cosmetics to humankind (1 *En.* 8:1–2), so Justin goes on to assert that the angels sowed "murders [φόνους], wars [πολέμους], adulteries [μοιχείας], intemperate deeds [ἀκολασίας], and all wickedness [ἅσαν κακίαν]." His stress on their causal role in bringing about "all wickedness" also recalls its rebukes of Asael and other Watchers for teaching "wrong-doing and sins on the earth and all manner of guile in the land" (1 *En.* 9:7; 13:2) and revealing to humankind "all manner of sins" (9:8). Justin, in fact, seems to follow the *Book of the Watchers'* version of angelic descent myth in both form and function. Not only does he forefront the corrupting teachings of the fallen angels, but his brief summary of antediluvian history in 2 *Apol.* 5 effectively implies that the evils on the earth originated from the angels' deviance from their divinely designated responsibilities, rather than any human failing.

Justin's understanding of these Enochic traditions, however, is informed by an innovative interpretation of the identity of the fallen angels and their

⁶ On Justin's familiarity with some form of *T.12*, see Skarsaune, *Proof*, 253–55, 270–72, 281, 291, 344–45, 428–29.

⁷ Translation follows Gr^{Pan} (neither Aram nor Gr^{Syn} are here extant).

sons. Reading the *Book of the Watchers'* association between the spirits of the Giants and present-day demons through LXX Ps 95:5 (“All the gods of the nations are δαίμονες”),⁸ Justin asserts that these figures are the very gods celebrated in Greek myths and worshipped by the Romans who ironically persecute Christians for their alleged atheism and impiety.

By equating the fallen angels and demons with the pagan pantheon, Justin is able simultaneously to explain and to undermine Greco-Roman traditions about the gods by reading them through the lens of Enochic traditions about the Watchers:

the poets and mythologists, not knowing that it was the angels [τοὺς ἀγγέλους] and those demons begotten by them [τοὺς ἐξ αὐτῶν γεννηθέντας δαίμονας] that did these things . . . ascribed them to God [θεόν] himself and to those who were accounted to be sons [υἱοὺς] from him. (2 *Apol.* 5.5)

Consistent with the intended audience of this work, he grounds the plausibility of Jewish traditions about the mingling of the “sons of God” and “daughters of men” in Greco-Roman myths about the coupling of gods and mortals.⁹ Moreover, he echoes contemporary philosophical critiques of popular religion, even as he mounts a frontal attack on the edifices of Greek culture and Roman power.¹⁰

As a result, his angelic/demonic etiology of pagan wickedness speaks poignantly to the persecution that occasioned the composition of his 2 *Apology*. Just as fallen angels were originally responsible for the introduction of wicked ways to humankind, so the continued pagan misunderstanding and persecution of Christians results from the bad judgment that attends human enslavement to them and their sons (2 *Apol.* 1.2, 7). Insofar as the *Book of the Watchers* blames the fallen angels both for the antediluvian corruption of humankind and for producing the demons who will roam the earth until the final judgment, the Enochic myth of angelic descent enables Justin to amalgamate the error of polytheism and the injustice of persecution; he diagnoses them as two symptoms of the same disease: the demonic inspiration of Greco-Roman culture.

⁸ LXX Ps 95:5: πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἔθνῶν δαιμόνια (cf. MT Ps 96:5: “The gods of the nations are idols [עֲשׂוֹתֵי יָד]”). LXX Deut 32:17 and LXX Ps 106:37 connect pagan sacrifice and idolatry to *daimones*, thereby enhancing the connection between the demons/gods of LXX Ps 95:5 and the fallen angels whom 1 *En.* 19:1 accuses of leading humankind astray “to sacrifice to demons.” Justin quotes these LXX verses often (e.g., *Dial.* 19; 27; 55; 73; 79; 83; 119; 133; 1 *Apol.* 41). The connection between pagan/idolatrous worship and demons is also asserted in 1 *Cor* 19–21 and *Rev* 9:2.

⁹ Skarsaune, “Judaism,” 593.

¹⁰ Hanson, *Studies*, 145–48; Droge, *Homer*, 54–55.

3, it proves especially striking that 2 *Apol.* 5 explains how the good creation of God deteriorated into human sinfulness with no reference to Adam and Eve. The summary of early human history in 2 *Apology* progresses directly from a description of God's orderly creation of the world to an account of the breach in cosmic order caused by the wayward angels. Justin here goes even further than the *Book of the Watchers*, which uses a passing allusion to the first couple (1 *En.* 32:6) to dismiss their relevance for the etiology of evil. In 2 *Apol.* 5, their story is simply skipped, such that the reader finds no hint of the role of human culpability in contributing to the distance between humankind and the Creator.

Likewise, in the rest of the text, the primordial sins of humans find no place. References to the fallen angels and demons abound, but no mention is made of the first human couple. The same pattern can be found in Justin's earlier apology, which explains their influence on the pagans in much the same manner: demons trick pagans into worshipping idols, enslave them by means of magic and dream-visions, and cause wickedness (1 *Apol.* 5; 9; 10; 14). Moreover, they manipulate them to persecute Christians unfairly, misrepresent Christianity, and inspire Christian "heretics" like Simon Magus and Marcion (1 *Apol.* 5; 14; 54; 56; 26; 58; 62). The fallen angels and demonic brood also provide the primary solution to the Problem of Evil, while allusions to Gen 2–3 are absent. In this sense, Justin's two *Apologies* stand closer to the *Book of the Watchers* than any of the other texts that we have surveyed so far. Justin here seems to embrace the very feature of this apocalypse that earlier Jews and Christians have been most wary of adopting, namely, its appeal to the fallen angels to assert the supernatural origins of human sin and suffering.

In the *Dialogue*, however, Justin refers quite frequently to Gen 2–3. There, Justin tries to persuade his Jewish interlocutor that Christ redeems humankind from the sins of the first couple. The *Dialogue* argues that their transgression in the Garden of Eden engendered death and remains paradigmatic of all human disobedience to God (88; 94; 98; 124). Accordingly, the fallen angels and demons serve a more limited function, explaining the origins of the polytheism and idolatry that binds pagans in servitude to otherworldly forces.

Why might Justin appeal to different etiologies of sin in the *Dialogue* and in the *Apologies*? In part, this choice reflects the audiences of these texts. In a recent article,¹¹ I argued that it also corresponds to Justin's differing diagnoses of the conditions of Jews and pagans vis-à-vis Christian salvation. Even as Justin's writings are ostensibly oriented towards particular non-Christian audiences, I suggested that they speak no less to Christians and potential proselytes. Accordingly, his appeal to different etiologies of evil can be understood in

¹¹ Reed, "Trickery."

terms of a broader attempt to construct a genealogy of error that defines the unique position of the Christian with reference to the history of both Jewish and pagan sin.

Whereas Justin's focus on pagans in the *Apologies* led him to exploit the explanatory power of the myth of angelic descent, Justin thus appeals to the transgressions of Adam and Eve as his primary etiology of evil in the *Dialogue*. Like earlier exegetes, he treats the sins of the first couple as representative of all human wickedness. Nevertheless, the *Dialogue's* explication of the unique condition of the Jews suggests that Justin saw this primordial sin of disobedience as particularly paradigmatic for them.

In the *Dialogue*, Justin argues that the Jews' relationship with God is distinguished by their exceptional hardheartedness. Despite God's repeated attempts to guide them towards His will, the Jews are said to respond with chronic and willful disobedience. According to Justin, God gave this nation laws concerning "the fleshly circumcision, and the Sabbaths, and in short all the feasts," not because of their chosen status, but "on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your hearts [σκληροκαρδίαν]" (18.2).¹² Citing the most venomous prophetic denunciations of Israel, Justin interprets circumcision as a punishment aimed at separating this defiant nation from all others (19; 92) and posits a similarly tainted origin for the Jewish dietary laws (20; 46).¹³

Within the *Dialogue*, the consistent failure of these measures underlines the Jewish propensity for disobeying God. As in the prophetic texts from which Justin liberally quotes, all the suffering that befalls the Jews is interpreted in terms of retributive justice. Yet the *Dialogue* departs from Deuteronomistic and prophetic approaches to Jewish history, not only in the treatment of the traditional emblems of Jewish chosenness as signs of exceptional waywardness, but also in the contention that this pattern culminated with the Jews' rejection of Jesus.¹⁴ The latter, in Justin's view, is affirmed by the destruction of the Second Temple and the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem after the Bar Kokhba Revolt, which he reads as the resultant punishment.¹⁵

But even as the *Dialogue* denounces the Jews, it affirms the immorality of pagans:

¹² Also *Dial.* 11; 23; 43; 44; 46; 92; Skarsaune, *Proof*, 429; also 313–20, 371–72.

¹³ Siker, *Disinheriting*, 165–70.

¹⁴ *Dial.* 16.4; 17.1; 32.3; 93.4; 103.2; 104.1; 133.6.

¹⁵ *Dial.* 25.5; 26.1; 108.3; also 1 *Apol.* 32.4–6, 35.6; 38.7–8; 40.6, 47–49; 53.2–3; Skarsaune, *Proof*, 288–95.

If those who are under this Law appear to be under a curse for not having observed all of its requirements, how much more should all the nations appear to be under a curse who practice idolatry, seduce youths, and commit other crimes? (*Dial.* 95)

Consistent with the assertions in his apologies, Justin presupposes throughout the *Dialogue* that pagan religion is demonically inspired (30; 83; 91) and repeatedly cites LXX Ps 95:5 (55, 73, 79, 83). As noted above, Justin's Jewish interlocutor is depicted as concurring on this point, even as he questions Justin's angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 (79).¹⁶ Nevertheless, both Jew and Christian agree that the pagan condition is marked by their worship of the "idols of demons" in place of the one God (55).

Although Justin admits that Jews who piously observe the Law are superior to non-Christian pagans, he depicts this as an exceptional case. In his view, the Jews have continually disobeyed God's commands throughout history, and they have knowingly aligned themselves with the demonic against the divine. For Justin, this choice is emblemized by their alleged adoption of the demonically inspired practices prevalent among pagans – a claim that he buttresses with prophetic prooftexts that rebuke Israel for "acting like the nations."¹⁷ Justin thus explains the Jewish Temple and sacrificial cult as divine measures intended to curtail a penchant for the idolatrous worship of demons (92; see also 19, 22). Throughout the *Dialogue*, he stresses that the Jews, despite all of God's special punitive and pedagogical efforts, have always strayed (46; 73; 132; 135), even going so far as to sacrifice their own children to demons (19; 27; 73; 133; cf. LXX Ps 105:37).

Despite their shared practice of idolatry, Justin emphasizes the different preconditions of Jewish and pagan wickedness; one expects pagans to worship the demons that are their own gods, but the Jews defiantly choose to stray from the true God who is everywhere proclaimed in their own scriptures. For him, the essential difference between the two groups is most starkly evinced by their respective roles in the persecution of Christians: the pagans who commit violence against Christians act unwittingly as puppets of the demons.¹⁸

¹⁶ See discussion in Ch. 4. This is the only explicit reference to the fallen angels of Gen 6:1–4 within the *Dialogue*. There may be allusions to these figures (*Dial.* 45; 76; 100); even so, Justin clearly distinguishes between Satan's fall "from the beginning" and the later descent of the angels, grouping them only to express the content of the present-day demonic population and to stress angelic free will.

¹⁷ Esp. Deut 32:17 (*Dial.* 119); Isa 65:11–12 (*Dial.* 135); Ps 106:37 (= LXX Ps 105:37; *Dial.* 19; 27; 73; 133).

¹⁸ Although not explicitly stated in the *Dialogue* (note, e.g., the generic "wicked men" of *Dial.* 18), I suggest that this element is assumed in Justin's schema. The silence seems deliberate. By never mentioning pagan violence against Christians at the behest of demons (but only demonic violence against Christians and Jewish violence against Christians), Justin strengthens his argument for Jewish culpability. And the only time that the *Dialogue* alludes to pagan persecutors of Christians (*Dial.* 17) is in the context of the malicious Jewish influence on them!

Justin claims, however, that the Jews dispatched messengers to encourage the rejection of Christianity throughout the world, sending out “from Jerusalem chosen men through all the land to say that the atheistic heresy of the Christians had sprung up and to recount those things that all who did not know us now speak against us” (17; also 26; 96; 108). In effect, Justin accuses the Jews of exerting a corrupting influence on the pagans not unlike the demons themselves: “You are thus the cause not only of your own unrighteousness, but in fact of that of *all other men*” (17).

Not only does the Jewish culpability for Christian persecution encompass the hostile actions of pagans, but Justin even alleges Jewish influence on Christ’s supernatural enemies.¹⁹ For instance, he alleges that “punishments even to death have been inflicted on us by demons [ὑπὸ τῶν δαιμονίων] and by the host of the devil [τῆς στρατιᾶς τοῦ διαβόλου], through the service ministered to them *by you*” (131.2). Just as his interpretation of Jewish history is an inversion of the Deuteronomistic approach to Israel’s sins and punishments, so Justin twists the traditional association of Israel with the angels by paralleling the corrupting influence of this nation with the actions of the fallen angels and their demonic brood.

When viewed solely in the context of the relationship between pagans and Christians, Justin’s interpretation of the angelic descent myth is a radical indictment of Greco-Roman culture.²⁰ Although the polemical power of this origin-myth cannot be denied, comparison with his approach to Judaism exposes his genealogy of pagan error as sympathetic. Moreover, it shows that Justin’s angelic etiology of evil in *2 Apology* 5 is deliberately selective; Justin there means to explain, not the origins of human wickedness in general but the origins of the wickedness of pagans more specifically. Within his genealogy of error, Jews suffer from their propensity to repeat the disobedience of Adam and Eve, while the experience of pagans is shaped by another moment in primordial history: the enslavement of humankind by the angels who descended before the Flood and by the demons born of their impure union with human women. Whereas the former willingly disobey God and choose to join Christ’s supernatural enemies, the latter are unwitting victims of both the demons and the Jews.

Even as Justin draws heavily on the *Book of the Watchers*, he radically recasts the significance of the angelic descent myth. In part, his approach parallels texts such as *Jubilees* and *2 Baruch*, which use Gen 2–3 to stress the human origins of sin, even as they retain elements of the angelic etiology espoused

¹⁹ The single exception is *1 Apol.* 63, which states that Jesus “endured all the sufferings that the demons instigated the senseless Jews to inflict on him.”

²⁰ Pagels, “Christian Apologists,” esp. 301.

by the *Book of the Watchers*. Whereas the authors of those texts seem to have been motivated by a desire to reassert humanity's ultimate responsibility for their own wrongdoings, Justin's version of the angelic descent myth in *2 Apology* ironically achieves the opposite – albeit with a limited scope and to a limited audience: he effectively downplays pagan responsibility for their sins, by excusing their practice of idolatry, misunderstanding of Christianity, and persecution of Christians as products of their ignorance to the demonic powers that control their irrational actions.²¹

ii. The Teachings of Fallen Angels and the Teachings of Christ-Logos

Within Justin's schema, Jews and the fallen angels share the role of corrupted corruptors who knowingly reject the true God, and pagans are unwittingly led astray by both. That is not to say, of course, that pagans are not ultimately culpable for their sinful deeds; they are just culpable in different ways and for different reasons. Justin stresses that pagans are not bound by their fate to serve the demons, and he points to the fact that many have been able to throw off the shackles of their enslavement. For this, he cites two types of examples: [1] pre-Christian pagans like Socrates, who exposed the true nature of the demons even before Christ's Incarnation (*1 Apol* 5; *2 Apol.* 6; 8; 10), and [2] gentile Christians like himself, who once served the demons (*Dial.* 30; 78; 83; 91) but now stand under Christ's protection (*Dial.* 30; 49; 121; 125; 131).

The former is central to Justin's argument that Reason is the antidote to demonic enslavement. This theme comes through most clearly in *1 Apology* 5. Justin begins by emphasizing the connection between demonic enslavement and human irrationality. He proposes that pagans persecute Christians, not only because of the "instigation of foul demons [μάστιγι δαιμόνων φάυλων]," but also because they "yield to unreasoning passion." Moreover, he describes irrational men as particularly amenable to demonic influence; it was precisely "those who did not judge the actions done with Reason" who were "carried away by fear and, not knowing that the spirits were evil, called them by the name of gods." By means of the equation of Christ with the *Logos* (a Greek term whose meanings include "Reason"), Justin projects the cosmic battle between the demonic and the divine into the human psyche. At the same time, he skillfully turns the Greco-Roman discourse about rationality and control of the passions into an argument against Greco-Roman religion.

²¹ On the resultant tension between determinism and free will, see Conzelmann, *Gentiles*, 295–96; Barnard, *Justin*, 115–16.

To illustrate the positive corollary of this point, he similarly cites one of their own: even prior to the Incarnation of the *Logos* as Jesus, the eminently reasonable Socrates was able to discern the true nature of these so-called gods.²² According to Justin, this philosopher “endeavored, by true Reason [λόγῳ ἀληθεῖ] and examination . . . to deliver humanity from the demons [ἀπάγειν τῶν δαιμόνων τοὺς ἀνθρώπους]” (also 2 *Apol.* 6; 8; 10). It was for this, he claims, that Socrates was persecuted just like the Christians of Justin’s own time. Acting in self-defense, “the demons themselves [αὐτοὶ οἱ δαίμονες], by means of men who rejoiced in iniquity, arranged to kill him as an atheist and impious man, by saying that he was introducing new divinities.”

Not surprisingly, this example occasions a plea on behalf of Christians and an apology for Christianity:

For not only were these things refuted by Reason [ὑπὸ λόγου] among the Greeks, though Socrates, but also among the barbarians, by the *Logos* himself [ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ λόγου], who took shape and became a human being and was called Jesus Christ.

As with Socrates, it was “by the *Logos*” that Christians came to discern the truth behind the appearance of pagan worship, recognizing that “those spirits that did these things are not only inauthentic, but they are wicked and impious demons [κακοὺς καὶ ἀνοσίτους δαίμονας].” On the one hand, this line of argument allows Justin to contend that Reason should enable his pagan audience to discern the terrible error in persecuting Christians and, conversely, that any decision against the Christians only exposes the Roman rulers as irrational demoniacs. On the other hand, his appeal to Reason serves a powerful apologetic function: if Christ is the *Logos*, then Christianity *must* be the true philosophy.

In contrast to the pointed cultural critique inherent in Justin’s theory of the demonic inspiration of pagan myth and religion, his statements about the *Logos* point to the positive similarities between Christianity and Greco-Roman philosophy. He argues that “whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some portion of the *Logos*” (2 *Apol.* 10). This allows him to claim continuity with all beneficial aspects of Greco-Roman culture, inasmuch as “whatever things were rightly said among all peoples are the property of us Christians” (2 *Apol.* 13). By providing a framework for articulating Christ’s activity in the world prior to the Incarnation, this approach helps him to buttress his claims for the singular truth of the Christian philosophy through appeal to its fundamental

²² Skarsaune, “Judaism,” 596–97.

universality and ultimate antiquity. Justin can therefore go on to argue that “our doctrines are not shameful, according to a sober judgment but are indeed more lofty than all human philosophy” (2 *Apol.* 15); the beliefs that seems to be new to his pagan audience are in fact the most ancient of all, and the doctrines that sound so unfamiliar are actually the best of everything that is already known to them (1 *Apol.* 46).

The contrast with Justin’s demonic etiology of polytheism and persecution is highlighted by a shared source, namely, the writings of Moses. Whereas Plato was dependent on Moses for his doctrine of Creation (1 *Apol.* 69–70), the demons generate mythic mimics of Mosaic prophecies that they do not completely understand in order “to deceive and lead astray the human race” (1 *Apol.* 54–55). Whereas the similarities between Greek philosophy and Christianity reflect their common share in the truth, the echoes of Christian belief and practice in Greco-Roman religion conceal the demons’ malicious attempt to confuse pagans into rejecting Christianity.

Insofar as Justin depicts the *Logos* and the demons as two forces competing for pagan souls and minds, he exploits an aspect of the angelic descent myth that lay largely latent in the *Book of the Watchers*: the depiction of the fallen angels’ transmission of knowledge as the exact inversion of divine revelation (esp. 1 *En.* 12–16 [BW]). As we have seen in Chapter 1, the *Book of the Watchers* focuses on the issue of cosmological speculation, contrasting the Watchers’ teachings of celestial divination with Enoch’s revelations about the contents of the heavens. Justin expands this theme to cover the whole of pagan history. Just as the *Logos* promotes piety, so the fallen angels and demons promulgate sin by encouraging human imitation of the false divinities to whom they ascribe impious deeds of blood lust and sexual licentiousness (1 *Apol.* 21; 25; 2 *Apol.* 12; 14). The *Logos* assured that “people everywhere . . . have made laws and philosophized according to right Reason by their prescribing to do some things and refrain from others” (2 *Apol.* 6); in turn, “the wicked angels appointed laws conformable to their own wickedness, in which the men who are like them delight” (2 *Apol.* 9). The *Logos* spread seeds of Christianity even before the Incarnation, both through human rationality and through the inspired writings of Moses; at the same time, the fallen angels and their sons shaped pagan culture so as to encourage the rejection of Christ.

What, then, distinguishes the pagan pursuit of Reason from Christianity? Despite his enthusiastic comments about the continuities between Greek philosophy and Christianity (1 *Apol.* 46), Justin posits an essential difference between rational humans who lived prior to the Incarnation and Christians of his own time. Even as he argues that the *Logos* has been always and everywhere

the source of human rationality, he holds that no human being living prior to the Incarnation could totally access the truth.²³

Consequently, Justin's celebration of pre-Christian Christians like Socrates conforms to his broader understanding of salvation history as the story of the struggle between the salvific power of Christ and the corrupting influence of the fallen angels and their sons. Justin christianizes the Greco-Roman concept of Reason by defining rationality as the ability to reject idolatry and the willingness to suffer persecution for this belief, and he recasts philosophers like Socrates in the model of Christian martyrs.²⁴ Consequently, he can depict the Roman persecution of Christians as part of a larger pattern: the demons have always provoked hostility towards anyone who seemed receptive to the *Logos* (1 *Apol.* 44; 2 *Apol.* 8).

Although Justin thus portrays the Christians' plight as a perennial one, he asserts that this ongoing battle has now entered a new phase. According to Justin, the birth of Jesus signaled the first death-blow against the earthly reign of supernatural evil.²⁵ By loosening the power that demons wield over humankind, Christ facilitated the conversion of pagans like Justin from polytheistic idolatry to monotheistic piety, thereby accounting for the proliferation of converts among the nations.²⁶ The implications are striking: now *all* Christian converts are able, not only to free themselves from demonic influence, but also to partake in rationality to an even greater degree than the celebrated Socrates.

Justin stresses, however, that the victory is not yet complete. He sees himself and his contemporaries as living in the era between the two advents, and they still await the eschatological judgment that will decisively end the reign of the demons on earth (1 *Apol.* 52). To describe this interim period, Justin turns once again to a tradition of Enochic origins. Like 2 Peter, he echoes the *Book of the Watchers'* description of the two stages in God's punishment of the Watchers and their sons,²⁷ explaining that the fallen angels "have been shut up in eternal fire" until the day that they will finally "suffer their just punishment and penalty" (2 *Apol.* 8; also 1 *Apol.* 45). But, precisely because their demise is so imminent, the demonic efforts on earth have intensified, as they take up arms to defend themselves against Christ and employ Roman proxies to fight against his earthly army of Christians.

²³ Barnard, *Justin*, 122–23; Droge, *Homer*, 53.

²⁴ Skarsaune, "Judaism," 598.

²⁵ *Dial.* 49; 78, 85.3; 125; 131.

²⁶ In light of Justin's characterization of Jewish wickedness as more pernicious than pagan wickedness, it is significant that he sees the Incarnation as facilitating the conversion of pagans but not Jews; *Dial.* 28; 30; 137; Rajak, "Talking," esp. 78.

²⁷ 1 *En.* 10:9–16; 12:4–6; 15:8–12; 2 *Pet* 2:4.

The Enochic myth of angelic descent serves a key function in Justin's broader genealogy of error. Justin innovatively expands the motif of illicit angelic instruction to encompass the totality of pagan history. By correlating it with alternate approaches to Judaism and Greco-Roman culture, Justin provides his fellow Christians with a model for understanding the prevalence of non-Christian beliefs throughout human history, both prior to the Incarnation and in the interim period before the Eschaton. In the process, he bequeaths to his fellow Christians an effective solution to the problem of the many similarities between Christians and their pagan neighbors: the positive affinities reflect the activity of the *Logos*/Christ, while the negative ones reflect the deceptive activities of his supernatural enemies, who are the Watchers and their demonic sons. In his retelling, the angelic etiology of pagan sin also resonates meaningfully with a situation of persecution; Roman hostility towards Christians is said to form part of a long history of demonic counterattacks against the salvific activities of the *Logos*.

The theological implications are no less significant. By accepting the Enochic tradition that demons originated in an angelic act of deviance, Justin can sidestep the problems that strict cosmic dualism might pose for a Christian monotheism in active conflict with pagan polytheism. The fallen angels were not created evil; they were heavenly beings who transgressed the will of God. Neither do they create evil in humankind. On the contrary, they imitate the divine in order to mislead unwary pagans into choosing the wrong path – just as they themselves once strayed of their own free will from their divinely appointed roles.²⁸

2. FROM COSMETICS TO PHILOSOPHY: OTHER APPROACHES TO THE INSTRUCTION MOTIF

Subsequent developments in Christian apology and heresiology suggest that Justin's transformation of the angelic decent myth would prove to be a powerful tactic for forging Christian identity over against both pagans and others who would claim the label "Christian." There are only a few references to illicit angelic instruction in Jewish and Christian sources prior to Justin. After Justin, however, a number of early Christians appeal to the teachings of the fallen angels, drawing on the explanatory power of the instruction motif to

²⁸ The angels' free will is stressed repeatedly by Justin and other proto-orthodox Christian authors (Justin, *Dial.* 102; 141; 2 *Apol.* 6; Lactantius, *Inst.* 25; Bardaisan, *Book of the Law of the Countries* as quoted in VanderKam, "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 67); the corollary to this was the assertion that humankind also had free will to resist them and their sons (Ferguson, *Demonology*, 119–20).

articulate the corrupting influence of certain types of skill, knowledge, and practice in their own time. Some, such as Tatian and Minicus Felix, seem to draw on elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in forms mediated by Justin.²⁹ For others, such as Tertullian, the relevance of angelic descent for the polemic against pagan culture seems to have served as welcome confirmation of the value of the “book(s) of Enoch” as sources of Christian truth.

Consistent with Justin’s use of this motif, many of his successors focus on the fallen angels’ teachings of astrology and magic,³⁰ their culpability for engendering the demons,³¹ and the role of the fallen angels and/or their sons in introducing and inspiring pagan religion.³² Insofar as Justin helped to integrate the motif of illicit angelic instruction into Christian demonology, he also opened the way for others to exploit the explanatory power of angelic teaching in different ways. Three other approaches are especially important to note: [1] the appeal to the Watchers’ magical and astrological teachings (*1 En.* 7:1; 8:2–3)

²⁹ Neither Tatian nor Minucius Felix seems to know the *Book of the Watchers* or even to depend on Gen 6:1–4. Rather, they seem to develop traditions found in the writings of Justin and other Christian apologists. Tatian, for instance, transposes Justin’s view of angelic descent from the antediluvian era to the time of Creation; although he equates pagan gods with demons and credits them with introducing astrology to humankind, Tatian’s demons are the host of the Serpent/Satan (*Orat.* 7–9; cf. VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 65). Minucius Felix’s demonology echoes Justin’s expansion of the Enochic myth of angelic descent – e.g., equating the demons with pagan gods and crediting them with corrupting humankind through prophetic mimicries, divination, magic, and idolatry (*Octavius* 26–27) – but he nowhere alludes to any connection to fallen angels of any sort. Lactantius is an interesting case insofar as he seems to be dependent on *Jubilees* instead of BW. He begins his account of angelic descent by asserting that God sent the angels to earth to counter the influence of Satan, and he recounts that Satan then tempted them into following him instead, so that they are now his minions (*Inst.* 25). Just as these elements echo *Jubilees*’ assertion of the Watchers’ positive mission to earth and its view of the demons as now subject to Mastema (see ch. 3), so Lactantius limits his account of their teachings only to magical arts (*Inst.* 27). This proves particularly intriguing insofar as *Jubilees*, unlike BW, was translated into Latin.

³⁰ E.g., Clement, *Ecl.* 53.4; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.15.6; *Epid.* 18; Tertullian, *Idol.* 9.1; *Apol.* 35.12; Lactantius, *Inst.* 2.16.

³¹ E.g., Athenagoras, *Leg.* 24–25; Lactantius, *Inst.* 2.14.

³² E.g., Athenagoras, *Leg.* 24–26; Tertullian, *Idol.* 4:2–3; Commodian, *Instructiones* 3; Cyprian, *Idol.* 6; Lactantius, *Inst.* 2.14. Athenagoras offers an interesting twist on Justin’s equation of the pagan pantheon with the fallen angels and their sons, harmonizing this etiology with euhemeristic traditions current in pagan philosophical circles at the time. After discussing the fall of the angels, their sexual sins, the birth of the Giants, and the imprisonment of the angels (*Leg.* 24–25), he notes that the “souls of the giants” are “those demons that wander about the world” and “drag men towards idols,” but he adds that the names of the gods were once the names of men, which the demons simply adopted for themselves (*Leg.* 26). On the place of fallen angels – antediluvian and otherwise – in Athenagoras’ works, see Wey, *Funktionen*, 33–60, 226–51.

to develop the notion of “heresy” as demonically inspired,³³ [2] the appeal to their role in introducing cosmetics and jewelry (1 *En.* 8:1–2) to stress the dangers of feminine vanity, and [3] the appeal to their revelation of heavenly secrets (1 *En.* 8:3; 9:6; 16:3–4) to explain the origins of Greek philosophy.³⁴

i. Angelic Instruction and the Demonization of “Heresy”

The Christian demonization of “heresy” is a phenomenon that preceded Justin’s reinterpretation of the angelic descent myth and extended well beyond the proto-orthodox use of Enochic traditions about the fallen angels.³⁵ Consistent with the prominence of Satan in NT demonology, proto-orthodox Christians typically appealed to this figure when articulating their accusations against “heretics.”³⁶ For our purposes, it proves significant that the motif of illicit angelic instruction was also enlisted for this aim.³⁷

Most striking in this regard is a tradition cited by Irenaeus, when denouncing the “heretic” Marcus:

Marcus, you maker of idols [εἰδωλοποιεῖ] and inspector of portents [τερατοσκοπέ] Experienced in astrology [ἀστρολογικῆς] and magical skill [μαγικῆς τέχνης] Through these, you confirm the doctrines of error [τῆς πλάνης τὰ διδάγματα] You show signs [σημεῖα δεικνύς] to those led astray by you [τοῖς ὑπό σου πλανωμένοις], undertakings of apostate power [ἀποστατικῆς δυνάμεως],

³³ Justin’s 1 *Apology* already blames the φαῦλοι δαίμονες for inspiring Christian “heretics” like Simon Magus and Marcion (26; 58).

³⁴ The exact nature of the association of the fallen angels with idolatry should also be noted. As mentioned above, *Sim.* adds “the power of those who cast molten images for all the earth” to the list of angelic teachings (1 *En.* 65:6). Bauckham concludes, however, the early Christian association between the fallen angels, their demonic sons, and idolatry does not seem to reflect any influence from this text (“Fall,” 319–23). Rather it seems to derive from the interpretation of 1 *En.* 19:1 through the principle of the demonic inspiration of pagan religion. There is only one example where an author from this period lists idolatry among the teachings of the fallen angels (Irenaeus, *Epid.* 18). Others make the connection indirectly. Commodian, for instance, states: “By them [i.e., the fallen angels] arts were made known in the earth, and they taught the dyeing of wool, and everything which is done; and to them, when they died, men erected images. But the Almighty, because they were of an evil seed, did not approve that, when dead, they should be brought back from death. While wandering they now subvert many bodies, and it is such as these especially that you worship this day and pray to as gods” (*Instructiones* 3). Compare the account of Athenagoras cited above.

³⁵ For a summary, see Pagels, *Origin*, 149–78.

³⁶ Esp. 2 Cor 11:13–15. The association of Satan and the “heretics” can be found through Irenaeus’ *Haer.* (e.g. 1.6.3, 13.4, 21.1, 25.3, 27.4; 3.12.12, 16.1; 5.26.2).

³⁷ This approach finds some precedent in 1 Tim 4:1 (“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits [πνεύμασιν πλάνοις] and teachings of demons [διδασκαλίαις δαιμονίων]”).

Which your father Satan [σός πατήρ Σατᾶν] always orchestrates for you
 To do through the angelic power Azazel [δι' ἀγγελικῆς δυνάμεως Ἀζαζήλ],
 Making you the precursor of godlike villany. (*Haer.* 1.15.6)

I find no reason to doubt Irenaeus' claim that he here quotes a tradition that he heard from a "divine presbyter and preacher of truth." Although other passages in Irenaeus' writings might reflect the author's familiarity with the *Book of the Watchers*,³⁸ *Haer.* 1.15.6 seems to attest the circulation of oral traditions rooted in the Enochic myth of angelic descent.³⁹

In any case, the parallels remain striking. According to the presbyter, Marcus owes his knowledge of divination, astrology, and magic to Satan via an angel. Not only do the topics of instruction echo *1 En.* 8 (BW), but the latter is called Azazel, evoking the equation of Asael with Azazel in the Qumran *Book of the Giants and Ages of Creation*. At the same time, *Haer.* 1.15.6 evinces two interesting developments. First is the conflation of traditions about the teachings of the Watchers (esp. *1 En.* 7:1, 8:3) into the single figure of Asael/Azazel. Second is the subordination of Azazel to Satan; Azazel has become merely an agent of the corruption initiated by another demonic leader. The second development makes the heresiological application of the motif of illicit angelic instruction all the more fascinating. Christian traditions about Satan's role in inspiring "heretics" are here harmonized with early Enochic traditions about the fallen angels teaching magical and divinatory arts to humankind, and it is the very assumption of an inexorable link between "heresy" and "magic" – two categories often used to denounce perceived deviance from ritual and religious norms – that makes this equation possible.

ii. *The Wiles of Women and the Teachings of the Watchers*

In a church ever more preoccupied with matters of sexual ethics,⁴⁰ it is perhaps not surprising that Enochic traditions about the fallen angels would also find a place in early Christian preaching about the dangers of vanity and promiscuity. We have already encountered some Jewish and Christian appeals

³⁸ A more intimate knowledge of the contents of *1 En.* 6–16 (BW) seems to be reflected in the examples from *Haer.* cited above and in the list of angelic teachings in *Epid.* 18: "The angels brought as presents to their wives teachings of wickedness, in that they brought them the virtues of roots and herbs, dyeing in colors and cosmetics, the discovery of precious substances, love-potions, amours, concupiscence, constraints of love, spells of bewitchment, and all sorcery and idolatry hateful to God."

³⁹ Elsewhere (e.g., *Haer.* 3.2.2), Irenaeus presupposes the special role of presbyters in cultivating oral traditions about salvation history and the interpretation of scripture; see Reed, "ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ," 21–22. The oral origin of this tradition is also suggested by its poetic form.

⁴⁰ Brown, *Body*, esp. 33–82.

to the Enochic myth of angelic descent to stress the perils of male lust (CD-A 11, 14–18) and feminine seduction (*T.Reub.* 5:4–6). Likewise, second- and third-century Christians cite the Watchers as negative paradigms in discussions of human sexual ethics, appealing to the example of the fallen angels to stress that men should not be lured by the beauty of women, lest they too fall from their angel-like states.⁴¹

This application of the angelic descent myth seems to have been facilitated by its value for the exegesis of Paul’s famously terse assertion in 1 Cor 11:10 that “a woman should have a symbol of authority on her head *because of the angels* [διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους].” Whether or not this verse originally alluded to the angelic descent myth, later Christians like Tertullian readily interpreted it through Gen 6:1–4 and *1 En.* 6–16 (BW). Tertullian assumes that Paul refers to the “daughters of men” who enticed the “sons of God” down from the heavens, and that the apostle meant to buttress his exhortations about the proper attire of Christian women with an example of the grave dangers of feminine vanity (*Virg.* 7).⁴²

What is striking, however, is that proto-orthodox exegetes writing after Justin do not only use the sexual sins of the Watchers to comment on lust and vanity; they also appeal to their teachings. Whereas the *Testament of Reuben* displaced illicit angelic instruction from its account of how painted women tempted the angels (see Ch. 3), Tertullian and Cyprian both integrate the *Book of the Watchers’* assertion that Asael taught humankind how to make jewelry from silver and gold (*1 En.* 8:1) and about “antimony, and eye-shadow, and all manner of precious stones and . . . dyes and varieties of adornment” (*1 En.* 8:2). When discussing the need to curtail women’s desire for ornamentation, both authors retell the Enochic myth of angelic descent and cite the tainted origins of the tools of artificial beautification for their own purposes.

Above, we noted how Justin harmonized the sins of Adam and Eve with the fallen angels’ corruption of humankind, applying the latter specifically to pagan culture. Likewise, the subordination of Asael/Azazel to Satan by Irenaeus’ presbyter may hint at a Christian solution to the relationship between the Serpent and the fallen angels, akin to *Jubilees’* view that the demonic sons of the Watchers became the minions of Mastema (see Ch. 3). The topic of temptresses and the accoutrements of temptation occasioned yet another strategy for aligning Gen 2–3 with Gen 6:1–4 and *1 En.* 6–16 (BW): Tertullian,

⁴¹ See e.g., Clement, *Paed.* 3.2; *Strom.* 3.7.59; Commodian, *Instructiones* 3.

⁴² This interpretation, moreover, had the value of assuring that the apostle’s instructions about the covering of the head could not be extended to men, since – as Tertullian stresses – “it was not on *his* account that the angels transgressed” (*Virg.* 8).

for instance, begins his treatise *On the Apparel of Women* with a discussion of Eve, applying to all women the guilt for causing Adam to sin and thus deeming the entire sex “the devil’s gateway” (1.1). He then turns to discuss “those angels who rushed from heaven on the daughters of men” [*illi scilicet angeli, qui ad filias hominum de coelo ruerunt*]:

For when to an age much more ignorant they [i.e., the angels] disclosed certain well-concealed material substances and several not well revealed scientific arts [*et artes plerasque non bene revelatas, saeculo multo magis imperito prodidissent*] – if it is true that they laid bare the operations of metallurgy [*et metallorum opera nudaverant*; cf. *1 En.* 8:1a], and divulged the natural properties of herbs [*et herbarum ingenia traduxerant*; cf. *1 En.* 8:3a], and promulgated the powers of enchantments [*et incantationum vires provulgaverant*; cf. *1 En.* 8:3ab], and traced out every curious art, even to the interpretation of the stars [*et omnem curiositatem, usque ad stellarum interpretationem, designaverant*; cf. *1 En.* 8:3c–g] – they conferred properly and as it were peculiarly on women that instrumental mode of feminine ostentation, the radiances of jewels with which necklaces are variegated, and the circlets of gold with which the arms are compressed, and the medicaments of orchil with which wools are colored, and that very black powder with which the eyelids and eyelashes are made prominent (cf. *1 En.* 8:1b–2). (Tertullian, *Cult.fem.* 1.2)

Here too, it is the weakness of women that enables the forces of otherworldly evil to operate in the world. For Tertullian, the continued use of cosmetics speaks, no less than Eve’s surrender to the Serpent, to the natural affinity between the feminine and the demonic – as well as to the need for Christian women to abandon accoutrements of vanity altogether.

In this case, there is no doubt that the author is directly dependent on the *Book of the Watchers*. Not only does Tertullian’s account of the topics of angelic teaching follow *1 En.* 8 in nearly every detail, but he dedicates the next passage (1.3) to defending the authenticity and authority of the “scripture of Enoch,” explicitly acknowledging this text as his source for these traditions about the fallen angels. In Chapter 6, we shall discuss his defense of the Enochic literature in some detail. For now, what proves significant is his interpretation of our text: just as the *Book of the Watchers* employs the pedagogue Asael to depict human civilization as an inexorable process of ethical decline, so Tertullian uses the fallen angels to mark certain practices as dangerous and demonic from their very origins.

Like Justin, Tertullian views the teachings of the Watchers through the lens of the cosmic battle between Christ and the demons. In exploiting the explanatory power of the instruction motif, he thus elevates the seemingly mundane matter of women’s dress to a choice between Christ and Belial, life

and death, salvation and damnation. For him, the central point is that one cannot renounce the demons at baptism and then decorate oneself with the products of their arts.⁴³ In the same way that Justin viewed the cosmos, history, and the human mind as battlegrounds on which Christ-*Logos* and demons fight for supremacy, Tertullian marks the (female) body as a prime site of contestation.

Tertullian's ideas about fallen angels and fallen women are developed further by Cyprian. His treatise about the proper feminine attire closely follows the work of Tertullian, and he too blames the fallen angels for the origins of the finery that even Christian women crave. In *On the Dress of Virgins*, Cyprian stresses that one cannot "put on Christ" if clothed with "silk and purple" and "adorned with gold and pearls and necklaces," since it was not God who created dyed wools, pierced ears, "necklaces of precious stones set in gold," and "pearls arranged in chains with numerous joinings" (*Hab. Virg.* 13–14; cf. Tertullian, *Cult. fem.* 2.10). Rather, these items have their origins with the fallen angels:

All these things the sinful and apostate angels brought into being by their own arts when, after falling into earthly contagion, they lost their heavenly power. They also taught how to paint the eyes by spreading a black substance around them and to tinge the cheeks with a counterfeit blush, and to change the hair by false colors and to drive out all truth from the countenance and head by the assault of their corruption. (Cyprian, *Hab. Virg.* 14)

Precisely because Cyprian's understanding of the angelic descent myth has obviously been mediated through Tertullian, it is interesting that he omits any reference to its ultimate source in the "scripture of Enoch." This, in my view, makes the contrast with pre-Rabbinic sources even more stark: not only does Cyprian choose to include the instruction motif, but *On the Dress of Virgins* forefronts the pedagogical sins of the Watchers and alludes only in passing to their transgressions with the "daughters of men" – even though the topic under discussion is sexual ethics. The motif of illicit angelic instruction, so shunned by earlier exegetes, has now moved to the fore.

⁴³ This is also clear in the next book of this treatise, when he returns once again to the topic of the fallen angels: "If those very angels – who disclosed both the material substances of this kind and their charms, of gold, I mean, and lustrous stones, and taught men how to work them, and then instructed them, among their other (teachings), in eyelid-powder and the dyeing of fleeces – have been condemned by God, as Enoch tells us, how shall we please God while we take joy in the things of those who, on these accounts, have provoked the anger and the vengeance of God?" (*Cult. fem.* 2.10).

iii. *Angelic Descent and the Heavenly Origins of Pagan Philosophy*

In their use of the motif of illicit angelic instruction, all the sources examined above – from the *Book of the Watchers* to Cyprian’s *On the Dress of Virgins* – operate under the assumption that the teachings of the fallen angels were corrupting and, hence, that the skills and knowledge introduced by them should be rejected by present-day humans. This logic, for instance, is central to Tertullian’s argument against feminine ornamentation: he links “the quality of these things” with “the quality and condition of their teachers,” and he argues that, just as “sinners could never have either shown or supplied anything conducive to integrity” or “unlawful lovers anything conducive to chastity,” so “renegade spirits” could not have taught “anything conducive to the fear of God” (*Cult.fem.* 1.2). In the case of astrology, magic, and divination (and we might add polytheism and idolatry), this proved to be a particularly effective strategy of argumentation. Proto-orthodox Christians could critique those who adopted such practices without addressing the issue of their efficacy.⁴⁴ If anything, the association with demonic spirits helped to explain how astrologers and diviners could predict the future, how magicians and pagan priests could heal, and how oracles from pagan temples could prove true – even as the intrinsically demonic nature of these practices formed the basis for an argument about why they should be avoided at all costs.

By contrast, Clement of Alexandria interprets the motif of illicit angelic instruction in the opposite fashion. Reasoning that the knowledge taught by the fallen angels could have been heavenly in origin, even if they sinned in revealing it to humankind, he proposes that their teachings provided one channel through which true wisdom was transmitted to the philosophers of the Greeks:

We showed in the first *stromateus* that the philosophers of the Greeks are called thieves, inasmuch as they have taken without acknowledgment their principal dogmas from Moses and the prophets.

To which also we shall add that the angels who had obtained the superior rank, after having sunk into pleasures, told to the women the secrets which had come to their knowledge [οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐκέينو οἱ τὸν ἄνω κλήρον εἰλήχοντες κατολισθήσαντες εἰς ἡδονὰς ἐξεῖπον τὰ ἀπόρρητα ταῖς γυναιξίν, ὅσα γε εἰς γνῶσιν αὐτῶν ἀφίκτο], whereas the rest of the angels concealed them – or rather, kept them until the coming of the Lord.

⁴⁴ Notably, this argument coexisted rather harmoniously with the argument that these practices were actually not efficacious and/or not as efficacious as their Christian counterparts; see Hanson, *Studies*, 155–56, 195–97, 201–2.

From there emanated the doctrine of Providence and the revelation of high things and, since prophecy had already been imparted to the philosophers of the Greeks, the treatment of dogma arose among the philosophers . . . (Clement, *Strom.* 5.1.10.2)

Interestingly, *Strom.* 5.1.10.2 seems to paraphrase God's rebuke of the Watchers in *1 En.* 16:3 (BW).⁴⁵ Perhaps not surprisingly, Clement's version appears to presuppose a Greek translation similar to that found in the fifth- or sixth-century Egyptian Codex Panopolitanus:

You were in heaven. And every secret that was not revealed to you and secrets that were from God you knew [καὶ πᾶν μυστήριον ὃ οὐκ ἀνεκαλύφθη ὑμῖν καὶ μυστήριον τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγνημένον ἔγνωτε]. And this you informed [ἐμηνύσατε] to the women/your wives, in your hard-heartedness. And by these secrets, females and mankind multiplied (c. pl.) evils on the earth.⁴⁶

If (as I suspect) this version also preserves the original gist of the passage, then it is here that the *Book of the Watchers* is most ambiguous about the nature of the knowledge revealed by the Watchers. Due to the emphasis on their transgression of the physical and epistemological boundaries between heaven and earth in *1 En.* 12–16, the argument necessitates that the knowledge revealed by the Watchers was truly heavenly in nature. In effect, the *Book of the Watchers* here implies that their teachings were improper and corrupting *precisely because* there are some heavenly things that earthly beings simply should not know.

The text-history of this verse suggests that this characterization of the Watchers' teachings provoked some anxiety among tradents—akin the discomfort that led LXX translators to suppress Ezekiel's assertion of the boundless wisdom of the King of Tyre before his fall (Ezek 28:3–4).⁴⁷ It is also telling that

⁴⁵ Charles, *Commentary*, 37–38; Black, *Apocalypsis*, 30; Black, *Commentary*, 155; VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 47. Clement's familiarity with the *Book of the Watchers* and its account of angelic teachings is suggested by his other references to Enoch and the fallen angels—most notably his statement that “all the demons knew that it was the Lord who arose after the passion, for Enoch already said that the angels who sinned taught humankind astronomy, divination, and the other arts” (*Ecl.* 53.4).

⁴⁶ See Ch. 1 on the issues of reconstructing the original Aramaic, which is not extant for this verse. Contrast the Ethiopic version: “You were in heaven, and hidden things still were not revealed to you [*wa-xebuāṭ ādī i-takaštu lakemu*], and rejected/abominable/worthless secrets [*mennuna meštira*] you knew, and these you informed [*zēnawa*] to women/your wives, in the hardness of your heart. And by this mystery women—and mankind—multiplied (f. pl.) evils on the earth.”

⁴⁷ MT: “Indeed, you are wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you”; LXX: “You are not wiser than Daniel; the wise ones did not teach you their knowledge.”

we have yet to encounter a source that exploited this aspect of the *Book of the Watchers*' description of the teachings of the fallen angels.⁴⁸

It remains, however, that this apocalypse's description of illicit angelic instruction is no less polyvalent than the rest of *1 En.* 6–16. For our understanding of Clement's approach, most notable are the two ways in which the *Book of the Watchers* explains the impropriety of the Watchers' instruction. Some passages denounce them for teaching sin, thereby characterizing angelic instruction as improper due to its corrupting effects on human ethics (8:1–2; 9:6a; 9:8b; 13:1–2). Others, including *1 En.* 16:2–3, rebuke them for revealing secrets, thereby suggesting that the transgression of epistemological boundaries is the crux of their transgression (also 8:3h; 9:6b; 10:7). In employing the instruction motif to condemn a range of practices as the products of the demonic corruption of human culture, Christians like Justin and Tertullian draw almost exclusively on the former. In appealing to the latter, however, Clement is no less indebted to the *Book of the Watchers*.

Interestingly, Clement may indirectly attest yet another use of the motif of illicit angelic instruction. His comments may, as Bauckham proposes, respond to those who used the instruction motif to impugn philosophy.⁴⁹ It does seem plausible that some Christians, assuming that the attribution of an art to the teachings of the fallen angels exposed its intrinsically sinful nature, may have expanded Justin's theories about the demonic inspiration of pagans to encompass even those philosophers celebrated by Justin himself. In support of Bauckham's suggestion is Clement's explicit claim to answer not only those who denounce philosophy as inspired by Satan,⁵⁰ but also those who claim that "certain powers descended and inspired the whole of philosophy" (*Strom.* 1.16.80.5). The latter plausibly refers to the use of the angelic descent myth by Clement's opponents. And, as Bauckham notes, the circulation of such a tradition may find additional confirmation in Hermias' assertion that philosophy "took its beginning from the apostasy of the angels [ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀγγέλων ἀποστασίας]" (*Irrisio* 1).⁵¹

In *Strom.* 1.7.81, Clement explains how his opponents can be correct to place the origins of philosophy in the fall of the angels but simultaneously incorrect to see this as a reason for rejecting its fruits.⁵² He agrees that "philosophy was

⁴⁸ The one possible exception is *Sim*; see Ch. 3.

⁴⁹ Bauckham, "Fall," 323–25.

⁵⁰ Clement, *Strom.* 1.16.80.5, 6.8.66.1; 6.17.159.1.

⁵¹ Bauckham, "Fall," 313, 325.

⁵² In the *Stromata*, angelic descent functions as one of four explanations for the truths found in pagan philosophy: "(a) that common human reason has enabled philosophers to discern some truth, (b) that divine inspiration, mediated by the angels of the nations, has given truth

not sent by the Lord, but came stolen, or given by a thief” (cf. John 10:18) when “some power or angel – who had learned something of the truth, but did not remain therein – inspired these things and, after having stolen them, taught them.” Clement differs, however, in his assessment of what the tainted origins of philosophy means for Christians. Contrary to the position that assumes the priority of origins in determining the present value of things, he argues that “the theft that reached humankind had some advantage.”

He makes sure to condemn the ones responsible for mediating this stolen knowledge. His main point, however, is that “Providence directed the products of this audacious deed to utility”; for him, “there is, then, in philosophy, although stolen like the fire by Prometheus, a slender spark capable of being fanned into flame, a trace of wisdom and an impulse from God” (1.7.81).⁵³ In his view, the fallen angels were thieves, and their human students both accepted this stolen knowledge and replicated the theft of their teachers by pilfering even more divine wisdom from Moses and the prophets; the result, however, is that Greek philosophy contains some glimmers of the truth, which render it useful for the Christian.

In effect, 1 *En.* 16:3 allows Clement to accept the contours of the opposing view that philosophy originated in angelic descent, even as he reconfigures the meaning of this genealogy for the valuation of philosophy. In part, this interpretation is made possible by his understanding of heavenly secrets, which seems to be filtered through a Christian concept of salvation-history. Whereas the *Book of the Watchers* drew a clear line between heavenly and earthly knowledge, Clement implies that the very secrets stolen by the fallen angels were fated eventually to be revealed on earth; when their brethren fell, the other angels continued to conceal this wisdom but only “until the coming of the Lord” (*Strom.* 5.1.10.2). The fact that the premature infusion of heavenly knowledge led to the development of the doctrine of Providence among the Greeks similarly suggests that these secrets are now freely accessible to Christians – or, at least, to the wise and the worthy among them (*Strom.* 1.12).⁵⁴

to the barbarian sages, (c) that the Greek philosophers have ‘stolen’ knowledge from Moses and the Hebrew prophets, and (d) that the fallen angels stole philosophy from heaven and taught it to humankind” (Bauckham, “Fall,” 323). For the first three, precedents and parallels abound, but the fourth appears to be Clement’s own innovation.

⁵³ The reference to Prometheus suggests that Clement’s interpretation was influenced by Greco-Roman traditions about ambivalent culture-heroes, whose teachings were simultaneously beneficial and corrupting; see Ch. 1.

⁵⁴ From the fragment preserved in Syncellus, it seems that Zosimus took a similar approach to explain the origins of alchemy: “. . . the ancient and divine scriptures said this, that certain angels lusted after women and, having descended, taught them all the works of nature. Having stumbled because of these women, he says, they remained outside of heaven, because they

3. THE “CHRISTIANIZATION” OF ENOCHIC TEXTS AND TRADITIONS

In Chapter 4, we discussed various factors that led proto-orthodox Christians to embrace the *Book of the Watchers*, stressing the continuity in the reception-history of this book in Second Temple Judaism and formative Christianity. Our inquiry in this chapter, however, suggests that the motif of illicit angelic instruction played a special part in the “christianization” of this apocalypse. It is here that early Christian exegetes depart most dramatically from the trends in the interpretation of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, by both Jews and Christians, before the Bar Kokhba Revolt and the writings of Justin Martyr. Not only is the motif of illicit angelic instruction widely attested in proto-orthodox Christian sources of the second and third centuries, but the numerous permutations in the use of this motif suggest that the Watchers’ teachings had become a focus for active reflection and interpretation to a degree unparalleled in earlier times.⁵⁵

On the one hand, the appeal to an aspect of the Enochic myth of angelic descent so shunned by earlier Jews and Christians confirms our above conclusion that Christians at this time were familiar with Enochic traditions about the fallen angels – not only due to oral traditions and the indirect mediation of other pre-Rabbinic writings, but also because the *Book of the Watchers* continued to be read and copied. On the other hand, the corrupting teachings of the fallen angels served a central function in the development of a distinctly Christian exegesis of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, which in turn contributed to the circulation of our text in Christian circles.

What, then, accounts for the special appeal of this motif for proto-orthodox Christians living in this critical era of Christian self-definition? From our survey of sources in this chapter, the polemical potential of the motif is clear, as is its flexibility for application to numerous issues. It is telling, however, that the intensive exploration of the explanatory power of this motif awaited the early Christian endeavor of articulating the relationship between Christianity and the dominant Greco-Roman culture. Jews, of course, had long been faced with the same conundrum. The condemnation of pagan worship and the claim of continuity with Greek philosophy both find ample precedents in Hellenistic Jewish literature. Nevertheless, the encounter between paganism

taught humankind everything wicked and nothing benefiting the soul. The same scriptures say that from them the Giants were born. So theirs is the first teaching concerning these arts handed down by Chemeu, whence also the art is called Alchemy” (Sync 14.1–14).

⁵⁵ Even though Julius Africanus suggests an alternate exegesis, he clearly views the Watchers’ teachings as emblematic of the angelic reading of Gen 6:14; see Ch. 6.

and biblically based religiosity was fraught with even more urgency, intensity, and anxiety due to the proliferation of gentile converts to Christianity and their rise to positions of leadership in the church.

It proves significant that Justin not only recast the angelic descent myth to speak to the situation of Christian persecution, but he did so in terms that rendered it accessible to an audience of former pagans. He cites the Greek myths much as he uses the Jewish scriptures, claiming that the truth therein can only be exposed by a certain mode of reading. Just as his anti-Judaism is founded on the inversion of the Deuteronomistic approach to biblical history, so he offers a distinctively Christian variation on the euhemeristic and allegorical interpretation of Greek myths by learned Greeks and Romans: the tales about the impious deeds of gods and sons of gods actually attest the activities of the fallen angels and demons, and the legends about their divine deeds are really fictions that the demons invented about themselves in a petty imitation of true prophecies about Christ.

Much the same can be said for Justin's approach to Greco-Roman religion: pagans already acknowledge the role that δαίμονες play in the cosmos; what he tells them is that all δαίμονες are evil (i.e., "demons," as in the Jewish and Christian understanding of the Greek term). Likewise, his denunciation of pagan sacrifice and idolatry echoes Greco-Roman philosophical critiques of popular religion, and his assertion of the fallen angels' role in transmitting corrupting skills and knowledge grounds its plausibility in myths about divine and semidivine culture-heroes. When read through the lens of Justin's historiographical and demonological approach to the history of human culture, his retelling of the angelic descent myth resonates with the cultural expectations of gentile Christians, even as it serves to confirm their choice to reject their pagan past – a choice here elevated to the level of a decision to free themselves from demonic enslavement and ally themselves with Christ in the cosmic battle against evil.

Yet, it seems, the attraction of the Enochic myth of angelic descent for early Christians went beyond its utility for the critique of pagan culture and its resonance with Greco-Roman traditions. As with the avoidance of this motif by earlier exegetes, its popularity among proto-orthodox Christians may pivot on the Problem of Evil. Whereas pre-Rabbinic approaches to Enochic myth of angelic descent were marked by a reticence to accept the *Book of the Watchers'* supernatural etiology of sin and by attempts to forge a genealogy of error based on human responsibility, many proto-orthodox Christians seem simply to assume that otherworldly forces are the primary causes for the sin and suffering in the world. In no way was the motif of angelic instruction diluted or domesticated by these exegetes, as it was by the authors of *Jubilees*

and the *First Sibylline Oracle*. Far from downplaying the role of otherworldly forces in the genesis of sin and the corruption of humankind, most appear to accept this diagnosis of the human condition almost as a matter of course.

In large part, the popularity of the Enochic myth of angelic descent among early Christians reflects the broader interest in demonology. Likewise, the attention given to the teachings of the fallen angels follows from one of the primary functions of this discourse, namely, to explain the persistence of non-Christian beliefs and practices in a world that Christ's Incarnation and Crucifixion had purportedly changed forever. During this formative stage in the construction of Christian identity, demonology touched nearly all aspects of Christian thought, ranging from pagan apologetics and anti-Jewish polemics to heresiology, historiography, and exegesis. In the hands of authors like Justin, an hermeneutic of inversion was used to recast the history and culture of both Jews and pagans in the image of the perennial struggle between Christ and the demons. This hermeneutic empowered Christians to explain both the Jewish rejection of Jesus and the Roman persecution of Christians as signs of the intensification of demonic attacks in the interim period before the final victory of their savior.

Just as Jesus had exorcized demons,⁵⁶ so Christians were now commissioned to take up the fight. For many, this meant exposing the machinations of the fallen angels and demons in the world around them, and they explained a startling array of phenomena with reference to the invisible hands of supernatural evil: demons were behind the persecution of Christians, the lack of receptivity to the Gospel by many Jews and pagans, and the proliferation of Christian "heresies," as well as all manner of disease, destruction, and suffering. By exploiting every facet of the description of the Watchers' teachings in *1 En.* 6–16 (BW), even more elements could be added to this list: the practice of idolatry, the vanity of women, the attraction of astrology and magic. And, even if the combination of the primeval rebellion of Satan and the antediluvian fall of the angels resulted in a certain overdetermination in the explanation of evil's origins, few authors at this time seem to mind. Just as they saw demons swarming everywhere around them, inspiring deeds as diverse as sacrificing to idols and daubing one's eyes with color, so they embraced a heterogeneous body of Jewish lore about the demons and spied their influence everywhere in human history.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Matt 4:24; 8:16; 8:28–33; 9:32–34; 12:22–28; 17:15–20; Mark 1:32–39; 5:6–16; 7:26–30; 16:9; Luke 4:33–41; 8:2; 8:27–36; 9:38–43; 11:14–20; 13.

⁵⁷ To some degree, this reflects the discourse of apologetics and polemics in which most proto-orthodox authors operated; indeed, it is not just with the issue of the origins of evil that they provide multiple and often conflicting proofs for the same argument.

For our inquiry into the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, it proves no less significant that the redeployment of the instruction motif by influential authors like Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian helped to spread the Enochic myth of angelic descent even to those Christians who may not have had direct access to our text. By the second and third centuries, the use of the *Book of the Watchers* was already well established in some locales. Most notable is the case of Alexandria, where the first-century circulation of Enochic pseudepigrapha finds confirmation in 2 *Enoch* and Barnabas, and its continued use is attested by Athenagoras (ca. 176–180), Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215), and Origen (ca. 185–254). As in Egypt, the use of this book by Christians in Asia Minor seems to have predated Justin, such that his reinterpretation of the angelic descent myth only served to render it newly relevant; in this regard, it is telling that Irenaeus (ca. 130–200) draws on the full array of Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, as well as evincing the cultivation of oral traditions concerning Asael/Azazel.

In other locales, the introduction of this book seems to have followed from the discovery of the value of the instruction motif as a tool for cultural critique. This, for instance, appears to be the case in North Africa. The example of Tertullian (ca. 160–220) proves most significant in this regard, since his are the first extant writings that evince the circulation of the *Book of the Watchers* in this area and the first to retell the Enochic myth of angelic descent in Latin. In the third century, North African Christians like Commodian and Cyprian follow Tertullian in their use of the angelic descent myth. It is unclear whether or not they too drew directly from the *Book of the Watchers*, although its circulation in this locale is indirectly attested by Augustine a century later. Indeed, when Augustine sets forth to contest the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the view that 1 Peter 2:4 refers to the angels who fell before the Flood, he is first forced to undermine the authority of the Enochic writings used to support these views (*Civ.* 15.23).

As we shall see in the [next chapter](#), Augustine also marks the culmination of the process by which traditions about the Watchers were progressively applied to Satan and gradually dissociated from Gen 6:1–4 and the era before the Flood. Already in second and third centuries, the figure of Satan looms even larger than the fallen angels in the Christian imagination, no doubt due to his prominent role in the increasingly elevated texts that would come to comprise the NT. In part because of Paul's celebration of Christ as the second Adam, Christians – even in this early period – also tended to focus more on the creation, transgression, and expulsion of the first Adam, than on the age of Enoch, the Watchers, and the Flood. As in Second Temple times, some early Christians integrated Enochic traditions about the latter into systems

that privileged the former. Nevertheless, Enoch and the fallen angels would progressively recede in significance, concurrent with the growing dominance of traditions about Adam, Eve, and the Serpent in the Christian discourse about the *Urzeit*, as ratified by Augustine's articulation of the doctrine of original sin.

This raises an important point, which should be stressed before we turn to examine the factors that led to the exclusion of the Enochic literature from the biblical canon of Western Christian orthodoxy: even in the second and third centuries, the popularity of the Enochic myth of angelic descent and the influence of the *Book of the Watchers* had its limits. Most notably, our evidence suggests that there was never a full translation of the text into Latin. Tertullian, for instance, seems to have used the *Book of the Watchers* in its Greek translation. Even as he passionately champions our text, the "father of Latin Christianity" ironically stands at the beginning of a trend that helped to seal the fate of the Enochic literature in Western Christendom, namely, the growing use of Latin as the primary language of worship and scholarship.

Even though the seeds of the eventual rejection of Enochic pseudepigrapha by ecclesiarchs can already be found in the second and third centuries, it proves significant that such seeds would not sprout until the christianization of the Roman Empire and the emergence of a triumphalistic Christian orthodoxy that eagerly took on the trappings of an imperial religion. As we shall see, it was this development that prompted a variety of measures aimed at standardizing and unifying the diversity of early Christian belief and practice, including the formation and promotion of a closed canon of both OT and NT scriptures. In the process, the church would develop a concept of scriptural authority more akin to the Rabbinic movement than to Second Temple Judaism and proto-orthodox Christianity. The fourth and fifth centuries also saw a dramatic shift in the power dynamics between pagans and Christians, as the decriminalization of Christianity led to a new influx of gentile converts and as the practice of this once persecuted religion even became an asset in an ever more christianized Empire. Once Christians finally gained some concrete support for their supersessionist claims both to the biblical promises to Israel and to the fruits of Greek antiquity, it is perhaps not surprising that Enochic traditions about the fallen angels and their demonic brood began to lose some of their appeal – even as the early apologists and heresiologists who embraced the *Book of the Watchers* were increasingly elevated to the status of Church Fathers.



The Interpenetration of Jewish and Christian Traditions: The Exegesis of Genesis and the Marginalization of Enochic Literature

IF WE CONCLUDED OUR INQUIRY HERE, WE MIGHT IMAGINE THAT THE *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* provides a parade example for the “Parting of the Ways” between Judaism and Christianity. In the pre-Rabbinic period, the *Book of the Watchers* and the Enochic myth of angelic descent influenced many Jews, informing the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 and shaping the religious landscape from which the Jesus Movement emerged. It is only after the Bar Kokhba Revolt that conflicting approaches arose among learned Jews and Christians. These reflect the parallel efforts at self-definition by the Rabbinic movement and proto-orthodox Christianity, and they led these groups in opposite directions. Early Sages seem to have abandoned the Enochic literature and mounted an offensive to invalidate its connections with the interpretation of Genesis. At the same time, proto-orthodox Christians embraced the very elements of the apocalyptic heritage of Second Temple Judaism that these Jews rejected.

Furthermore, proto-orthodox Christians redeployed early Enochic traditions for distinctively Christian aims. Consistent with the general consensus among pre-Rabbinic Jews, they read Gen 5:21–24 as signaling Enoch’s escape from death. They, however, used this exegesis to claim Enoch as a pre-Christian Christian whose righteousness in God’s eyes demonstrates to the possibility of salvation apart from Torah-observance. Likewise, they followed the precedents in Second Temple Judaism for interpreting Gen 6:1–4 through the traditions about the fallen angels in the *Book of the Watchers*, but they simultaneously developed new approaches to the Enochic myth of angelic descent, which addressed the ambivalent relationship between an increasingly gentile church and its pagan past.

In Chapter 4, I argued that this evidence only speaks to the decisive separation between the two religions if one chooses to ignore the continued diversity of both Judaism and Christianity, accepting the narratives told by the

“winners of history” as the only stories worthy of telling. This chapter and the next will consider evidence that sheds doubt on the traditional model of early Jewish–Christian relations in a different way, by demonstrating the continued interpenetration of Jewish and Christian traditions concerning Enoch, the fallen angels, and the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 long after the so-called Parting of the Ways.

The present chapter will explore the various reasons why Christian attitudes towards the *Book of the Watchers* and the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 increasingly came to parallel their Rabbinic Jewish counterparts in the fourth and fifth centuries, even despite the popularity of Enochic myth of angelic descent among earlier Christians. We will begin by investigating the exclusion of the Enochic literature from the OT canon of Western Christian orthodoxy, with a special focus on the place of the Jewish Tanakh in arguments against the continued Christian use of “the books of Enoch(s).” From there, we will turn to consider the late antique Christian rejection of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, exploring the parallels in Rabbinic Judaism and speculating about possible points of contact.

The chapter will conclude with a survey of the settings for the transmission of early Enochic texts and traditions after the fifth century. Our main aim will be to weigh the impact of the rejection of Enochic books by ecclesiarchs in the Roman Empire on the *Book of the Watchers*’ reception-history in the West. This survey will also lay the foundation for our inquiry in the next chapter, which will approach the question of influence from the other direction, exploring the possibility that Christians, “Jewish-Christians,” Manichees, and/or Muslims played some mediatory role in facilitating the rediscovery of early Enochic texts and traditions by Rabbinic Jews in the early Middle Ages.

According to the traditional characterization of the early history of Jewish–Christian relations, the destruction of the Second Temple and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt ushered in Judaism’s increasing isolation from the broader culture and simultaneously served as the determinative catalyst for the full formation of Christian identity, theology, and praxis. Both developments, according to this account, rendered the beliefs and practices of “living” (as opposed to biblical and “rhetorical”) Jews largely irrelevant for the church.

Our sources, however, tell a different story. Following the traditional model, we would scarcely expect fourth- and fifth-century church leaders in the West to exhibit any interest or anxiety about their Jewish contemporaries; not only did they live centuries after the failure of the Bar Kokhba Revolt had allegedly sealed the church’s triumph over Judaism (both without and within), but they saw themselves as living at the very moment of its victory over paganism, due to Constantine’s decriminalization of Christianity and the progressive

christianization of the very Empire in which they had suffered so much persecution. Yet, contrary to the “master narrative” promoted by orthodox ecclesiarchs and echoed by many modern scholars, this is precisely what we find in our primary sources – Christian anxiety *and* interest about the practices of their Jewish contemporaries.

Recent research has focused mostly on the anxiety about Jewish influence. Pointing to fourth- and fifth-century polemics against Jews, Judaizing, and “Jewish-Christians,” some have stressed that Nicene and post-Nicene church leaders were engaging in extensive efforts to draw clear boundaries between Christianity and Judaism, precisely because there was still a need to do so. Most cited is the evidence of John Chrysostom’s sermons (e.g., *Adv.Jud.* 3.4), which rail against parishioners who saw no contradiction in worshipping at both synagogues and churches.¹ Examples like these suggest that the emphatic statements by ecclesiarchs from this time are rooted not so much in an established consensus about the mutual exclusivity of “Judaism” and “Christianity,” as in the continued lack of adequately clear distinctions “on the ground.”²

Like the no less tendentious declarations of the demise of Greco-Roman religion, Christian assertions about the ossified state of post-Christian Judaism and its irrelevance to the ascendant church should perhaps be read, not as a direct reflection of historical fact, but rather as a “facilitating narrative” by which they made sense of a situation that still remained problematic.³ Like the alleged triumph of “orthodoxy” against “heresy,” the untangling of “Jewish” and “Christian” identities was hardly a *fait accompli*. In the wake of Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, the “Great Church” gradually gained the political and legal leverage needed to police the borders of Christian identity, but the fight was far from over – and, even after the fifth century, the victories were largely limited to the Roman Empire.

The reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* also highlights a fascinating paradox in late antique Christian attitudes towards Jews and Judaism: even though the fourth and fifth centuries were a critical era for the establishment of “Christian” and “Jew” as categorically distinct identities in the Roman Empire, the concurrent construction of an imperial Christianity owed much to the dialogue with “living” forms of Judaism. At the same time that ecclesiarchs were attempting to officialize and legislate their vision of Christianity as wholly independent from post-Christian Judaism, some of the

¹ Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, esp. 66–94; Gager, “Dangerous.”

² On the textual and archaeological evidence for these “fuzzy” boundaries, see Rutgers, “Archeological,” esp. 101–18, 110–15; Lieu, “Parting,” esp. 110–19; Kimelman, “Identifying.”

³ On 5th c. assertions about the triumph over paganism as a “facilitating narrative,” see Brown, *Authority*, 4.

most influential thinkers in Western Christendom began to follow their Rabbinic Jewish counterparts, not only in promoting a closed canon of scriptures and formulating an exclusivistic approach to scriptural authority, but also in rejecting the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, adopting euhemeristic approaches to the “sons of God,” and abandoning the Enochic literature.

Although these developments were precipitated by a variety of factors, I suggest that knowledge of the practices of their Jewish contemporaries played a part in prompting orthodox ecclesiarchs to depart so radically from proto-orthodox Christian approaches to the *Book of the Watchers* and the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. Needless to say, the Rabbinic Jewish precedent neither catalyzed nor determined the Christian canon.⁴ The formation of a scriptural canon by the “Great Church” reflects inner-Christian debates about religious authority, as well as ecclesiastical efforts at promoting doctrinal and liturgical uniformity, as both prompted and enabled by the new political power of the church and the growing authority of bishops.⁵ Likewise, the debates about the inclusion and exclusion of books of the OT and NT involved a variety of factors, including concerns about the use of certain texts by so-called heretics.⁶ Nevertheless, it remains that the “scriptures of the Jews” served as a primary reference point for the discussions about the scope of the OT canon and for the determination of the proper text of books therein.

Particularly with regard to the Enochic literature and the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, there is reason to believe that the parallels between Rabbinic Judaism and Western Christian orthodoxy are not coincidental. It is telling, for instance, that those authors who argue for the exclusion of these once popular works from the scriptural legacy of the church never criticize the content of these books, do not deny that the apostle Jude quoted from the *Book of the Watchers*, and only rarely question whether Enoch himself penned prophetic writings. As we shall see, however, these texts’ lack of authority among “the Jews” comes up again and again in their arguments about the impropriety of the “book(s) of Enoch” for Christian use.

The rejection of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the adoption of euhemeristic alternatives in Christian circles may be part of the same trend, namely, the intensification of interest among some learned Christians about the textual and exegetical practices of their Jewish counterparts. Christian scholars like Origen and Jerome still parrot the anti-Jewish tropes innovated

⁴ Schaper, “Rabbinic,” 93–106.

⁵ Hahneman, *Muratorian*, 215–18; Brakke, “Canon,” 396–98; McDonald, *Formation*, 209–20; Gamble, *Books*, 215–18.

⁶ Metzger, *Canon*, 75–105.

by their proto-orthodox predecessors, and they stand on high alert against Christian “Judaizing.”⁷ But their words and actions simultaneously evince the emergence of another – comparably sympathetic – view of “the Jews.” Even as they continue to proclaim the church’s supersession of the biblical promises to Israel and even as they denigrate post-Christian Judaism as an anachronistic aberration, they seem to see their Jewish contemporaries as guarantors of the trustworthy transmission of the OT and as resources for its exegesis.⁸

The fact that this viewpoint takes root precisely when the church begins to gain political and cultural power is perhaps not as paradoxical as it first may seem. Insofar as proto-orthodox writers like Justin lived in a time in which Christians were even more marginalized than Jews, they viewed their Jewish contemporaries as living challenges to the church’s appropriation of the history of Israel and the Jewish scriptures (as well as the legitimating stamp of antiquity that came with them). After the imperial empowerment of the church and the resultant intensification of Christian pilgrimages and settlement in Roman Palestine,⁹ more and more learned Christians began to seek out Jews – and particularly Jews living in the Holy Land – as useful resources for the difficult task of forging a unified, imperial Christianity.¹⁰ Whether this reflects a decline in the older defensiveness concerning the church’s status vis-à-vis its “mother religion,” or a sense of sharp nostalgia for the apostolic past, it remains that the late antique Christian encounter with Jews and Judaism was just as ambivalent as the encounter with paganism and Greco-Roman culture.

1. THE REJECTION OF THE ENOCHIC PSEUDEPIGRAPHA BY WESTERN CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

Already in the third century, we find clues that some Christians had begun to question the authority of the Enochic books and that their doubts were largely rooted in the status of these texts amongst “the Jews.” As noted above, our earliest evidence for this debate occurs in the writings of Tertullian and Origen. Both are clearly familiar with the *Book of the Watchers*, and both explicitly refer to the “book(s)/scripture(s) of Enoch” in their own writings. Inasmuch as they voice very different attitudes towards Enochic pseudepigrapha, a comparison of the two will help us to sketch the parameters of the debate that eventually

⁷ Origen, *Hom. Jer.* 12.13; *Comm. Matt.* 79; Jerome, *Ep. Nepotion* 52.

⁸ de Lange, *Origen*, 50–61, 103–32; Kamesar, *Jerome*, 4–49, 176–91; Salvesen, “Convergence.”

⁹ Stemberger, *Jews and Christians*, 48–120.

¹⁰ See Jacobs, *Remains*.

led to the exclusion of the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic writings from the OT canon of Western orthodoxy.

In Tertullian, the Enochic literature finds its most famous and fervent champion. Most notable for our purposes is his extended defense of these books in *On the Apparel of Women*. Following his assertion about the origins of cosmetics in antediluvian angelic descent (see Ch. 5), he informs the reader that “I am aware that the Scripture of Enoch, which has assigned this order [of action] to angels, is not received by some, because it is not admitted into the Jewish canon [lit. chest; i.e., ark of the Torah?].”¹¹ To answer these suspicions, Tertullian surveys the early transmission-history of the book, beginning with the Flood:

I suppose they did not think that, having been published before the deluge, it could have safely survived that worldwide calamity . . . If this is the reason, let them recall that Noah, the survivor of the deluge, was the great-grandson of Enoch himself; and he, of course, had heard and remembered, from domestic renown and hereditary tradition, concerning his own great-grandfather’s “grace in the sight of God,” and concerning all his preachings, because Enoch had given no other charge to Methuselah other than to transmit the knowledge of them to his posterity. (*Cult.fem.* 1.3)

Lest his reader remain suspicious about the claimed antiquity of this book, Tertullian suggests another possible channel of transmission:

If he [i.e., Noah] had not had this by so short a route, there would be this to warrant our assertion of [the authenticity of] this scripture: Just as it could have been destroyed by the violence of the Flood, so it could have been restored again through the Spirit [*Perinde potuit abolefactam eam violentia cataclysmi, in spiritu rursus reformare*] in the same way that, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian attack, every document of the Jewish literature is generally agreed to have been restored through Ezra [*omne instrumentum judaicae litteraturae per Esdram constat restauratum*].

¹¹ *Scio scripturam Enoch, quae hunc ordinem angelis dedit, non recipi a quibusdam, quia nec in armarium judaicum admittitur.* Tertullian refers to the “scripture of Enoch” in the singular. Insofar as this discussion follows from *Cult.fem.* 1.2, a passage clearly dependent on 1 *En.* 8, it is clear that the book to which he refers is either BW or a composite text that includes BW. Insofar as he clearly knows other Enochic pseudepigrapha (esp. EE), this raises two possibilities: [1] he knows an Enochic collection that includes at least some of the books found in the Ethiopic collection 1 *Enoch* or [2] he knows BW and EE as distinct documents, but here confines his discussion to BW; in referring to the “Scripture of Enoch that has assigned this order [of action] to angels,” he may be specifying that he refers to BW, rather than another Enochic book. The evidence is so scant that any theory must remain speculative, but the circulation of other Enochic books at the time (including now nonextant ones) makes the latter more likely than it first may seem – particularly since, when he picks up his discussion of cosmetics in the next chapter, he similarly confines his argument to BW.

Both arguments have their roots in the self-legitimizing statements found within early Jewish apocalypses. The first echoes a common trope within the Enochic literary tradition, namely, that Enoch's words and/or writings were passed on by his son Methuselah.¹² In light of his attitude towards Enochic pseudepigrapha, it is perhaps not surprising that Tertullian seems to prefer this explanation. For the skeptic, he offers a second explanation, which echoes the account of the re-revelation of the 24 books for all and 70 books reserved for the wise in *4 Ezra* 14. It is telling that Tertullian makes no mention of *4 Ezra's* distinction between the exoteric and esoteric components of the written revelation; for him, what is significant is the status of the "Scripture of Enoch" as a document inspired by the Holy Spirit, which can thus be renewed at any point in time.

Tertullian then argues for the *Book of the Watchers'* inspired status on the basis of its consonance with Christian beliefs:

But since Enoch in the same Scripture has preached likewise concerning the Lord,¹³ nothing at all must be rejected *by* us which pertains *to* us; and we read that "every Scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired." (cf. 2 Tim 3:16)

This leads him to invert the logic of those who cite its rejection by the Jews as proof for its spurious nature:

By the Jews it may now seem to have been rejected for that very reason, just like all the others that tell of Christ. Nor, of course, is this fact stunning – namely, that they did not receive some Scriptures that spoke of him whom they were not to receive, even in person, speaking in their presence.

In conclusion, he cites the witness of Jude: "To these considerations is added the fact that Enoch possesses a testimony in the apostle Jude."

¹² Although not present in BW, variations on this assertion are found in AB (76:12; 81:5; 82:1), BD (83:1, 10; 85:1–2), and EE (91:1–2). Nickelsburg (*Commentary*, 81, 334) makes much of the fact that this reference to Methuselah's role in transmitting Enochic books occurs after a discussion indebted to BW; he suggests that the former is an allusion to *1 En.* 82:1–2 (AB) and argues that the witness of Tertullian shows that this chapter of AB was once affixed to the end of BW, together with other nonextant testamentary material. Even if the trope of Methuselah's reception and transmission of Enoch's books and teachings was not widespread in the Enochic literature, it remains that Tertullian's discussion in *Cult.fem.* 1.3 is a digression from his discussion of cosmetics; when he picks up the discussion again in the [next chapter](#), he returns to the topic of the fallen angels and their teachings (i.e., 2.10); hence, it is misleading to assert that the order of Enochic allusions in *Cult.fem.* 1.2–3 mirrors the order of the Enochic writing(s) known by Tertullian.

¹³ VanderKam suggests that Tertullian here refers to the theophany in *1 En.* 1:3–9 (BW; "1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs," 52). If we consider that early Christians likely interpreted so-called pseudepigraphical books just like they interpreted "biblical" ones, it is also possible that he read the references to "Lord" in BW as referring to Christ.

These passages suggest that Tertullian viewed the *Book of the Watchers* as an inspired text, irrespective of Jewish opinions on the matter. In fact, far from undermining its authority, its rejection by “the Jews” only confirms his conception of its status as a source of Christian truth. Moreover, his assertion that “every scripture suitable for edification is divinely inspired” exposes a surprising lack of canonical consciousness.¹⁴ When seen from the perspective of developments in the following centuries, his appeal to 4 *Ezra* proves particularly poignant. Just as the authors of 4 *Ezra* defended an inclusive understanding of scriptural authority in an era when other Jews were beginning to formulate a closed canon, so Tertullian here voices an understanding of inspired writings that has more in common with 2 Timothy than with Athanasius. Even as these attitudes may presage his later involvement in the New Prophecy – a movement that, among other things, reacted against attempts by other Christians to limit inspiration to the past and to delineate a set number of inspired texts¹⁵ – they show just how much “mainstream” Christianity was also changing.

By contrast, it seems that Origen initially used the *Book of the Watchers* without questioning its status but was later beset with mounting doubts about the authority of Enochic pseudepigrapha. In *On First Principles* (ca. 225 CE), he does not hesitate to cite the “book of Enoch” alongside other “holy scriptures” (1.3.3), nor to quote directly from the *Book of the Watchers* (1 *En.* 19:3 and 21:1 at 4.4.8).¹⁶ Yet in his commentary on the Gospel of John, we hear hints of hesitation:

... for Jared was born to Mahleel, as it is written in the book of Enoch [ὡς ἐν τῷ Ἐνωχ γέγραπται] – if one is wont to accept the book as holy [εἰ τῷ παραδέχῃσθαι ὡς ἄγιον βιβλίον] – in the days when the sons of God came down to the daughters of men. (Origen, *Comm. John* 6.25)¹⁷

After his emigration to Caesarea, Origen becomes even more self-conscious about his use of Enochic literature. In his *Homilies on Numbers* (ca. 245 CE), he refers to “many secret and hidden matters” concerning the names of the stars “contained in the books called Enoch [*in libellis qui appellantur Enoch*],”

¹⁴ Or, more accurately, a surprising lack of canonical consciousness about pre-Christian Jewish (or ostensibly pre-Christian Jewish) scriptures. Contrast his approach to the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (*Bapt.* 17) and *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Pud.* 10; cf. *Or.* 16).

¹⁵ McDonald, *Formation*, 172–76; Metzger, *Canon of NT*, 99–106.

¹⁶ VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 54–55.

¹⁷ Origen’s reference to the “book of Enoch” is confined to the tradition about the fall of the Watchers in Jared’s time (1 *En.* 6:6 [BW]; also 106:13 [EE]), since his descent from Maleel is noted in Gen 5:16–17 as well as in 1 *En.* 37:1 (*Sim.*) and 83:3–9 (BD).

possibly alluding to the *Astronomical Book* and/or *2 Enoch*.¹⁸ Rather than quoting or discussing the relevant material from these books, he informs the reader that “since those books do not appear to be regarded as authoritative among the Jews, for the moment we should postpone appealing to those matters that are there mentioned as an example.” Interestingly, Origen does not impugn the content of these texts; if anything, his aborted citation of their teachings suggests that he still thinks of them as useful. Nevertheless, their status among the Jews serves to shed doubt on their propriety for Christians.

In *Against Celsus* (ca. 248 CE), Origen expresses an even more negative view of Enochic literature, articulated in response to the pagan use of the angelic descent myth to polemicize against Christianity. In Celsus’ view, Christian belief in the uniqueness and goodness of the Incarnation is undermined by the belief that “others [i.e., other angels] have often come – and, in fact, sixty or seventy at once, who became evil and were punished by being cast under the earth in chains” (*Cels.* 5.52). Strikingly, Origen answers by asserting that Celsus “has misunderstood what is written in the book of Enoch.” This leads him first to affirm that the angelic descent myth entails no contradiction with the doctrine of the Incarnation. He then stresses that Celsus should not be using this book as a source for understanding Christian beliefs because “the books titled ‘Enoch’ are not generally held to be divine by the churches” (5.54).¹⁹ Further to undermine Celsus’ argument, Origen counters the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 with an allegorical reading based on Philo’s ideas in *On the Giants*.

The writings of Tertullian and Origen suggest that the exclusion of the Enochic literature from the OT canon of Western orthodoxy had its roots in growing doubts about the Enochic literature already in the third century. In this, there appear to be four factors. First is their absence from the Jewish canon, as cited by Tertullian’s opponents and by Origen in the third century and stressed again in the fifth by Augustine (see below). Second is the lack of

¹⁸ Lawlor, “Early,” 203. A comment in the *Paschal Canon* of Anatolius may attest the circulation of AB or a similar Enochic text in the third century: “But that the first month among the Hebrews is about the equinox, is clearly shown also by what is taught in the book of Enoch” (Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 7.32.19).

¹⁹ Origen clearly knows BW, but it is impossible to tell whether he knew it as an independent document or as part of a collection akin to *1 Enoch*. His reference to “booklets entitled ‘Enoch’” could refer either to all/some of the five books now in *1 Enoch* or to a single Enochic collection – particularly since it is likely that *2 Enoch* and perhaps even later (now nonextant) Enochic pseudepigrapha also circulated in Egypt at the time. In any case, it is important to note Origen’s shift from a discussion of the “book of Enoch” allegedly used by Celsus (probably BW or text/collection containing BW) to the “booklets entitled ‘Enoch’”; this makes clear that, even though Enochic pseudepigrapha circulated separately, their status remained interconnected.

consensus concerning their inspired status; this seems to lie behind Origen's comment in *Cels.* 5.54 and, moreover, finds confirmation in our earlier conclusions about their transmission in a limited group of geographical areas,²⁰ as well as for their circulation in Greek but apparently not Latin.²¹ Third is the appropriation of the Enochic myth of angelic descent by pagans for use in anti-Christian polemics, as suggested by the comments of Celsus quoted by Origen, as well as by similar statements to the same effect later made by the apostate emperor Julian, as cited and countered by Cyril of Alexandria (*c. Julianum* 9). Fourth is an overall growth in learned Christians' discomfort with the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the widespread adoption of alternative approaches to this biblical pericope (see below).

We catch glimpses of all of these trends in our third-century sources. By the late fourth and early fifth centuries, however, the tenor of the discussion has changed. A number of earlier authors had concerned themselves with questions about the authority of specific texts or groups of texts (e.g., Irenaeus on gospels).²² But systematic approaches to the delineation of a list of OT scriptures awaited the decriminalization of Christianity, the imperial empowerment of the church, and the resultant efforts at imposing doctrinal and liturgical uniformity on communities throughout the Empire. It was at this time that ecclesiarchs began to categorize commonly used scriptures according to their propriety for Christian use. They label some books as "canonical" due to their divine inspiration and acceptability for use in worship, limit the use of others to didactic and or catechetical contexts, and dismiss still others as "apocrypha" forbidden for use in Christian worship and teaching.²³

Among the ecclesiarchs who engaged in the task of canonization, Enochic literature would find no champions. Nevertheless, the "book(s) of Enoch" consistently figure in arguments about the boundaries of scriptural authority, both among those "orthodox" authors who sought to limit this authority to

²⁰ I.e., Egypt and North Africa, possibly still Syrio-Palestine and Asia Minor, but probably never Italy and Spain.

²¹ Lawlor, "Early," 188–225.

²² As above, I here distinguish between the development of a concept of Scripture, the emergence of "canonical consciousness" about scriptures, and the official formation of a canon – the last being, in Brakke's words "the restriction of canonical status to certain writings out of a larger set of authoritative literature which is called scripture" ("Canon," 397).

²³ We find quite a bit of variance between the lists of books in the second category (sometimes called "catechetical" or "ecclesiastical") as it relates to the first; in Athanasius' famous letter, for instance, Esther, Wisd, Sir, Jud, Tobit, the *Didache*, and *Hermas* are deemed useful but not inspired. As for the "apocrypha," some (e.g., Athanasius, Augustine) stress that they are heretical in whole or part and thus should not be used at all by Christians. Others (e.g., Rufinus, *Exp.symb.* 36–38) leave open the possibility that they still have some value, albeit outside of worship and teaching.

a closed group of texts (e.g., Athanasius) and among those “heretics” who reacted against the emergent canonical consciousness of the imperial church (e.g., Priscillian). In a sense, the early Enochic pseudepigrapha emblemized the challenge that so-called apocrypha posed to efforts at defining the pre-Christian scriptural heritage of Christianity in terms of closed lists and clearly delineated categories. Because of Jude’s quotation of the *Book of the Watchers*, the example of the Enochic literature sharply highlighted the fact that the architects of the Christian canon sought to exclude a number of texts with a longstanding history of use in certain communities. Those who continued to assert the didactic value of “apocryphal” writings cited Jude’s use of Enochic books to grant apostolic authority to their own reading practices.²⁴ Likewise, those who sought to purge the church of “noncanonical” writings were forced to deal in some way with Enoch and his writings.

Athanasius (ca. 296–373) achieves this goal by redeploying an argument that heresiologists had long used to impugn gospels other than the four now canonical ones (e.g., Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.11.9): the Alexandrian bishop dismisses the books circulating under the names of Enoch, Isaiah, and Moses as spurious compositions invented by “heretics.” In his thirty-ninth *Festal Letter* of 367 CE – the earliest known source to apply the term *canonized* [καλονιζόμενα] to books and to outline a list of canonical NT texts identical to the present NT – he asserts that the “heretics . . . write these books whenever they want and then grant and bestow upon them dates, so that, by publishing them as if they were ancient, they might have a pretext for deceiving the simple folk.” Although he depicts the use of “apocrypha” as coterminous with heterodoxy,²⁵ it is clear that the main problem that he faces is not the “heretical” use of these texts but rather their popularity with the populace:

Who has made the simple folk believe that those books belong to Enoch even though no scriptures existed before Moses? On what basis will they say that there is an apocryphal book of Isaiah? . . . How could Moses have an apocryphal book? (*Ep.* 39; trans. Brakke)

He answers these questions through appeal to the pernicious influence of “heretics” like the Melitians, who are said even to “boast about the books that they call ‘apocryphal.’”²⁶

²⁴ E.g., Priscillian, *Liber de fide* 44–45.

²⁵ Jacobs, “Disorder.”

²⁶ Also *Hist.Ar.* 78.1. Followers of Melitius probably transmitted and redacted biblical pseudepigrapha (so Frankfurter, “Regional,” 171–72; Brakke, “Canon,” 411–12). Our inquiry above, however, suggests that we need not look to the influence of any specific group to explain the continued popularity of the Enochic literature in Egypt.

Athanasius represents our first known example of a proto-orthodox/orthodox Christian author who categorizes Enochic pseudepigrapha as “apocrypha” and associates them with “heretics.” In the second and third centuries, Enochic texts and traditions were used by prominent heresiologists (e.g. Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian), and not even the skeptical Origen mentioned their use by any “heretical” group. This pattern conforms to our first-hand evidence for the limited use of this literature by the so-called heretics with whom proto-orthodox Christians were most concerned, namely, Marcionites and various types of “gnostics.”²⁷ Later, when heresiological efforts began to focus on groups like the Manichees, authors like Jerome and Ephraim depict the use of Enochic texts and traditions as “heretical” in a distinctively Manichean sense – a charge that is consistent with the continued production and/or transmission of Enochic pseudepigrapha by Mani and his followers.²⁸ By that time, however, the early Enochic pseudepigrapha had already been branded as “apocryphal,” and Athanasius’ influence had ensured that the equation between “apocrypha” and “heresy” could be readily applied, not only to what we call “NT apocrypha,” but also to early Jewish and Christian parabiblical literature that circulated under the names of OT figures.

Later discussions of the status of the Enochic literature show that Athanasius’ strategy of “guilt by association” did not suffice to uproot the use of these specific texts. Anyone familiar with the teachings of earlier Church Fathers could deduce that the “book(s) of Enoch” were not fabricated by the followers of the fourth-century Melitius. Most problematic was the quotation of Enoch by Jude. Athanasius’ categorical denial of the existence of pre-Mosaic writings jars with the inclusion of the Jude’s epistle in his list of the canonical NT, but he nowhere addresses this apostle’s quotation of a prophecy of Enoch. Perhaps the reader is meant to assume that the “heretics” plucked this quotation from Jude’s epistle to legitimate their composition of Enochic pseudepigrapha.²⁹ It is also possible that this silence is deliberate; from our foregoing inquiry, we can imagine why this argument might not prove as effective when applied to the Enochic literature, which had circulated for long enough in Alexandria that these writings – and the *Book of the Watchers* in particular – had already

²⁷ Reeves rightly notes that “classical gnostic literature maintains a deafening silence on the subject of Enoch” (*Heralds*, 41); also Wagner, “Interpretations,” 142–45; Brakke, “Seed”; cf. Stroumsa, *Another Seed*. The only “gnostic” retelling of the Enochic myth of angelic descent occurs in the *Apocryphon of John*, a text composed at the very peak of BW’s popularity among proto-orthodox Christians.

²⁸ The oldest extant source to associate the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 with the Manichees is Alexander of Lycopolis, *c.Man.* 25 (late 3rd/early 4th c.; see Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 41); see also Jerome, *Hom.Ps.* 132; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, esp. 9–32, 185–98; idem, “Pseudepigrapha,” 181–91.

²⁹ I.e., as Athanasius argues for the quotation of the *Ascen.Isa.* in 1 Cor 2:9.

left numerous traces in Egyptian Christian literature, not to mention “popular belief” (see Cassianus, *Coll.* 7.20).

It was left to later authors, such as Augustine (ca. 354–430) and Jerome (ca. 345–420) to explain why the book quoted in Jude 14–15 should be dismissed as “apocryphal.” Here too we can see the importance of the Jewish canon for Christian discussions about the Enochic literature. This is most clear in the case of Augustine. In the course of arguing against the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, he offers a surprising solution to the conflicting evidence provided by the quotation of Enoch in the NT and the omission of Enoch’s books from the biblical canon of his Jewish contemporaries:

We cannot deny that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, left some divine writings, for that is asserted by the Apostle Jude in his canonical epistle. But it is not without reason that these writings have no place in that canon of Scripture which was preserved in the temple of the Hebrew people . . . for their antiquity brought them under suspicion, and it was impossible to ascertain whether these were his genuine writings. (*Civ.* 15.23)

For Augustine, Jude’s witness confirms that Enoch did indeed pen inspired writings. Nevertheless, he sees the omission of these books from the Jewish canon as evidence enough that Christians should question the authenticity of any writings that claim to be these ancient books.

Later on in the same work (*Civ.* 18.37–38) this assertion puts Augustine in a quandary. When arguing that Hebrew prophets predate even the most ancient of Greek philosophers (as dependent on Moses) and Egyptian wisemen (who taught and were taught by Abraham), Augustine points to the example of Enoch. He cites Jude in support of the prophethood of this preeminently ancient sage: “What of Enoch, the seventh from Adam? Doesn’t the canonical epistle of the apostle Jude declare that he prophesied?”³⁰

Consequently, he is forced to explain why the books attributed to this prophet find no place in the Christian canon. He cannot conclude that Enoch never composed any books, lest he shed doubt on Enoch’s prophetic status, Jude’s witness to Enoch, and hence the existence of Hebrew prophets long before Egyptians even walked the earth. He thus justifies the omission of these books from the Christian canon as follows:

³⁰ Interestingly, it almost seems as if Augustine is attempting to salvage Tertullian’s view of Enoch as “the oldest prophet” (*Idol.* 15.6) – albeit without accepting those books that circulate under his name.

But the writings of these men [i.e., the Hebrew prophets who predate Abraham] could not be held as authoritative *either among the Jews or among us* on account of their extreme antiquity, which made it seem necessary to regard them with suspicion, lest false things should be set forth instead of true. For, some writings that are said to be theirs are quoted by those who, according to their own whims, loosely believe what they please.

But the purity of the canon has not admitted these writings – not because the authority of these men who pleased God is rejected, but because they [i.e., the writings] are not believed to be theirs. Nor should it appear strange if writings for which such great antiquity is claimed are held in suspicion, seeing that in the very history of the kings of Judah and Israel (i.e., 1–2 Kgs) . . . very many things are mentioned which are not explained there but are said to be found in other books that the prophets wrote . . . [which] are not found in the canon that the people of God received . . .

Therefore, if any writings outside of it are now brought forward under the name of the ancient prophets, they cannot serve even as an aid to knowledge, because it is uncertain whether they are genuine. (*Civ.* 18.38)

Augustine here adopts Athanasius' tactic of explaining the church's rejection of Enochic books by lumping them together with other questionable books and by alluding to the role of "heretics" in falsifying ancient writings.

Nevertheless, he stops short of dismissing the Enochic pseudepigrapha as wholly the invention of "heretics," and this choice necessitates a rather tortured argument about how it came to be that "although there is some truth in these apocryphal writings, they contain so many false statements that they have no canonical authority" (*Civ.* 15.23).³¹ Again, the lack of Jewish support for the authority of these books proves critical for his argument. By stressing that the uncertainty surrounding these writings is common to both Jews and Christians, he can explain away the witness of Jude and raise enough doubts about the trustworthiness of these books to argue that they "cannot serve even as an aid to knowledge."

Jerome, by contrast, seems to have little difficulty choosing between the witness of Jude and the evidence of the Jewish canon. Insofar as he was the most vocal supporter of *Hebraica veritas* and one of the few Christians who proposed limiting the "canonical" OT books solely to those found in the Tanakh, it is perhaps not surprising that he wholeheartedly opts for the latter:

³¹ Augustine goes on to explain that the use of some of these books by "heretics" serves to delegitimize the use of all of these books by anyone.

Jude the brother of James, left a short epistle that is reckoned among the seven catholic epistles. Because he therein quotes from the apocryphal book of Enoch, it is rejected by many. Nevertheless, through age and use, it [i.e., the Epistle of Jude] has gained authority and is reckoned among the Holy Scriptures. (*Vir. ill.* 4)

Jerome accepts that Jude quoted from the “book of Enoch,” but he sees this as reflecting negatively on Jude, rather than positively on Enoch. Even though he quotes this opinion in the name of an anonymous “many,” Jerome himself seems quite ready to jettison the Epistle of Jude from the Christian canon. Only begrudgingly does he accept the traditional place of the book within the church, albeit with a notable silence on the question of its inspired status.³²

The underlying assumption – namely that the scope of the Jewish canon says more about the status of Enochic books than its quotation by the apostle Jude – exposes an interesting shift in the dynamics of Jewish–Christian relations. Based on the attitudes towards Jews and Judaism expressed by proto-orthodox authors like Justin Martyr, we might expect Tertullian’s view to hold sway. Yet Tertullian, in stark contrast to second-century authors like Clement and Athenagoras, was forced to defend this view to other Christians, for whom the Jewish rejection of these texts proved far more damning. Together with the evidence from Origen, this suggests that the initial decline in the popularity of the Enochic literature among Christians may have been linked to its lack of authority among Jews. If the case of Origen can be taken as characteristic, we could further propose that this development has roots in actual contacts between Christians and Jews. Insofar as Origen’s suspicions about Enochic books mounted after his move to Caesarea, one might even speculate about their roots in contacts between Christians and Rabbis in Roman Palestine.³³

The example of Origen proves illustrative in another way, helping to explain why the Jewish canon remained relevant even in post-Athenasian discussions about the authenticity and authority of the Enochic literature: Origen’s concern for the status of these books in Jewish circles reflects his broader interest in the textual practices and preferences of his Jewish contemporaries. This is exemplified by his efforts at learning Hebrew and embodied in his magisterial text-critical project, the Hexapla. For this, Origen consulted

³² Admittedly, Jude’s place in the NT canon was not all that secure at this time. Eusebius, writing prior to the more systematic canonical efforts of Athanasius, lists books according to the level of consensus about their sanctity (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.1–7) and places Jude in the category of “disputed books, which are nevertheless familiar to the majority.” This category includes James, 2 Peter, 2 John, and 3 John.

³³ Origen elsewhere betrays his familiarity with the scope of the Rabbinic biblical canon (see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.1–2; Hilary, *Comm. Ps.* 15; also Origen, *Ep. Afr.* 13) as well as his knowledge of some distinctively Rabbinic traditions, such as the limitations on expounding Ma’aseh Merkavah (*Comm. Cant.* praef.). This one author, at least, likely speaks of the Enochic books’ “lack of authority among the Jews” from first-hand knowledge.

Jewish-transmitted scriptures both in the original Hebrew and in Greek translation (i.e., consonantal MT, Aquila, Symmachus?) alongside Christian-transmitted and Christian Greek versions (i.e., LXX, Theodotion, Symmachus?). The contrast with Tertullian could not be more striking: Tertullian assumes that his Jewish contemporaries are unreliable guardians of a biblical heritage that they know is no longer theirs, whereas Origen's words and actions betray a surprising degree of trust in "the Jews" in their capacity as tradents of the OT scriptures.³⁴

This, in my view, is the context in which we should consider the Jewish influence on Christian attitudes towards Enochic books, as well as the impact of the Jewish canon on Christian canonizing more generally. As the move towards standardization in Western Christendom exposed the troubling heterogeneity both in copies of the scriptures and in the selection of texts used by different churches, it seems that some learned Christians actively sought out Jews – and particularly Jews (and/or Rabbis?) in the Holy Land – for help in their efforts to arrive at an accurate and authentic determination of the OT. Among leading Christians in the West, only Jerome believed that the "canonical" OT should be identical in scope to the "scriptures of the Hebrews." Most, however, accepted that the scriptures used by their Jewish contemporaries shed some light on the scope of the canon and the text of biblical books.

The absence of Enochic literature from the Jewish biblical canon was not the only factor in their rejection by Western Christian orthodoxy, but I suggest that it was an important one. By the fifth century, for instance, Augustine can assume that his readers will accept the evidence of the Jewish canon as support for his somewhat strained argument that Enochic writings should not be read by Christians, even despite the fact that Enoch was a prophet whose writings were quoted by an apostle. Whatever the attitudes towards "the book(s) of Enoch" in the writings of earlier Christians, their absence from the Jewish canon now suffices to shed doubt on their value for use within the church.

2. THE "SONS OF GOD" IN LATE ANTIQUE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN EXEGESIS

Throughout our inquiry, we have seen how the fate of the *Book of the Watchers* remained tightly tied to the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. In Second Temple Judaism and proto-orthodox Christianity, the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and

³⁴ Of course, Origen's choice to include Aquila and Symmachus in the Hexapla is rooted in the polemical aims of helping Christians involved in controversies with Jews (*Ep. Afr.* 9), even as it reflects his text-critical interest in using Jewish-transmitted versions of OT scriptures to "heal" the Septuagint (*Comm. Matt.* 15.14); Kamesar, *Jerome*, 4–40; Schaper, "Origin," 3–15.

the use of the *Book of the Watchers* seem to have been mutually validating, due in large part to the integration of elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent into the oral interpretative tradition surrounding Genesis. It thus proves significant that the progressive marginalization of the Enochic literature in Western Christendom occurred concurrently with a shift in the consensus among learned Jews and Christians about the identity of the “sons of God” in Gen 6:1–4.

The centuries between the birth of Jesus and the formation of the Western Christian canon saw a remarkable change in the Christian exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. During the formative stages in Christianity, it was generally assumed that the “sons of God” were heavenly beings come to earth. Like pre-Rabbinic Jews, most Christian authors readily accepted that angels descended to earth in antediluvian times, and they frequently read Gen 6:1–4 through the lens of the Enochic myth of angelic descent. But by the time that ecclesiarchs in the Roman Empire began to label the Enochic literature as “apocryphal,” few exegetes – either Jewish or Christian – held this view. In its place we find a new consensus, voiced by Jews and Christians alike: the “sons of God” may be mighty or holy or have extraordinarily long lives, but they are only human.

Especially if we accept that knowledge about the status of the Enochic literature among “the Jews” played a role in shaping attitudes towards these texts among church leaders in the West, the question arises: can the same be said for the rejection of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the adoption of euhemeristic alternatives? In Chapter 4, we discussed early Rabbinic efforts to root out the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, and we noted Justin’s comments in *Dial.* 79, which evince at least some Christian awareness of these developments. Before we explore the causes for the change in the Christian exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 and its effects on the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, we must thus look more closely at the precedents and parallels in Rabbinic Judaism.

i. Gen 6:1–4 in Rabbinic Midrash

In Chapter 4, we contextualized the tannaitic and early amoraic reaction against Enochic texts and traditions within the formative stages in the development of the Rabbinic movement, which included a series of efforts to exclude certain groups and practices from the bounds of “normative” Judaism. By the fourth century, the Mishnah had gained a status as the foundational document of the Rabbinic movement.³⁵ The influence of this movement had begun

³⁵ Kraemer, “Formation,” 616–27.

to spread beyond the study-circles of Sages in Roman Palestine, such that its authority would only mount with the christianization of the Roman Empire.³⁶ Generally, however, early Rabbinic polemics proved highly ineffective, even in defining the scope of acceptable discourse *within* the movement. Later Sages, for instance, were quick to circumvent the mishnaic limitations on exegetical inquiry into Ma'aseh Bereshit (*m.Hag.* 2.1).³⁷ Likewise, polemics against the use of the Torah for magical purposes (*m.Sanh.* 10.1) had little effect; irrespective of the status of the Mishnah and the growing influence of the Rabbinic movement, Jewish magic continued to flourish, both inside and outside the spheres of Rabbinic influence.³⁸

This makes it all the more striking that, with regard to the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, early Sages like R. Simeon seem to have succeeded in purging the Rabbinic discourse of certain opinions – and exegetical opinions, no less. The classical Rabbinic literature is famous for its inclusion of multiple and conflicting viewpoints, and this proves particularly true for midrashic texts. Midrash does not merely condone the coexistence of different interpretations; it celebrates and elevates multivocality as an intrinsic characteristic of Scripture.³⁹ Especially in light of the dominance of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in pre-Rabbinic Judaism, we might expect to find this view voiced in classical midrashim, alongside dissenting opinions and alternative interpretations. Yet in sources from the Talmudic period (ca. 200–600 CE), traditions about the fallen angels have no place in the interpretation of Genesis. It is only centuries later, in the early Middle Ages (see Ch. 7), that Rabbinic Jewish sources even deign to suggest again that the “sons of God” of Gen 6:2 might be angels.

On the one hand, this pattern fits well with our earlier conclusion that the Rabbinic rejection of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 was not merely a matter of exegetical concern. The attitude towards this readings seems to root in polemics against *minim* who used Enochic texts and traditions – and, hence, in the broader construction of Rabbinic authority over against other forms of Judaism. It thus makes sense that this perspective would not be readily reintegrated into Rabbinic discourse.

On the other hand, there is reason to believe that the suppression of this exegesis largely succeeded in undermining the status of Enochic pseudepigrapha. The example of Daniel shows that the Rabbinic antipathy towards

³⁶ Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 179–289.

³⁷ Alexander, “Preemptive,” esp. 230–31.

³⁸ For examples of amulets that show the persistence of the precise practice condemned in the Mishnah, see *MSF* pp. 22–31.

³⁹ Stern, *Midrash and Theory*, 22–33.

apocalypses was not absolute; insofar as Daniel contains prooftexts that proved helpful in inner-Jewish debates about resurrection (esp. 12), some seemed willing to reinterpret its problematic aspects (e.g., *t.Miqvaot* 7.11).⁴⁰ Likewise, the example of the Wisdom of ben Sira demonstrates that Rabbinic Jews could find some “outside books” useful and, therefore, continue to copy and preserve them.⁴¹ By contrast, the complete lack of references – either positive or negative – to Enochic books within the classical Rabbinic literature appears to confirm the abandonment of the *Book of the Watchers*. Once drained of its relevance for the exegesis of the Torah, it appears that this text was rendered largely irrelevant for Jews in the sphere of Rabbinic influence.

Rabbinic readers, it seems, soon took for granted that the “sons of God” of Gen 6 were antediluvian humans, rather than angelic beings. The consensus is assumed, for instance, even by the fifth-century redactors of *Genesis Rabbah*. Above, we noted that *Gen.Rab.* 26.5 preserves a tannaitic tradition countering the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:2 (“R. Simeon b. Yoḥai called them ‘sons of judges.’ R. Simeon b. Yoḥai cursed all who called them ‘sons of God’”). In the redacted form of *Genesis Rabbah*, we might expect to learn more about the interpretation countered by R. Simeon, or to hear another Sage introduce additional biblical prooftexts into the discussion, such as those in which “sons of God” is commonly taken to mean “angels.”⁴² The text, however, promptly abandons this question and turns to discuss other matters; R. Simeon’s statement is here treated, not as the beginning of a discussion about the identity of these “sons of God,” but rather as a statement of the consensus on which further discussion must be founded.

The tradition about R. Simeon is followed by an aphorism attributed to the same Sage, paired with another dictum. Both address the theme of leadership:

R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Any lawlessness [פְּרִצָּה], if it is not from the leaders [הַגְּדוֹלִים], is not [truly] lawlessness. R. ‘Azariah said in the name of R. Levi: If the masters [מְרִים] stole the gods [אִדֹּלִים; i.e., idols], by what would they to swear or to what [would they] sacrifice?

⁴⁰ Neusner, “Beyond Myth,” 102–3.

⁴¹ Leiman, *Canonization*, 91–102.

⁴² E.g., Job 1:6; 38:7 in *Gen.Rab.* 65:21; *b.Ḥul.* 91b; *b.B.Bat.* 15b–16a; cf. *Pirqe R.El.* 22. The Rabbinic interpretation of Job 38:7 (“... when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy . . .”) presents an especially interesting case. Since the praise of the “morning stars” was mentioned before that of the “sons of God,” this verse served as a key prooftext for the tradition that the praise of the ministering angels (= “sons of God”) in heaven must await the beginning of liturgical praise by Israel (= the stars); see e.g., *Gen.Rab.* 65:21; *b.Ḥul.* 91b; Schäfer, *Rivalität*, 170–74. It is only in post-Talmudic sources (e.g., *Pirqe R.El.* 22; *BerRabbatī* ad Gen 6:2) that this verse is brought into the discussion concerning Gen 6:2.

These statements are striking precisely because they have no bearing at all on the question of whether the “sons of God” are angels or men. Even to understand their relevance, the reader/hearer must assume that Genesis here speaks of antediluvian people who went astray. The implication is that the “sons of God” are those who are ultimately responsible for the fact that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Gen 6:5) in the days before the Flood. Like the leaders of any age, these men had the power to sway others, either for evil (i.e., like the lawless ones cited by R. Simeon) or for good (i.e., like those cited by R. Azariah, who discourage idolatry). In a sense, the “sons of God” retain the role of corruptors, but their role in encouraging the wickedness of the Generation of the Flood is explained wholly in mundane and naturalistic terms.

In the interpretations of Gen 6:2–4 in *Gen.Rab.* 26.5–7, their human identity is presumed throughout. The question is not whether these “sons of God” are men, but why Scripture calls these men “sons of God”:

Why are they called “sons of God” [בני האלהים]? R. Ḥanina and Resh Lakish both said: Because they had long lives [lit. multiplied days; cf. Gen 6:3] without trouble or suffering. R. Huna said in R. Jose’s name: It was in order that men might understand the calendrical cycles [התקופות] and calculations [החשבונות]. Our Sages said: It was in order that they might receive the punishment of themselves and also of the Generations that followed them. (*Gen.Rab.* 26.5)

So too with other sources from the Talmudic period: Gen 6:1–4 is commonly read in light of Rabbinic traditions about the Generation of the Flood, which is singled out already in the Mishnah as one of the paradigmatically wicked ages of humankind (*m.Sanh.* 11; *m.B.Metzia* 4) and which becomes a key element in the Rabbinic view of the pre-Abrahamic history of the world as a progression of evil eras (*SifreDeut.* 311; *Gen.Rab.* 19.7). Whether the sins of the “sons of God” are applied specifically to the leaders of the Generation of the Flood or to the Generation as a whole, there is no doubt that these beings are human (*SifreNum.* 86; *SifreZ* 194). And, most notably, we find no further hints of any discord concerning their identity. If the tannaitic and early amoraic arguments against the once traditional readings of Gen 5:21–24 and Gen 6:1–4 reflect early polemics against those who continued to cultivate Enochic texts and traditions, it seems that these polemics met with success.

In part, we can account for this success with reference to broader theological developments in Rabbinic Judaism. Most notable is the stress on the inherent sinlessness of angels, as rooted in the belief that angels are categorically inferior to humankind.⁴³ Far from exalting the angels, the assertion of their inability

⁴³ The below discussion is based on the analysis in Schäfer, *Rivalität*, esp. 51–55, 220–24, 229.

to sin is used to confirm their complete subordination to humankind, and particularly to the chosen nation Israel. Within Rabbinic thought, humans alone have the ability to sin (and thus to avoid sin), and they are uniquely deserving of the divine gift of the Torah.

In other words, we find an exact inversion of the attitudes towards angels in pre-Rabbinic Jewish literature. As we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, earlier Jews assumed the superiority of angels to humankind, articulating the exaltation of individual humans (e.g., Enoch, Noah) by likening them to the angels and by depicting them as transformed into angel-like beings themselves. Such traditions reflect and convey the essential similarity between humans and angels, while asserting the permeability of the boundaries between them. Ironically, this assertion of commonality also grounds the plausibility of angelic sin and allows for an understanding of wicked angels as akin to wicked humans.

By contrast, the angelology of classical Rabbinic Judaism is founded on the categorical difference between the two classes of creatures. Humans (and particularly Jews) are assured that they have no reason to wish to be like angels. Angels are neither able nor worthy to “fall” into a human state. Although the radical demotion of the angels probably first developed as a response to the veneration of angels by some Jews, it no doubt helped, at the same time, to undermine traditions about fallen angels like those in the *Book of the Watchers*.⁴⁴

Within Rabbinic exegesis, the euhemeristic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 also displaced and absorbed the angelic one. Even as the equation of “sons of God” with humans spurred the development of a new body of midrashic traditions about this pericope,⁴⁵ elements from the older interpretation were integrated and adapted. Most notable is the transfer of tropes from the typological interpretation of the Watchers in pre-Rabbinic Judaism. Inasmuch as this approach downplayed the supernatural status of the fallen angels and enhanced their paradigmatic function, its motifs could be readily reapplied to wayward humans.

Interestingly, some pre-Rabbinic motifs, such as the association of the fallen angels with Sodomites (Sir 16:7–9; *T.Reub.* 5; Jude 7), proved useful in solving

⁴⁴ That the trope of angelic rivalry functioned to counter angel veneration is clear from *b.Sanh.* 38a–b, where the *minim*’s exalted view of the angels is discussed alongside this alternate approach to the angels’ role at Creation.

⁴⁵ Especially notable are the view that this Generation’s wickedness is linked to the ease of human life in antediluvian times (e.g., *SifreDeut.* 43, 318; *Gen.Rab.* 26.5; *b.Sanh* 108a) and the notion that this Generation had no one from whom to learn (e.g., *SifreDeut.* 43), as well as the use of passages from the Book of Job to expand upon their sins (e.g., *SifreDeut.* 32, 43).

the major shortcoming of the euhemeristic interpretation of “sons of God,” namely the incommensurability between their sin of taking wives from the “daughters of men” (Gen 6:2) and the punishment of the Flood (Gen 6–9). It is not difficult to imagine why fornication between angels and human women might elicit cosmic punishment. Some effort, however, is needed to explain the dire misdeed involved in the choice of certain antediluvian men to take certain wives. Accordingly, the sins of the human “sons of God” were magnified:

. . . when a bride was made beautiful for her husband, the chief [i.e., of the sons of God/nobles/judges] entered and enjoyed her first. Hence it is written, “For they were fair,” which refers to virgins. “And they took for themselves wives” refers to married women. “Whomsoever they chose” – that means men and beasts. R. Huna said in the name of R. Joseph: The Generation of the Flood was not blotted out from the world until they composed nuptial songs in honor of pederasty and bestiality! (*Gen.Rab.* 26.5; also *Tanh.B* Gen 1.33)

That these sins were patterned on the sins of the Sodomites is suggested by thematic parallels with exegesis of Gen 18 (*Gen.Rab.* 50:7) and by the common pairing of the two in Rabbinic lists of the paradigmatically wicked (*SifreDeut.* 43, 310; *Lev.Rab.* 23.9; *Num.Rab.* 5.3; 9.24).

In Rabbinic exegesis of Gen 6:1–4, we also find other traces of the pre-Rabbinic traditions about the fallen angels whose application to humans proves more tenuous.⁴⁶ One example is the tradition that the “sons of God” did not have physical intercourse with the “daughters of men.” *Genesis Rabbah*, for instance, attributes the following interpretation to R. Berekiah:

“And also after that, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men” (Gen 6:4). R. Berekiah said: A woman would go out into the marketplace, see a young man, and conceive a passion for him, whereupon she would go, cohabit, and give birth to a young man like him. (*Gen.Rab.* 26.7)⁴⁷

Here, we encounter a variation on an exegetical motif that originated as a solution to the problem of angelic–human sexual union. Already in the second-century BCE, the author of the “Animal Apocalypse” felt the need to explain that

⁴⁶ The tradition about the Cainite women’s use of cosmetics (e.g., *Tg.Ps.-J.* Gen 6:1; *Pirqe R.El.* 22) is another example of the same phenomenon, which has notable precedents in Christian sources (e.g., Ephraim, *Comm.Gen* 6:3); cf. Alexander, “Targumim,” 70. Another interesting echo of the Enochic myth of angelic descent occurs in an interpretation of Gen 6:5 in *Gen.Rab.* 27:4: “R. Nehemiah interpreted it [i.e., God’s expression of regret in Gen 6:5]: I am comforted that I created him below, for had I created him above, he would have incited the celestial creatures to revolt, just as he has incited the terrestrial beings to revolt.”

⁴⁷ Note also the idea that the “sons of God” sinned through seeing in *t.Sotah* 3.2, *Esth.Rabb.* 7.9, and *Num.Rabb.* 20.2.

angels had to transform themselves in order to have sex with human women (1 *En.* 86:4). The Rabbinic version more specifically recalls the account given in the *Testament of Reuben*, which explains that the Watchers appeared to human women when they were having intercourse with their husbands but “since the women’s minds were filled with lust for these apparitions, they gave birth to Giants” (5:6).

Of course, neither of these traditions occurs in the *Book of the Watchers*. Rather, the parallel between the “sons of God” and Sodomites and the explanation of how spiritual angels copulate with fleshly humans reflect the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 and the Enochic myth of angelic descent during an earlier era when the two were intertwined. Accordingly, the later occurrence of these motifs in Rabbinic Midrash is most readily explained with appeal to their ongoing transmission in the oral interpretative tradition surrounding Genesis: traditions associated with the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 continued to circulate orally, even among circles that abandoned the *Book of the Watchers* or never used it to begin with, and were later adapted to fit the euhemeristic interpretation of the “sons of God.”⁴⁸

The following chapter will discuss the reemergence of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in post-Talmudic Jewish literature. For now, it suffices to note the striking contrast between the approaches to Gen 6:1–4 in classical midrashim (ca. 200–600 CE) and in early medieval midrashim, *yalqutim*, and biblical commentaries. The former depart from pre-Rabbinic interpretation of the identity of the “sons of God,” but they retain elements from pre-Rabbinic exegesis of Gen 6:1–4. This pattern suggests the absorption of older motifs. We find the exact opposite in post-Talmudic sources: the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 recurs in a handful of texts written between the eighth and eleventh centuries.⁴⁹ Interestingly, however, these sources contain few parallels with the pre-Rabbinic interpretations of Gen 6:1–4 and the Enochic myth of angelic descent; there is little to suggest an unbroken line of development linking pre-Rabbinic exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 with the exegesis of this passage in early medieval Judaism.

Retellings of the angelic descent myth in post-Talmudic sources integrate several details that betray familiarity with the *Book of the Watchers*, for reasons that we shall discuss in the next chapter. Even so, the euhemeristic reading continues to dominate the discussion in the Middle Ages; when medieval texts do include traditions about the fallen angels in course of their expositions of

⁴⁸ This, in fact, is precisely what we would expect to find in the wake of the suppression of a once popular interpretation: the appropriation and reintegration of aspects from the older approach.

⁴⁹ E.g., *Pirqe R.El.* 22; *BerRabbati* Gen 6:4; *Ag.Ber.* praef; *MHG* Gen 6:4; *Yalq.* Gen §44.

Gen 6:1–4, these are placed side by side with nonangelic interpretations and are almost always subordinated to them (e.g., *Pirqe R.El.* 22; praef. *Ag.Ber.*). Furthermore, the angelic descent myth is assimilated to distinctively Rabbinic traditions, such as the trope of angelic envy of humanity and the view that Gen 4:26 denotes the wickedness of Generation of Enosh.

In short, the early medieval evidence seems to reflect the reintroduction of the angelic descent myth into Rabbinic culture after a long period of absence, rather than its continuous transmission in oral channels or in texts now lost to us. Consequently, this evidence too seems to confirm the successful suppression of the Enochic myth of angelic descent and the abandonment of the *Book of the Watchers* by Rabbinic Jews in the intervening period. At the time when Christian exegetes were beginning to question whether or not the “sons of God” were really angels, the idea that Gen 6:1–4 referred to human beings seems to have been basically a matter of consensus among Rabbinic Jews.

ii. The “Sons of God” in the Targumim, Aquila, and Symmachus

In addition, the Aramaic translations of Gen 6:2 and Gen 6:4 all reflect (and communicate) the assumption that the “sons of God” are humans. *Targum Neophyti* translates “sons of God” as “sons of the judges” [בני דיניא], consistent with the tradition attributed to R. Simeon in *Gen.Rab.* 26.5. *Targums Onqelos* and *Pseudo-Jonathan* adopt another euhemeristic reading – “sons of the nobles” [בני רברביא] – which resonates with the depiction of the “sons of God” as the wayward leaders of the Generation of the Flood (also *Tg.Ps.-J.* Gen 6:3).

In suggesting the continued transmission of the angelic descent myth in Rabbinic circles, scholars sometimes point to the latest of these translations, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. This targum renders *Nephilim* in Gen 6:4 with the gloss “ ξ Semḥazai and Azael, these fell from heaven.” Alexander, for instance, cites this allusion to the angelic descent myth to argue that *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* reflects the original form of the Palestinian Targum⁵⁰ and preserves the state of the targumic tradition before the second-century polemics against the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4.⁵¹

This theory provides a tempting solution to the puzzling reemergence of the angelic descent myth, centuries later, in early medieval texts written in the Rabbinic tradition. Several factors, however, suggest that this explanatory gloss was added at a later point in time. Most notable is this targum’s close affinities with *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* (8th–10th c.), one of our earliest extant

⁵⁰ On the methodological problems with this assumption, see Kaufman, “On Methodology,” 120–23.

⁵¹ Alexander, “Targumim,” 70–71; also Bowker, *Targums*, 157–58.

sources to evince the reintegration of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 into Rabbinic exegesis.⁵²

The location of this tradition also militates against the assumption that it faithfully preserves a fragment of pre-Rabbinic interpretation. The statement concerning Šemḥazai and Azael does not translate “sons of God” at Gen 6:2 or Gen 6:4b; in both cases “sons of God” is rendered as “sons of the nobles.” Instead, this paraphrastic rendering explains the reference to the *Nephilim* in Gen 6:4a.⁵³ The result is a hybrid between the euhemeristic and angelic interpretations:

Šemḥazai and Azael, these fell from heaven [שמחזאי ועזאל היון נפלו מן שמיא] and were on earth in those days, and also afterwards, when *the sons of the nobles* [בני רברביא] came in to the daughters of men.

Although the *Nephilim* can be readily connected to “fallen” angels by means of the root נפ (“to fall”), we find no precedents for this interpretation in Second Temple Judaism.⁵⁴ As we have seen, the Watchers and Giants play very distinct roles within pre-Rabbinic versions of the angelic descent myth. The *Nephilim* of Gen 6:4 are always identified with the latter and grouped together with the *Gibborim* as the progeny of the Watchers and human women (see LXX Gen 6:4).⁵⁵

Despite this targum’s inclusion of names ultimately derived from the *Book of the Watchers*, its approach to Gen 6:4 makes most sense when seen in the context of Rabbinic traditions about the *Nephilim*. Earlier Jewish exegetes read

⁵² *Pirqe R.El.’s* relationship with *Tg.Ps.-J.* seems to be one of mutual interdependence, as best explained with the theory of their interconnected redaction-histories; see Hayward, “Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer,” 244–46; cp. Fernández, *Capítulos*, 31–36; Shinan, “Dating,” 57–61.

⁵³ *Nephilim* is translated as *Gibborim* in the other targums. A marginal notation in Neophyti reads נפילימ at Gen 6:2. Insofar as the influence of Pseudo-Jonathan can be detected throughout the marginal notations in Neophyti, this addition likely postdates the expansion in Pseudo-Jonathan and reflects a later tradent’s lack of unease at directly equating the “sons of God” with angels. Interestingly, the insertion of נפילימ as a marginal gloss on Gen 6:2 has parallels in the text-history of LXX Gen 6:2 (see Ch. 3), raising the possibility of influence from Christian-transmitted Greek scriptures or from the Syro-Hexapla, some MSS of which contain the same marginal notation; we might also cite Syncellus’ version of BW’s paraphrase of Gen 6:2 (1 *En. 6:2*: οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ; cf. Aram. עירין).

⁵⁴ The English designation “fallen angels” is itself a bit of a misnomer, since the Watchers of BW and related Second Temple literature do not literally “fall” from heaven; rather, they either choose to descend to earth or are sent down by God (i.e., unlike Satan and his hosts) – hence the frequency of puns on the name Jared [ירד] and the use of the root ירד (“to descend”) to describe their journey to earth in the pre-Rabbinic versions of the angelic descent myth (e.g., *Jub.* 4:15). This contrasts with post-Talmudic Rabbinic Jewish sources, which – like *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* – contain puns on *Nephilim* [נפלים] and consistently use the root נפ (“to fall”) to describe their journey to earth (see Ch. 7).

⁵⁵ Stuckenbruck, *BG*, 111–12.

Gen 6:4 through 1 *En.* 6–16 (BW) and interpreted the qualification therein (“The *Nephilim* were on the earth in those days, *and also afterwards*”) as support for the early Enochic etiology of demons. By contrast, Rabbinic exegetes interpreted Gen 6:4 in light of Num 13:33, consistent with the midrashic principle of expounding Scripture through Scripture.

In Num 13:33, Moses sends men to scout the land of Canaan, and they return with the following report:

All the people that we saw in it are men of great size. We saw there the *Nephilim*, the descendants of Anak come from the *Nephilim*. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.

The classical Rabbinic literature depicts the *Nephilim* as ancient men of legendary stature and strength, associating them with a variety of other figures connected to the biblical accounts about the conquest of Canaan – ranging from enigmatic groups like the *Emim*, *Refaim*, *Zamzumim*, *Anakim*, and *Awim*, to individuals like the warrior Goliath and the kings Sihon and Og.

Even when deprived of their angelic parentage, these Giants become the subject of a body of extrabiblical traditions no less “legendary” in character than early Enochic traditions about the Watchers. It is here that we find precedents for the etymological wordplay on the name *Nephilim* that seems to inform *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*’s equation of these figures with Šemḥazai and Azazel.⁵⁶ One important example occurs in *Gen.Rabb.* 26.7:

Nephilim denotes that they hurled [הפיטו] the world down, themselves fell [נפלו] from the world, and filled the world with abortions [נפלים] through their immorality [בגורה].⁵⁷

In effect, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* interprets this “falling” in a literal sense and correlates it with traditions about angelic descent, for reasons that we shall explore in the following chapter. For now, it suffices to note that the only other parallels for its equation of the *Nephilim* with fallen angels, apart from early medieval Jewish sources, occur in Manichean literature.⁵⁸

I thus find it more plausible to reconstruct the evolution of the targumic tradition on Gen 6:1–4 as follows:

⁵⁶ This, in my view, is also the context in which we should read *b.Nid.* 61 a; see Ch. 7.

⁵⁷ Post-Talmudic sources also attest the integration of this interpretation into the euhemeristic approaches to the “sons of God”: “From the seed of Cain and Seth there came forth the *Gibborim*, who from the haughtiness of their spirits fell and became corrupt, and were therefore swept away by the waters of the Flood, and therefore they were called *Nephilim* (*Yerahmeel* 24.12).

⁵⁸ Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 156–63. These traditions seem to conflate the Watchers and Giants largely because they read נפלים both in the sense of “fallen ones” and as “abortions.”

1. Whatever the original reading, the second century saw the introduction of the euhemeristic renderings of “sons of God” now found in *Targums Onqelos, Neophyti, and Pseudo-Jonathan*, as part of the polemic against the angelic interpretation of this pericope evinced by Justin, *Dial.* 79 and *Gen.Rab.* 26.7.
2. The traditions about Šemḥazai and Azael in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* reflect a late stage in the redaction of this translation, contemporaneous with *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* and thus with the reemergence of the angelic descent myth in Rabbinic culture (see Ch. 7).
3. Even in the Middle Ages, however, the euhemeristic reading of Gen 6:2 remained dominant enough that *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* associates Šemḥazai and Azael with the *Nephilim*, rather than the “sons of God.”⁵⁹

Below, we will discuss these developments in more detail. For our current consideration of the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in late antique Judaism and Christianity, what proves relevant are the parallels in Jewish and “Jewish-Christian” translations of Genesis into Greek.⁶⁰ The translation attributed to the Jewish proselyte Aquila (ca. 125 BCE) renders “sons of the Gods” (οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν θεῶν; reading *Elohim* as a plural). This may merely reflect Aquila’s tendency to mimic the Hebrew with a fidelity that renders the Greek opaque. Yet, in light of R. Simeon’s curse of those who “call [קרא; i.e., also meaning ‘read’] them ‘sons of God’ [בני אלהים],” it is also possible that Aquila follows the earliest stage of the targumic tradition, which was similarly literalistic.

Also illuminative is the reading offered by Symmachus. His translation dates to the same period as the probable Rabbinic suppression of the angelic interpretation (late 2nd/early 3rd c.). His paraphrase of “sons of God” as “sons of the powerful” [οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν δυναστυόντων] is essentially a Greek translation

⁵⁹ A similar reticence can be found in medieval biblical commentaries, which tend to follow *Gen.Rab.* in interpreting the “sons of God” of Gen 6:2, even if they integrate some elements of the post-Talmudic versions of the angelic descent myth that we shall discuss below. Rashi (1040–1105) presents euhemeristic interpretations of Gen 6:2 and 6:4, but mentions the fallen angels in the context of his commentaries on Num 13:3; *b.Yoma* 67b; *b.Nid.* 61a (see Ch. 7). The angelic interpretation is totally missing from the range of options for the reading of “sons of God” at Gen 6:2 given by Ibn Ezra (1089–1164). Likewise, only at the very end of a long discussion of Gen 6:1–4, understood euhemeristically, does Rambam (1195–1270) mention the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:4; he notes that this reading – which he cites from “the Midrash of R. Eliezer the Great” (i.e., *Pirqe R.El.* 22) with reference to “the Gemara of Tractate Yoma” (i.e., *b.Yoma* 67b) – “fits into the language of the verse more than all other interpretations,” but he decides against “delving at length into the secret of the subject.”

⁶⁰ The revision attributed to Theodotion follows the majority of LXX MSS in rendering “sons of God” with the literalistic οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, although notably avoiding the alternative reading οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ.

of the Targumic “sons of the nobles.” Whatever Symmachus’ precise identity and the character of his contacts with the Rabbinic movement, he was widely perceived by Christians as a convert to Judaism and/or a “Jewish-Christian.”⁶¹ Insofar as Origen included Symmachus’ translation in the Hexapla, we can identify one channel through which the euhemeristic approach to Gen 6:2 in Rabbinic Judaism could be mediated to learned Greek-speaking Christians, including those with no direct cultural contacts with “living” exemplars of Judaism.

It is unlikely that these alternate translations of “sons of God” were a causal factor in the emergence of the euhemeristic interpretations of Gen 6:1–4 among Christian exegetes. They did, however, play some role in its promulgation, due to their usefulness for arguments against the angelic interpretation. Aquila and Symmachus were often maligned as “Judaizing” translators, but their renderings of Gen 6:2 served as important counterevidence against the translation of “sons of God” as “angels of God” [οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ] in many copies of LXX Genesis.⁶² In this case, their “Judaizing” character is treated as a benefit insofar as their witness lends support to the promotion of the euhemeristic interpretation of this pericope.

Among earlier Jewish and Christian authors, the exact wording of the biblical basetext does not seem to have been determinative for an exegete’s choice to adopt an angelic interpretation over an euhemeristic one, or the converse. Just as “sons of God” could be readily interpreted to mean “angels” (e.g., Tertullian), so “angels of God/heaven” could be taken allegorically (e.g., Philo). With Origen’s compilation of the Hexapla, however, these variant readings begin to take on a new significance (e.g., Julius Africanus in Sync. 19.24–20.4). Learned Christians began increasingly to approach the differences between LXX Genesis, the Hebrew text, and the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion as clues to the determination of the original text of LXX Gen 6:1–4 and to its proper interpretation.

⁶¹ Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 6.17; Jerome, *Vir.ill.*, 54; *Comm.Hab.* 2.3; Salvesen, *Symmachus*, esp. 177–87, 192–93, 290–95. On the possibility that Symmachus was a Jew, see Barthélemy, “Qui est Symmaque?”; Salvesen, “Symmachus Readings,” 178–79. Salvesen also speculates that this translation may have been used by a Jewish community in Caesaria (p. 181).

⁶² That copies of LXX Genesis that read οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ at Gen 6:2 continued to circulate and to be copied by Christian scribes in Late Antiquity is evinced by our extant MSS of LXX Genesis. As noted above, οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ is found in the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus, as well as in a handful of related minuscules from the medieval period and in marginal notations in the Syro-Hexapla. In the codicological evidence that survives today, the more literal rendering prevails. Yet, from Africanus’ first-hand account, the similar statements made by Cyril and Augustine, and the quotations of Gen 6:1–4 by other authors (Philo; Didymus; Eusebius), it seems that the angelic interpretation—although probably not original—was once more common than our current evidence suggests.

Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria, for instance, use the translations of Aquila and Symmachus as support for arguments that the “sons of God” are human beings. Cyril cites Aquila and Symmachus to promote a euhemeristic approach to Gen 6:1–4 and to dismiss the reading “angels” [ἄγγελοι] as a later interpolation into LXX Gen 6:2.⁶³ Augustine does not mention Symmachus, but he uses the translation of “Aquila, whom the Jews prefer to the other interpreters” as part of his argument for the euhemeristic reading of Gen 6:2 based on Ps 82:6 (*Civ.* 15.23).⁶⁴ Perhaps most striking is his conclusion: after rejecting the Enochic literature as an authoritative source for the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, he confidently asserts that “There is therefore no doubt that, according to the Hebrew and Christian canonical scriptures, there were many Giants before the deluge, and that these were citizens of the earthly society of men.”

iii. *The Rejection of the Angelic Reading of Gen 6:1–4 in Christian Circles*

As in Rabbinic Judaism, the Christian rejection of the angelic approach to Gen 6:1–4 occurred concurrently with the abandonment of early Enochic pseudepigrapha. Within Christian tradition, the two developments are so interlaced that we cannot isolate one as the cause for the other. Neither seems to have temporal priority; both begin in the third century and become well established in the fifth. Furthermore, some sources cite the questionable status of “the book(s) of Enoch” in order to undermine the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, while others do the exact opposite. The two developments, it seems, went hand-in-hand: just as the status of the *Book of the Watchers* declined with the severing of its connection to the exegesis of Genesis, so the support for this interpretation dwindled with the marginalization of the book once used as a source for traditions about the fallen angels.

In Christianity, the process seems to have been more prolonged, unfolding over the course of several centuries. In part, this reflects the popularity of both the *Book of the Watchers* and the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 among earlier Christians. The Rabbinic movement seems never to have granted Enochic literature any level of authority. The same cannot be said for proto-orthodox/orthodox Christianity. And, even as early Christians used the “book(s) of Enoch” for a variety of purposes, the account of angelic descent in *1 En.* 6–16 (BW) seems to have been its most useful element for

⁶³ Wickham, “Sons,” 135–36.

⁶⁴ Augustine probably does not write from direct knowledge of these versions; plausible is Wickham’s suggestion that he is here dependent on Jerome (“Sons,” 146–47).

proto-orthodox apologists and heresiologists. Already in the second century, Christians could cite a variety of non-Enochic sources to assert Enoch's special righteousness and even his escape from death. By contrast, the traditions about the teaching of the fallen angels in the *Book of the Watchers* lay at the heart of a distinctively Christian approach to Gen 6:1–4 as an etiology of pagan culture.

The importance of the motif of illicit angelic instruction for early Christian exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 is even evident in the earliest known Christian source to propose a euhemeristic interpretation, namely, the *Chronicle* of Julius Africanus (ca. 160–240 CE). A contemporary and colleague of Origen, Africanus writes:⁶⁵

When humankind became numerous on the earth, angels of heaven had intercourse with daughters of men. In some copies (i.e., of LXX Genesis), I found “the sons of God.” In my opinion, it is recounted that the sons of God are called sons of Seth by the Spirit [i.e., by the Holy Spirit who inspires Scripture] since genealogies of the righteous and the patriarchs up until the Savior are traced from him. But the descendents of Cain it designates as human seeds, as having nothing divine because of the wickedness of their race and the dissimilarity of their nature, so that when they were mingled together, they caused God vexation.

But, if we take this to mean “angels” we would conclude that it refers to those who transmitted knowledge about magic and sorcery, as well as motion of the numbers [and] astronomical phenomena to their wives, from whom they produced Giants; and because of them, depravity came into being, and God resolved to destroy the whole faithless race of living things in a flood. (Sync. 19.24–20.4)⁶⁶

In stark contrast to R. Simeon (as well as to later Christians), this third-century chronographer presents a euhemeristic interpretation without denouncing the angelic one.⁶⁷ Furthermore, he clearly associates the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 with the *Book of the Watchers*' version of the angelic descent myth: he assumes that this reading of Genesis leads naturally to the view that the angels corrupted humankind with their teachings and birthed Giants who led humankind further into depravity. Moreover, he sees the value of this exegesis

⁶⁵ Klijn, *Seth*, 61; Lawlor, “Early,” 212–13; Wickham, “Sons,” 144–45; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 127; Alexander, “Targumim,” 63. In light of its close parallels with *Jubilees*, I suspect that the euhemeristic interpretation in Ps.-Clem. *Recog.* 1.29 belongs to the fourth-century stage of redaction.

⁶⁶ Translation follows Adler as quoted in VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 80.

⁶⁷ It is unclear which interpretation Africanus himself prefers (Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 127; cf. Klijn, *Seth*, 62).

in its usefulness for explaining, not only the deterioration of antediluvian ethics on the earth, but also the origins of magic and astronomy.

The issue of the status of Enochic books (including but not limited to the *Book of the Watchers*) also remains closely linked to the discussion about the proper exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 and the place of the Enochic myth of angelic descent within it. As noted above, Tertullian's appeal to the motif of illicit angelic instruction occasions his defense of the (singular) "book of Enoch." Origen's most sustained argument against the use of the (plural) "books titled 'Enoch'" occurs in the context of his response to Celsus' use of a "book of Enoch" that speaks of the fallen angels and, moreover, is followed by his endorsement of Philo's allegorical reading of Gen 6:1–4.⁶⁸ By the time that ecclesiarchs like Athanasius were establishing the exact bounds of the canon, most learned Christians already concurred that the "sons of God" of Gen 6:1–4 were not angels.

But, just as Athanasius still had to contend with the acceptance of Enochic literature among "common folk" (*Ep.* 39), so the abbot Serenus had to answer the "popular belief [*illa vulgi opinio*] that angels taught men sinful practices and various arts" (Cassianus, *Coll.* 7.20). When Augustine argues against the view that the "sons of God" are fallen angels, he is forced to explain why – even despite Enoch's authorship of prophetic writings used by Jude – "prudent men" should not accept the "writings which are produced under his name . . . which contain fables about the Giants, saying that their fathers were not human beings" (*Civ.* 15). When Jerome ridicules the idea that certain spirits became flesh in order to mingle with human women, he does not only dismiss it as a "Manichean" belief but he also impugns the "apocryphal book" used to support it (*Hom.Ps.* 132).⁶⁹

As in the parallel case of Rabbinic Judaism, the shift in Christian exegesis simultaneously reflects theological developments. Earlier Christians already voiced some discomfort with the idea of spiritual beings committing sexual acts with fleshly women. This concern was no doubt heightened by the use of the angelic descent myth by pagans like Celsus and Julian to denigrate the virgin birth and Incarnation.

Also notable is the increasing importance of the Fall of Adam and Eve in Christian salvation-history, and the resultant transfer of many traditions from angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 to the rebellion of Satan and his hosts at the

⁶⁸ Origen does not refer to Philo by name in *Cels.* 5.55, but he attributes this view to "one of our predecessors."

⁶⁹ So too Ephraim; see Klijn, *Seth*, 73–75.

beginning of time. When Augustine, for instance, argues against the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the Enochic literature, he does so in part to propose that NT references to wicked angels refer instead to the fall of Satan and his host at the beginning of time:

I would not dream of believing that it was the holy angels of God who suffered such a fall *in the present instance!* Nor can I think that it is of them the Apostle Peter said: “For if God did spare the angels that sinned . . . (1 Pet 2:4).” I think that he speaks rather of those who first apostatized from God, along with their chief the devil, who enviously deceived the first man in the form of a serpent (*Civ.* 15,32)

In contrast to his Rabbinic contemporaries, Augustine here has no problem with the concept of angels sinning. What troubles him is the notion that they sinned in the period preceding the Flood, rather than at Creation. Whereas earlier Christians seem willing to accept that angels fell to earth at more than one point in biblical history, Augustine asserts that this was a one-time event reversed by another one-time event, namely the coming of Christ.⁷⁰

As a result, he is able to neutralize the arguments of pagans who point to the Enochic myth of angelic descent to suggest the inconsistency between Christian beliefs about the wayward “sons of God” constantly coming to earth and their assumptions about the goodness and singularity of one particular Son of God, as well as contesting the Manichean view of angelic descent as a recurring pattern in history.⁷¹ In the process, he reinterprets NT references to the fallen angels, so as to deprive both the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and the Enochic myth of angelic descent of any basis in the words of the apostle Peter.

iv. The “Sons of God” as Sons of Seth

The developments examined above help to explain the rejection of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, but they do not suffice to account for the specific interpretation that would come to gain dominance: the view of the “sons/angels of God” as sons of Seth who sinned by intermarrying with the daughters of Cain (=“daughters of men”). Scholars concur that the first known Christian author to cite this interpretation is Julius Africanus in the third century and that this interpretation had effectively displaced the angelic one by

⁷⁰ On the fall of Satan and his hosts in Augustine’s developing understanding of the origins of evil, see Burns, “Augustine,” 16–25; Babcock, “Augustine,” esp. 47–48.

⁷¹ On the latter, see Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 185–209.

the fifth century, assimilating many Enochic traditions about the fallen angels in the process.⁷² There is, however, some disagreement concerning its exact origins in relation to Rabbinic exegesis. It is tempting to see the Christian traditions about “sons of God” as Sethians as a result of Jewish influence, due to the Rabbinic precedent for the adoption of a euhemeristic approach to Gen 6:1–4 in place of an angelic one – as well as the popularity of the Sethian tradition among Syriac-speaking Christians in the Sassanian Empire, who had more cultural contacts with Rabbinic Jews than their counterparts in the Roman Empire.⁷³ But we find no parallels for the identification of these figures as sons of Seth in late antique Jewish sources; within Jewish literature, the Sethian interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 first occurs in early medieval writings (e.g., *Pirqe R.El.* 22; praef. *Ag.Ber.*).

Gedaliahu Stroumsa and Sebastian Brock suggest that this identification of “sons of God” is already assumed by Josephus (*A.J.* 1.72–74). They thus read the post-Talmudic midrashim as evidence for a long-standing exegetical tradition in Judaism, which influenced (directly or indirectly) Julius Africanus.⁷⁴ Other scholars have been more cautious in interpreting Josephus’ comments. Adler, for instance, concludes that Josephus provides a euhemeristic reading of Gen 6:2 while “falling short of the identification of the Sethians with the ‘sons of God.’”⁷⁵

The late midrashic evidence also proves less decisive than first may seem. Stroumsa and Brock rightly note that Syriac versions of the Sethian interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 closely resemble the versions in post-Talmudic sources. Yet the same cannot be said for the earliest Christian exemplars of this tradition. Africanus explains the Sethian identity of the “sons of God” with reference to Seth’s genealogical connection with Christ, presupposing an exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 that reads the “sons of God” in terms of the Son of God. Moreover, there were a range of nonangelic interpretations of the “sons/angels of God” current in third and fourth centuries, including allegorical interpretations (e.g., Origen, Didymus) as well as the view that they were the sons of Enosh,

⁷² Klijn, *Seth*, 61; Lawlor, “Early,” 212–13; Wickham, “Sons,” 144–45; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 127; Alexander, “Targumim,” 63.

⁷³ See Brock, “Jewish Traditions,” esp. 230–32. To my knowledge, the only Syriac Christian author to follow the angelic interpretation is Bardaisan (154–222 CE), who wrote the following prior to the widespread reaction against this exegesis in Christian circles: “We understand well that if the angels had not possessed free will, they would not have had intercourse with the daughters of men; they would not have sinned and would not have fallen from their state” (trans. Drijvers, *Book of the Law of the Countries*, 15). See Klijn, *Seth*, 67–77; Kruisheer, “Jacob of Edessa’s Scholia,” 194–96.

⁷⁴ Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 128–31; Brock, “Jewish Traditions,” 226.

⁷⁵ Adler, *Time*, 115.

an antediluvian figure exalted by Christians and denigrated by Rabbinic Jews (e.g., Cyril of Alexandria).⁷⁶

The complexity of our evidence highlights the need to distinguish between two issues: [1] the impact of the Jewish (or specifically Rabbinic) exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 on the Christian abandonment of the once traditional angelic interpretation of this pericope in favor of nonangelic and/or euhemeristic approaches and [2] the possibility that Christians adopted the Sethian interpretation from Jews. This distinction, for instance, informs the approach of A. F. J. Klijn, who thus arrives at a more nuanced view of the nature of the Jewish influence involved in Christian traditions about Gen 6:1–4.⁷⁷ Klijn shows that Syriac Christians, when arguing for the adoption of the Sethian approach in place of the angelic one, sometimes betray their awareness of Rabbinic traditions about the “sons of God/nobles/judges.”⁷⁸ At the same time, he points to the lack of evidence for the corollary conclusion that the Sethian interpretation was a Jewish one taken over by Christians.⁷⁹ When we examine the evidence from this perspective, it is equally likely that the affinities between Syriac Christian expansions of Gen 6:1–4 and those in later Jewish sources reflect influence in the opposite direction. As Alexander proposes, the Sethian interpretation may have “entered Jewish thought from the Christian tradition.”⁸⁰

As Adler and Klijn have stressed, we cannot dismiss the fact that the first known author (i.e., Julius Africanus) to voice this view also happens to be one of the foundational figures in Christian chronography.⁸¹ The development of this motif seems to have been shaped by the distinctive concerns of the chronographers, particularly with regard to the harmonization of different sources concerning early human history and the debate about the origins of calendrical astronomy. Hence, it is perhaps best to consider the emergence of the Sethian interpretation against the background of broader efforts of chronographers to conform the biblical account of early human history to the norms of Hellenistic historiography, for which Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*

⁷⁶ The latter is the view promoted by Cyril of Alexandria, apparently based on the identification of Enosh as a “son of God” insofar as it was during his time that “people began to call upon the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26); for a discussion of this and other earlier alternatives to the angelic interpretation adopted by Christians at the time, aside from the Sethian one, see Wickham, “Sons,” esp. 143–47.

⁷⁷ Contrast, for instance, the approach in Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 127–31.

⁷⁸ Klijn, *Seth*, 75. Note esp. Ephraim’s reference to the “judges” who consort with the “daughters of men” in *Comm.Gen.* 6:4.

⁷⁹ Klijn, *Seth*, 77–79.

⁸⁰ Alexander, “Targumim,” 66.

⁸¹ Adler, *Time*, 113–31; Klijn, *Seth*, 61–67.

served both as a precedent and as a source. Josephus' account of antediluvian history likely lies at the roots of the Sethian interpretation,⁸² but not in the direct sense suggested by Stroumsa. Rather, the equation of the "sons of God" with sons of Seth may derive from a Christian interpretation of Josephus in light of traditions about Seth and Christ, which arose during the search for naturalistic alternatives to the angelic descent myth, both as an interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and as an account of early human history.

Insofar as Josephus' account of the Sethians provided an alternative etiology of astronomical knowledge,⁸³ it also seems to have facilitated the integration of the instruction motif and other elements of the Enochic myth of angelic descent into the Sethian interpretation of Gen 6:1–4. In some cases, this move clearly results from a deliberate effort to undermine Enochic texts and traditions. Serenus, for instance, contests the "popular belief [*illa vulgi opinio*] that angels taught men sinful practices and various arts" by attributing the origins of these arts to Sethians; in a clever combination of the Enochic myth of angelic descent and Josephus' account of the Sethians, he speculates that they learned wickedness from their Cainite wives and thus began to use their special knowledge of the stars for magical and idolatrous purposes (Cassianus, *Coll.* 7.2off).⁸⁴

We find a similar development in the chronographical tradition. Our evidence suggests that the *Book of the Watchers* proved a useful proof-text for early chronographers, largely due to the instruction motif. Africanus' reluctance to abandon the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 is linked to the Watchers' teachings about the stars (here described as astronomy, as opposed to celestial divination). Likewise, both the *Book of the Watchers* and the instruction motif play important roles in Panodorus' account of the early history of calendrical calculations, enabling him to explain away Chaldean and Egyptian chronologies of early human history as based in a miscomprehension of the angel Kokabiel's teachings of astronomy.⁸⁵

Panodorus' reading of the angelic descent myth was soon given a euhemeristic spin by his younger contemporary Annianus. Extracts from the *Book*

⁸² Also notable is the influence of *Jubilees*, with its concern for the genealogy of early humans (see Ch. 3).

⁸³ Note also John Malalas' harmonization of the accounts of the origins of astronomy/astrology in Josephus' *Antiquities* and *Jubilees* (*Chron.* 1.5).

⁸⁴ Further Lawlor, "Book of Enoch," 178–81. Another interesting example is Epiphanius, who recounts that "in the time of Jared and later [there was] sorcery, magic, licentiousness, adultery, and injustice" (*Pan.* 1.3) – effectively retaining the etiological value of the motif of illicit angelic instruction for asserting the primeval origins of these specific evils, even as he omits both angels and instruction from it.

⁸⁵ Panodorus uses BW to reconcile Egyptian and Babylonian chronologies of early human history with LXX Genesis; see Adler, "Berossus," 434–41.

of the *Watchers* in both of their works continued to be transmitted in the chronographical tradition, even despite the affirmation of the “apocryphal” status of this book and the abandonment of the angelic descent myth. Thus, in these scholastic circles, the *Book of the Watchers* continued to impact the exegesis of Gen 6:1–4, albeit in a different form (i.e., as short excerpts) and in the context of a different, more specialized discourse (i.e., chronography). By virtue of the influence of Annianus, the *Chronicle* of Michael Syrus preserves a short passage from the *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 6 in 1.4),⁸⁶ together with an expansive retelling of Gen 6:1–4 in which the Watchers are conflated with Sethians (esp. *Chron.* 1.3 ≈ Bar Hebraeus 3).⁸⁷ Here, “Semiazos” is identified as the leader of the Sethians who came down from his home on Mt. Hermon to seek wives – an inventive reinterpretation that probably lies at the root of the widespread tradition that Sethians were mountain-dwellers, whereas Cainites lived in the low plains.⁸⁸ Although Byzantine chronographers like Syncellus and Cedrenus also preserve some of Panodorus’ lengthier excerpts from the *Book of the Watchers*, they too read these passages in terms of the Sethian interpretation of Gen 6:1–4. Thus Syncellus treats “Watchers” [ἐγγρηγοροί] as another name for Sethians, and Cedrenus credits them with teaching their Cainite wives about cosmetics, precious stones, roots, magic, and astrology.⁸⁹

Like the impact of Rabbinic Jewish precedents on the late antique Christian reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*, the nature and scope of the Jewish impact on the Christian exegesis of Gen 6:1–4 is a complex matter. Our evidence cannot be readily explained through a simple model of influence, nor through an approach which treats the possibility of dependence on Jewish texts and the possibility of contacts with “living” Jews as mutually exclusive options. The Sethian interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 owes much to Josephus’

⁸⁶ Brock, “Fragment,” 626–31. Michael Syrus’ indebtedness to Annianus for early Enochic traditions is confirmed from his (incorrect) citation of Annianus’ “testimony from the book of Enoch” (1.1). Although his excerpt (1.4) is in Syriac, it is clearly translated from an earlier Greek excerpt (with Michael Syrus dependent on the translation) and thus does not attest to the circulation of BW in Syriac translation; see Brock, “Jewish Traditions,” 224.

⁸⁷ “In that year, the Benai Elohim came down from the mountain Hermon, being in number 200. For, seeing that they had not returned to Paradise, they were discouraged and so abandoned their angelic way of life, and they were smitten [with a desire for marriage]. And they set up a king for themselves, whose name was Semiazos. Concerning these, Annianus relates that they came down from the mountain Hermon to their brethren, the children of Seth and Enosh, but these were unwilling to give them any wives, on the grounds that they had transgressed [their] promise. And so they went to the children of Cain and took wives; and they gave birth to giants, that is, plunderers, mighty and renowned assassins, and audacious bandits.” (Michael Syrus 1.3; trans. Brock)

⁸⁸ E.g., Ephraim, *Hymns on Paradise* 1.11; Malalas, *Chron.* 1.3.

⁸⁹ Klijn, *Seth*, 65–67.

Antiquities, a book preserved by Christians but not by Jews in Late Antiquity. Nevertheless, the appeal to the biblical translations of Aquila and Symmachus cautions us against assuming that the “bookish” influence of Jewish traditions on late antique Christian thought was limited to the literary heritage of Second Temple Judaism, or to texts (such as the OT) that were perceived to have been fully appropriated by Christians; for, as we have seen, the “Jewish” character of these translations functioned as an asset in this particular discussion, helping to conjure the impression of a shared consensus among Christians and Jews concerning the identity of the “sons of God” – and, progressively, to actualize this consensus.

Christians and Rabbinic Jews had different reasons for rejecting the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 and developed different understandings of these antediluvian men. Nevertheless, it proves significant that they agreed about the impropriety of the Enochic myth of angelic descent and about the need to see the “sons of God” as human beings. Christians, at least, seem to have been self-conscious about this fact, readily exploiting its rhetorical usefulness in polemics against pagans and Manichees. Jerome and Ephraim could have hardly dismissed the Enochic myth of angelic descent as an idiosyncratically Manichean tradition, if this view had still dominated Jewish exegesis. Particularly in late antique Mesopotamia, it is likely that the view of the human identity of the “sons of God” simultaneously served as one of the many threads of commonality that strengthened the fabric of the shared cultural context of Rabbinic Jews and Syriac Christians, which in turn facilitated the continued contacts between them and the ongoing interpenetration of Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions. If so, then it is perhaps not surprising that Christian traditions about the Sethians and Cainites would eventually find their way into the Rabbinic tradition too.

3. SETTINGS FOR THE CONTINUED TRANSMISSION OF THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS

In the [next chapter](#), we will explore the possibility that Christian mediation also played some part in the reemergence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in early medieval Jewish literature. Before turning back to the Jewish *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers*, however, we shall conclude our inquiry into its Christian *Nachleben* by weighing the impact of fourth- and fifth-century developments on the fate of this apocalypse in the West.

It would be naïve to assume that the attitudes of ecclesiarchs promptly effected the abandonment of the *Book of the Watchers* and the Enochic myth of angelic descent by all Christians in the Roman Empire and beyond. In fact,

much of our primary evidence for the circulation of the *Book of the Watchers* comes from after the fourth century. As noted above, the Greek translation of this book now survives in fragments from the fifth- or sixth-century Codex Panopolitanus. Similarly, the Ethiopian collection 1 *Enoch* attests the availability of Greek *Vorlagen* of the *Book of the Watchers*, *Astronomical Book*, *Similitudes of Enoch*, *Book of Dreams*, and *Epistle of Enoch* in Ethiopia between the mid-fourth and sixth centuries.

From this evidence, it is obvious that some Christians continued to use the *Book of the Watchers* even after the rejection of the authenticity, authority, and antiquity of the “book(s) of Enoch” by church leaders in the Roman Empire. But, in contrast to the widespread circulation of Enochic pseudepigrapha prior to the fifth century, it seems that these texts continued to be cultivated only in specific groups and geographical areas. The imperial church did not root out the use of the Enochic literature, but it did succeed in compartmentalizing it, even beyond its already limited circulation. The efforts of authors like Augustine may not have instantly purged Christendom of Enochic texts and traditions, but they did set into motion a series of developments that led to the eventual loss of these books to the West.

Our discussion above touched on some second-hand evidence that Manichean communities in both the Roman and Sassanian Empires continued to cultivate Enochic texts and traditions, irrespective of Jewish and Christian opinions on the matter. This is confirmed by our first-hand evidence. Mani himself seems to have had a notable interest in Enoch, the Giants, and the fallen angels, possibly owing to the cultivation of Enochic traditions in the Elchaasite sect to which he first belonged. In any case, Manicheism later served as one of the major settings for the preservation, reproduction, and redaction of Enochic pseudepigrapha, as well as the development and dissemination of traditions based on them (see Ch. 7). The *Book of the Giants* – and possibly also the *Similitudes* and 2 *Enoch* – appear to have been more important in this tradition than the *Book of the Watchers*. Nevertheless, it remains that Manichean influence (both direct and indirect) helped to spread Enochic texts and traditions to a variety of locales, ranging from late antique Mesopotamia to medieval Bulgaria.

Ever since Lawlor’s foundational research on the reception-history of the Enochic literature, scholars have also pointed to the continued popularity of Enochic texts and traditions in Egypt for centuries following the ecclesiastical rejection of the Enochic pseudepigrapha.⁹⁰ It is an irony of history

⁹⁰ Esp. Lawlor, “Book of Enoch”; Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 216–24; Nickelsburg, “Two Enochic Manuscripts.”

that Athanasius' fierce polemics against these and other "apocryphal" books had notably less effect in his native Egypt than in other locales. This situation can be readily explained with reference to three factors. First is the continued use of Greek alongside Coptic by learned Egyptian Christians, which enabled continued access to those texts, like the *Book of the Watchers*, which were not translated into Latin; whereas the selectivity of fifth-century translators like Jerome and Rufinus had a censorious effect in locales such as Italy and North Africa, Egypt remained immune to the growing use of Latin as the primary language of scholarship and worship in the Roman Empire.⁹¹

Second is a cultural milieu long predisposed to archaic texts and secret revelations, because of the native priestly culture of pre-Christian Egypt and its influence on the development of distinctively Egyptian forms of Christianity and "gnosticism," as well as Hermeticism and Greco-Egyptian magic. In short, the stamp of an "apocryphal" status might have proved less damning in this particular cultural setting, and the shroud of secrecy and danger around these now marginalized texts may have actually enhanced their status in the eyes of some Egyptians.⁹² Third, and most important, is the setting of the Egyptian monastery, an institutional structure with the material means and theological motivation to preserve such works, as well as a degree of physical isolation and independence from the bishops of the imperial church.⁹³

Other factors are peculiar to the Enochic literature. In Chapter three, we noted that Egypt was the main locus for the cultivation of Enochic texts and tradition among Jews in the Diaspora already in the first century. In light of the decimation of Egyptian Jewry during the revolts against Trajan in 116/117 CE, it is improbable that there were cohesive Jewish communities

⁹¹ This also helps to explain the continued use of a number of parabiblical texts from Second Temple Judaism in the Greek East and in Syriac-speaking communities in the Sassanian Empire. Yet, the Enochic books do not seem to number among the books preserved in these contexts.

⁹² Frankfurter, "Regional," 142–200. Adler suggests that, even before BW and other early Enochic books were excluded from the canon, it was already the case that "wide publication and acceptance of 1 Enoch, inclusion in a canon, or legitimization through some other channel of institutional authority would have been largely irrelevant to those who accepted his books as secret and inspired" ("Introduction," 25). There is, in my view, little evidence to support the idea that the readers who embraced this book prior to the fourth century saw it as "secret and inspired" instead of merely "inspired." If Adler is correct that this text was a "work whose allure rested on its esotericism" and that its exclusion from Western OT canons followed naturally from this problematic status (p. 25), then we would also be hard pressed to explain – among other things – its fate in the Ethiopian church.

⁹³ Frankfurter, "Regional," 185–95.

in late antique Egypt that continuously transmitted the *Book of the Watchers* and other Enochic books.⁹⁴ By that time, however, the Christian use of these texts was already well established, as evident in the appeal to the words of Enoch in the Epistle of Barnabas (4:3) and from the references to Enoch, Enochic writings, and the Enochic myth of angelic descent by second- and third-century Alexandrians such as Athenagoras, Clement, and Origen (see Chs. 4–5). Indeed, it is in the context of the long-standing use of the *Book of the Watchers* in Egypt that we should see Athanasius' complaints about the popularity of Enochic books amongst "simple" Egyptians (*Ep.* 39). This same popularity likely underlies the redeployment of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in Hermetic circles as a positive etiology for alchemy.⁹⁵ Likewise, it is perhaps not coincidental that the continued preservation of excerpts of the *Book of the Watchers* in the Christian chronographical tradition owes to the works of Panodorus and Annianus, two fifth-century Alexandria monks.

Because of the influence of Panodorus and Annianus, certain passages from the *Book of the Watchers* continued to be preserved, transmitted, and discussed by later Christian chronographers, such as Micheal Syrus and Syncellus. For our purposes, the latter proves more important. Syriac chronography seems to have known only a small fragment of our text, as mediated through Annianus and his Sethian interpretation of the angelic descent myth.⁹⁶ By contrast, Byzantine chronography would preserve more substantial excerpts.⁹⁷ Insofar as the latter were mediated by Panodorus, they include the bulk of the material about the fallen angels in the *Book of the Watchers*, including the extended discussion of illicit angelic instruction in *1 En.* 8. Most significant in this regard is Syncellus. Even as he cautions his readers that this text is "apocryphal, questionable in places" (24.6–9) and has been "adulterated by Jews and heretics"

⁹⁴ Despite the plethora of surviving material from Egyptian Judaism *before* the revolt of 116/117 CE (and Egypt's ideal conditions for preserving such material), we do not find evidence again for a Jewish community in Egypt until the fourth century. This, of course, does not mean that there was no continuity in the use of Enochic literature. With regard to apocalyptic literature more broadly, Frankfurter concludes that "with the demise of Egyptian Jewry in 117 CE literary apocalypticism in Egypt became the inheritance of literate Christian or Gnostic groups that themselves had come to claim biblical seers or the apocalyptic model of gnosis as authoritative" (p. 169), although rightly cautioning against drawing "a strict line between an 'orthodox' Jewish community and a 'heterodox' and 'post-Jewish' proto-Gnostic community, where only the latter survived after 117" ("Regional," 162).

⁹⁵ Zosimus in Sync. 14.2–14; see Ch. 5 n. 54.

⁹⁶ Michael Syrus, *Chron.* 1.3; Bar Hebraeus 3.

⁹⁷ Sync. 11.19–13.19, 24.10–27.7; Cedrenus 1.19.2–20.2; Brock, "Fragment," 626–31; Adler, *Time*, 151–57.

(27.11),⁹⁸ he reproduces large passages from the *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 6:1–9:5, 9:1–10:15, 15:8–16:2), which he seems to have drawn from an anthology of sources.⁹⁹

For Syriac and Byzantine Christianity, we have no evidence that the *Book of the Watchers* circulated among Christians in any form apart from these excerpts. In Egypt, however, the Enochic literature continued to be transmitted in other forms, as well. This is clear from the presence of the bulk of the *Book of the Watchers* in Codex Panopolitanus and the presence of two almost complete versions of the *Epistle of Enoch* in the fourth-century Chester Beatty–Michigan Papyrus XII, as well as a small sixth- or seventh-century Coptic fragment of the *Epistle*.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Codex Panopolitanus and the Chester Beatty papyrus both attest the practice of anthologizing Enochic books alongside Christian writings. Likewise, the continued circulation of the Enochic literature in Egypt readily accounts for the availability of complete Greek versions of these books to serve as *Vorlagen* for the Ethiopian translations (ca. 4th–6th c.). In fact, due to the long history of the transmission, composition, and collection of the Enochic books in Egypt, Pearson even suggests this locale as the most plausible milieu for the anthological activity that shaped 1 *Enoch*.¹⁰¹ Whether or not this was the case, the continued popularity of these works in late antique Egypt surely helps to account for the authoritative status of this collection in Ethiopian Christianity.

In the following centuries, the Egyptian cultivation of Enochic texts and traditions seems to have become largely limited to those monastic settings in which Enoch was revered as a scribal hero. Frankfurter, for instance, cites evidence from the fifth and sixth centuries for the adoption of the name “Enoch” among monks with important scribal functions.¹⁰² Both he and Pearson also discuss the iconographical representations of Enoch in two monastery chapels; one image depicts “Enoch the Scribe” holding the “Book of Life,” and

⁹⁸ Syncellus does, however, state that this book is preferable to the “lies of Berossus and Manetho,” precisely because it is “more akin to our scriptures” (24.7–8).

⁹⁹ Adler, *Time*, 229–31.

¹⁰⁰ Milik has also claimed to have found fragments of BD and AB (copied together, no less) in the fourth-century Egyptian P. Oxy XVII.2069 (“Fragments grecs,” 321–43). His reconstruction of the extremely fragmentary remains is highly questionable, as Knibb (*Commentary*, 2:20) and Larson (“Translation,” 179–88) have shown.

¹⁰¹ Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt.” Black suggests that a Greek translation of Enochic pseudepigrapha was brought to Ethiopia by Syrian Monophysites after 451 CE, arguing on the basis of native Ethiopian traditions about the translation of scriptures more generally (*Commentary*, 3). I know of no supporting evidence for the use of Enochic books by such groups.

¹⁰² Frankfurter, “Regional,” 182.

the other shows him presiding over a judgment scene, consistent with a depiction of Enoch as eschatological scribe.¹⁰³ Egyptian monastic settings also continue to foster the composition of new Enochic pseudepigrapha, such as the ninth-century encomium entitled “On the Four Bodiless Creatures.”¹⁰⁴

It is likely that the preservation and production of Enochic books in Egypt waned in the Middle Ages, along with the decline of the specific monasteries in which it was concentrated.¹⁰⁵ By contrast, *Maṣḥafa Henok Nabi* has a continuous history of use in Ethiopia to the present day. Yet the influence of Ethiopian Christianity on other Christian communities appears to have been minimal, particularly after the Islamic conquests of the seventh century effectively isolated Ethiopia from the rest of Christendom. Indeed, it is striking that the Ethiopic collection 1 *Enoch* was not discovered by the West until 1773, when the Scottish traveler James Bruce brought Ge‘ez manuscripts to Europe in response to decades upon decades of rumors about the preservation of Enochic books in Ethiopia.

This raises an important point concerning the nature of textual transmission in premodern times. For authors and readers living in modern times, it seems natural to assume that any published book need not be very useful or popular for it to survive in an accessible form. We, however, live in an age in which information is incredibly easy to preserve and extraordinarily inexpensive to disseminate, even across the vastest of geographical and cultural divides. In this, our own situation differs radically from all that came before. Prior to the invention of the printing press, the photocopier, the computer, and the scanner, the reproduction of books was a laborious and expensive enterprise, rarely wasted on literature that served no purpose in the life of a community. And, if enough scribes and scribes ceased to duplicate the aging copies of a text, it would simply fall out of circulation. Books could easily be lost to entire groups or in entire regions, even as they were preserved by others.

For an example, we need not look any further than the early modern reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*. For centuries our text was unknown in the West, apart from Syncellus’ fragments. Despite the active efforts of curious Christian Kabbalists and early Orientalists to find the books to which Jude, Tertullian, Syncellus, and the *Zohar* all seemed to refer, the

¹⁰³ Frankfurter, “Regional,” 187; Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 228–30.

¹⁰⁴ Frankfurter (“Regional,” 187) also cites a 9th c. healing spell: “Enoch the scribe, do not stick your pen in your ink until Michael comes from heaven and heals my eye!” (Anastasi 29528).

¹⁰⁵ Pearson, “Enoch in Egypt,” 230–31.

task was fraught with difficulty and bore fruit only after multiple expeditions to Ethiopia.¹⁰⁶ Since then, *1 Enoch* has been widely available and accessible in multiple editions, translations, and collections, but we should not be misled by our own experience to imagine that the *Book of the Watchers*' earlier reception-history resembled its rather fortunate fate from 1773 to the present.

¹⁰⁶ Flemming and Radermacher, *Henoch*, 2.



The Apocalyptic Roots of Merkabah Mysticism?: The Reemergence of Early Enochic Traditions in Rabbinic Judaism

WITH OUR FINAL CHAPTER, WE RETURN TO CONSIDER THE JEWISH *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers*. Here, we find ourselves on less solid ground. For the preceding inquiry into the Christian transmission of this apocalypse in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, our evidence included several primary witnesses to the text itself as well as secondary witnesses representing different geographical locales and varieties of Christianity. By contrast, we have much less data from which to reconstruct its reception-history in late antique and early medieval Judaism, and what data we do possess prove more difficult to interpret.

Apart from the Aramaic fragments from Qumran, the latest of which dates from the first century BCE, no Jewish-transmitted copies of our apocalypse, or even excerpts, survive.¹ Moreover, our extant Jewish literature from Late Antiquity contains no explicit statements about the “book(s) of Enoch” akin to the Christian evidence surveyed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. In later medieval Jewish literature, we find a few references to Enoch’s writings, consistent with the resurgence of interest in the figure of Enoch in post-Talmudic times. Even these, however, are opaque. The *Zohar*, for instance, speaks of a “Book of Enoch” on several occasions, but it is a book “preserved in heaven, which no eye can see” (I 37b).²

¹ If we could accept that the translators/redactors of the Ge’ez version used Aramaic sources in concert with the Greek, this would evince the continued transmission of the Aramaic version; this speculation, however, is much contested (see Introduction n.35) and, to my knowledge, is not supported by any other data.

² *Zohar* I 37b; 72b; II 55a; III, 240a; 248b; 253b. Although the Zoharic statements may have some connection with 3 *Enoch*, it is generally agreed that this “Book of Enoch” is primarily a literary trope to articulate God’s revelation of wisdom to the ancients; Scholem, *Major Trends*, 174. Note also *Yerahmeel* 24: “And Enoch, who was the author of many writings, walked with God and was no more, for God had taken him and placed him in the Garden of Eden, where he will remain until Elijah appears”; cf. *Jub.* 4; al-Tabari, *History*, 1.173.

In addition, questions of dating are complicated by the fact that few Jewish texts from this time are “authored” in the simple sense of the term. In the Middle Ages, Jewish authors and anthologists began to publish books in their own names, but the literature of the Talmudic and gaonic eras reflects modes of textual production more akin to Second Temple Jewish sources than to the writings of Church Fathers: most are anonymous or pseudonymous, and many reflect protracted processes of redaction.³ Consequently, we must base our analysis of the Jewish *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* almost wholly on literary clues and locate the emergence of various traditions with reference to the redactional activity that shaped the extant forms of our texts.

The [previous chapter](#) surveyed evidence that attests the exclusion of the Enochic myth of angelic descent from Rabbinic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in the Talmudic period. Our conclusions about the abandonment of Enochic texts and traditions in classical Rabbinic Judaism are borne out by the treatment of Enoch, which follows the same pattern: we find traces of tannaitic and early amoraic polemics against Enoch’s elevation (*Gen.Rab.* 25:1; *Tg.Onq.* Gen 5:24), but the classical Rabbinic literature is characterized by a striking silence concerning this figure.⁴ The silence is eventually broken by new traditions about Enoch, such as his inclusion in lists of “beloved sevenths” (*Lev.Rab.* 29:11). Although often positive in thrust, these traditions exhibit no discernable connection with early Enochic pseudepigrapha; they appear to have arisen independently from the exegesis of Gen 5 and/or from the development of other traditions about Enoch.

If there were, in fact, Rabbinic polemics against Enochic texts and traditions, they seem to have met with a surprising degree of success. It seems plausible, moreover, that such polemics might have led to the loss of these “outside books” to Rabbinic Judaism. And, however we explain the patterns in our evidence, it remains that the Enochic myth of angelic descent was divorced from the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in classical Rabbinic Judaism, just as the exegesis of Gen 5:21–24 that undergirds the authority of Enochic literature was invalidated.

In the [previous chapter](#), we noted that some traces of the Enochic myth of angelic descent still remain in the body of Rabbinic lore about the human

³ Unlike their Christian counterparts, early medieval Jews did not have an institutionalized system for producing books; Beit-Arié, “Jewish Scribality,” 225–247.

⁴ According to Himmelfarb’s survey of Rabbinic references (“Report,” esp. 259–60), the period between 70 and 600 CE is otherwise characterized by silence concerning Enoch, with only one possibly tannaitic reference to Enoch, which lists him with Elijah and Moses due to his ascent to heaven (*MHG* Gen 5:24; cf. Philo, *Q.G.* 1.86). Since the tradition occurs only in a late source, the assignment of an early date strikes me as speculative.

“sons of God/judges/nobles.” Likewise, some traditions related to Asael and Šemiḥazah, the two main Watchers in the *Book of the Watchers*, continued to circulate – albeit in different and disconnected forms, unrelated to Enoch, angelic descent, and the exegesis of Genesis. Two of these “survivals” can be found in the Babylonian Talmud (ca. 600 CE). In the course of a discussion about Sihon and Og, two ancient kings often identified with the *Gibborim* (Deut 29; 31; Josh 2; 9; Ps 135), *b.Niddah* 61a states that “Sihon and Og were the sons of Ahijah the son of Šemḥazai [שמחזאי].”⁵ The passage, however, gives no indication of the angelic identity of Šemiḥazah/Šemḥazai. Rather, this ancient angel-name has apparently been integrated into Rabbinic traditions about the Giants who lived before the Flood “and also afterwards” (Gen 6:4), in a manner akin to the use of the name “Semiazos” in some Syriac and Byzantine Christian sources to refer to a human monarch.⁶

In the course of a discussion on the interpretation of Lev 16 (quoted below), a brief statement in *b.Yoma* 67b mentions “Uzza and Azael” [עזאז ועזאזל]. It is tempting to seek some connection to the conflation of the Watcher Asael with Leviticus’ Azazel in early Jewish texts such as the Qumran *Book of the Giants* (see Ch. 3). On the one hand, however, the passage is too terse to support any direct filiation between early Enochic and Talmudic traditions. On the other hand, as we shall see, the same names appear in Babylonian incantation bowls from around the same time; their occurrence in the Talmud could thus reflect the continued place of Asael/Azael in the angelology and demonology of Jewish magic. Even as *b.Niddah* 61a and *b.Yoma* 67b reflect traditions ultimately rooted in the *Book of the Watchers*, neither seems shaped by direct knowledge of our text or its distinctive traditions about the fallen angels.

By contrast, the angelic descent myth reemerges in full-fledged form in a number of post-Talmudic sources. Examples can be found in the Hekhalot macroform 3 *Enoch*,⁷ gaonic midrashim like *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* and *Pesikta Rabbati*, and medieval midrashic collections/anthologies like *Aggadat Bereshit*, *Bereshit Rabbati*, and *Yalqut Shimoni*, as well as the *Chronicle of Yerahmeel*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, the *Zohar*, and the commentaries of Rashi. The euhemeristic approach to Gen 6:1–4 remains dominant in medieval

⁵ Note also the reference to Og as Giant in *b.Zev.* 113b. This view of Og proves particularly intriguing in light of the Gelasian Decree (6th c.?), which cites the “Book of Ogias the Giant” as a heretical work; on this reference and its possible connection to the Manichean BG, see Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 21–22.

⁶ Adler, *Time*, 117–22.

⁷ I here follow Schäfer in approaching the Hekhalot literature as a “post-Rabbinic phenomenon” (i.e., postamoraic and, in the case of the late 3 *Enoch*, post-Talmudic); *Hekhalot-Studien*, 289–95.

Judaism. Nevertheless, the angelic interpretation of this pericope takes on a new life. Exegetes appear to interweave Enochic traditions about Asael and Šemiḥazah with traditions from the Babylonian Talmud and classical Midrash, such as the trope of the angelic rivalry with humankind, the view that idolatry originated with the Generation of Enosh, and the speculation concerning the astronomical causes of the Flood.⁸

The possibility that these developments reflect familiarity with the Enochic myth of angelic descent and/or the *Book of the Watchers* is raised by the prominent place of the motif of illicit angelic instruction within traditions about Azael in particular. At the time when these traditions begin to be reintegrated into exegesis of Gen 6:1–4, Rabbinic Jews still remained wary of positing sinful angels, and sexually sinful angels in particular, for the reasons discussed in the [previous chapter](#). No such reticence, however, accompanies the pedagogical sins of Azael and his cohorts, who are identified as Uzzah and Azzah or Šemḥazai. In fact, we find a surprising number of variations on the instruction motif, and the topics of their teachings even echo the list in 1 *En.* 8 (BW): dyes, cosmetics, sorcery, and magical knowledge about the sun, moon, and stars.

The early Middle Ages also see a remarkable renewal of Jewish interest in Enoch.⁹ Whereas the classical Rabbinic literature stresses his mortality, post-Talmudic sources reassert his escape from death and heavenly ascent. Some even propose that he was transformed into Metatron, an angel second only to God in knowledge and power.¹⁰ Furthermore, the antediluvian scribe becomes associated, yet again, with astronomical and calendrical wisdom and, in some cases, even credited, once more, with the composition of books.¹¹

What, then, can the reemergence of these traditions tell us about the Jewish reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers*? This question will occupy us in the present chapter. Scholars have often noted themes and motifs shared by the *Book of the Watchers* and various post-Talmudic sources. Few, however, have explored these connections in concrete terms or addressed the issue of transmission. In part, this reflects one of the most prevalent, overarching assumptions in scholarship on premodern Judaism, namely, that an appeal to oral tradition suffices to explain the occurrence of the same traditions in different

⁸ Reed, “From Asael”; Schäfer, *Rivalität*, 75–242; Fraade, *Enosh*, 109–228; Robbins, “Pleiades,” 329–44.

⁹ Himmelfarb, “Report,” 261–64; Alexander, “From Son of Adam,” 110–13.

¹⁰ 3 *En.* 3–16 (§§4–20); *Targ.Ps.-J.* Gen 5:24; see below.

¹¹ See *Pirqe R.El.* 8; *Midrash Aggadah* Gen 5:24 and n.2 above; Himmelfarb, “Some Echoes,” 119–20; Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5.157–58; Böttrich, “Beobachtungen” on *Yashar Bereshit* 11 a–13 a (*BHM* 4.129–32).

Jewish texts, however distant in date and provenance. When applied to the numerous parallels found within the Rabbinic literary tradition, this assumption often works quite well, due to the importance of speech and memory in Rabbinic scholasticism, the place of the oral sermon in the dissemination of midrashic traditions, and the nature of Rabbinic “authorship” as an ongoing practice of collecting, redacting, and recontextualizing traditional materials, both oral and written.

As a result, however, scholars can be too quick to assume that parallels between Second Temple Jewish texts and later Rabbinic works need no explanation beyond the undocumented appeal to orality. At times, an analysis of the relevant evidence bears out this assumption. This is clearly the case for certain exegetical motifs, whose integration into early Targumic tradition evinces their place in the oral interpretative practices that accompanied the liturgical recitation of Scripture before and after the destruction of the Temple. And, of course, there are also themes and motifs which are simply so pervasive in pre-Rabbinic and Rabbinic literature that questions about the precise mode of their transmission prove almost moot.¹²

In the case of the Enochic myth of angelic descent, we have seen that the patterns in our evidence speak against such continuity. Allusions to the *Book of the Watchers* and its traditions about the fallen angels can be found in many pre-Rabbinic Jewish sources (see Chs. 2–3) and in some Jewish sources from the early medieval period (see Ch. 6 and below). By contrast, Jewish texts from the intervening centuries contain evidence of early efforts at active suppression, followed by silence.¹³

There are two main ways to interpret this pattern of attestation. First, we could treat the post-Talmudic attestations as proof for the ongoing transmission of early Enochic traditions within Rabbinic circles, reading the silence of the classical Rabbinic literature as evidence for the exclusively oral transmission of these traditions and/or their esoteric character. In this case, our task would be to identify the setting(s) for their inner-Jewish transmission and to explain what prompted the shift in their status from written/exoteric to oral/esoteric and back again. The second option is to understand the lack

¹² This point was often lost on early 20th c. scholars, as Urowitz-Freudenstein shows (“Pseudepigraphical,” 35–50).

¹³ When surveying exegetical motifs that occur both in early Jewish literature and in late midrashim, Kister concludes that “the absence of a tradition from the interim literature is a chance occurrence” (“Aspects,” 6). He goes on to note, however, that “in the cases where the weight of the theological factor was particularly heavy (e.g., *the Enoch tradition*), there is room to consider the possibility that ancient traditions have been rejected by the ‘mainstream Judaism’ of the classical Midrashim” (p. 23; italics mine).

of references to Enoch and the fallen angels as a sign of the success of early Rabbinic polemics and to explain their reemergence as a result of their rediscovery at a later point in time. In this case, the task would be to trace the channel(s) through which these once lost texts and/or traditions were mediated back into Rabbinic Judaism.

The first model has dominated previous research on the fate of early Enochic texts and traditions in post-70 Judaism. This is due largely to the influence of Gershom Scholem. Ever since Scholem's foundational research on Jewish mysticism, the investigation of the Jewish *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* has been inextricably intertwined with the quest for the origins of Merkavah mysticism. For Scholem, the affinities between 1 *Enoch* and 3 *Enoch* exposed the genetic relationship between the apocalypses of Second Temple Judaism and the Hekhalot literature. He saw both as literary relics of the same social phenomenon: a "religious movement of a distinctive character," which evolved with unbroken continuity from "the anonymous conventicles of the old apocalypses" to the "Merkabah speculation of the Mishnaic teachers" to the "Merkabah mysticism of late and post-Talmudic times."¹⁴ Scholem had little reason to be troubled by the absence of evidence for the cultivation of these types of apocalyptic traditions in the classical Rabbinic period. For him, the gap was readily explained with appeal to the "esoteric" character of this apocalyptic/mystical movement during all of its stages.

The present chapter will begin by considering some of the shortcomings of Scholem's theory and surveying more recent attempts to ground his conclusions in the textual evidence. Rather than dwell on the question of the relationship between early Jewish apocalypses and the Hekhalot literature, we will try to work towards an alternate model. This chapter will approach the relationship between the *Book of the Watchers* and 3 *Enoch* from a different direction, asking whether their commonalities form part of a broader phenomenon: the puzzling reemergence of traditions from the parabiblical literature of Second Temple Judaism in post-Talmudic Jewish texts.¹⁵

In my view, it is misleading to consider the *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers* only from the perspective of the relationship between "Apocalyptic" and Merkavah mysticism. When we compare the Rabbinic reception-histories of other early Jewish texts that were similarly excluded from the Tanakh but nevertheless had an impact on Rabbinic culture, we find that the literary heritage of Second Temple Judaism infused (and reinfused) Rabbinic Judaism

¹⁴ Scholem, *Major Trends*, 43.

¹⁵ Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent," 99.

in many ways, through a variety of different channels.¹⁶ At one extreme is the Wisdom of ben Sira, which seems to have been continuously transmitted and perhaps even granted a scriptural or quasi-scriptural status by some Sages. At the other extreme are cases in which medieval Jews were influenced by Christian, Manichean, or Islamic traditions about biblical figures that are ultimately based on early Jewish traditions.¹⁷ In between, we encounter a variety of possibilities, ranging from the unearthing of buried documents in the Judean desert¹⁸ to the Jewish reclamation of books like the histories of Josephus, which were lost to the Jews in Late Antiquity only to reenter post-Talmudic Judaism in forms mediated by Christians.¹⁹ In other words, Scholem's model is hardly the only option. And, however tempting it may be to view inner-Jewish transmission as inherently more plausible than Jewish dependence on non-Jewish sources, there are many examples of the reintroduction of early Jewish texts and tradition into early medieval Rabbinic culture through the mediation of non-Jews.

In a recent article, I argued that the version of the angelic descent myth in 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8) represents a later addition to the Enoch-Metatron material in 3 *Enoch* (3–16 [§§4–20]) and reflects direct literary dependence on the extracts of the *Book of the Watchers* preserved in the Christian chronographical tradition.²⁰ The present chapter will build on this finding with the aim of further illuminating the Jewish *Nachleben* of the *Book of the Watchers*. By locating 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8) in the context of traditions about Azael in Jewish mystical, magical, and midrashic literature, we will attempt to arrive at a richer picture of the reemergence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in post-Talmudic Judaism. In the process, we will explore some of the reasons why learned Jews might be interested in consulting such sources in the first place, as well as attempting to correlate our reconstruction of the reemergence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent with the changing Jewish attitudes towards Enoch and “outside books” more broadly.

After considering the ways in which Scholem and others have approached the affinities between early Enochic pseudepigrapha and 3 *Enoch*, this chapter will turn to focus on the conflicting traditions about Uzzah, Azzah, and Azael in 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) and 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8), using the redaction-history of 3 *Enoch* to

¹⁶ Reeves, “Afterlife,” 148–66; idem, *Heralds*, 42–48; Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 137–39; eadem, “Some Echoes,” 117–18, 126–36.

¹⁷ I.e., whether mediated by early Jewish texts preserved by non-Jews (e.g., *Jub.*; see Himmelfarb, “R. Moses,” 71–74, 77–78) or by non-Jewish texts that rework early Jewish texts or traditions (e.g., *T.12*; Manichean BG; see below).

¹⁸ Reeves, “Afterlife,” 159–62; Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim*, 37–38.

¹⁹ Himmelfarb, “Some Echoes,” 116–17.

²⁰ Reed, “From Asael,” esp. 119–25, 128–29, 134–35.

shed light on the reemergence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in early medieval Judaism. This will be followed by a treatment of a group of traditions about Šemḥazai and Azael, versions of which occur in midrashic collections dating from the eleventh century and following. Most scholars have privileged the fullest form of this midrash and have treated it as a single document or “legend” (“Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael”). By contrast, we will attempt to reconstruct the growth of this multiform unit by relating it to our other literary evidence for the development of traditions about Azael at this time. Due to its affinities with the *Book of the Giants*, this complex of traditions serves to further our discussion concerning the possible role played by non-Jews – including Christians but also Manichees and Muslims – in the reintegration of early Enochic traditions into Rabbinic Judaism. In conclusion, we will ask what the rather surprising resurgence of interest in Enoch and the fallen angels might tell us about the changes in Rabbinic culture following the compilation of the Babylonian Talmud, the increasing institutionalization of Rabbanate authority, and the widespread acceptance of the Tanakh as the biblical canon of a variety of Jews across a broad range of geographical settings.

1. THE BOOK OF THE WATCHERS AND THE HEKHALOT LITERATURE

When Scholem speculated about the relationship between the early Jewish apocalypses and the Hekhalot literature, he naturally drew on the dominant understanding of apocalypses in the scholarship of his time. Most of his contemporaries dealt with “Apocalyptic” as a single phenomenon, without distinguishing between the literary genre of the apocalypse, the ideology of apocalyptic eschatology, and the social phenomenon of millennial movements. As noted in Chapter 2, it was also commonplace before the discovery and publication of the Aramaic Enoch fragments to treat diverse apocalypses as expressions of a common worldview nurtured in “conventicles” on the outskirts of “mainstream” Jewish society.

Seen from this perspective, Scholem’s speculations make much sense. At a time when “Apocalyptic” was viewed as a cohesive movement in Second Temple Judaism, Scholem admirably took up the task of asking how this movement evolved, not only in Christianity, but also in post-70 Judaism. And, at a time when scholars widely agreed that the authors of all apocalypses cultivated secret wisdom in closed and isolated groups, he proposed the same social setting for the continued transmission of this wisdom within Judaism, conjuring “conventicles” of mystics who preserved the apocalyptic heritage of Judaism, even as it was being expunged from the exoteric discourse of the

Rabbinic movement. In short, the consensus on the *Sitz im Leben* of early Jewish Apocalyptic prior to the discoveries at Qumran supported Scholem's hypothesis that the formative stages of the Rabbinic movement was infused with a visionary stream of Jewish thought that was as vital as it was invisible, flowing in subterranean channels until its eventual return, many centuries later, into the light of day.

In Chapter 2, we noted the emergence of a new consensus about early Jewish apocalypses, forged in the intensive research on these apocalypses in the decades after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Today, few scholars of Second Temple Judaism still see the early Jewish apocalypses as products of a single movement or assume that all such texts emerged from groups cut off from the rest of Jewish society.

In light of this paradigm shift in scholarship, one might expect for Scholem's theory to be roundly rejected, abandoned together with the concepts that serves to ground its plausibility as a socio-historical model. This, however, has not been the case. Even as research into the Hekhalot literature has shed doubt on nearly every element in his explanatory model,²¹ his view of the historical continuity between the authors of the early Jewish apocalypses and the mystics responsible for the Hekhalot literature continues to hold sway among many scholars – due both to Scholem's unquestioned status as a founding figure in the field of Jewish mysticism and to the value of his theory as a means to “disprove . . . the old prejudice according to which all the productive energies of early apocalyptic were absorbed by and into Christianity.”²² Before we can move towards a new approach, we must first consider the treatment of the *Book of the Watchers* in works that develop Scholem's model of continuity.

i. Is 1 Enoch a Work of Merkavah Mysticism?

The *Book of the Watchers* has been a central proof-text for those scholars who approach the early Jewish apocalypses as evidence for the earliest stages of Merkavah mysticism, of which the Hekhalot literature is said to be a continuation.²³ For instance, in his book on *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Gruenwald explores the ideological, structural, and thematic affinities

²¹ Halperin, *Merkabah*, 183–85; idem, *Faces*, 385–86, 450–51; Schäfer, “Research on Hekhalot,” 231–32.

²² Scholem, *Major Trends*, 43; idem, *Messianic Idea*, 9–10; Stone, “Enoch and Judaism,” 193; idem, “Books and Traditions,” 214; Nickelsburg, “Enoch, Levi,” 581; Adler, “Introduction,” 25–29; VanderKam, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs,” 100–101; Rowland, “Parting,” 222–26; Mach, “From Apocalypticism”; Saldarini, “Apocalypses,” 186–98.

²³ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 32–47; Halperin, *Faces*, 78–86; Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, 9–28.

between early Jewish apocalypses and the Hekhalot literature. Central to his argument about the allegedly mystical orientation of the former are the *Book of the Watchers'* descriptions of Enoch's heavenly ascent (1 *En.* 12) and his vision of the Throne of God (1 *En.* 14). Not only does Gruenwald approach 1 *En.* 14 as "a model-vision of Merkabah mysticism,"²⁴ but he places much weight on the fact that a similar interest in the Throne of God marks the traditions about the mystic's *yeridah la-merkavah* ("descent [=ascent] to the chariot") in Hekhalot texts.

It is telling, however, that Gruenwald rarely addresses the question of the socio-historical continuity between the pre-Rabbinic authors/redactors of the early Jewish apocalyptic literature and the late antique Jewish authors/redactors responsible for the Hekhalot literature. When he does, it is only to acknowledge his inability to cite any concrete evidence for the continuity that he elsewhere assumes:

Needless to say, this Merkabah material (i.e., 1 *En.* 14) had its own important share in shaping the mystical experience of the kind which we find later on in the Hekhalot literature. Although it is quite difficult to show the direct historical connection between Jewish apocalyptic and the Hekhalot literature, the literary connections are almost self-evident . . . A mystical sensibility is a common phenomenon in almost all the religions of the world. The rise of an interest in mystical speculation, or even the mystical experiences themselves, in one age or another, could be expected either by some kind of now unattested traditions which link the ages, or else by an independent mystical impetus that annexed itself to traditional modes of expression, or most likely by both. Whether we view these connections as merely of a literary quality or as real historical affiliations, the fact that the ancient Jewish mystical tradition is mainly focused on the vision of the divine Merkabah is more telling from the point of view of the historical connections than is sometimes admitted by scholars.²⁵

Gruenwald nuances Scholem's model by acknowledging the possibility that the traditions from the former were mediated to the latter exclusively by literary channels. Nevertheless, for him, 1 *En.* 14 (BW) suffices to make plausible "real historical affiliations" between the authors of the early Jewish apocalypses and the authors of the Hekhalot literature.

Gruenwald's conclusions reflect the broader assumption that he shares with Scholem, namely, that the *yeridah la-merkavah* lies at the very heart of the Hekhalot literature and that the prehistory of this literature must thus be

²⁴ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 36. Schwartz's comments about the problems with labeling Qumran sources "mystical" apply here too ("Dead Sea Scrolls," 184).

²⁵ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 45.

sought in earlier Jewish traditions about heavenly ascent. Concurrent with the intensification of scholarship on the Hekhalot literature after Schäfer's 1981 publication of the first critical editions of these works, research has shown this characterization to be skewed. Schäfer, for instance, stresses that:

. . . Scholem's assessment of Merkavah mysticism is fixed too one-sidedly upon the heavenly journey. It is not the heavenly journey which is the center of this mysticism, with adjuration on the edge, but rather the reverse. Magical adjuration is a thread woven throughout the entire Hekhalot literature . . . to such an extent that a heavenly journey may even culminate in an adjuration.²⁶

Likewise, Himmelfarb has pointed to the fundamental differences between the treatment of heavenly ascent in apocalypses and Hekhalot texts. Whereas the former narratively and pseudepigraphically describe how God snatched worthy ancients up into heaven, the latter are concerned to provide technical instructions for mystical adepts to initiate their own otherworldly journeys.²⁷ She notes several areas of continuity between the two, but she concludes that these are too broad to support either a theory of socio-historical continuity or a hypothesis about direct literary dependence.²⁸ Although the Hekhalot literature attests the continued cultivation and development of certain tropes, motifs, and beliefs ultimately based in early Jewish apocalypses, this mystical tradition represents only "one crystallization of themes that appear in a wide range of Jewish and Christian literature."²⁹

ii. *Is 3 Enoch an Enochic Pseudepigraphon?*

There is, however, one exception to this pattern: the Hekhalot macroform commonly termed 3 *Enoch*. Even apart from its unusual interest in Enoch, this work exhibits many affinities with early Jewish apocalypses, such as its inclusion of an *angelus interpretes*, its concern for the fate of the souls of the dead, and its interest in ouranology.³⁰ Not surprisingly, the evidence of 3 *Enoch* proved central for Scholem's understanding of the apocalyptic roots of Merkavah mysticism. This work, in fact, served as the key proof-text for his

²⁶ Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien*, 285; see also idem, *Hidden*, 143–47; Halperin, *Faces*, 383–85; Kuyt, *Descent*, 384–85; Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent," 73–100.

²⁷ Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent," 73–100, esp. 80–81; Schwartz, "Dead Sea Scrolls," esp. 189–90.

²⁸ Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent," 99.

²⁹ Himmelfarb, *Tours*, 155.

³⁰ Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent," 96–100; Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien*, 288; idem, *Hidden*, 140–42; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 191–208, esp. 191, 204, 207; Alexander, "Historical Setting," 178.

assertion that “apocalyptic nostalgia was among the most powerful motive-forces of the whole Merkabah mysticism.”³¹

Among the many scholars who have tried to test and develop Scholem’s ideas about the apocalyptic roots of Merkavah mysticism, Alexander stands out as the one who has most seriously sought to move beyond the mere reiteration of their shared interests in heavenly ascent and the Throne of God, offering an argument which does not stand or fall with our willingness to accept that all Jewish references to heavenly ascent (pseudepigraphical or otherwise) conceal an unbroken tradition of “real” mystical practice. Alexander has done so precisely by focusing on *3 Enoch*, attempting to ground Scholem’s speculations in an argument about the continuity within the Enochic literary tradition.

Previously, the most sustained argument for the essential continuity between *3 Enoch* and earlier Enochic writings came from Hugo Odeberg, who viewed this Hekhalot macroform through the lens of Charles’ work on the “OT Pseudepigrapha.” It is difficult to overstate the influence of Odeberg’s 1928 translation of *3 Enoch* on the scholarly understanding of this work to this day. His idiosyncratic view of *3 Enoch* as an early Jewish pseudepigraphon, rather than a work of later Jewish mysticism, is embodied in the very title that we still commonly use for this text. Rather than adopting one of the various names for the work found in the MSS themselves (e.g., *Sefer Hekhalot*), Odeberg invented the title *3 Enoch* in imitation of *1 Enoch* and *2 Enoch*.

This title embodies Odeberg’s overarching assumption, namely, that *3 Enoch* represents a direct continuation from the Enochic literary tradition of the Second Temple period, rather than a part of the late antique literature with which it was preserved and transmitted. Although the text presents itself as a first-hand account of R. Ishmael’s ascent to heaven during which this Sage encounters Enoch-Metatron and hears his words (*3 En.* 1–2 [§§1–3]), Odeberg treated *3 Enoch* as an Enochic pseudepigraphon. This led him to date its final redaction to the third century and even to speculate that some portions may have originated in the first or second.³² Accordingly, he approached its affinities with both Rabbinic and Hekhalot literature as signs of their dependence on *3 Enoch* instead of the converse.

Since the publication of Odeberg’s translation, nearly all of his conclusions about *3 Enoch* have been abandoned. Specialists in Jewish mysticism, beginning with Scholem himself, expressed their incredulity at his choice to

³¹ Scholem, *Major Trends*, 72.

³² Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 23–43, 188.

divorce this work from the rest of the Hekhalot literature, and their research has exposed the many distortions that result from this choice.³³ Most notably, Odeberg's extremely early dating of the work has been readily disproved through comparison with other Hekhalot macroforms. Such analysis shows it to be one of the latest works in the corpus – a matter of consensus even among scholars, such as Scholem and Gruenwald, who view 3 *Enoch* as the literary embodiment of the apocalyptic heritage of Merkavah mysticism.³⁴

Nevertheless, Odeberg largely succeeded in annexing this Hekhalot macroform to the “OT Pseudepigrapha.” Researchers on Jewish mysticism have repeatedly reiterated the problems with this assumption, but many outside the field have continued to treat 3 *Enoch* as an extension of the parabiblical literature of Second Temple Judaism. To a large extent, the persistence of this assumption results from the fact that 3 *Enoch* was the first part of the Hekhalot corpus (and still one of few) available in English translation. Ironically, the more recent translation communicates Odeberg's view of the continuity between 1, 2, and 3 *Enoch* even more than his own volume, due to its context and its placement; not only is 3 *Enoch* the only Hekhalot text included in James Charlesworth's *OTP* collection, but it is placed directly after 1 and 2 *Enoch*,³⁵ in a striking embodiment of Odeberg's conclusions about the direct line of evolutionary development that – in his view – connects the three.³⁶

By contrast, Alexander approaches the continuity between 3 *Enoch* and older Enochic writings as something to be proved, rather than assumed, and he stresses the problems with Odeberg's work, even as he attempts to recover its value for our understanding of 3 *Enoch*.³⁷ In this, Alexander focuses on traditions about Enoch, suggesting that 3 *Enoch*'s equation of Enoch with Metratron represents the culmination of his progressive elevation in early Enochic pseudepigrapha. As he demonstrates, it is indeed possible to discern a trajectory of development. The *Astronomical Book*, *Book of the Watchers*, *Epistle of Enoch*, and *Book of Dreams* celebrate Enoch's wisdom and exalt him as the “scribe of righteousness” and as an eschatological prophet. In the two

³³ Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 7; Greenfield, “Prolegomenon,” xxiii–xxvi; Alexander in *OTP* 1:224–25; Schäfer and Herrmann, *Übersetzung* 1.x.

³⁴ Scholem *Jewish Gnosticism*, 7; Schäfer and Herrmann, *Übersetzung* 1.li; Schäfer, *Hidden*, 134; Alexander in *OTP* 1:227; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 191–92; Himmelfarb, “Heavenly Ascent,” 98.

³⁵ In Charles' 1913 collection *APOT*, published before Odeberg's edition, 1 and 2 *Enoch* occur in the section called “Apocalypses” but are not placed together.

³⁶ Odeberg locates 2 *Enoch* “on the straight line connecting 1 Enoch with 3 Enoch” (3 *Enoch*, 60–61).

³⁷ E.g., Alexander in *OTP* 1:224–25.

later Enochic pseudepigrapha, *2 Enoch* (esp. 22–23) and the *Similitudes* (esp. *1 En.* 70–71), Enoch begins to take on angelic and messianic qualities.³⁸ It is the latter that seem to inform his assimilation to the angelic scribe Metatron (cf. *b.Ḥag.* 15a) in *3 Enoch*.³⁹

When seen from this perspective, the latter does look like the endpoint of an evolutionary process begun many centuries before. Alexander thus concludes that “Metatron’s absorption of translated Enoch could only have taken place in circles acquainted with the Palestinian apocalyptic Enoch traditions.”⁴⁰ He proposes, moreover, that “We must postulate in consequence an historical link between the Hekhaloth mystics and the circles which generated these pseudepigraphic Enoch traditions.”⁴¹

In my view, Alexander has made a convincing case for the former but not for the latter. Several data militate against basing any theory concerning the origins of the Hekhalot literature so heavily on the evidence of this specific work. The Enochic pseudepigrapha that provide the closest parallels with *3 Enoch* are the *Similitudes* and *2 Enoch*, two first-century texts that seem to have been produced apart from any direct socio-historical continuity with earlier works like the *Book of the Watchers* (and, in the case of *2 Enoch*, in a different language and locale). Moreover, as noted above, *3 Enoch* represents a late example of the Hekhalot literature. Even if we concur with Alexander on *3 Enoch*’s affinities with early Enochic literature, we are left with the problem of the large gap in our evidence for the inner-Jewish transmission of these Second Temple Jewish texts. Furthermore, *3 Enoch*’s affinities with early Jewish apocalypses number among its notable departures from Hekhalot traditions, as also evident in its rabbinization of Hekhalot traditions.⁴²

The parallels between *3 Enoch* and earlier Enochic writings provide too shaky a foundation for any broader theory about the socio-historical continuity linking the early Jewish apocalypses and the Hekhalot literature, particularly in the absence of other concrete and compelling evidence. However tempting it is to speculate about mystical circles functioning as the social setting for the preservation and reproduction of Enochic literature by Jews in Late Antiquity, our extant data simply do not support such a reconstruction.

³⁸ Alexander, “Historical Setting,” 159–67; Deutsch, *Guardians*, 32–35; Himmelfarb, “Report,” 261.

³⁹ For references to Metatron in Jewish literature, see Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 90–125.

⁴⁰ Alexander in *OTP* 1:243–44.

⁴¹ Alexander, “Historical Setting,” 160.

⁴² Schäfer, *Hidden*, 138; Alexander, “3 Enoch”; cf. Morray-Jones, “Hekhalot”; see below on the evidence of T.-S. K 21.95.L.

Moreover, Scholem's theory may prove attractive for the wrong reasons. It is indeed tempting to believe that we need only to label a text "esoteric" or "mystical" to be exempted from the burden of proof normally required in reconstructions of social, literary, and religious history. Likewise, a surprising number of scholars accept that an appeal to "mystical experience" suffices to support otherwise ungrounded speculations about Jewish movements, beliefs, and practices stretching back to time immemorial,⁴³ even though scholarship on better attested mystical movements has shown mystical practice to be anything but an ahistorical phenomenon. Perhaps even more pernicious is the principle of selectivity inculcated by this approach: Scholem's comments have led scholars to scour pre-Rabbinic Jewish literature for hints of parallels with the Hekhalot literature. As a result, less attention has been paid to the non-Jewish parallels present in the immediate cultural contexts in which the Hekhalot literature was composed and redacted.

When approached from the diachronic perspective of inner-Jewish developments, 3 *Enoch's* expression of intensive interest in Enoch comes as a surprise. But, if we consider the equation of Enoch and Metatron from a synchronic perspective and contextualize it within the cultural milieu of late antique Mesopotamia, its interest in – and elevation of – Enoch seems far less unusual. Most notable in this regard is the cultivation of Enochic texts and traditions by Manichean groups, whose continued presence in this area is attested by Syriac Christian and Muslim heresiologists.

The importance of Enoch and Enochic traditions within Manichaeism is clear from Enoch's status as one of the prophetic heralds, and their transmission, redaction, and/or production of books in his name is evinced by the Manichean *Book of the Giants*⁴⁴ and the "Apocalypse of Enoch" in the *Cologne Mani Codex* (ca. 3rd–5th c.).⁴⁵ Recently, John C. Reeves has suggested that the Enochic material in *CMC* 58:6–60:7 betrays knowledge of both the *Similitudes* and 2 *Enoch*.⁴⁶ The former proves particularly suggestive inasmuch as

⁴³ E.g., Segal, *Paul*, 53–54; Morray-Jones, *Transparent*, 220–21. Contrast Davila's more cautious approach in *Descenders*, 155, n. 62.

⁴⁴ BG's importance in Manichaean tradition seems to stretch across all of its various stages and locales; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, esp. 9–50.

⁴⁵ Stone and Greenfield propose that the former is a quotation from a larger (possibly pre-Manichean and/or Jewish) Enochic book; "Books of Enoch," 209–10. More likely, in my view, is Frankfurter's suggestion that "Mani or Baraies coined a kind of 'archetypal' Enoch apocalypse, the verisimilitude of which would be guaranteed by its similarity to other Enochic apocalypses of the ancient world, with some of which we know Mani was acquainted" ("Apocalypses Real," 63).

⁴⁶ Reeves, "Jewish Pseudepigrapha," 183; *Heralds*, 183–206.

we otherwise lack evidence for its later use.⁴⁷ David Suter and James Davila have also pointed to the many affinities between 3 *Enoch* and the *Similitudes*, particularly its elevation of Enoch (1 *En.* 70–7) and its angelology (61:10–12).⁴⁸ The occurrence of terminology characteristic of the Hekhalot literature in some Manichean texts, alongside an interest in the practice of heavenly ascent, makes the possibility of interchange even more intriguing.⁴⁹

When we turn to consider the reemergence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in early medieval Judaism, we will find several motifs for which Manichaeism provides the only known parallels. In addition, the “Midrash of Šemḥazai and Azael” includes a tradition with striking parallels to the Qumran *Book of the Giants*, a Manichean version of which was current at the time. As noted above, Mani’s own interest in Enoch and Enochic pseudepigrapha appears to root from his early life with an Elchaasite group in southern Babylonia.⁵⁰ This connection raises the possibility that this and other “Jewish-Christian” groups continued to transmit and develop early Enochic texts and traditions and/or to mediate them to non-Christian Jews.⁵¹ Neither can we rule out the cultivation of early Enochic traditions by non-Christian, non-Rabbinic Jewish groups in the area,⁵² which may have continued to flourish even despite the growing power and institutionalization of Rabbinic Judaism in Babylonia.⁵³

⁴⁷ I.e., apart from its inclusion in 1 *Enoch*; see Ch. 3.

⁴⁸ Suter, *Tradition*, 14–23; Davila, “Of Methodology,” 9–14; also Black, “Eschatology,” 6–7.

⁴⁹ Reeves, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 176–81.

⁵⁰ Reeves, *Heralds*, 42, 46–48.

⁵¹ Most notable in this regard is Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 8 (ca. 4th c.), which contain a retelling of the Enochic myth of angelic descent (heavily dependent on *Jubilees*, but possibly integrating elements from BW) and also material that may presage the Shiur Qomah speculation in the Hekhalot literature (Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 41). We cannot, of course, assume that all evidence for “Jewish-Christianity” reflects a uniform movement or unified phenomenon, but it is striking that “the Manichaen doctrine of the recurrent incarnation of the Apostle of Light within select antediluvian forefathers and ‘national’ religious teachers . . . appears to be a variant formulation of the so-called ‘true prophet’ doctrine of the Pseudo-Clementines” (Reeves, “Reconsidering,” 167).

⁵² These issues are further complicated by AB and BW’s debt to ancient Mesopotamian traditions (see Chs. 1–2). We know too little about Babylonian Jewry in the Hellenistic and early Roman periods to rule out the continued cultivation of such traditions in that locale (or, for that matter, to rule out a Babylonian provenance for AB and perhaps even parts of BW). In any case, it is surely fitting that early Enochic traditions seem to flourish on precisely the soil from which they seem to have sprung in the first place.

⁵³ The evidence for Jewish sectarianism in this area dates from a later period and comes mostly from Islamic writings (Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim*, 17–46); it does raise some questions, however, concerning the degree to which we should trust the Rabbinic evidence concerning the lack of sectarian dispute among Jews between the Second Temple period and the rise of Karaism.

Any firm conclusions must await further research. For the purposes of our present inquiry, the parallels prove significant for one main reason: they may shed light on the cultural milieu in which early Enochic traditions about Enoch first came to be reintegrated into the Hekhalot literature – a Jewish discourse which, if not “Rabbinic” in a strict sense, self-consciously based its claim to legitimacy on the authority of famous Sages of the past and which would also play some part in mediating such traditions to other Jewish discourses, such as Midrash.

2. UZZA, AZZA, AND AZAEL IN THE REDACTION-HISTORY OF 3 ENOCH

The form and content of 3 *Enoch* owes to authorial/redactional activity over a long span of time and in multiple settings.⁵⁴ More specifically, our codicological and literary evidence points to four different settings that informed the present shape of this work: [1] a formative stage in Babylonia, [2] a stage of development in “eastern circles” (as evinced by the Cairo Genizah fragments), [3] an intermediary Byzantine stage, and [4] a final Ashkenazi stage, to which we owe the extant form of this work.⁵⁵

The initial identification of Enoch with the angel Metatron probably belongs to the Babylonian stage.⁵⁶ The place of early Enochic traditions in the formation of 3 *Enoch* can be further illuminated through a focus on the treatment of Azael. The material about Enoch’s elevation into Metatron in 3 *Enoch* (3–15 [§§4–19]) contains two separate units that mention Uzza, Azza, and Azael: 3 *Enoch* 4 (§§5–6) and 5 (§§7–8). The two differ in telling ways, which shed light both on the redaction-history of 3 *Enoch* and on the process by which traditions about Azael gradually came to reenter the Rabbinic Jewish discourse about early human history.

i. 3 Enoch 4 (§§5–6) and the Babylonian Stage of Composition/Redaction

The first, 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6), recounts Enoch’s ascent and transformation into Metatron in the context of his responses to R. Ishmael’s question concerning

⁵⁴ Schäfer and Herrmann, *Übersetzung* 1.liv. Our earliest MS evidence for 3 *Enoch*, an 11 th/12th c. Genizah fragment (T.-S. K 21.95.L, preserving 3 *En.* 1, 43–44 [§§1–2; §§61–62]) confirms that some of the “apocalyptic” features of 3 *Enoch* do in fact derive from this early stage; Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien*, 84–95; idem, *Hidden*, 137–38.

⁵⁵ Schäfer, “Research on the Hekhalot,” 231–32; *Hekhalot-Studien*, 15, 228–29.

⁵⁶ Schäfer, “Research on the Hekhalot,” 231–32.

his 70 names and particularly his title *Na'ar* (“Youth”).⁵⁷ Insofar as the account of Enoch’s ascent and elevation here functions to prove the angelic Metatron’s origins in the human Enoch, this unit likely reflects the formative Babylonian stage in the redaction-history of this work. If so, 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) may contain important clues concerning 3 *Enoch*’s combination of early Enochic themes and motifs with Hekhalot and Rabbinic traditions,⁵⁸ as well as the place of the fallen angels therein.

After recounting how God brought Enoch up to heaven to serve as a witness against the Generation of the Flood (esp. 4:1–5 [§5]), this unit describes the complaints of heavenly angels named *Uzza*, *Azza*, and *Azael* (4:6–10 [§6]):

In that hour, three of the ministering angels – *Uzzah*, *Azzah*, and *Azael* – came forth and brought charges against me in the high heavens, saying before the Holy One: Didn’t the first ones rightly say before you, “Do not create humankind!” The Holy One blessed be He answered and said to them, “I have made, and I will hear; I will carry and deliver” (Isa 46:4b).

As soon as they saw me, they said before him: “Lord of the universe! What is this one that he should ascend to the height of the heavens? Is he not one from among the sons of those who perished in the days of the Flood? What is he doing in the *Raqia* (i.e., the Firmament)”?

Again, the Holy One blessed be He answered and said to them: “What are you, that you enter and speak in my presence? I delight in this one more than in all of you, and thus he will be a prince and ruler over you in the high heavens!”

Right away, all stood up and went out to meet me, prostrated themselves before me and said: “Happy are you and happy is your father, for the Creator favors you.” And because I am small and a youth among them in days and months and years, therefore they call me *Na'ar*.

Here, we encounter a variation on the familiar Rabbinic trope of the rivalry between angels and humankind, or more specifically, an expansion of the version found in *b.Sanh.* 38b.

In the Bavli’s version, God consults three groups of angels before His creation of humankind; the first two groups oppose His planned act of anthropogony on the basis of the wicked deeds that humans will commit, and they quote Ps 8:2 in support of their position. God promptly destroys them, such that the third group agrees, meekly affirming that God can do anything with His world that He so chooses. The account concludes by confirming the

⁵⁷ This title predates the association of Enoch with Metatron (Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 49–50; Halperin, *Faces*, 422–27).

⁵⁸ For instance, 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) interweaves Hekhalot traditions about Metatron, Rabbinic traditions about the Generation of the Flood (esp. 4:3), and early Enochic traditions about Enoch himself.

validity of the angels' concerns about human wickedness, while also reaffirming God's steadfast support of humankind:

When it came to the people of the Generation of the Flood and of the Division, whose deeds were corrupt, they [i.e., the angels] said to Him: "Lord of the Universe, did not the first ones speak correctly?" He answered: "Even to your old age I am the same, even when you turn gray I will carry you" [Isa 46:4a, i.e., the first part of the verse cited in 3 *En.* 4:6]. (*b.Sanh.* 38b)

Comparison of the two texts suggests that the conclusion of the story in *b.Sanh.* 38b served as the starting point for 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6), which applies the angelic rivalry model to Enoch's ascent and identifies the Bavli's third group of angels as Uzza, Azza, and Azael.

In 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6), however, human sinfulness is no longer the issue. In an interesting assimilation of a Rabbinic motif to Hekhalot traditions, the three angels take on the function of the hostile gatekeeping angels who try to endanger those who seek to ascend to heaven.⁵⁹ With the application of this trope to the righteous Enoch's heavenly ascent, the theme of the subordination of angels to humans also takes on a new meaning, which betrays a more ambivalent attitude towards angels. On the one hand, the theme of angelic subordination to humankind is further emphasized, as God makes Enoch a "prince and ruler" over the angels.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the appropriation and reapplication of the rivalry motif ironically serves to neutralize the Rabbinic critique of angel veneration, at least with regard to this one figure: Enoch's elevation is itself a process of angelification.⁶¹

In post-Talmudic Midrash, Azael and his cohorts – Uzzah and/or Azzah in the earlier traditions, and later Šemḥazai – quite often take on the role of the accusing angels who cite the wickedness of the Generation of the Flood and/or the Generation of Enosh as proof that God should have never created humankind. Many of these sources contain retellings of Enochic myth of angelic descent presented as interpretations of Gen 6:2. Yet, in each case, early Enochic traditions have been read through the Rabbinic trope of angelic rivalry. Consequently, it proves significant that the notion of Azael et al. as ministering angels and/or gatekeeping angels seems to have preceded both the view of these figures as fallen angels and their reassociation with Genesis' "sons of God" in Rabbinic tradition.

⁵⁹ Reed, "From Asael," 115–16.

⁶⁰ The account of angelic objection to Enoch's elevation in 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) is repeated in 3 *En.* 6 (§§9), but here the complaining angels are unnamed heavenly hosts (6:2, cf. 5:3).

⁶¹ Cf. *b.Hag.* 15a; *b.Sanh.* 38b; *b.AZ.* 3b.

Before we turn to examine these later developments, we must first ask whether and how the occurrence of Uzzah, Azzah, and Azael in 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) relates to early Enochic traditions about the Watcher Asael. As noted above, these names occur already in the Babylonian Talmud. In a long list of explanations for the name “Azazel” (עזאזל) in Leviticus 16, *b. Yoma* 67b includes the following statement, attributed to the school of R. Ishmael:

Azazel: he is the one who obtains atonement for the deed of Uzza and Azael.
[עזאזל – שמכפר עו מעשה עוזא ועזאזל]

This brief and enigmatic tradition allows for a variety of interpretations, both of its meaning and of its relationship to 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6). One possibility is that this etymology presupposes only knowledge about an angel/demon called Azael (i.e., עזאזל = עזא + עזאזל), which 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) later reads in light of the angelic rivalry motif in *b. Sanhedrin* 38b. One could suggest that *b. Yoma* 67b presupposes a tradition akin to 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6), or that both draw from some other tradition according to which Uzza/Azza and Azael were wayward angels, or even accusing angels similar to Samael and Satan.

The evidence of Jewish magical literature is here instructive. In the Palestinian amulets, Babylonian incantation bowls, and magical materials from the Cairo Genizah, we find many variations on the name Azael,⁶² consistent with the scattered references to this angel in the Greco-Egyptian magical literature of Late Antiquity.⁶³ In late antique amulets from Palestine and medieval ones from Cairo Genizah, he is clearly a heavenly angel, rather than a fallen one.⁶⁴ In some spells, he even seems to be an archangel.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it is not clear that this figure had a distinct personality; he is far from a major figure, and he numbers among the many angels to whom a magical practitioner can appeal for help and protection.⁶⁶

⁶² עזאזל in AMB A 1:1; עזאזל in AMB A 7:3; עזאזל in MSF A 19:23; עזאזל in T.-S. AS 142.39 1 a line 25.

⁶³ Αζαήλ in PGM XXXVI 174; XLV 7; Αζήλ in IV 2142. Also Gaster, “Logos Ebraikos,” 109–117.

⁶⁴ See Odeberg, 3 *Enoch*, 12, for a list of literary sources in which Azael (or variations thereof) denotes a heavenly angel.

⁶⁵ AMB a 1:1–3: “On your right are very many, on your left is Uziel [[עזיא(א)], in front of you is Susiel, behind you is Repose. Above these is God’s Shekhinah” (also Moussaieff Collection Bowl 6 lines 7–8 in Shaked, “Peace,” 211–16); AMB A 7a:2–5: “In the name of Michael, Raphael, Azael [עזאזל], Azriel, Ariel . . . the holy angels who stand in front of the throne of the great God.”

⁶⁶ Schiffman and Schwartz rightly caution us against assuming that angels and demons in the magical texts always have “distinct personalities” (*Hebrew and Aramaic*, 34).

This, however, does not seem to be the case with the Aramaic incantation bowls from Nippur and related Babylonian material.⁶⁷ Not only do we find variations on both Asael and Azael,⁶⁸ but one bowl (Gordon D *Archiv Orientalni* VI) provides us with an interesting parallel to literary traditions that pair Azael with angel(s) with similar names.⁶⁹ When petitioning for the nullification of sorceries [חרשין] from a range of different nations, as practiced “in the seventy languages, either by women or men” (lines 8–9), the text states:

All of them (i.e., the sorceries) are brought to an end and annulled by the command of the jealous and avenging God, the One who sent [שדח] Azza and Azael [עזא ועזאל] and Metatron, the great prince of his Throne [המטטרון רבא דכורסיה]. They will come and guard the dwelling and the threshold of Parrukukdad son of Zebinta and Qamoi daughter of Zaraq (lines 10–12).

Here, Azza and Azael seem to be heavenly angels invoked to protect Parrukukdad and Qamoi from sorcery – although the reference to “sending” allows for the possibility that they have already descended to earth, whether because of sin or adjuration. In any case, it is striking that these figures are associated with Metatron and that they are invoked in a spell dedicated to countering sorcery, one of the teachings of the Watchers in 1 *En.* 6–11 (BW).

Generally speaking, the angelological discourse of Jewish magic may help to explain the emergence of Uzza(h) and Azza(h) as counterparts to Azael, since angel names are often subject to variation and multiplication in magical texts.⁷⁰ Whereas the Palestinian tradition seems only to know this Watcher’s

⁶⁷ “In the bowls and Babylonian Jewish magic in particular, demons and angels tend to have more distinct personalities and appear in narrative contexts” (Schiffman and Schwartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic*, 28).

⁶⁸ Relevant are two bowls with duplicated material, first published by Myrman and Montgomery respectively: 16081 (Myrman), line 8 = “In the name of Gabriel and Michael and in the name of Raphael and Asiel [ובשם רפיאל ועסיאל], and in Hermes the great lord [ובהרמס מריא רבא], in the name of YHW in YHW [ובשם יהו ביהו].” Montgomery 7, line 8 (16007) = “In the name of Gabriel and Michiel and Raphiel [בשם גבריאל ומיכילא ורפיאל], and in the name of Asael Asiel the angel [עסאל עסיאל מלאכה] and Ermes [ארמיס] the gr[eat] lord” These bowls may help us to imagine the process by which the name of this and other angels shifted in the course of their use within the magical tradition. Here, the name Asiel emerges as a variation on Asael, concurrent with the assimilation of the names of other angels to the “-iel” ending. On Hermes, Metatron, and Enoch, see Montgomery, *Aramaic*, 122–24.

⁶⁹ Isbell, *Corpus*, 112–13.

⁷⁰ Montgomery cites a text published by Pradel (p. 22 line 16), in which the names $\alpha\sigma\alpha$ and $\alpha\phi\alpha$ appear; he speculates that Asael and Raphael are meant (*Aramaic*, 150). Cf. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:152–53.

name,⁷¹ the Babylonian evidence suggests that, in this locale at least, he may have retained something of his early Enochic associations. The latter appears to be confirmed by other bowls, which suggest the integration of several Enochic motifs into the Babylonian magical tradition. In some, Enoch himself is invoked; others contain formulae involving curses on Mt. Hermon, thereby recalling the Watchers' oath on this very mountain in *1 En.* 6 (BW).⁷²

For our limited purposes, this evidence proves significant in two ways. First, the magical tradition offers a plausible setting in which some early Enochic traditions about the Watchers could have been transmitted and developed apart from the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4.⁷³ This evidence thus helps us to account for the occurrence of Azael in *b.Yoma* 67b⁷⁴ and *3 En.* 4 (§§5–6) – and particularly the latter, in light of the broader affinities between the Babylonian magical tradition and the Hekhalot literature.⁷⁵ Secondly, it may aid us in grounding some of our broader observations concerning the common cultural milieu that *3 Enoch* seems to share with Manichean, “Jewish-Christian,” and Mandaean groups,⁷⁶ inasmuch as it provides us with a concrete example of a channel through which angelological and demonological traditions flowed back and forth across creedal divides.⁷⁷

It is often said that ancient magic was an interreligious or transreligious phenomenon. This proves especially true for Babylonian magic, as is clear from

⁷¹ It is not impossible that “Azael” could have emerged independently from Asael, since it is a rather obvious choice for an angel name (i.e., strength of God), particularly in a discourse in which angel names are often to be invented according to the quality or thing being requested. It is striking, however, that Αζαηλ is the form used in the Greek translations of BW.

⁷² E.g., Montgomery 4 line 3 [אזאיהל] and comments there (*Aramaic*, 134–35). For some of the relevant texts, see Milik, *Commentary*, 336–38 (noting his problematic assumption that these traditions are based in BG).

⁷³ Schwartz, in his survey of affinities between Qumranic precedents for later Jewish mystical, magical, and divinatory sources, concludes that there is much more continuity (both in form and content) with regard to magic and divination than with regard to themes deemed “mystical or visionary”; the former are more “stable and enduring” and seem to play a consistent role in the life of a community (“Dead Sea Scrolls,” 193).

⁷⁴ If so, *b.Yoma* 67b could reflect [1] the preservation of Azael's status as a wayward angel or [2] the Talmud's polemic against the adjuration of these angels for magical purposes (if the latter, then the attribution to “the school of R. Ishmael” may be explicable as a means to counter the theurgic traditions associated with this figure in the groups eventually responsible for the Hekhalot literature).

⁷⁵ The exact nature of this relationship is a matter of some debate; e.g., *MSF*, pp. 17–20; Schwartz, *Scholastic Magic*; Schäfer, “Merkavah Mysticism,” 59–78; Davila, *Descenders*.

⁷⁶ In incantation bowls produced by and for Mandaeans, we find references to “Azazel”; see Wasserstrom, “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 102, and references there.

⁷⁷ There is a similar duplication of Azazel in Mandaean tradition, where Azazel and Azazel are two of the four angels of the West. Wasserstrom suggests the same channel for the transmission of traditions about Metatron into Islamic culture (“Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 101; *Between Muslim*, 194–205).

the remarkable parallels between the (presumably Jewish) bowls preserved in Babylonian Aramaic and those preserved in Mandaic and Syriac.⁷⁸ With regard to 3 *Enoch*, further research is needed to explore the exact nature of its possible connections to Manichean, Mandaean, and “Jewish-Christian” angelologies and traditions about Enoch. For now, we can only stress that the immediate environment in which this macroform began to take shape was much richer in such material than we might imagine from examining only the Rabbinic Jewish and Syriac Christian evidence. Indeed, the same cultural milieu – shaped by the “symbiosis” among the heterogeneous biblically based religious groups living under Zoroastrian rule – would nurture the development of early Islamic traditions about Azāzil, Idris/Enoch, and the fallen angels Harut and Marut.⁷⁹

In what follows, we will focus on another trajectory of development, leading through Byzantium to Christian Europe, because the sources linked to these areas are the only ones which contain parallels to the distinctive version of the angelic descent myth in the *Book of the Watchers*. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the crystallization of these themes in Islamic culture (as perhaps ultimately rooted in early Enochic texts and/or traditions, but significantly shaped by their development in late antique Mesopotamia) also played a part in nurturing the renewed interest in the fallen angels among early medieval Jews.⁸⁰ It is surely not coincidental that the reintegration of the angelic descent myth into the Rabbinic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 occurs soon after the rise of Islam and that the earliest extant Rabbinic source to identify the “sons of God,” once again, with “the angels who fell from their holy place in heaven” is *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* (22), a gaonic midrash that integrates elements from Islamic folklore.⁸¹

⁷⁸ E.g., Montgomery, *Aramaic*, 95–101, 115–16. Odeberg’s list of parallels between 3 *Enoch* and Mandaean literature (3 *Enoch*, 64–79) is plagued by his usual parallelomania, but this issue needs to be revisited, particularly in light of the interest in Metatron in the Mandaic magical bowls (Alexander in *OTP* 1:253) and the fact that the Mandaeans were, as Alexander notes, “in close historical contact with the rabbinic communities of Babylonia in which Merkavah mysticism flourished” (p. 253).

⁷⁹ Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim*, 7–14, 222–37. On Azazel and Azāzil, see his “Jewish Pseudepigrapha,” 101–3. On Harut and Marut, see Quran 2.102 (*Al-Baqarah*): “They followed what the *Shayâtin* [devils] gave out in the lifetime of Sulaimân. Sulaimân did not disbelieve, but the *Shayâtin* disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Hârût and Mârût, but neither of these two taught anyone until they had said, ‘We are only for trial, so disbelieve not.’”

⁸⁰ Netzer, “Story,” esp. 499–502.

⁸¹ Space does not permit an inquiry into *Pirqe R.El.’s* approach to the fallen angels, particularly since we here find no hint of any influence from distinctively Enochic traditions about them. Interestingly, the angels who fall before the Flood are there anonymous.

ii. *The Byzantine Stage of 3 Enoch's
Composition/Redaction/Transmission*

Although 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) reflects knowledge of angelological traditions that may have their ultimate origin in the *Book of the Watchers*, there is little to support or to necessitate a theory of literary dependence.⁸² By contrast, 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8) is best explained with reference to the distinctive traditions in 1 *En.* 6–11 (BW).

There are, as I have shown elsewhere, compelling reasons for seeing 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8) as a later addition to the account of Enoch's transformation into Metatron in 3 *En.* 3–15 (§§4–19). This is the only unit in 3 *Enoch* in which Uzza, Azza, and Azael function as fallen angels: here they teach humankind sorcery and spreading wickedness on the earth. It is also the only unit in 3 *En.* 3–15 that does not include any reference at all to Enoch or Metatron. Moreover, its third-person narrative form distinguishes it both from the surrounding material and from 3 *Enoch* in general.⁸³

This unit recounts how the wickedness of the Generation of Enosh brought an end to the happy and harmonious lives of earlier humans, who – even despite their expulsion from Eden – lived under the protective light of the Shekinah, in close contact with God and the angels (5:1–5). The proliferation of sin and suffering on earth is here linked to the deeds of Uzza, Azza, and Azael, who teach this Generation sorceries that allow them to bring the “sun and moon, stars and constellations” down to earth to serve their idols, which they forged by amassing “silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls” (5:8–9). In response, unnamed ministering angels complain to God that His Shekinah should not be dwelling among such sinful beings. God – in a rather striking departure from the usual progression of the rivalry motif – promptly removes His Shekinah into heaven, offering no argument against the angels and no pledge of continued support for humankind (5:10–14).

In an earlier publication, I argued that this unit reflects dependence on the *Book of the Watchers*, and specifically the excerpts preserved in Christian

⁸² The question of 3 *Enoch's* relationship with 2 *Enoch* and the *Similitudes* awaits further research, undertaken apart from the assumption of the socio-historical continuity between the early Jewish apocalypses and the Hekhalot literature. As it now stands, there is too little evidence to argue for literary dependence; it is possible that 3 *Enoch's* elevation of Enoch into Metatron is based on knowledge of 2 *Enoch* and/or the *Similitudes*, but their affinities might merely speak to 3 *Enoch's* origins in a cultural milieu in which some biblical-based religious groups reworked traditions from these texts to elevate and celebrate Enoch. It is striking, for instance, that the affinities with the *Similitudes* in 3 *Enoch* and *CMC* involve the exact same material (1 *En.* 70–71).

⁸³ Reed, “From Asael,” 112–16.

chronographical source-collections.⁸⁴ This theory accounts, for instance, for its depiction of the corrupting teachings of Uzzah, Azzah, and Azazel as a causal factor in the radical deterioration of antediluvian ethics, as well as for its association of these angels with the teachings of celestially oriented magical skills (cf. *1 En.* 8:3c–g) and its stress on the Generation of Enosh’s gathering of “silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls” as materials for their idols (cf. Gr^{Syn} *1 En.* 8:1–2).⁸⁵ The striking departure from other Rabbinic traditions about angelic rivalry, which function to affirm God’s preference for humankind over the angels and thus conclude with God’s rebuttal or destruction of the accusing angels, may also reflect dependence on the *Book of the Watchers*. Like *1 En.* 6–11, this account of the angelic involvement in facilitating human wickedness functions as an etiology for human sin and suffering, rather than a confirmation of our superiority (even in moments of weakness and wickedness) to the angels.

There are also several reasons to posit that *3 En.* 5’s dependence on excerpts of the *Book of the Watchers* similar in shape and form to those preserved by Syncellus.⁸⁶ Most notable is its total lack of reference to Enoch. This, as we noted in Chapter 1, is also the case with the account in *1 En.* 6–11 – even though Enoch plays an important part in the angelic descent myth within the redacted whole of the *Book of the Watchers* by virtue of the material in *1 En.* 12–16. Syncellus’ version of *1 En.* 8:1–2 also suggests that Asael descended to earth first, only later followed by the other Watchers, and this may help to account for this unit’s location of the activity of Uzzah, Azzah, and Azazel in the Generation of Enosh, rather than the Generation of the Flood.⁸⁷ In a broader sense, the dependence on a chronographical source-collection containing an excerpt “from the first book of Enoch” (Sync 11.19) also helps to explain why a scribe would even include this unit in *3 Enoch*, in the middle of a discussion about Enoch – even though it makes no mention of the antediluvian sage at all and, moreover, presents an account of the removal of the Shekhinah before Enoch’s own lifetime, as opposed to depicting him as ascending to heaven with it (cf. *3 En.* 6, 7 [§9, §10]).

Most importantly, it may be possible to correlate this theory with the redaction-history of *3 Enoch*, insofar as this Hekhalot macroform likely made

⁸⁴ Reed, “From Asael,” 119–22, 134–6.

⁸⁵ Reed, “From Asael,” 119–23.

⁸⁶ Reed, “From Asael,” 124–25, 128–29.

⁸⁷ This interest in identifying the specific sins and punishments of the sinful Generations of early human history is characteristic of the Rabbinic discussion concerning the Generation of Enosh, for whom – unlike the Generation of the Flood and the Generation of the Dispersion – no biblical punishment is recorded; Reed, “From Asael,” 125.

its way into the hands of the Haside Ashkenaz by means of Byzantium.⁸⁸ When discussing parallels between *Jubilees* and *Midrash Aggada*, a collection drawn from R. Moshe ha-Darshan's commentaries, Himmelfarb has argued that the former may have become accessible to learned Jews like R. Moshe by virtue of their preservation in Christian chronographical source-collections, akin to those used by Syncellus. She further suggests that Jews in Byzantine Italy may have played a mediatory role, translating traditions of interest into Hebrew, and she cites the well-known case of Yosippon in support.⁸⁹ The possibility that portions of the *Book of the Watchers* also began to circulate again among learned Jews, due to their transmission through the same channels, becomes even more intriguing when we turn to consider R. Moshe's role in the formation of the "Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael."

3. ANGELIC DESCENT AND ANGELIC TEACHING IN THE "MIDRASH ON ŠEMḤAZAI AND AZAEL"

This title was given by Jellinek to a short midrash about the fallen angels found in Simeon ha-Darshan's midrashic anthology *Yalqut Shimoni* (13th c.; Frankfurt?).⁹⁰ Versions also occur in R. Moshe ha-Darshan's *Bereshit Rabbati* (11th c.; Narbonne)⁹¹ and the copy of the anthological chronicle of Yerahmeel ben Solomon (ca. 1150; Southern Italy?) preserved in Eleazar ben Asher Ha-Levi's collection *Sefer ha-Zikhronot* (ca. 1325).⁹² Due to its affinities with the Qumran and Manichean versions of the *Book of the Giants*, as well as its utility as an aid for reconstructing these fragmentary works, scholars have typically focused on the most expansive form of this midrash, as found in Jellinek's excerpt from *Yalqut* (*BHM* 4:127–28) and Gaster's translation of the *Chronicle of Yerahmeel* (25). Moreover, they have tended to treat this midrash as a single "text" or "document" with various "recensions,"⁹³ even despite the fact that it combines a series of smaller units, which seem to have circulated separately and which are marked as distinct traditions in the version in *Bereshit Rabbati*.

⁸⁸ Schäfer and Herrmann, *Übersetzung* 1:liv–lv; also Ta-Shma, "Towards," 61–70.

⁸⁹ Himmelfarb, "Some Echoes," esp. 117–18, 135–36. On this milieu, Liebner, "Asaf's *Book of Medicines*," esp. 235–36; on the use of Greek alongside Hebrew, see de Lange, "Hebrews," esp. 110–12, 115–16.

⁹⁰ *Yalqut Shimoni*, Venice 1566, ff. 11 v–12v; i §44. *Yalqut's* source here is commonly identified as *Midrash Abkir*, a nonextant midrashic collection that may date from the early 11th c. (Heller, "Chute," 205). Ginzberg notes, however, that this material is attributed to *Midrash Abkir* in late editions of *Yalqut* but not in early ones (*Legends*, 5:169).

⁹¹ Another version, with slight variations, is among Raymundi Martini's quotations of *Ber. Rabbati* in his *Pugio Fidei* (ca. 1280).

⁹² On *Sefer ha-Zikhronot*, see Yassif, "Hebrew Narrative," 157–72.

⁹³ Milik, *Commentary*, 329–39; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 86, 143; Stuckenbruck, *Book of the Giants*, 64.

Milik, for instance, reconstructs the “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael” with primary reference to *Yerahmeel’s* version, suggesting that all other versions and related traditions stand dependent on this “text.”⁹⁴ Notably, this approach was necessitated by his hypothesis concerning its relationship with the *Book of the Giants* tradition. According to Milik, the “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael” originated as a Hebrew translation of a Syriac copy of the Manichean *Book of the Giants*, which R. Joseph himself undertook in the fourth century.⁹⁵

Few scholars follow Milik’s naïve acceptance of the medieval attribution of this tradition, let alone his groundless speculation about a Syriac *Vorlage*.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the entire discourse concerning the relationship between this midrash and the Qumran and Manichean versions of the *Book of the Giants* is still shaped by his assumption that the “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael” is a unified text with a univalent relationship to the *Book of the Giants* tradition. Whether scholars propose its dependence on the Manichean form, the Qumran form, or treat all three as versions of the same orally transmitted “legend,”⁹⁷ they have neglected to approach this midrash as a midrash, exploring its relationship to earlier aggadic traditions and considering its inclusion in these various sources with reference to the literary practices that characterize late midrashim and yalqutum.

When approached from this perspective, it soon becomes clear that the version found in Eleazar ben Asher Ha-Levi’s copy of the *Chronicle of Yerahmeel* represents a late compendium of various traditions about the fallen angels that had developed in the gaonic and early medieval periods. In *Yerahmeel*, they are presented as a single story, thereby giving the impression of a single “legend.” There, different traditions have been woven into a narrative whole, which is framed as R. Joseph’s answer to a question about the story of Šemḥazai and Azael (25).

An earlier stage in this development is preserved by *Bereshit Rabbati*. This midrash contains the same traditions about Šemḥazai and Azael as *Yalqut* and *Yerahmeel*. Here, however, we find three separate units, rather than a single “legend.” These units form part of the exegetical elaboration of Gen 6:2 (“The sons of God saw . . .”) with reference to Gen 6:6 (“The Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth . . .”). Interestingly, R. Moshe ha-Darshan attributes only part of the material concerning Šemḥazai and Azael to R. Joseph, and this material is interspersed with two additional traditions,

⁹⁴ Milik, *Commentary*, 329–35, 339; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 86, 143; Stuckenbruck, *Book of the Giants*, 64. Stone and Greenfield already leveled this critique against Milik (“Books of Enoch,” 102).

⁹⁵ Milik, *Commentary*, 336, 339.

⁹⁶ Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 88; Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 166–167; Stone and Greenfield, “Books of Enoch,” 102.

⁹⁷ Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, 88; Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*, 2.

attributed to Rabbi and R. Zadok (cf. *Pirque R.El.* 22). These differences in literary form speak to the priority of R. Moshe's version, especially in light of the other evidence for *Yerahmeel's* dependence on *Bereshit Rabbati*.⁹⁸ This conclusion, moreover, finds confirmation in the prologue to *Aggadat Bereshit*,⁹⁹ which includes close parallels to two of the units in *Bereshit Rabbati* and which presents them as distinct traditions with different scriptural referents.¹⁰⁰

In other words, comparison of the different versions of the so-called "Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael" suggests that its appearance as a coherent "legend" is the result of redactional efforts by a later tradent (perhaps *Yerahmeel* himself?), who constructed a smooth narrative out of a group of discrete midrashim. Notably, this theory is consistent with general trends in the Jewish literary practices of the gaonic and early medieval period, which were marked by the narrativization of earlier midrashic traditions.¹⁰¹ Whereas the authors/redactors of classical midrashim like *Genesis Rabbah* chained together small units attributed to various Sages and arranged them by exegetical principles, the authors/redactors of later midrashim and *yalqutum* often present larger units with narrative forms and use traditions that originated as interpretations of words or phrases in Scripture to construct biblical retellings. This tendency can already be seen in *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*. In many ways, *Yerahmeel* represents its culmination; there, aggadic and midrashic traditions are arranged into the form of a chronicle, with the aid of some early Jewish but Christian-transmitted materials that had been recently reappropriated by Jews (e.g., Josephus' writing via Yosisippon; Ps.-Philo *LAB*).¹⁰²

Below, we will discuss the ramifications of such anthologizing activities for our understanding of the surprisingly open attitudes towards noncanonical and Christian-transmitted texts among some learned Jews in the early Middle Ages. For now, it suffices to note that the so-called Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael is the end-product of a process more complex than Milik allows. Space

⁹⁸ Albeck, *Bereshit Rabbati*, 29; Schwarzbaum, "Prolegomenon," 4–5.

⁹⁹ I.e., the prologue to *Ag.Ber.* found in MS Oxford 2340, which dates from between the 10th and 15th c.; Teugels, *Aggadat Bereshit*, 250 n.1. It contains many other parallels with the traditions that *Yalqut* attributes to *Abkir*. It is possible that its version approximates *Abkir*, and that it was a later scribe – not Simeon ha-Darshan – who added the attribution to *Yalqut* based on his own familiarity with *Abkir* and the similar (but not identical) traditions found therein.

¹⁰⁰ Milik reproduces the relevant parts of the text (*Commentary*, 331–32), but he omits the interpretation of Gen 6:4 that occurs in between them (an euhemeristic interpretation based on a Sethian/Cainite reading of Gen 6:1–4), thus giving the impression that this work too preserves a single legend about Uzza and Uzael – rather than two separate midrashim about them, which are attached to two different biblical verses (Gen 6:2, 4) and each presented alongside euhemeristic interpretations of the same verses.

¹⁰¹ Rubenstein, "From Mythic."

¹⁰² Esp. *Yerahmeel* 72.1; 87–100; Schwarzbaum, "Prolegomenon," *passim*.

does not permit a detailed discussion of all the traditions. It proves helpful, however, to list the main components, together with their parallels in earlier midrashic traditions.¹⁰³

1. **Angelic rivalry and angelic descent.** Šemḥazai and Azael are ministering angels who respond to God's expression of regret concerning the creation of humankind (Gen 6:7), by reminding Him that they told Him at Creation that He should not create human beings (citing Ps 8:4; cf. 3 *En.* 4 [§§5–6]). They offer to replace humankind on the earth, and God dares them to visit earth as a "test" of their own ability to resist the evil inclination. When they descend, He allows the evil inclination to come upon them, and they instantly fail the test, seeing and/or cavorting with the "daughters of men." The angels then take wives and have sons. In *Bereshit Rabbati*, this story is presented as R. Joseph's exposition of Gen 6:2; *Yalqut* describes these events as occurring during the Generation of the Flood, and *Yerahmeel* has "when the Generation of Enosh arose and practiced idolatry (cf. 3 *En.* 5 [§§7–8]) and when the Generation of the Flood arose and corrupted their actions."¹⁰⁴ This midrash is also paralleled in the preface to *AggBer*, where it occurs (unattributed) as a midrash on Gen 6:2 and the angels are "Uzza and Uzael"; here the angels let themselves down without God's consent but also to prove humankind's wrong, as in the version of the angelic descent myth in Ps.-Clem. *Hom.* 8:7–8. Other important parallels include *Pesiq. Rab.* 34.2 (before 9th c.)¹⁰⁵ and *Midrash Petirat Moshe Rabbenu*, both of which concern "Azza and Azael."
2. **The ascent of Asterah.** Šemḥazai sees the woman Asterah and tries to seduce her, but she refuses to listen to his request, demanding that he teaches her "the Name by which you are able to ascend to the *Raqia*." As soon as he does so, she ascends to heaven to escape him, and God places her among the stars in the Pleiades (a tradition that may ultimately root in speculations about the Pleiades and the astronomical causes

¹⁰³ Further parallels in Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:169–71.

¹⁰⁴ The fall of the angels is placed in the Generation of Enosh in some MSS of *Pirqe R. El.* 7 (unnamed angels), as well as Rashi's commentary on Num 13:3 and on *b. Nidd* 61a (Šemḥazai and Azael); Fraade, *Enosh*, 165–66.

¹⁰⁵ In *Pesiq. Rab.* 34.2, humans complain to God about the angels, citing Azza and Azael in much the same way that the accusing angels in Rabbinic rivalry traditions cite the Generation of Enosh and the Generation of the Flood: "Master of the Universe, you gave us a heart of stone, and it led us astray; if Azza and Azael, whose bodies were fire, sinned when they came down to earth, would not we of flesh and blood sin all the more?"

for the Flood; *b.R.H.* 11 b–12a).¹⁰⁶ Then Šemḥazai and Azael marry and take wives. In *Bereshit Rabbati*, this tradition is presented as an exposition of “the sons of God saw” (Gen 6:2). A variation of this aggada is found (twice) in *Seder Hadar Zeqenim*, with reference to Gen 6:2 and to Gen 28:12 (BHM 5:156); here, the woman becomes the constellation Virgo. This tradition finds ample parallels in contemporaneous Islamic sources, often applied specifically to Harut and Marut; there too the trope of angelic rivalry usually serves as the occasion for angelic descent.¹⁰⁷

[Between #2 and #3, *Bereshit Rabbati* includes three midrashim: The first, attributed to Rabbi, considers the sexual sins of the fallen angels in terms of Ps 104:3 (“His servants are a flaming fire”), concluding that they turned into “clods of dust” (Job 7:5) when they fell from heaven. The second, attributed to R. Zadok, concludes that the *Anaqim* were born from this union. Both have parallels in *Pirqe R.El.* 22 (see also MHG Gen 6:2).]

3. **The dreams of Heyya and Aheyya.** Metatron either comes (*Bereshit Rabbati*) or sends a messenger (other versions) to Šemḥazai to tell him about the upcoming Flood. His two sons Heyya and Aheyya [היייא והיייא] have symbolic dreams, and they ask their father about them. He tells them that the dreams foretell only four survivors of the Flood: Noah and his sons. They are anguished, but he assures them that their names will live on, as the sounds men make when lifting heavy objects. With the exception of the last, all of the elements in this unit find their only parallels in Qumran and Manichaean *Book of the Giants*, with Metatron taking the place of Enoch, consistent with the identification of the two in 3 *Enoch*. In *Bereshit Rabbati*, this tradition is presented as a tannaitic teaching (introduced with תנא; cf. the shorter form preserved by Martini).
4. **The repentance/punishment of Šemḥazai.** Šemḥazai repents and suspends himself between heaven and earth. This tradition also attested in the preface to *Aggadat Bereshit* (there framed as an interpretation of Gen 6:4 and applied to the punishment of “Uzza and Uziel”), and presupposed in a late addition to *Deut.Rab.* (end; concerning “Azzah and Azael”) paralleled in *Midrash Petirat Moshe Rabbenu* (concerning

¹⁰⁶ Robbins, “Pleiades,” 336–41.

¹⁰⁷ See summary in Bamberger, *Fallen Angels*, 113–16; also Heller, “Chute,” 206–10. The theme of the angels’ contestation of Adam’s creation occurs already in the Quran (2.30–33; see Jung, *Fallen Angels*, 52–54).

“Azza and Azael”).¹⁰⁸ In *Bereshit Rabbati*, this tradition is introduced with אמרי.

5. **Azael as Azazel.** Azael remains unrepentant (cf. *b.Yoma* 67b where Azazel atones for Uzza and Azael), as made clear by his corrupting teachings: “And Azael was appointed chief over all kinds of dyes and over all kinds of women’s ornaments by which they entice men to unclean thoughts of sin.”¹⁰⁹ Then he is identified as the same figure for whom one lot is cast on Yom Kippur (Lev 16); the unit concludes with the statement “This is the Azazel who is mentioned in Scripture” (i.e., consistent with the introduction to the whole unit in *Yalqut*). The teachings here attributed to Azael echo 1 *En.* 8:1–2, but I know of no parallels in other Jewish sources.

The material about Azael and Šemḥazai in *Bereshit Rabbati*, *Yalqut*, and *Yerahmeel* combines several traditions of different origin,¹¹⁰ two of which (#1 and #4) are preserved in an earlier form in the preface of *Aggadat Bereshit*. In the case of #1, the early medieval versions reflect the development of angelic rivalry traditions concerning Azael, as first attested in 3 *En.* 4 (§§5–6) and later in 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8).¹¹¹ Taken together with the parallels in other midrashim, these data suggest that the complex of traditions about the accusing angels of antediluvian history (i.e., Generation of the Flood and Generation of Enosh) originally concerned Uzza/Azza and Uzael/Azael. Only the versions in *Bereshit Rabbati*, *Yalqut*, and *Yerahmeel* (which are themselves closely aligned) apply it to Šemḥazai and Azael, for reasons that we will explore below.¹¹² Moreover,

¹⁰⁸ *Deut.Rabb.* end: “From beside Your exalted Shekhinah, two angels Azzah and Azael came down [ירדו שני מלאכים עזה ועזאל] and coveted the daughters of the earth and corrupted their way upon the earth [והשחיתו דרכם על הארץ] until You suspended them between earth and the *Raqia* [עד ששלית אותם בין הארץ לרקיע]”). This statement occurs within the account of the death of Moses, which is commonly acknowledged to be a later addition to the midrash, due to its close affinities with *Midrash Petirat Moshe Rabbenu* (Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 308). See *BHM* 1:129 for the latter.

¹⁰⁹ In *Yalqut* and *Yerahmeel*, this statement occurs twice; once here and once in #3.

¹¹⁰ Also Heller, “Chute,” 206, on *Yalq. Gen* §44.

¹¹¹ Ginzberg cites two parallels to 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8) in late midrashim: *Hakam ha-Razin* in *Yalq. Reubeni* 25b–25c and *Ziyyoni Gen* 4:26 (*Legends*, 5:152).

¹¹² To my knowledge, the only other Rabbinic sources to pair Azael with Šemḥazah rather than Uzza(h) and/or Azza(h) are *Tg.Ps.-J.* 6:4 and Rashi. On the former, see above. Rashi twice identifies Azael’s cohort as Šemḥazai, most likely due to dependence on R. Moshe’s work. In both cases, he places angelic descent in the Generation of Enosh (so 3 *En.* 5). When commenting on Num 13:3, Rashi identifies the *Nephilim* and *Anaqim* as “from the sons of Šemḥazai and Azael [בני שמחזאי ועזאל], who fell from heaven [שנפלו מן השמים] in the days of the Generation of Enosh [במי דור אנוש].” Likewise, he explains the reference to Šemḥazai in *b.Nidd.* 61a by stating that Ahijah “came from Šemḥazai and Azael, two angels who fell during the Generation of Enosh [שני מלאכים שירדו בדור אנוש].” By contrast, his comments on

the affinities between *Aggadat Bereshit's* version and the retelling of the angelic descent myth in the fourth-century Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* (8:7–8) may hint at some “Jewish-Christian” influence during some point in the development of the tradition, particularly with regard to the view that the fallen angels came to earth because of their mistaken perception of their moral superiority to humankind.¹¹³ Although space does not permit an extended discussion of this fascinating complex of traditions, one point proves important to note: angelic rivalry here serves to solve the problem of angelic sin, thereby facilitating the integration of the angelic descent myth into Rabbinic Judaism.

The midrash in #2 is best explained as a product of the circulation of traditions about the fallen angels in the “scientific” discourse of Jewish astronomy/astrology, consistent with the common equation between angels and stars.¹¹⁴ This theory is supported by the astronomical chapters of *Pirque Rabbi Eliezer* (6–8), which include a reference to the fallen angels in a discussion about the cycles of the constellations and their relationship to the cycles of the moon.¹¹⁵ A similar tradition may inform the version of #4 in *Aggadat Bereshit*, which contains an enigmatic reference to Uzza and Uzael coming forth from their place of punishment once a year in a cycle of shrinking and growing. The specific tale of Asterah may have developed from more “scientific” speculations about the Pleiades and the Flood, as found in *b.Rosh Ha-shanah* 11b–12a; notably, this source evinces the cultivation of both calendrical and chronographical astronomy among Rabbinic Jews in late antique Mesopotamia, as well as their familiarity with the views on such matters current among their non-Jewish counterparts (consistent with the element of intercultural exchange suggested by the very name “Asterah”).¹¹⁶

b.Yoma 67b draw on traditions associating Uzza/Azza and Azael with the “sons of God.” He identifies these figures as “Angels of Destruction [מַזְכֵּי חַבָּתָה] who descended to earth in the days of Naamah, daughter of Tubal-Cain, and about them it is written: *The sons of God saw the daughters of the earth* (Gen 6:2); hence it is said that he (i.e., Azazel) atones for their prohibited sexual activity [הַעֲרִיזָה].”

¹¹³ The significance of this parallel cannot be established without further study.

¹¹⁴ On this tradition as an “interweaving of Enochic, biblical, and astronomical motifs,” see Robbins, “Pleiades,” 343–44.

¹¹⁵ *Pirque R.El.* 8: “All the Mazzikin that move in the Raqia and the angels who fell from their holy place from heaven, they ascend to hear the divine word behind the veil [פְּרִיטָה], they are pursued with a rod of fire, and they return to their place.”

¹¹⁶ Robbins, “Pleiades,” 329–44. The stress on two stars being removed from heaven to cause the Flood might help to explain the consistent focus on two fallen angels in Jewish traditions about fallen angels (the only exceptions to which, to my knowledge, occur in 3 *Enoch*).

The close affinities between #3 and the two versions of the *Book of the Giants* have been much discussed.¹¹⁷ For our purposes, what proves significant is the complete absence of Rabbinic precedents or parallels for this story or any of its components. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that non-Jews (e.g., Manichees), “Jewish-Christians” (e.g., Elchaasites), or non-Rabbinic Jews played some part in mediating some form of this text or its traditions into Rabbinic Judaism. One possibility is that the integration of elements from the *Book of the Giants* tradition into Rabbinic aggadah took place in late antique Mesopotamia and reflects the Jews’ cultural proximity to Elchaasites and/or Manichees who continued to transmit the Qumran version and/or Manichean version in Aramaic. Or, alternately, later Jews (e.g., in Byzantium) might have had access to the Manichean version in its Greek form. Unfortunately, both versions of the *Book of the Giants* are far too fragmentary to allow for the type of literary analysis needed to make any firm conclusions, particularly since the Rabbinic version of the story is attested only in midrashic collections from the eleventh century onwards.

Nevertheless, it proves significant that traditions related to the *Book of the Giants* are here interpreted through the lens of 3 *Enoch’s* identification of Enoch and Metatron. This is most clear in the version in *Bereshit Rabbati*, where Metatron himself (like Enoch in BG) goes to tell Šemḥazai about the Flood. By contrast, *Yalqut* and *Yerahmeel* seem to be reticent about Metatron traveling to earth and interacting with fallen angels, and they specify that he sent a messenger to Šemḥazai.

The origins of #4 and #5 seem to be more complex. The first has parallels in other Rabbinic references to Azza/Uzza and Azael/Uzael being suspended between heaven and earth.¹¹⁸ The second answers questions concerning Azael’s association with Azazel, which already have some precedent in the Babylonian Talmud. Comparison with the prologue to *Aggadat Bereshit*, however, suggests that both #4 and #5 in *Bereshit Rabbati*, *Yalqut*, and *Yerahmeel* have been shaped by the application of these traditions to Azael and Šemḥazai, as well as the concern to distinguish between the fates of these two Watchers.

The version in *Aggadat Bereshit* reads as follows:

There were Nephilim on the earth in those days (Gen 6:4) – those are the sons of Cain who were the greatest of the whole Generation . . . *And also afterwards, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men* (Gen 6:4) – these are the grandsons of Cain that were born to the daughters of men.

¹¹⁷ Stuckenbruck, *Book of the Giants*, esp. 64–66, 201–3; Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, esp. 84–88, 92–95, 148–50.

¹¹⁸ E.g. praef. *AggBer*; *DeutR* end; *Midrash Petirat Moshe Rabbenu*.

Another interpretation: *There were Nephilim on the earth in those days* (Gen 6:4) – those are Uzza and Uzael; those are the *Gibborim who were of old*.¹¹⁹ And now, where are they? R. Elazar said in the name of R. Joseph: They were suspended in chains of iron and suspended on dark mountains. And they return the whole year, until they are the size of a finger, and then they grow again until they are as before. And they teach sorcery to those that were made unclean by them.

We here find precedents both for the punishment/repentance that *Bereshit Rabbati*, *Yalqut*, and *Yerahmeel* apply to Šemḥazai and for the reference to illicit angelic instruction, which they apply only to Azael and expand in a manner strikingly reminiscent of *1 En.* 8:1–2 (BW).

Insofar as the origins of the “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael” lie in the collection, compilation, and reworking of a diverse group of traditions concerning Gen 6:1–4, Azael, fallen angels, and Giants, we cannot understand its exact relationship to the Enochic myth of angelic descent and the *Book of the Watchers* without first asking: what might have motivated early medieval Jewish exegetes/anthologists to gather these traditions in the first place? From the patterns in our evidence, I propose that this process had its initial impetus in the reemergence of the angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 as an acceptable alternative to the euhemeristic approach to this pericope, which had long become the normative approach in Rabbinic Judaism as well as the forms of Christianity with which it had contact (see Chs. 4, 6). Especially insofar as *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* (8th–10th c.) is our first extant source to integrate traditions about the fallen angels into the midrashic discourse on Gen 6:1–4, it seems likely that the circulation of similar traditions in Islamic folklore played an important role in “normalizing” the angelic interpretation of this pericope among Rabbinic Jews.

This, in turn, may have prompted the collection of traditions about Azael and fallen angels/stars, which had initially circulated in other contexts (mystical, magical, “scientific”) and the forms of which had been shaped by contacts with non-Jews and non-Rabbinic Jews in late antique Mesopotamia. An early stage in this process of collection may be preserved in the prologue to *Aggadat Bereshit*; in course of presenting various interpretations for the “sons of God” of Gen 6:2 and the *Nephilim* of Gen 6:4, it includes midrashim involving Uzza and Uzael, alongside midrashim about the Sethian “sons of God.” R. Moshe’s version in *Bereshit Rabbati* is likely dependent on a similar source; he also presents this material as a series of traditions related to the exegesis and

¹¹⁹ This midrash attests an interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 similar to that in *Tg.Ps.-J.*, namely, that Uzza and Uzael are *Nephilim*.

expansion of Gen 6:2, but he omits the traditions concerning the Cainites and inserts additional material about the fallen angels in its place.

Already in *Bereshit Rabbati*, we can discern attempts to harmonize the traditions.¹²⁰ R. Moshe uniformly applies them to Šemḥazai and Azael and, moreover, arranges them into a narrative progression. If he did possess a source that, like the preface to *Aggadat Bereshit*, associated traditions about the descent of the Watchers with Gen 6:2 and traditions about their punishment with Gen 6:4, R. Moshe used these two traditions as a narrative frame, inserting traditions about the character of their sins in between them.

The move towards narrativization is also evident in his treatment of Šemḥazai, which entails more than a simple equation between Šemḥazai and Uzza/Azza with the former taking the place of the latter in the traditional pairing. Whereas Uzza/Azza rarely occurs apart from Azael,¹²¹ Šemḥazai here takes on a distinct personality. Most notably, his repentance allows Azael to be exempted from the punishment/repentance of suspension between heaven and earth. This, in turn, allows for the assertion of his continued evil activity on earth and hence for his identification with Azazel and the connection between Gen 6:1–4 and Lev 16.

In my view, this hypothesis best explains *Bereshit Rabbati*'s most notable departure from the parallel in *Aggadat Bereshit*. *Aggadat Bereshit* concludes its account of the suspension of Uzza and Uzael between heaven and earth by stating that “they teach sorceries to those who consort with them”; it thus recalls 3 *En. 5*'s depiction of Uzza, Azza, and Azael teaching sorcery for the adjuration of celestial bodies. By contrast, *Bereshit Rabbati* limits the fallen angels' teachings only to Azael and states that “Azael was appointed chief over all kinds of dyes [מני צבעותין] and women's ornaments [תכשיטין שש נשים] by which they entice men to unclean thoughts of sin.”

This proves particularly significant for our purposes, insofar as this statement also represents the closest parallel to the *Book of the Watchers* in the midrashic tradition. From the discussion above, it is clear that the motif of illicit angelic instruction was already integrated into the Rabbinic traditions concerning Azza/Uzza and Azael/Uzael. In other sources, however,

¹²⁰ On R. Moshe's tendency to revise his sources, see Albeck, *Bereshit Rabbati*, 22–24.

¹²¹ In light of precedents for the addition of the angelic “-el” ending onto human and demonic figures, one is tempted to see the name “Azza” as a reflection of the fallen status of Azael. I know of only one case, however, in which Azza or Uzza occurs apart from Azael in the Rabbinic literature, namely, *Midrash Vayyoscha* (*BHM* 1.35–57); here Uzza is the angel of the Egyptians (esp. 1.39, 40). Heller calls this “une invention sans précédent”; “Chute,” 204.

their teachings are always magical and typically associated with astronomical phenomena. Strikingly, these variations of the instruction motif involve the two main theurgical elements of the Hekhalot tradition: [1] angelic adjuration (reinterpreted as celestial adjuration in 3 *En.* 5 [§§7–8] and treated negatively) and [2] the practice of heavenly ascent (reinterpreted as catassterism in #2 above and treated positively). We are at a loss, however, to find any mystical or midrashic precedent for the association of Azael with teachings of dyes and cosmetics (or, for that matter, with the introduction of any such mundane skills). Consequently, we may need to investigate the possibility of influence from the *Book of the Watchers* itself, which explicitly depicts Asael (called “Azael” in Gr^{Pan,Syn}) as teaching humankind to make “ornaments for women” and “antimony and eye-shadow and precious stones and dyes” (1 *En.* 8:2).

Our brief analysis of the literary growth of the “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael” has suggested that either R. Moshe ha-Darshan or his source inserted the statement about Azael’s teachings into this cluster of midrashim, prior to the further narrativization of these traditions that resulted in the versions found in *Yalqut* and *Yerahmeel*. Since the midrashic collections associated with R. Moshe contain a striking number of other parallels with traditions from “OT pseudepigrapha,”¹²² he emerges as the most likely candidate. Especially if Himmelfarb is correct concerning his use of excerpts from *Jubilees* preserved in the Byzantine chronological tradition, it becomes all the more possible that he consulted excerpts from the *Book of the Watchers* when compiling his compendium of traditions about Azael.¹²³ Insofar as the material in 1 *En.* 6–11 (BW) depicts the two chief Watchers as Asael and Šemiḥazah, his dependence on these excerpts would also help to explain his reinterpretation of earlier traditions about Azza/Uzza and Azael/Uzael in terms of Azael and Šemḥazai.¹²⁴

¹²² Albeck, *Bereshit Rabbati*, 17–18; Himmelfarb, “R. Moses,” 55–58; Ta-Shma, “Rabbi Moses,” 5–16.

¹²³ I see no reason to posit a single channel to explain his familiarity with such sources (cf. Ta-Shma’s appeal to “obscure or subsequently discarded Aggadic material from old Hebrew sources that were current in Ashkenazi society”; “Rabbi Moses” [quotation taken from English abstract]); even if Stone is correct that R. Moshe used a Hebrew fragment of *T.Naph.* genetically related to 4QTestNaph (rather than the Greek *T.Naph.*; “Testament,” 311–21), this does not rule out his use of Christian-transmitted sources in Hebrew translation (Himmelfarb, “R. Moses,” 73–78; “Some Echoes,” 115–18), particularly in light of the anthological impulse to collect traditional materials of diverse origins.

¹²⁴ The only extant pre-Rabbinic Jewish texts to mention Šemiḥazah at all, alongside Asael/Azael/Azazel, are BW, Qumran BG, and *Sim.*

4. TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION AND THE PERMEABILITY OF COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

Scholars are typically reticent to consider the possibility of any external influence on post-70 Judaism. When faced with the evidence of a theme or motif that occurs in both non-Jewish and Jewish sources, the “default option” is to treat it as a Jewish one adopted by the non-Jewish group, even if the non-Jewish attestation is earlier in date. Even when scholars point to particular times and places in which Jews and Christians lived in close proximity, the discussion still centers on Jewish “influence” on Christians. The opposite is rarely advanced as an explanation for parallels between the two traditions.

Due in part to the enduring influence of Scholem, this tendency has been particularly marked in scholarship on Jewish mysticism; many scholars are surprisingly willing to accept that certain traditions lay submerged for many centuries in an oral and/or esoteric tradition, while rarely deigning to consider alternative explanations for their reemergence in later literature. Few even explore the possibilities of their mediation through other channels or their absorption from the immediate cultural contexts in which their authors/redactors/compilers lived and worked.¹²⁵ It is not difficult to see the attraction of Scholem’s view of the early Jewish apocalyptic tradition as a vital force that continued to flow beneath the surface of Rabbinic Judaism, with its allegedly mystical components cultivated in secret amongst groups of visionaries, while its eschatological components lay dormant until times of trouble when they reemerged to animate the messianic hopes of the Jews.¹²⁶ There is an undeniable mythic power to this image of “Apocalyptic,” as a hidden fount that bubbles up from time to time to vivify Judaism from within.

The problem arises, however, when scholars impose this compelling narrative on the extant evidence, preferring the former to the latter. One relevant example is Moshe Idel’s article “Enoch is Metatron.” In the course of comparing Jewish mystical traditions about the elevation of Adam and the elevation of Enoch, he notes the striking absence of traditions about Adam in the Hekhalot literature.¹²⁷ This silence problematizes his argument that its prominence in the Kabbalah follows from its place in earlier Jewish mystical traditions. He thus turns to explore possible reasons for its absence.

Among the scenarios that he considers is the possibility that the authors of the Hekhalot literature were reacting against the Christian cultivation of

¹²⁵ Schäfer, *Mirror*, Ch. 10.

¹²⁶ Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 9–10.

¹²⁷ Idel, “Enoch,” 220–21.

extrabiblical traditions about Adam.¹²⁸ He notes that “the Kabbalah that developed the concept of the Supernal Adam flourished precisely in Christian regions,” while “in areas under Islamic influence, by contrast, nothing of the kind came to the surface during the hundreds of years preceding the growth of the Kabbalah in Europe.”¹²⁹ This pattern of attestation might seem to speak to the impact of Christian traditions about Adam on Kabbalistic traditions about Adam Kadmon. Idel, however, promptly forecloses this line of inquiry, opting instead for a theory based in the inner-Jewish transmission of these traditions, albeit in “quite a lengthy esoteric tradition of which we do not possess detailed evidence.”¹³⁰ The speculative nature of this conclusion is clear from his own reticence in making it. He is admirably forthright in admitting that “any suggestion that originally Jewish conceptions were suppressed for centuries in Jewish sources has inherent difficulties.”¹³¹ Nevertheless, he concludes that “it is likely to be more convenient than the alternative.”¹³²

Such theories become even more “convenient” when we are dealing with parallels between early medieval Jewish sources and Christian-transmitted Jewish material from the Second Temple period. In part, this reflects a valid concern about the dangers of generalizing about late antique Judaism based only or even mainly on our Rabbinic sources. As we have seen, the likely contacts between Jews and “Jewish-Christians” further complicate the issue. Moreover, other non-Rabbinic, non-Jewish communities may have lived in proximity to both, at least in the cultural context of late antique Mesopotamia. The development of traditions from the parabiblical literature of Second Temple Judaism in other religious groups (Christian, Manichean, Mandaean, Islamic) also meant that Jews could have encountered such traditions in a variety of different ways that did not necessarily involve the transmission of texts across community boundaries.

In some cases, however, the theory of Jewish “back-borrowing” of books from Christians proves unavoidable, as in the case of *Sefer Yosippon*, a product of the medieval Jewish rediscovery of Josephus’ writings due to Christian mediation. I have suggested that Jewish “back-borrowing” from Christians also provides the best explanation for the influence of the *Book of the Watchers* on 3 *En.* 5 (§§7–8) and the “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael.” If I am correct, two points are important to note. First, the use of these excerpts seems to have been predicated on the renewed interest in Enoch and the fallen angels in

¹²⁸ Idel, “Enoch,” 222–23.

¹²⁹ Idel, “Enoch,” 223.

¹³⁰ Idel, “Enoch,” 223, see also pp. 237–39.

¹³¹ Idel, “Enoch,” 223.

¹³² Idel, “Enoch,” 223.

post-Talmudic times. If Jews were not already curious about Azael and Enoch (thanks in part to the circulation of earlier forms of *3 Enoch*), it is unlikely that exegetes would have used these excerpts at all, let alone translated them, even if they had access to them.

The second concerns their access to this material. In my view, the Jewish “back-borrowing” of Christian-transmitted sources is readily explicable with appeal to the literary practices that shaped the late midrashim and *yalqutum* in which we find the so-called “Midrash on Šemḥazai and Azael.” The reclamation of early Jewish texts and traditions long lost to Rabbinic Judaism cannot be understood apart from the broader anthological interest in creating comprehensive compendiums of midrashim and *aggadot*, as well as the broader antiquarian interest in preserving the literary heritage of early medieval Judaism.¹³³ For some learned Jews, the boundaries of the latter seem to stretch well beyond the Tanakh and the literature of Rabbinic Judaism, readily encompassing “secular” literature like the histories of Josephus and even “religious” books in the Western and Greek orthodox Christian OTs not found in the Rabbinic Tanakh (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon; Judith; Tobit).¹³⁴ Perhaps some Jewish scholars saw their Christian counterparts much as Origen and Jerome had once seen Jews: as resources in recovering lost fragments of their own tradition.¹³⁵ As in the corollary case, it seems that this attitude was limited to a very small group of learned elites. Nevertheless, the influence of their writings (in this case, especially *Yalqut*) served to mediate these traditions to others.¹³⁶

The possibility of interchange is strengthened, in my view, by the literary practices and concerns that early medieval Jews who anthologized midrashim and *aggadot* shared with contemporary Christian chronographers. Yerahmeel, for instance, sought to compile a comprehensive account of Jewish history from “the Book of Yoseph ben Gorion” (i.e., Josephus) and “the books of other writers who have recorded the deeds of our ancestors,” in order to

¹³³ Yassif, “Hebrew Narrative,” 139–41.

¹³⁴ Note Eleazar ben Asher ha-Levi’s explicit interest in “outside books”; Bodelian Heb.d.11 7a as cited in Yassif, “Hebrew Narrative,” 158.

¹³⁵ See sources cited in Himmelfarb, “R. Moses,” 75–77, which show that at least some medieval Jews were self-conscious about their use of texts transmitted by Christians.

¹³⁶ Contra Ta-Shma (“Rabbi Moses,” 5–16), I find it improbable that all of these traditions would be “marked” as non-Rabbinic and/or dangerously dualistic. In the case of the early Enochic material in *Ber. Rabbati* Gen 6:2 (and even *3 En.* 5 [§§7–8]), these so-called “pseudepigraphical” traditions were readily filtered through Rabbinic *topoi* and thus thoroughly “rabbinized” in their final forms. Even if he is correct that later authors were wary of the material that R. Moshe based on “outside books,” our survey above suggests that this was not the case with the material about Šemḥazai and Azael.

“assemble them onto one scroll.”¹³⁷ For this, Yerahmeel is often maligned by modern scholars as “neither a ‘historian’ nor a ‘chronicler’ but rather a scribe or copyist noted for accuracy in transcribing and copying texts”¹³⁸ Few, however, seem to notice that this conception of historiography finds ample precedents and striking parallels among Byzantine chronographers like Syncellus and Cedrenus (whom, in fact, modern scholars critique on the exact same counts).

As in the case of Jewish “influence” on the Christian rejection of the Enochic literature, any Christian “influence” on its rediscovery by later Jews was no doubt predicated on a series of internal developments. It remains significant, nevertheless, that the Jewish and Christian reception-histories of the *Book of the Watchers* still remain intertwined, even into the early Middle Ages.

¹³⁷ MS. 2797, fol. 113a, as quoted and translated in Schwarzbaum, “Prolegomenon,” 8.

¹³⁸ Schwarzbaum, “Prolegomenon,” 7.

Epilogue

This study has suggested that the *Book of the Watchers* originated in a setting of priestly scribalism. In the centuries following its composition and redaction, the apocalypse had a major impact on early Jewish and early Christian approaches to antediluvian history. Although early exegetes generally avoided its distinctive view of the fallen angels as corrupting teachers of humankind, the Enochic myth of angelic descent shaped the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 among a range of pre-Rabbinic Jews, including members of the Jesus Movement. In the first centuries of the Common Era, Enochic texts continued to be popular among proto-orthodox Christians, and Enochic traditions were developed in new directions by Christian apologists and heresiologists. By contrast, their Rabbinic contemporaries abandoned the Enochic pseudepigrapha, replacing the traditional angelic interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 with new euhemeristic approaches and asserting that Enoch was a normal man who died a normal death. These efforts formed part of a broader attempt at self-definition over against non-Rabbinic Jews (including but not limited to Christ-believing Jews), and they proved largely successful in excluding the *Book of the Watchers* and the Enochic myth of angelic descent from Rabbinic Judaism during the Talmudic period (ca. 200–600 CE).

Beginning in the third and fourth centuries, Christians in the Roman Empire began to adopt a similar stance. Concurrent with the formation of the biblical canon of Western Christian orthodoxy, church leaders followed their Rabbinic counterparts in rejecting both the Enochic books and the angelic reading of Gen 6:1–4, often with explicit reference to the precedent set by “the Jews.” Although the *Book of the Watchers* continued to be transmitted in its entirety in Egypt and Ethiopia, the efforts of ecclesiarchs such as Athanasius and Augustine progressively led to the loss of this book in the West, apart from the excerpts preserved in the Syriac and Byzantine chronological traditions. The latter, I proposed, may provide one explanation for

the puzzling reemergence of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in gaonic and early medieval Judaism. Just as the renewed interest in Enoch and the fallen angels within magical, mystical, and midrashic literature seems sparked in part by Manichean and Islamic traditions, so Christian chronography may have served as one channel for the reintroduction of specific traditions from the *Book of the Watchers* back into Judaism.

As with any study that attempts to analyze the patterns in our surviving evidence, my specific conclusions stand at a special risk of being overturned as new sources come to light. I remain convinced, however, that this risk is outweighed by the value of seeking to understand the different ways in which books were read, received, and transmitted in premodern times. Those of us who study antiquity tend to be particularly susceptible to the argument that “the text itself” contains all that we need to know. Nevertheless, we may miss too much when we study a text with no thought to the redactors who shaped it, the range of readers who used and interpreted it, and the long line of anonymous copyists and tradents to whom we owe our very knowledge of it. In a real sense, the premodern *Nachleben* of ancient books shape our assumptions about them, no less than the history of modern research.

This proves particularly true in the case of the so-called “OT Pseudepigrapha.” Like the anachronistic label that we give them, our views of these texts are too often shaped by one critical moment in their ancient reception-histories: their omission from the Tanakh of Rabbinic Judaism that later served as the basis for the Protestant OT. It is not an easy task to shed the canonical biases that inevitably inform our reading and analysis of such literature, but I hope that my analysis of the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* has succeeded in pointing to some potential gains – both for our knowledge of these texts and for our understanding of the cultural contexts in which they were composed, transmitted, heard, and read. Much is lost when we treat the “extrabiblical” status of a text as somehow inherent to the text itself and assume that such works were, from the very moment of their composition, fated to circulate only on the fringes of society.

In some cases, the current status of such texts reflects the fact that they were, in fact, embraced by “separatist” groups and only by such groups. Yet the fascinating fate of the *Book of the Watchers* demonstrates the danger of uniformly applying this logic to all texts that happen to be labeled with the (essentially artificial) designation of “OT Pseudepigrapha.” Conclusions about ancient attitudes towards now noncanonical texts are better proved than presupposed, and their exclusion from Rabbinic and Western Christian canons is only one of many factors that need to be taken into account. We should not, in other

words, conclude with the Rabbis that the “outside books” and the “books of the *minim*” are always and everywhere the same, nor assume with Athanasius that all texts that are noncanonical are intrinsically “heretical.”

Texts of the apocalyptic genre may suffer most critically from such biases due to deep-rooted assumptions about the inherently marginal character of this allegedly “visionary” literature and the general discomfort that many moderns have towards the social phenomenon of apocalypticism. Some scholars thus dismiss these allegedly marginal authors and readers as irrelevant for our understanding of the development of “mainline” Judaism and Christianity. No less pernicious is the opposite reaction, namely, the temptation to romanticize such texts, putting a positive spin on the notion that apocalypticists fit the ideal type of the Weberian “prophet,” whose visionary charisma defies the routinization of Religion by mainstream “priests.”

In both cases, the approach to noncanonical literature serves tacitly to reinforce the same two problematic assumptions: [1] that the canonization of now “biblical” texts was no less inevitable than the noncanonization of other ancient books and [2] that there was always a clear and identifiable “mainline” voice – whether they be the Temple priests and Wisdom teachers of Second Temple times, or the Rabbis and Church Fathers of Late Antiquity. The first ignores the evidence that speaks to the historical and cultural contingencies which led to the canonization of many “biblical” texts. Furthermore, it privileges certain canons over others, retrojecting the Jewish and Protestant Christian concepts of “the Bible” into the distant past, while dismissing the Catholic canon and ignoring the even more inclusive OT canons adopted by other ancient churches. As for the second, such assumptions have been rendered obsolete by recent scholarship, which has stressed the diversity of Second Temple Judaism and dismantled the traditional view that Rabbinic Judaism and the “Great Church” emerged *ab ovum* as orthodoxies that forever after defined the normative discourse in their respective religions. Nevertheless, many still find it difficult to give up its corollary: the romantic notion of heterodoxy as a unified phenomenon, with “esoteric” traditions flowing freely from Apocalyptic to Gnosticism to Mysticism.

Our analysis of the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* has shown that things were not so simple on either side. Chapter 2 questioned the dominant view that our text was composed and redacted in a “separatist” setting, arguing on the basis of our knowledge of the third century BCE. The same argument could be made from the reception-history of the apocalypse. To argue for the social marginalization of its authors/redactors, one could cite certain aspects of its afterlife, such as its popularity among the Qumranites, its use by members of the Jesus Movement, and its exclusion from the biblical

canon of Rabbinic Judaism. The *Nachleben* of this text, however, also supports the opposite argument: its acceptance by a surprisingly broad range of Jews and Christians militates against the assumption that the *Book of the Watchers* is an originally or inherently “separatist” document.

If we had predicted the afterlife of this text on the basis of its allegedly marginal and “esoteric” character, the evidence would have often proved us wrong. In early Christianity, for instance, it seems not to have been the “gnostics” who embraced the Enochic myth of angelic descent but rather those who so fervently railed against them. No less striking is the fact that the continued transmission of the *Book of the Watchers* was ensured by one of the most rationalistic of Christian discourses, namely, chronography. And, perhaps needless to say, its canonicity in the Ethiopian church cannot be explained by a model that relegates the readers of this book to small groups huddled on the margins of their respective societies.

It remains to see to what degree the reception-history of the *Book of the Watchers* proves characteristic, and to what degree this is an exceptional case. The *Epistle of Enoch* emerges as an obvious candidate for a similar inquiry, since – second only to the *Book of the Watchers* – it is the best attested of the Enochic pseudepigrapha. It would also be intriguing to trace the *Nachleben* of smaller units, such as the “Animal Apocalypse” and “Apocalypse of Weeks,” which could be readily included in *testimonia*. An investigation into the reception-history of the *Similitudes* would be most welcome, shedding much needed light on the question of how exactly this book came to be integrated into *Maṣḥafa Henok Nabi*; unfortunately, such an inquiry might not be possible in the absence of fresh evidence. By contrast, we seem to have more than enough data for a similar study concerning *Jubilees*. In fact, this text may have been even more influential than the *Book of the Watchers*, even as its fate followed much the same path.

It stands as eloquent testimony to the influence of the *Book of the Watchers* that the present study could not exhaust all the trajectories of its transmission and reception. The most obvious lacunae concern the *Nachleben* of this apocalypse among groups dismissed as “heretical” by Rabbinic Judaism and Western Christian orthodoxy. I personally remain skeptical about the influence of our text on “Gnosticism.” Nevertheless, the surprising lack of references to Enoch and the fallen angels in the Nag Hammadi literature begs for further exploration, particularly in light of the Egyptian provenance of many of these texts. Such an inquiry might help to answer the vexed question of the relationship between “gnostic,” “Jewish-Christian,” and Manichean traditions.

With regard to the latter two, there is also much room for further research into their continued cultivation of Enochic lore as well as the probable role of either/both in helping to spread Enochic texts and traditions to different groups and geographical locales. The very fact that 2 *Enoch* survives only in Old Church Slavonic speaks to the impact of the Manichees and related groups (in this case the Bogomils) on the ongoing spread and survival of early Jewish traditions concerning Enoch and the fallen angels. No less notable is the underexplored but intriguing possibility that Islamic traditions about Enoch/Idris and the fallen angels Harut and Marut reflect direct contacts with “Jewish-Christian” communities living in the areas first swept by the Arabic conquest. In addition, the place of the Enochic myth of angelic descent in Ethiopian culture is still a sorely neglected topic.

I regret that these fascinating topics must fall outside the scope of this study. As I stressed at the outset, so I should stress again: my omissions are not meant to communicate the relative value or significance of these traditions. Rather, they reflect my own overarching interest in using the present inquiry as a “test-case” for a fresh approach to early Jewish–Christian relations, which considers the late antique and early medieval histories of Rabbinic Judaism and Western Christian orthodoxy as two parts of the same story. I hope that I have demonstrated that the developments in these groups – the very sectors of Judaism and Christianity that most vigorously asserted the exclusivity of Christ-believing and Torah-observing approaches to biblically based worship – remained meaningfully intertwined throughout Late Antiquity and even into the early Middle Ages. I have attempted to embody in this book my belief that the “Parting of the Ways” is an illusion that can be sustained only through a selective reading of the evidence, as well as my conviction that the scholarly fields of Patristics and Rabbinics each suffer from their present isolation from one another. And, if I have succeeded, then I hope that my conclusions speak to methodological concerns beyond the bounds of this narrow inquiry.

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Index of Modern Authors

- Adler, W. A. 1, 2, 4, 8, 21, 93, 219, 222, 223, 224, 228, 229, 230, 235, 241
- Alexander, P. S. 1, 22, 53, 59, 100, 132, 137, 138, 141, 201, 207, 211, 213, 219, 222, 223, 236, 243, 244, 245, 246, 255
- Alter, R. 10
- Argall, R. 43, 69, 70, 71
- Babcock, W. S. 221
- Bamberger, B. J. 9, 262
- Barnard, L. 170, 173
- Barr, J. 105, 106, 153
- Bauchham, R. J. 9, 39, 82, 105, 120, 149, 176, 183, 184
- Baumgarten, A. I. 62, 69, 85
- Baumgarten, J. M. 278
- Becker, A. H. 13, 22, 123, 127
- Beckwith, R. 53, 56, 105, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135
- Beit-Arié, M. 21, 234
- Bickerman, E. J. 65
- Black, M. 4, 17, 20, 32, 33, 34, 48, 72, 77, 78, 97, 105, 106, 148, 182, 230, 248
- Blundell, S. 38
- Boccaccini, G. 69, 73, 76
- Böttrich, C. 236
- Boyarin, D. 13, 53, 124, 125, 129, 140, 142, 143
- Brakke, D. 132, 149, 193, 199, 200, 201
- Brock, S. 4, 222, 225, 229
- Brown, P. R. L. 177, 192
- Bryan, D. J. 76
- Burkert, W. 40, 163
- Burns, J. P. 221
- Carroll, R. P. 61
- Charles, R. H. 3, 8, 9, 25, 26, 34, 88, 105, 148, 182, 244, 245
- Chester, A. 7, 19, 72, 230
- Cohen, S. J. D. 124, 129, 132
- Collins, J. J. 3, 25–27, 29, 43, 44, 61–63, 66, 77, 78, 89, 100, 101, 103, 108
- Conzelmann, H. 170
- Cook, S. 61, 62
- Cowley, R. W. 17
- Cross, F. M. 63, 68, 132
- Davidson, M. 1, 100, 116
- Davies, P. 61, 62, 67, 71
- Davila, J. 247, 248, 254
- Delcor, M. 9
- Deutsch, N. 246
- Dexinger, F. 9, 78, 116, 117
- Dillman, A. 9, 105, 148
- Dimant, D. 1, 4, 9, 17, 25, 26, 28, 38, 42, 45, 75, 79, 89, 98
- Dix, G. H. 18
- Droge, A. 161, 165, 173
- Elbaum, J. 22
- Elman, Y. 10, 11
- Erder, Y. 1
- Ferguson, E. 40, 163
- Field, F. 117
- Fishbane, M. 65
- Flemming, J. 3, 232
- Flint, P. W. 99, 134
- Flusser, D. 108
- Fowden, G. 93
- Fraade, S. D. 124, 236, 261
- Frankfurter, D. 127, 128, 200, 228, 229, 230, 231, 247
- Gager, J. G. 62, 123, 192
- Gamble, H. Y. 10, 11, 193

- García Martínez, F. 17, 26, 73, 74, 78, 79, 95
 Gaster, M. 252, 258
 Gaston, L. 123
 Gershenzon, R. 139
 Ginzberg, L. 138, 140, 143, 236, 253, 258, 261, 263
 Goldstein, J. 87
 Goodenough, E. R. 137, 160, 161
 Goodman, M. 142
 Gordon, R. 40, 253
 Grabbe, L. 97, 98, 116
 Graf, F. 39, 40
 Graham, W. 21
 Greenfield, J. 4, 18, 19, 54, 67, 245, 247, 259
 Grelot, P. 53, 68, 88
 Gruenwald, I. 5, 43, 55, 134, 241, 242, 243, 245

 Hahneman, G. M. 193
 Halperin, D. 69, 90, 91, 92, 93, 141, 241, 243, 250
 Hanson, P. 25, 26, 28, 52, 61, 63, 98, 163, 165, 181
 Harkness, D. E. 2
 Hartman, L. 41, 52
 Hayes, C. 125
 Hayward, R. 214
 Heller, B. 258, 262, 263, 267
 Hendel, R. 5
 Hengel, M. 39, 59, 65
 Hezser, C. 146, 147
 Himmelfarb, M. 1, 42, 45, 48, 49, 51, 52, 57, 62, 64, 65, 79, 82, 103, 104, 113, 121, 138, 139, 234, 236, 238, 239, 241, 243, 245, 246, 258, 268, 271
 Hollander, H. W. 20
 Houtman, A. 22

 Idel, M. 269, 270
 Ilan, T. 139

 Jacobs, A. S. 194, 200
 Jaffee, M. 10, 11, 12, 55, 65, 124, 146
 Janowitz, N. 125, 140, 147
 Jansen, H. L. 25, 53
 de Jonge, M. 20, 127
 Jung, L. 262

 Kalmin, R. 140, 147
 Kamesar, A. 194, 205
 Kaufman, S. A. 213
 Kilmer, A. D. 5
 Kimelman, R. 124, 140, 192
 Kister, M. 237

 Knibb, M. A. 4, 7, 8, 17, 19, 20, 21, 62, 72, 153, 230
 Koester, H. 123, 125
 Kraft, R. A. 1, 57
 Kruisheer, D. 222
 Kugel, J. 10, 52, 53, 54
 Kurfess, A. 108
 Kuyt, A. 243
 Kvanvig, H. 41, 53

 Lachs, S. T. 139
 de Lange, N. 258
 Larson, E. 7, 72, 82, 105, 106, 230
 Lawlor, H. L. 4, 105, 113, 148, 149, 157, 198, 199, 219, 222, 224, 227
 Leiman, S. Z. 130, 131, 133, 143, 146, 208
 Lieu, J. 124, 192
 Lovejoy, A. O. 38

 McDonald, L. M. 131, 135, 155, 193, 197
 Metzger, B. M. 132, 193
 Milik, J. T. 3, 4, 7, 17, 18, 19, 53, 59, 72, 78, 88, 96, 97, 100, 107, 230, 254, 258, 259, 260
 Molenberg, C. 30, 37, 42, 98
 Montgomery, J. A. 253, 254, 255
 Moore, G. F. 123, 143
 Morray-Jones, C. R. A. 246, 247
 Müller, H. 41

 Netzer, A. 255
 Neugebauer, O. 68
 Neusner, J. 140, 208
 Newsom, C. A. 25, 40, 44, 50
 Neyrey, J. H. 104, 105, 106
 Nickelsburg, G. 3, 4, 7, 8, 19, 20, 25, 26, 28, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 42, 59, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 86, 87, 98, 100, 101, 112, 196, 227, 241
 Nidich, S. 69

 Odeberg, H. 244, 245, 246, 252, 255
 Olyan, S. M. 65

 Pagels, E. 52, 125, 169, 176
 Pearson, B. 4, 227, 230, 231
 Peerbolte, L. 86
 Plöger, O. 61
 Pomykala, K. 52

 Rajak, T. 162, 173
 Reed, A. Y. 13, 19, 28, 42, 44, 49, 63, 123, 162, 166, 177, 236, 239, 251, 256, 257

- Reeves, J. C. 1, 96, 97, 148, 201, 221, 235, 239,
247, 248, 258, 259, 265
- Reid, S. B. 64
- Reimer, A. M. 100
- Robbins, E. 236, 262, 264
- Rowland, C. 41, 241
- Rubenstein, J. 260
- Ruether, R. R. 123
- Rutgers, L. V. 192
- Sacchi, P. 3, 73, 78
- Saldarini, A. J. 65, 124, 139, 140, 241
- Salvesen, A. 194, 217
- Scaliger, J. J. 2
- Schäfer, P. 11, 16, 22, 59, 129, 132, 141, 145, 208,
209, 235, 236, 241, 243, 245, 246, 249, 254,
258, 269
- Schams, C. 65
- Schaper, J. 135, 193, 205
- Schiffman, L. 142, 143, 252, 253
- Schmidt, N. 2
- Scholem, G. 4, 5, 233, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242,
243, 244, 245, 247, 248, 250, 269
- Schwartz, M. D. 60, 124, 131, 207, 242, 243, 252,
253, 254
- Sed, N. 141
- Segal, A. F. 247
- Shaked, S. 252
- Shinan, A. 214
- Siker, J. S. 167
- Simon, M. 123, 166, 176
- Skarsaune, O. 162, 164, 165, 167, 171, 173
- Slomovic, E. 139
- Smith, J. Z. 67, 70, 132
- Soggin, J. A. 5
- Stadelmann, H. 65
- Stemberger, G. 194, 263
- Stendahl, K. 123
- Stern, D. H. 144, 207
- Sternberg, M. 10
- Stone, M. 4, 18, 19, 41, 43, 52, 54, 58, 59, 62, 66,
67, 68, 69, 70, 79, 101, 131, 134, 140, 143,
144, 241, 247, 259, 268
- Strack, H. L. 263
- Stroumsa, G. 3, 117, 149, 201, 215, 219, 222, 223,
224, 259
- Stuckenbruck, L. 19, 84, 96, 97, 214, 258, 259,
265
- Sundberg, A. C. 130, 131, 135
- Suter, D. 30, 37, 39, 45, 63, 65, 98, 113, 248
- Talmon, S. 10, 11, 55, 146
- Ta-Shma, I. M. 258, 268, 271
- Teugels, L. M. 260
- Tigchelaar, E. J. C. 25, 26, 29, 39, 65, 95
- Tov, E. 21
- Ullendorf, E. 8
- Ulrich, E. 55, 132, 133, 135
- Urbach, E. E. 52
- Vaillant, A. 103
- van der Kooij, A. 70
- VanBeek, L. 129
- VanderKam, J. C. 1, 4, 8, 41, 52, 53, 55, 56, 59,
62, 66, 68, 74, 77, 78, 82, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90,
92, 95, 100, 103, 105, 130, 131, 133, 134, 148,
149, 152, 158, 174, 175, 196, 197, 219
- Wagner, W. 9, 149, 201
- Wasserstrom, S. 239, 248, 254, 255
- Werman, C. 79
- Wevers, J. W. 117
- Wey, H. 9, 175
- Wickham, L. R. 9, 82, 117, 218, 219, 222, 223
- Wilken, R. L. 192
- Yassif, E. 258, 271
- Zevit, Z. 133

Index of Primary Sources

HEBREW BIBLE

Genesis, 6, 52, 53, 54, 56, 89

1–9, 53

1–11, 51

2–3, 6, 49, 51, 52, 86, 89, 115, 166, 169,
178

2–5, 53

4, 76

4:22–24, 38

4:26, 213

5, 89

5–6, 89

5:19, 1

5:21, 1

5:21–14, 209

5:21–24, 24, 54, 80, 123, 138, 190

5:21–25, 90, 234

5:22, 1

5:24, 1, 24, 139

6, 79, 91

6–8, 78

6–9, 28, 90, 211

6:1–4, 5, 14, 15, 24, 27, 29, 53, 54, 56, 69, 71,
82, 86, 90, 102, 106, 107, 109, 110, 115, 116,
117, 118, 120, 122, 123, 125, 136, 137, 138,

139, 148, 149, 151, 155, 156, 159, 190, 191, 193,

198, 202, 205, 206, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213,

216, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 234, 236,
267

6:1–4 (LXX), 107

6:2, 57, 208, 211, 214, 217

6:2 (LXX), 107, 117, 118, 218

6:3–6, 27

6:4, 214

6:4 (LXX), 107, 117

6:5–7, 90

6:5, 31, 53, 92

6:7, 261

6:11, 28

6:11–12, 31

6:12, 32

6:13–21, 42

Exodus

15:26, 142

Leviticus

16, 97, 263, 267

Numbers

13:33, 215

Deuteronomy

18:9–14, 40

18:10–12, 41

25:9, 113

29, 235

31, 235

32:17 (LXX), 165

32:8 (LXX), 118

Joshua

2, 235

9, 235

2 Samuel

19:9, 101

2 Kings

2:11, 139

22:8–20, 57

Isaiah

2:20, 38

14, 116

31:7, 38

44:25–26, 41

46:4, 250

46:9–11, 41

47:12–13, 41

60:22, 142, 145

- Jeremiah
10:4, 38
- Ezekiel
7:19, 38
28, 116
28:3-4, 182
- Hosea
8:4, 38
- Zechariah
3:1-2, 94
- Psalms
8:2, 250
95:5 (LXX), 161, 165, 168
106:37 (LXX), 165
135, 235
- Proverbs
30:1-4, 43
- Job
1:6 (LXX), 118
1:6-2:7, 94
2:1 (LXX), 118
11:28, 43
11:38-40, 43
11:5-6, 43
28, 40
38:7 (LXX), 118
- Qohelet, 43, 58, 63, 134, 136, 145
3:21, 43
- Daniel, 57, 61, 62, 63, 71, 101, 105, 119, 130, 136,
140, 207
1:20, 41
2-6, 41
2:16-19, 42
2:26-30, 42
2:47, 42
4:9, 41, 42
5:11, 41
7-12, 61
- Nehemiah
9, 104
- 1 Chronicles
21:1, 94
- PRE-RABBINIC JEWISH LITERATURE
- 1 QNoah, 100
- 1 QS (Rule of the Community) VIII, 4-10, 73
- 4Q227 (Pseudo-Jubilees) frag.2, 82, 99
- 4Q510 (Songs of the Sage^a) I, 5, 164
- 4QAgnesCreat (Ages of Creation) frag. 1
7-10, 97
- "Animal Apocalypse." See *Book of Dreams*
- "Apocalypse of Weeks." See *Epistle of Enoch*
- Astronomical Book* (1 Enoch 71-82), 3, 17,
18, 41, 42, 43, 44, 59, 60, 62, 65, 66, 67,
68, 69, 72, 80, 86, 87, 88, 103, 113, 198,
227, 245
- 4QEnastr^a, 3
1 Enoch 70-77, 248
1 Enoch 76:5, 77
1 Enoch 76:12, 196
1 Enoch 81:1-82:4, 19
1 Enoch 81:5, 196
1 Enoch 82:1, 196
- 2 Baruch, 61, 101, 116, 169
53, 110
54-76, 110
56:5-16, 111
- Book of Dreams* (1 Enoch 83-90), 17, 59, 60, 61,
64, 65, 72, 74, 80, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89,
95, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 113, 119, 156, 227,
245
1 Enoch 83-84, 78, 91
1 Enoch 83-90, 59
1 Enoch 83:1, 196
1 Enoch 83:10, 196
1 Enoch 84:4, 78
1 Enoch 85-90, 74
1 Enoch 85:1-2, 196
1 Enoch 85:5, 76
1 Enoch 86-89, 74
1 Enoch 86:1-2, 36
1 Enoch 86:1-3, 75
1 Enoch 86:1-89:1, 74
1 Enoch 86:2, 76, 92
1 Enoch 86:4, 212
1 Enoch 86:6, 77
1 Enoch 88-89, 18
1 Enoch 88:1-3, 75
1 Enoch 89, 18
1 Enoch 89:42, 77
1 Enoch 89:42-49 (in Codex Vaticanus
Gr. 1809), 21, 153
1 Enoch 89:75, 76
1 Enoch 90:2-4, 77
1 Enoch 90:6-7, 72
1 Enoch 90:21-24, 74
- Book of Giants*, 18, 19, 95, 96, 100, 177, 227, 235,
240, 248, 258, 259, 265
1 QEnGiants^a ar frag.14, 97
2 QEnGiants ar, 96
4 QEnGiants^a, 19
4 QEnGiants^a ar frag.1, 2, 97
4 QEnGiants^a ar frag.7 I, 6, 97
4 QEnGiants^a ar frag.7A-8, 96

*Book of Giants (cont.)*4QEnGiants^a ar frag.8, 5, 974QEnGiants^b II, 21–III, 11, 964QEnGiants^b II, 4–10, 96

6QpapEnGiants ar II, 96

Book of the Watchers, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12,

13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 53, 56, 57, 59, 60,

61, 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 69, 74, 80, 81, 82, 84,

85, 86, 87, 88, 93, 95, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103,

113, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 126, 128, 129, 133,

135, 138, 140, 142, 145, 148, 149, 152, 154,

157, 160, 170, 186, 188, 191, 193, 194, 197,

206, 210, 212, 218, 220, 226, 227, 228, 229,

236, 246, 273, 274, 275, 276

4QEn^a, 19, 964QEn^a IV, 1–2, 324QEn^a IV, 5, 424QEn^b, 17, 1004QEn^b III, 2, 324QEn^b III, 5, 424QEn^c, 19, 1004QEn^d, 1004QEn^e, 100

1 Enoch 1–5, 24, 45

1 Enoch 1:1–32:6 (in Codex Panopolitanus),

7

1 Enoch 1:3–9, 196

1 Enoch 1:9, 4, 105

1 Enoch 2–5, 41, 163

1 Enoch 2:1, 41, 163

1 Enoch 2:2, 41

1 Enoch 2:3–5:1, 41

1 Enoch 3:1–4:1, 163

1 Enoch 5:1, 41, 163

1 Enoch 5:4–9, 41

1 Enoch 6, 90, 104, 114, 116, 225, 254

1 Enoch 6–7, 27, 28, 34, 36

1 Enoch 6–8, 35

1 Enoch 6–9, 74

1 Enoch 6–11, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35,

36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47,

48, 49, 50, 53, 63, 71, 75, 78, 90, 91, 98, 113,

253, 256, 257, 268

1 Enoch 6–16, 4, 5, 27, 39, 45, 50, 51, 71, 74,

86, 88, 89, 90, 96, 102, 103, 106, 116, 161,

177, 178, 183, 187, 215, 218

1 Enoch 6:1–2, 52

1 Enoch 6:1–8, 28

1 Enoch 6:1–10:15 (in Syncellus), 7

1 Enoch 6:2, 118

1 Enoch 6:3–6, 31

1 Enoch 6:3–7, 34

1 Enoch 6:6, 48, 90

1 Enoch 6:19 (in Syncellus), 230

1 Enoch 7, 30, 31, 32, 35, 91

1 Enoch 7–8, 32

1 Enoch 7:1, 30, 32, 34, 37, 75, 90, 104, 109,

114, 164, 175, 177

1 Enoch 7:2, 30

1 Enoch 7:2–5, 31, 90

1 Enoch 7:2–6, 28

1 Enoch 7:3, 75

1 Enoch 7:3–5, 30, 31, 91, 92

1 Enoch 7:6, 30

1 Enoch 7:8, 104

1 Enoch 7:24, 92

1 Enoch 8, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 40, 51, 75,

114, 176, 177, 179, 195, 229, 236

1 Enoch 8:1, 31, 32, 38, 72, 178

1 Enoch 8:1–2, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 90,

112, 114, 164, 176, 183, 257, 263, 266

1 Enoch 8:1–2, 28, 38

1 Enoch 8:1–2 (in Syncellus), 257

1 Enoch 8:1–3, 28, 75, 90

1 Enoch 8:2–3, 114, 175

1 Enoch 8:2, 32, 40, 178, 268

1 Enoch 8:3, 31, 32, 34, 37, 41, 42, 49, 92, 109,

164, 177, 183, 257

1 Enoch 8:4–9:3, 7

1 Enoch 8:4–9:11, 28

1 Enoch 8:4, 28, 30, 31

1 Enoch 9, 28

1 Enoch 9–10, 50, 75

1 Enoch 9:10, 30, 33

1 Enoch 9:1–10:15 (in Syncellus), 230

1 Enoch 9:6–10, 28, 30, 32, 36

1 Enoch 9:6–7, 33, 34

1 Enoch 9:6, 28, 33, 75, 90, 183

1 Enoch 9:7, 33, 34, 164

1 Enoch 9:8, 33, 34, 164

1 Enoch 9:9, 30, 33, 90

1 Enoch 10, 75, 98, 150, 156

1 Enoch 10–11, 72, 74

1 Enoch 10:1–3, 28

1 Enoch 10:4–5, 91

1 Enoch 10:7, 183

1 Enoch 10:7–8, 75

1 Enoch 10:7–8, 28

1 Enoch 10:9–10, 91

1 Enoch 10:9–16, 173

1 Enoch 10:11–11:2, 28

1 Enoch 10:12–13, 109, 116

1 Enoch 10:13–14, 149

1 Enoch 11–12, 115

1 Enoch 12, 242

1 Enoch 12–13, 150, 158

- 1 Enoch* 12–16, 24, 25, 26, 39, 44, 45, 46, 48,
 49, 50, 63, 64, 65, 75, 92, 96, 104, 113, 172,
 182, 257
1 Enoch 12:1, 36
1 Enoch 12:1–2, 47, 52
1 Enoch 12:1–6, 48
1 Enoch 12:3–13:3, 48
1 Enoch 12:3–4, 58
1 Enoch 12:3–6, 44, 47
1 Enoch 12:4, 45, 92
1 Enoch 12:4–6, 173
1 Enoch 12:4–13:3, 44
1 Enoch 13, 64
1 Enoch 13:1, 45, 75
1 Enoch 13:1–2, 44, 46, 47, 183
1 Enoch 13:2, 47, 48, 164
1 Enoch 13:3–14:25, 46, 48
1 Enoch 13:3–4, 47, 48
1 Enoch 13:4, 70
1 Enoch 13:7–14:7, 47
1 Enoch 13:8, 48
1 Enoch 14, 5, 64, 242
1 Enoch 14:1, 88
1 Enoch 14:3, 48
1 Enoch 14:6–7, 70
1 Enoch 14:8–24, 47, 48
1 Enoch 15, 65, 73, 90
1 Enoch 15–16, 45, 48, 94, 163
1 Enoch 15:1, 58
1 Enoch 15:1–12, 47
1 Enoch 15:2, 48
1 Enoch 15:2–12, 92
1 Enoch 15:2–16:4, 44
1 Enoch 15:3, 45, 70
1 Enoch 15:3–4, 65, 163
1 Enoch 15:4–7, 45
1 Enoch 15:6, 45
1 Enoch 15:8, 46, 77
1 Enoch 15:8–12, 173
1 Enoch 15:8–16:1, 90, 93
1 Enoch 15:8–16:2 (in Syncellus), 7, 230
1 Enoch 15:9, 46
1 Enoch 15:9–12, 45
1 Enoch 15:10, 46
1 Enoch 15:11–12, 46
1 Enoch 16, 48
1 Enoch 16:1, 46, 94
1 Enoch 16:2, 48
1 Enoch 16:2–3, 46, 47, 183
1 Enoch 16:3, 45, 75, 184
1 Enoch 16:3–4, 48
1 Enoch 16:6–10, 70
1 Enoch 17, 25
1 Enoch 17–18, 50
1 Enoch 17–19, 25, 45, 47, 49
1 Enoch 17–36, 41, 44, 46, 48, 49, 50, 88, 103
1 Enoch 17:2, 48
1 Enoch 17:3, 49
1 Enoch 18:15, 50
1 Enoch 19, 103
1 Enoch 19:1, 38, 77, 93, 114, 164
1 Enoch 19:1–2, 49, 50, 51, 90
1 Enoch 19:3, 148, 197
1 Enoch 20–36, 18, 25, 45, 49, 51
1 Enoch 23–36, 88
1 Enoch 24–25, 51
1 Enoch 26:9–27:7 (in Syncellus), 7
1 Enoch 32:6, 49, 51, 166
 Damascus Document, 95, 104
 CD A I, 7–9, 73
 CD A II, 14–17, 99
 CD A IV, 12–18, 99
 CD A V, 17–19, 99
 CD A XVI, 3, 100
 4Q266 2 II, 13–17, 99
 4Q266 2 II, 17–19, 99
2 Enoch, 3, 4, 103, 110, 113, 119, 188, 198, 227,
 246, 247, 277
 7:3, 103
 7:5, 103
 18:1–2, 103
 18:2–5, 104
 18:8–9, 104
 19:17–19, 104
 22–23, 246
 30:16, 52
Epistle of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 91–105/6/7), 7, 17,
 18, 61, 64, 65, 74, 81, 82, 84, 87, 88, 89, 95,
 100, 101, 102, 103, 113, 152, 156, 227, 230,
 245, 276
 4QEn^c (I–II), 79
1 Enoch 91–105, 17
1 Enoch 91:1–2, 196
1 Enoch 91:11–17, 74, 77
1 Enoch 91:15, 78
1 Enoch 92–105, 19, 59, 72
1 Enoch 93:10, 64
1 Enoch 93:1–10, 74, 77
1 Enoch 93:2, 64
1 Enoch 93:3–4, 77
1 Enoch 93:9–10, 72
1 Enoch 94:8, 64
1 Enoch 96:5, 64
1 Enoch 98:4, 78, 95
1 Enoch 106, 79
1 Enoch 106–7, 79, 91, 96

- 4 *Ezra*, 61, 144, 146
 3:7, 52
 3:14–22, 101
 3:21–22, 52, 101
 3:25–26, 101
 4:30, 52, 101
 7:118, 52, 101
 14, 196
 14:26, 135
 14:45–47, 143
 14:46, 135
 63–66, 52
- Genesis Apocryphon*
 II–V, 79
 II, 1, 91, 96
 II, 16, 79
- Flavius Josephus
Against Apion 1.37–43, 134
Jewish Antiquities 1.69–70, 93
Jewish Antiquities 1.72–74, 222
Jewish Antiquities 1.73, 107
Jewish Antiquities 1.85, 82
Jewish Antiquities 9.28, 82
Jewish Antiquities 17–20, 86
Jewish War 2.165, 142
Jewish War 2.254–65, 86
- Jubilees*, 82, 85, 87, 118, 120, 122, 133, 134, 169, 186, 258, 268, 276
 1:1–7, 145
 2:23, 134
 3, 89
 4, 88, 100, 233
 4–5, 89
 4:15–26, 87
 4:15, 90, 214
 4:17–18, 87, 88
 4:17–19, 82
 4:17–22, 81
 4:18–19, 87, 88
 4:21, 100
 4:21–22, 88, 94, 158
 4:22, 90
 4:23–25, 87
 4:27–28, 92
 4:30, 52
 4:33, 92
 5, 90
 5–7, 90
 5:1, 91
 5:1–10, 87
 5:2, 90, 91
 5:6, 91
 5:7–10, 91
 5:13, 91
 5:13–18, 91
 5:15–16, 91
 5:17–18, 91, 98
 5:20–32, 90
 7:20–21, 38
 7:20–23, 91
 7:20–39, 87, 89, 92
 7:21, 91, 92
 7:22–23, 92
 8:2–3, 92
 8:2–4, 89
 8:3, 92
 8:5, 93
 10, 89, 164
 10:1–17, 87
 10:5, 93
 10:7–9, 94
 10:10–11, 94
 10:12, 94
 10:13–14, 94
 10:1–6, 93
 11:4–5, 93, 94
 21:10, 87
- 1 Maccabees 2:51–61, 104
 2 Maccabees 2:13–15, 130
- Philo of Alexandria
De Abrahamo 17–19, 82
De mutatione nominum 33–34, 82
De posteritate Caini 43–43, 82
De praemiis et poenis 10–27, 82
Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesim 82–86, 82
- Pseudo–Eupolemus
apud Eusebium Praeparatio evangelica
 9.17.8–9, 107
- Pseudo–Philo, *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, 260
 1.15–17, 82
- Sibylline Oracles* 1.90–103, 108
- Similitudes of Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 37–71), 4, 17, 113, 120, 227, 246, 247, 276
 1 *Enoch* 54:6, 115
 1 *Enoch* 55–58, 77
 1 *Enoch* 61:10–12, 248
 1 *Enoch* 64:2, 114
 1 *Enoch* 65:11, 114
 1 *Enoch* 65:6, 176
 1 *Enoch* 65:6–7, 114
 1 *Enoch* 66–69, 77
 1 *Enoch* 67:4, 114
 1 *Enoch* 69, 115
 1 *Enoch* 70–71, 246, 256

Wisdom of Solomon

4:10–15, 82

13:10, 38

Wisdom of Ben Sira, 43, 57, 59, 60, 70, 71, 81,

84, 143, 239

3:20–21, 141

3:21–22, 43

15:14, 52

15:17, 52

16:7, 70

16:7–9, 104, 210

20:20, 43

25:24, 52

33:14–15, 101

34:1–8, 43

39:1–3, 70

41:4, 43

44:16, 69, 82, 158

44–50, 104

49:14, 69, 82, 158

15:21–22, 52

19–21, 165

2 Corinthians 11:13–15, 176

1 Timothy 4:1, 176

2 Timothy 3:16, 196

Epistle to the Hebrews 11, 82, 104, 158

2 Peter

2:4, 106, 173

2:9–10, 106

3:18–20, 110

Epistle of Jude

5–8, 104

6, 104, 163

7, 104, 210

14–15, 20, 105

Revelation

2:10, 116

9:1, 116

9:2, 165

12:9, 116

20:2, 116

20:2–3, 116

NEW TESTAMENT

Gospel of Matthew

4:24, 187

5:17, 153

7:12, 153

8:16, 187

8:28–33, 187

9:32–34, 187

12:22–28, 187

17:15–20, 187

Gospel of Mark

1:32–39, 187

5:6–16, 187

7:26–30, 187

16:9, 187

Gospel of Luke

4:33–41, 187

8:2, 187

8:27–36, 187

9:38–43, 187

10:18, 116

11:14–20, 187

24:47, 153

Gospel of John

1:45, 153

10:18, 184

Acts of the Apostles 28:23, 153

Romans 5:12, 52, 101

1 Corinthians

11:10, 178

15:21–22, 101

LATE ANTIQUE AND MEDIEVAL
LITERATURE*Aggadat Bereshit*, 235, 260, 262, 264, 265, 266,
267*Apocalypse of Abraham*

14:4, 98

14:5, 98

Athanasius

Epistulae festales 39, 200, 220, 229*Historia Arianorum* 78.1, 200Athenagoras, *Legatio pro Christianis*

24, 152

24–26, 152, 175

Augustine

De civitate Dei 14, 52*De civitate Dei* 15, 15, 188, 202, 203, 218, 220*De civitate Dei* 18.37–38, 202, 203*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 196, 124

Bar Hebraeus 3, 225, 229

Bereshit Rabbati, 208, 259, 260, 262, 265, 266,
267

9:7, 101

26:4, 101

Johannes Cassianus, *Collatio* 7.20, 202

Cedrenus. 1.19.2–20.2, 229

Chronicle of Yerahmeel, 235, 260

25, 258, 259

72.1, 260

87–100, 260

- 1 Clement
 9–10, 158
- Clement of Alexandria
Ecolgae propheticae 2.1, 148, 152
Ecolgae propheticae 53.4, 148, 175, 182
Paedagogus 3.2, 178
Stromata 1.7.81, 183, 184
Stromata 1.12, 184
Stromata 1.16.80, 183
Stromata 3.7.59, 178
Stromata 5.1.10, 48, 148, 182, 184
Stromata 6.8.66, 183
Stromata 6.17.159, 183
- Commodian, *Instructiones* 3, 175, 176, 178
- Cyprian
De habitu virginum 13–14, 180
Quod idola dii non sint 6, 175
- Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Julianum* 9, 199
- Didascalia Apostolorum* 26, 124
- 3 Enoch (*Sefer Hekhalot*), 4, 235, 238, 243, 244, 245, 246, 248
- 1, 249
 1–2, 244
 3–15, 249, 256
 3–16, 236, 239
 4, 239, 249, 250, 251, 252, 254, 256, 261, 263
 5, 239, 249, 256, 261, 263, 267, 268, 270
 6, 251, 257
 7, 257
 23–43, 244
 43–44, 249
 64–79, 255
- Ephraim
Commentary on Genesis 6:3, 211
Hymns on Paradise 1.11, 225
- Epistle of Barnabas
 4, 148
 4:3, 152, 229
 16:6, 20
- Esther Rabbah* 7:9, 211
- Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*
 3.25.1–7, 204
 4.26.13–14, 134, 145
 6.17, 217
 6.25, 145, 204
 7.32.19, 148, 198
- Genesis Rabbah*
 1:1, 145
 17:2, 52
 19:7, 209
 25:1, 138, 139, 234
 26:5, 137, 208, 209, 210, 211
- 26:5–7, 209
 26:7, 211, 215, 216
 27:4, 211
 34:8, 38
 50:7, 211
 65:21, 208
 91:3, 143
- Hermian, *Irrisio* 1, 183
- Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 10.3, 124
- Irenaeus
Adversus haereses 1.6.3, 176
Adversus haereses 1.10.1, 149, 150, 152
Adversus haereses 1.15.6, 98, 175, 177
Adversus haereses 1.27.3, 158
Adversus haereses 3.2.2, 177
Adversus haereses 3.11.9, 200
Adversus haereses 3.12.12, 176
Adversus haereses 4.16.2, 148, 158
Adversus haereses 4.36.4, 104, 150
Adversus haereses 5.5.1, 158
Adversus haereses 5.26.2, 176
Adversus haereses 13.4, 176
Adversus haereses 16.1, 176
Adversus haereses 21.1, 176
Adversus haereses 25.3, 176
Adversus haereses 27.4, 176
Epideixis tou apostolikou kerygmatos 18, 175, 176, 177
- Jerome
Commentariorum in Habacuc 2.3, 217
De viris illustribus 4, 204
De viris illustribus 54, 217
- Justin Martyr
 1 *Apologia* 5, 166, 170
 1 *Apologia* 15, 166
 1 *Apologia* 21, 172
 1 *Apologia* 25, 172
 1 *Apologia* 32.4–6, 167
 1 *Apologia* 35.6, 167
 1 *Apologia* 38.7–8, 167
 1 *Apologia* 40.6, 167
 1 *Apologia* 41, 165
 1 *Apologia* 44, 173
 1 *Apologia* 45, 173
 1 *Apologia* 46, 172
 1 *Apologia* 47–49, 167
 1 *Apologia* 52, 173
 1 *Apologia* 53.2–3, 167
 1 *Apologia* 54, 166
 1 *Apologia* 54–55, 172
 1 *Apologia* 56, 166
 1 *Apologia* 58, 166
 1 *Apologia* 62, 166

- 1 *Apologia* 63, 169
 1 *Apologia* 67.3–4, 153
 1 *Apologia* 69–70, 172
 2 *Apologia* 1.2, 162, 165
 2 *Apologia* 1.7, 165
 2 *Apologia* 4, 162
 2 *Apologia* 5, 162, 164, 166
 2 *Apologia* 6, 170, 171, 172, 174
 2 *Apologia* 8, 170, 171, 173
 2 *Apologia* 9, 172
 2 *Apologia* 10, 170, 171
 2 *Apologia* 12, 172
 2 *Apologia* 13, 171
 2 *Apologia* 14, 172
 2 *Apologia* 15, 172
Dialogus cum Tryphone 11, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 16.4, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 17, 167, 168, 169
Dialogus cum Tryphone 18, 167, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 19, 158, 165, 167, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 20, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 23, 158, 160, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 25.5, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 26, 167, 169
Dialogus cum Tryphone 27, 165, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 28, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 30, 168, 170, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 32.3, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 43, 158, 160, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 44, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 45, 158, 160, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 46, 167, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 49, 170, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 55, 165, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 73, 165, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 76, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 78, 170, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 79, 137, 165, 216
Dialogus cum Tryphone 83, 165, 168, 170
Dialogus cum Tryphone 85.3, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 91, 168, 170
Dialogus cum Tryphone 92, 158, 160, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 93.4, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 95, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 96, 169
Dialogus cum Tryphone 100, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 102, 174
Dialogus cum Tryphone 103.2, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 104.1, 167
Dialogus cum Tryphone 108, 167, 169
Dialogus cum Tryphone 119, 165, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 121, 170
Dialogus cum Tryphone 125, 170, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 131, 169, 170, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 132, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 133, 165, 167, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 135, 168
Dialogus cum Tryphone 137, 173
Dialogus cum Tryphone 141, 174
 Lactanius, *Divinarum institutionum* VII, 174, 175
Leviticus Rabbah
 23:9, 211
 28:1, 134
 29:11, 139, 234
 John Malalas, *Chronographia*, 225
 Michael Syrus, *Chronicle*
 1.1, 225
 1.3, 225, 229
 1.4, 225
Midrash Aggadah Genesis 5:25, 236
Midrash ha–Gadol
 Genesis 5:24, 139
 Genesis 6:4, 212
Midrash Petirat Moshe Rabbenu, 261, 263
Midrash Vayyosch, 267
 Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 26–27, 175
 Mishnah
Berakhot 1:5, 142
Berakhot 5:2, 142
Berakhot 9:5, 142
Ḥagigah 2:1, 140, 141, 142, 207
Baba Metzia 4, 209
Sanhedrin 10:1, 134, 140, 142, 144, 145, 150, 207
Sanhedrin 11, 209
Eduyot 5:3, 134
Yadayim 3:5, 134, 145
Yadayim 4:6, 146
Numbers Rabbah
 5:3, 211
 9:24, 211
 20:2, 211
 Origen
Commentary on John 6.25, 148, 197
Commentary on Matthew 79, 194
Contra Celsum 5.52–55, 148
Contra Celsum 5.52, 198
Contra Celsum 5.54, 198, 199
Contra Celsum 5.55, 220
Epistula ad Africanum 13, 204, 205
Homilies on Jeremiah 12.13, 194
Homilies on Leviticus 5.8, 124
Homilies on Numbers 28, 15, 20, 148
On First Principles 1.3.3, 20, 148, 197
On First Principles 4.4.8, 20, 148, 152, 197

- Panodorus, 224, 225, 229
Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 23:10, 139
Pesiqta Rabbati 34.2, 261
Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer
 6–8, 264
 8, 236, 264
 22, 208, 211, 212, 213, 222, 255, 260, 262
 Priscillian, *Liber de fide* 44–45, 200
 Pseudo–Clementine *Homilies*
 8, 248
 8.7–8, 261, 264
 8.12–13, 75
 8.12–18, 128
 Pseudo–Clementine *Recognitions*
 1.29, 128
 4.26–27, 128
Qohelet Rabbah
 7:11, 143
 7:15, 138
 Rashi
 on *b. Niddah* 61 a, 261
 on Numbers 13:3, 261
 Rufinus, *Expositio symboli apostolorum*
 36–38, 199
Seder Hadar Zeqenim, 262
Sifre Deuteronomy, 210
 43, 210, 211
 310, 211
 311, 209
Sifre Numbers 86, 209
 George Syncellus, *Ecloga Chronographica*,
 42
 11.19, 2, 257
 11.19–13.19, 7, 229
 14.1–14, 185, 229
 19.24–20.4, 217, 219
 24.6–9, 229
 24.7–8, 230
 24.10–27.7, 7, 229
 27.11, 230
 40.31–41.9, 93
 53–56, 93
 Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud)
Berakhot 48a, 143
Berakhot 61a, 101
Shabbat 13b, 134
Shabbat 30b, 134
Shabbat 31 a, 10
Shabbat 100a, 134
Eruvin 54b, 10
Yoma 67b, 216, 235, 252, 254, 263
Sukkah 52b, 101
Rosh ha–Shanah 5a, 146
Rosh ha–Shanah 11 b–12a, 262, 264
Rosh ha–Shanah 15a, 146
Megillah 7a, 134
Ḥagigah 11 b, 141
Ḥagigah 13 a, 134
Ḥagigah 15a, 246, 251
Qiddushin 30b, 101
Baba Batra 14b, 130, 145
Sanhedrin 20a, 52
Sanhedrin 38a–b, 210
Sanhedrin 38b, 250, 251, 252
Sanhedrin 56a–57a, 38
Sanhedrin 108a, 210
Abodah Zarah 3b, 251
Menahot 65a, 146
Ḥullin 91 b, 208
Niddah 61 a, 215, 216, 235, 263
 Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud)
Berakhot 11 b, 143
Ḥagigah 77a, 141
Nazir 54b, 143
Sanhedrin 72, 52
 Targum Neophyti
 Genesis 6:2, 213
 Genesis 6:4, 213
 Targum Onqelos Genesis 5:24, 139, 234
 Targum Pseudo–Jonathan
 Genesis 5:24, 236
 Genesis 6:1, 211
 Genesis 6:3, 213
 Genesis 6:4, 213
 Tertullian
Adversus Iudaeos 4, 158
Apologeticus 22, 152
Apologeticus 35.12, 175
De cultu feminarum 1.1, 179
De cultu feminarum 1.2, 179, 181, 195
De cultu feminarum 1.2–3, 196
De cultu feminarum 1.3, 15, 138, 148, 179, 195, 196
De cultu feminarum 2.10, 148, 180, 196
De cultu feminarum 3.1–3, 20
De idololatria 15.6, 148, 152, 202
De idololatria 4.2, 148
De idololatria 4.2–3, 20, 152
De idololatria 4.3, 148
De idololatria 4:2–3, 175
De idololatria 9.1, 175
De virginibus velandis 7, 178
De virginibus velandis 8, 178
 Testament of Abraham [B] 11:3–10, 82

Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs

- Testament of Benjamin* 9:1, 82, 112
Testament of Benjamin 10:6, 82
Testament of Dan 5:6, 82, 112
Testament of Judah 18:1, 112
Testament of Levi 10:5, 20, 82, 112
Testament of Levi 14:1, 20, 82, 112
Testament of Naphtali 2–3, 112
Testament of Naphtali 3:5, 163
Testament of Naphtali 4:1, 82, 112
Testament of Reuben 5, 104, 210
Testament of Reuben 5:4–6, 112
Testament of Reuben 5:5–7, 75
Testament of Reuben 5:6, 212
Testament of Simeon 5:4, 20, 82, 112
Testament of Zebulun 3, 112, 113

Tosefta

- Berakhot* 1:12, 142
Berakhot 3:9, 142
Berakhot 7:21, 142
Sotah 3:2, 211
Sanhedrin 12:9–10, 142
Hullin 10:6, 142
Miqvaot 7:1, 208
Yadayim 2:14, 134
Yadayim 2:19, 146
Yalqut Reubeni 25b–25c, 263
Yalqut Shimoni, 235, 258

Zohar

- I 37b, 233
 I 72b, 233
 II 248b, 233
 II 253b, 233
 II 55a, 233

OTHER SOURCES

- al-Tabari, *History* 1.173, 233
 Cologne Mani Codex 58:6–60:7, 247
 Diodorus Siculus 5.64.4–5, 40
 Hesiod, *Opera et dies*
 109–74, 108
 109–201, 38
 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 8.5, 93
 Naveh and Shaked, ed., *AMB*
 A 1:1, 252
 A 1:1–3, 252
 A 7:3, 252
 A 7a:2–5, 252
 Naveh and Shaked, ed., *MSF* 207
 A 19:23, 252
 Pliny, *Naturalis historia* 7.61, 40
Prometheus Bound 484–500, 40
 Quran, 262
 2.102 (*Al-Baqarah*), 255
 Raymundi Martini, *Pugio Fidei*, 258

Subject Index

- 1 *Enoch*. *See also Maṣḥafa Henok Nabiyy*
Aramaic fragments of. 3–4, 7, 17–18, 61, 100,
113, 233
as collection. 3, 8, 17–19, 57, 61
history of scholarship on. 2–5, 26, 28–29,
34, 57
prehistory of. 18–20, 230
- Abba Saul. 145
Abel. 76
Abraham. 54, 108, 158, 202
Adam. 76, 262
and Christ. 166, 188
in Jewish mysticism. 269–70
Adam and Eve. 49, 76, 90, 101, 166
disobedience of. 51
in genealogy of error. 52, 81, 85, 89, 101, 110,
111, 115–16, 166–67, 179, 188, 220
- adjuration
of angels. 243, 253–54, 268
of celestial bodies. 267
- Aḥiram. 96
alchemy. 184, 229
Alexander of Macedon. 59
amulets. 207, 252
Anakim. 215, 262–63
- angelic descent
and anti-Christian polemics. 220
and anti-pagan polemics. 160, 164–65, 169,
172, 174–75, 186, 190
and origins of evil. 25, 37, 49, 51, 86, 101, 114,
120, 160, 163–64
chronology of. 35–37, 75, 112, 257, 261
euhemeristic interpretation of. 225, 229
for positive aims. 89, 90, 120, 261
historiographical appeal to. 108
human culpability for. 111
- in anti-Christian polemics. 198–99
oral traditions about. 11, 29, 119, 151, 177,
188, 212, 238
post-Talmudic Jewish approaches to.
212–13, 238–40, 249, 251, 255, 258–59, 261,
266, 274
- angelic sin. 28, 45, 47, 75, 236, 264
as epistemological transgression. 31–33, 46,
48–49, 65
as intermarriage. 76, 92–93, 95
as sexual transgression. 6, 28, 31, 34–35, 37,
45, 50, 64, 86, 90–92, 96, 102, 114, 119, 122,
178, 262
as transgression of proper roles. 24, 45, 116,
163, 164
- angelology
and magic. 235, 252–53
Jewish. 115, 138, 209–10, 235, 248, 251
- angels. *See also fallen angels*
accusing. 251, 252, 257, 263
and stars. 264, 268
free will of. 111, 168, 174
gatekeeping. 251
heavenly. 25, 28, 33, 36, 45, 50, 75, 250–51,
256, 261
interpreting. 110, 243
rivalry with humans. 213, 236, 250–52, 257,
261–64
veneration of. 138, 251
- Annianus. 224–25, 229
- Antiochus IV. 60, 73, 85
- apocalyptic literature. 26, 149
and *Astronomical Book*. 62
and book of Daniel. 61–63, 140
and *Book of the Watchers*. 3, 63, 112
and Hekhalot literature. 5, 238, 241–43, 245,
246, 269

- and Wisdom literature. 42–43, 63
 history of scholarship on. 3, 61–62, 70, 275
 Rabbinic attitudes towards. 140–42, 207
 social settings of. 58, 61, 62, 67, 70, 240–41, 275
- apocalypticism. 62, 140, 240, 275
- apocrypha. 134, 199–200, 271
- apology, apologetics
 Christian. 161–62, 171–74, 185
 Jewish. 107, 185
- Aquila. 205, 213, 216–18, 226
- Asael, Azael. 236, 239, 252–54, 259, 266, 267–68
 and human sin. 37, 47, 76, 81, 263
 and Prometheus. 39
 and similarly named angels/demons. 97, 98, 177, 235, 236, 250, 252–53, 256, 257, 263, 265, 267
 as accusing angel. 261
 as culture-hero. 34–35, 38, 40
 as first angel to descend. 35, 36, 75, 76, 257
 as heavenly angel. 250–53, 261
 as leader of fallen angels. 28
 as one of the *Nephilim*. 214–16
 as teacher. 6, 28, 30, 31, 33, 37, 40, 45, 112, 164, 178–79, 236, 256–57, 266–68
 paired with Šemiḥazah/Šemḥazai. 28, 213–15, 235, 236, 240, 263, 267, 268
 punishment of. 265
 rebuke of. 44, 48
- Asb'el. 114
- Asia Minor. 108, 119, 156, 188, 199
- Asterah. 261, 264
- astronomy, astrology. 67, 68, 109, 223, 264
 as angelic teaching. 109, 175, 177, 181, 187, 220, 224, 268
 as invention of Sethians. 32, 224
- Athanasius. 197, 199–204, 220, 228, 229, 273, 275
- Athenagoras. 119, 152, 188, 204, 229
- atonement. 97–98, 252
- Augustine. 52, 188–89, 198, 202–3, 205, 217, 218, 220–21, 227, 273
- authorship
 in Christianity. 22
 in Judaism. 54, 55, 234
 premodern. 10, 23
- Awim*. 215
- Azael. *See* Asael
- Azazel. 97, 98, 115, 252, 255, 264
 and Asael/Azael. 97, 98, 116, 177, 235, 252, 263, 265, 267, 271
 and Satan. 177, 178
- Azāzil. 255
- Azza(h)/Uzza(h). 235, 236, 249, 252, 253, 257, 263–64, 267–68
 as heavenly angels. 250, 251, 253
 as teachers. 256–57, 267
 punishment of. 265
- Bar Kokhba Revolt. 85, 124, 137, 140, 161, 167, 190, 191
- Baraḡ'el. 97
- Bardaisan. 149, 222
- Baruch. 54, 110
- Belial. 98, 99
- Bogomils. 98, 277
- Book of the Watchers*
 and etiology of evil. 51, 53, 164, 166, 186
 and Greco-Roman culture. 38, 39, 60, 109
 and Hekhalot literature. 15, 68, 238, 242, 245, 246
 and the Epistle of Jude. 4, 15, 104–5, 119, 193, 196, 200–2, 204
 authority of. 56, 57, 84, 94, 98, 105, 126, 136, 189, 193, 218, 227, 276
 authors/redactors of. 14, 44, 55, 56, 58, 59, 64–69, 273, 276
 circulation and transmission of. 119, 148, 185, 188
 Jewish back-borrowing of. 13, 16, 191, 257, 258, 268, 270, 274
 polysemy of. 16, 27, 29, 34, 35, 37, 45, 46, 51, 52, 63, 183
 priestly interests of. 64, 65
 quotations and allusions to. 86, 113, 119, 129, 133, 148, 179, 194, 197
 readers of. 14, 82, 276
 redaction of. 11, 16, 17, 21, 24–27, 29, 34, 35, 42, 49, 50
 scribal interests of. 44
 textual identity of. 17, 20, 21
- Cain, Cainites. 38, 76, 221, 225, 265, 267
- Cainan. 89, 92, 93
- Cairo Genizah. 249, 252
- calendar, calendrical issues. 66, 68, 101, 133, 141, 224, 264
- Canaan. 215
- Canaanites. 71
- canon, canonization. 129, 132
 history of scholarship on. 130–32
 in Christianity. 15, 120, 132, 189, 199, 200
 in Judaism. 18, 129–31, 133, 140, 143, 145
 prehistory of. 55–56, 131, 133–34, 155, 199
 relationship between Jewish and Christian. 15, 155, 193, 202, 204, 205

- canonical consciousness. 16, 134, 135, 145, 155, 197, 200
- Cedrenus. 225, 272
- Celsus. 148, 198, 199, 220
- Chester Beatty-Michigan Papyrus XII. 7, 19, 72, 230
- Christ. 162, 166, 173
 and demons. 172–74, 187
 and Enoch. 150
 and fallen angels. 110, 150, 156, 172–74
 and Seth. 224
 as *Logos*. 162, 170–74
 Incarnation of. 170, 173
 pre-Christian witnesses to. 152–55, 159
- Christian Kabbalah. 2, 231
- Christianity
 and Greco-Roman culture. 147, 160–62, 165, 166, 168, 170, 171, 174, 185, 186, 190, 221
 attitudes towards Jews in. 124, 156, 159, 161, 162, 166–69, 191, 192, 194
 continuities with Judaism. 155, 156, 157, 190, 226
 Jewish scriptures in. 15, 126, 135, 147, 152, 155, 186
 origins from Judaism. 122, 123, 126, 127
- Chronology. 110, 150
- chronography. 223, 257, 272
 Enochic texts and traditions in. 2, 8, 108, 120, 219, 224, 229, 274, 276
- circumcision. 158, 167
- civilization
 as decline. 15, 38, 40, 51, 76, 92, 179
 origins of. 37, 38, 72, 109
- Clement of Alexandria. 119, 149, 181–84, 188, 204, 229
- Codex Panopolitanus. 3, 7, 19, 21, 154, 182, 227, 230
- Commodian. 149, 176, 188
- Constantine. 191
- cosmetics, cosmetology. 40
 and promiscuity. 32, 35, 38, 113, 176, 178–80
 as angelic teaching. 37, 38, 112, 164, 176, 180, 181, 236, 267–68
- cosmology
 and ethics. 24, 67
 in Enochic literature. 41, 42, 44, 49, 62, 67, 68, 71, 75, 103, 115, 172
 Rabbinic attitudes towards. 140–41
- covenant. 64, 68
- Creation. 163, 172
 as protological precedent for Eschaton. 115
 in Wisdom literature. 43–44, 71
- culture-heroes
 Cainites as. 38
 fallen angels as. 34, 35, 38, 40, 108–9
 Greco-Roman traditions about. 39, 109, 184
 Sethians as. 224–25
- Cyprian. 149, 178, 180, 181, 188
- Cyril of Alexandria. 199, 217–18, 223
- daimones*. 40, 163, 165, 186
- Dee, John. 2
- demonology
 and magic. 115, 166, 177, 235, 252
 Christian. 15, 161, 163, 166, 172, 173, 175, 179, 181, 186, 187
 Jewish. 115, 164
- demons. 77, 89, 95, 173, 215
 and fallen angels. 49, 50, 100, 152, 163, 174, 175
 and heretics. 176, 177, 187
 and idolatry. 49–51, 93, 94, 114, 168
 and pagan gods. 50, 165, 166, 168, 171, 186
 and women. 179
 as enemies of Christ. 162, 169–70, 172–74, 179–80, 186
 as spirits of Giants. 46, 93, 94
 Christian association with Jews. 168–69
 pagan enslavement to. 162, 165, 166, 168–70, 172, 186
- Diadochi. 59, 63
- Diaspora Judaism. 82, 85, 106, 107, 109, 119, 122, 135, 228
- Diodorus Siculus. 40
- divination. 40, 89, 109
 as angelic teaching. 32, 37, 49, 93, 120, 177, 181
 biblical views of. 41
 Mesopotamian. 41
- dyes. 31, 32, 36, 112, 178, 236, 263, 267, 268
- Edict of Milan. 15
- Egypt. 59, 228
 Enochic texts and traditions in. 119, 152, 156, 188, 201, 227–31, 273, 276
- Elchaasites. 128, 227, 248, 265
- Eleazar ben Asher Ha-Levi. 258–59
- Elijah. 234
- Emim*. 215
- Enoch. 1, 152, 254
 and revealed knowledge. 24, 41, 42, 48, 49, 60, 61, 65, 72, 74, 78, 88, 103, 139, 172, 236
 angelification of. 251
 as author. 57, 80, 87, 88, 94, 103, 105, 112, 128, 148, 153, 193, 202, 236
 as eschatological witness. 110

- as intercessor for fallen angels. 64, 103, 104
 as Metatron. 236, 244–47, 249, 256, 265, 269
 as pre-Christian Christian. 123, 148, 157, 158, 190
 as priest. 64, 65
 as prophet. 25, 46, 72, 88, 105, 128, 148, 152, 153, 156, 157, 159, 202, 245, 247
 as rebuking fallen angels. 25, 44, 45, 48, 90, 158
 as righteous apart from the Law. 158, 190
 as scribe. 48, 54, 58, 65, 80, 87, 88, 230, 245
 death of. 138–39, 273
 elevation of. 44, 46–49, 58, 64, 104, 158, 245, 248–50, 269
 escape from death. 69, 156, 158, 190, 219, 236
 in medieval Judaism. 233, 236, 247, 270
 in Rabbinic Judaism. 138, 234, 273
 otherworldly journeys of. 3, 5, 25, 46, 48, 51, 88, 103
 Enochic Judaism. 69, 73
 Enochic literary tradition. 55, 66, 112, 246
 and 3 *Enoch*. 238, 239, 243–46, 249, 251, 256, 257
 and *Jubilees*. 87, 88, 90, 94
 eschatology in. 60, 62, 72, 74, 79
 place of 2 *Enoch* in. 103, 104
 place of *Astronomical Book* in. 65, 67
 place of *Book of Dreams* in. 60, 61–65, 71, 72, 79–82, 84
 place of *Book of the Giants* in. 96
 place of *Book of the Watchers* in. 73, 113, 118
 place of *Epistle of Enoch* in. 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 71, 72, 79–82, 84
 place of *Similitudes* in. 113
 scientific interests in. 67, 68, 81, 103
 social settings of. 63, 68–70, 72–73, 240
 Enochic literature
 and Mesopotamian traditions. 67–69
 and the Torah. 18, 40, 64, 89, 112, 139
 at Qumran. 61, 129
 authority of. 9, 15, 52, 80, 88, 100, 120, 138, 147, 152–56, 195–98, 203–4, 218, 227
 Christian preservation of. 2, 4, 13, 15, 84, 123, 148, 157, 160, 185, 190, 273
 Christian rejection of. 193, 195, 200–1, 204, 218, 226
 circulation and transmission of. 9, 84, 127, 128, 152, 199, 227, 233
 collection of. 7, 17–19, 20, 60, 63, 119
 Ethiopian translation of. 8, 20, 230
 exclusion from biblical canons. 8, 13, 129, 135–36, 195, 202–3, 273
 Greek translations of. 7, 105–6, 117, 119, 157, 189
 Latin translation of. 7, 21, 153, 157, 189
 loss to the West. 2, 227, 231, 273
 omission from biblical canons. 120, 198, 226
 preservation of extracts from. 8, 21, 120, 153, 154, 157, 224–25, 229, 230, 239, 257, 268, 273–74
 Rabbinic rejection of. 139, 140, 142, 190, 209, 234, 237, 238, 273
 Enochic Pentateuch. 18, 19
 Enochic Testament. 19
 Enosh. 213, 222–23, 225, 236, 251, 256–57, 261, 263
 Ephorus of Cyme. 40
 Ephraim. 201, 226
 Epiphanius. 224
 epistemology. 14, 60, 62, 71, 75, 81, 183
 eschatology. 62, 71, 72, 74, 80, 243, 269
 and protology. 72
 and sexual ethics. 180
 Christian. 150, 173
 in apocalyptic literature. 62, 240
 Rabbinic. 140, 142, 208
 Essenes. 85, 135, 142
 Ethiopia
 Aksumite Kingdom. 8
 Enochic texts and traditions in. 3, 4, 8, 17, 120, 135, 227, 230–32, 273, 276–77
 Eve. *See also* Adam and Eve
 seduction of. 114, 115, 179
 evil
 and human responsibility. 37, 76–78, 174
 pre-Rabbinic Jewish approaches to. 14, 76, 80, 95, 100, 101
 problem of. 3, 35, 37, 81, 85, 94, 116, 165–66, 186
 supernatural etiology of. 25, 28, 49–51, 53, 73, 163–64, 169
 evil inclination. 6, 101, 261
 Ezra. 54
 fallen angels. 50, 119, 164–65, 172, 176, 186
 and pagan gods. 161, 165–66, 170, 175, 186
 and Sodomites. 210, 212
 and stars. 236, 256
 as Diadochi. 63
 as enemies of Christ. 165, 169, 172–74
 as *Nephilim*. 214–16
 as paradigms of punished wicked. 47, 50, 70, 78, 80, 90, 98, 104, 106, 119, 149, 178
 as priests. 39, 63–65

- fallen angels. (*cont.*)
 as stars. 36, 50–51, 75, 266
 as tempted to earth by women. 35, 36, 111, 178
 imprisonment of. 50, 91, 102–4, 109, 110
 punishment of. 28, 45, 102, 104, 110, 119, 122, 150, 156, 173, 262
- First Jewish Revolt. 124
- Flood. 5, 77–79, 93, 94
 as protological precedent to Eschaton. 72, 101, 110, 150
 causes of. 35, 92, 113, 236, 262, 264
 Generation of. 31, 209, 211, 213, 250–51, 257, 261–63
- Garden of Eden. 51, 76, 87
- Genesis
 and *Book of the Watchers*. 5, 6, 14, 24, 27, 38, 51–54, 56, 70, 71, 82, 85, 86, 89, 102, 116–18, 126, 138, 156, 190, 206, 212, 218, 220, 225
 and etiologies of sin and evil. 52, 53, 110, 115
 and *Jubilees*. 89, 90
 Christian exegesis of. 125, 138, 156, 178, 190, 193, 206, 217, 223
 Enoch in. 1, 56, 89
 history of interpretation of. 6, 14, 49, 53, 71, 76, 85, 107, 115, 116, 190, 212
 oral interpretive tradition of. 54, 118, 151, 206, 212
 Rabbinic exegesis of. 123, 125, 136, 139, 156, 207, 211, 222, 234
- geography. 62, 67, 68
- Giants. 96, 97, 108, 185, 219, 235
 and demons. 46, 77, 93, 94, 163, 165
 and pagan gods. 164, 165
 as hybrid. 46, 76, 91
 as paradigms of punished wicked. 70, 71, 80, 96
 as symbols of foreign nations. 75, 77
 euhemeristic interpretations of. 107, 215
 Greco-Roman traditions about. 107
 punishment of. 173
 violence of. 28, 30, 31, 33, 45, 77
 visions of. 96, 262
- Gibborim*. 5, 107, 214–15, 235, 266
- Gilgamesh. 96
- gnostics, Gnosticism. 12, 149, 201, 228, 275, 276
- Greco-Roman culture
 Christian polemics against. 160–62, 165, 168–70, 172, 181, 226
 Jewish polemics against. 39, 107
- Greco-Roman mythology. 107, 165, 186
- Haayah. 96, 97
- Harut and Marut. 255, 262, 277
- Haside Ashkenaz. 258
- heavenly ascent. 49, 244, 248, 261, 268
 and Hekhalot literature. 68, 242, 243
 in apocalyptic literature. 62, 243
 of Enoch. 3, 5, 24, 68, 121, 236, 242, 251
- Hekhalot literature. 5, 15, 22, 68, 138, 235, 238, 240–43, 246–47, 248–49, 254, 268–69
 and 3 *Enoch*. 243, 245, 246, 250
 and Jewish magic. 254
- heretics, heresiology
 and canonization. 200, 201, 203
 Christian. 157, 162, 174, 176, 247
 Jewish. 139, 140, 143, 147, 207
 Muslim. 247
- Hermeticism. 228–29
- Hermon, Mt. 48, 104, 225, 254
- Hermoni. 32, 40, 109
- Hesiod. 108
- Hexapla. 204–5, 214, 217
- Heyya and Aheyya. 262
- historiography
 biblical and Jewish. 8, 53, 54, 223, 272
 Christian. 167, 172, 186, 272
 Hellenistic. 8, 107, 156, 223
 of antediluvian age. 14, 54, 78, 89, 92, 164, 220, 224, 263, 273
- Ḥobabish. 96
- Idaeon Dactyls. 40
- idolatry. 38, 168, 173, 186, 209
 and Generation of Enosh. 236, 257, 261
 as linked to fallen angels and demons. 49, 50, 51, 93, 94, 114, 164, 166, 168, 170, 181, 187, 256
- Idris. 255, 277
- impurity
 geneological. 76, 91, 92
 sexual. 30, 31, 34, 35, 64, 107
- incantation bowls. 235, 252–55
- intermarriage. 76, 91–93, 95, 221
- Irenaeus. 104, 149, 150, 152, 158, 176–78, 188
- Islam. 16, 239, 240, 254, 255, 262, 270, 274, 277
- Israel. 1, 77, 137, 145, 149, 199
 ancient. 54, 68, 69
 and the angels. 91, 169, 210
 and the nations. 60, 63, 76, 77, 80, 168
 competing claims to status as. 124, 126, 142, 145, 157, 161, 194
 Land of. 13, 18, 66, 82, 85, 122–24, 128, 139, 141, 143, 152, 156, 194, 204, 207, 252
- Italy. 199, 228, 258

- Japeth. 93
- Jared. 1, 89, 90, 114, 154, 197, 214, 224
- Jerome. 193, 201–3, 220, 226, 271
- Jerusalem. 39, 58, 60–69, 70, 85–86, 167, 169, 195
- Jesus. 86, 122, 167
- Jesus Movement. 85, 86, 129, 135
and Christianity. 124, 127, 153
and Enochic texts and traditions. 13, 14, 73, 86, 110, 126, 129, 148, 152, 275
and Judaism. 122–24, 128, 190
- Jewish-Christian relations. 15, 16, 125, 155–56, 190–91, 204, 269–71
and biblical exegesis and translation. 191, 193–94, 203–5, 217, 222, 226
continued complexity of. 16, 127, 192, 194
history of scholarship on. 13, 122–23, 191
new approaches to. 14, 192, 277
- Jewish-Christians, Jewish-Christianity. 127–28, 139, 143, 147, 149, 161, 216, 248, 254–55, 264, 276–77
- John Chrysostom. 192
- Josephus. 107, 117, 134, 142–43, 156, 222–25, 239, 260, 270–71
- Judas Maccabeus. 130
- Julian. 199, 220
- Julius Africanus. 118, 148, 185, 217, 219, 221, 222, 224
- Justin Martyr. 6, 15, 137, 149, 160–75, 179, 180, 183, 185, 186, 188, 194, 204, 206, 216
- Kabbalah. 269, 270
- Kasadya. 115
- Kasb'el. 115
- knowledge
and sex. 30–32
and violence. 30, 31
corrupting power of. 6, 30, 32, 40, 115
heavenly. 184
human and divine. 38, 46
limits of human. 6, 43
revealed. 2, 24, 31–33, 42, 43, 49, 56, 60, 65, 71, 72, 74, 78, 80, 88, 89, 103, 105, 135, 139, 144, 182, 184
secret. 6, 32, 33, 42, 43, 46, 48, 49, 56, 61, 113, 114, 115, 176, 182–84, 197, 228
- Kokabiel. 224
- Korah. 71
- Lactantius. 149
- Lamech. 79, 96
- Levi. 54, 208
- literary production. 10–12, 16, 21–23
Christian. 147
medieval Jewish. 260, 271
Rabbinic Jewish. 22, 144–46, 260
Second Temple Jewish. 54, 55, 144, 145
- Ma'aseh Bereshit*. 141, 207
- Ma'aseh Merhavah*. 141
- Maccabean Revolt. 59–61, 72, 73, 76, 85
- magic
as angelic teaching. 32, 37, 40, 92, 109, 114, 164, 175, 177, 181, 187, 220, 236, 256, 257, 267, 268
as transcental discourse. 254
Greco-Egyptian. 228, 252
Greco-Roman etiologies of. 40
Jewish. 207, 235, 252, 254
- Maḥaway. 96
- Mandaean. 254, 255, 270
- Mani, Manichees. 16, 18, 96–98, 128, 201, 215, 220, 221, 226, 227, 239, 240, 247, 248, 254, 255, 265, 270, 274, 276, 277
- Marcion, Marcionites. 155, 161, 201
- martyrdom. 162, 173
- Mastema. 89, 93–95, 98, 178
- Maṣḥafa Henok Nabiyy*. 3, 8, 17, 231, 276
modern Western discovery of. 3, 231
- Melito of Sardis. 7, 19, 145
- Melitus, Melitians. 200, 201
- Merkavah mysticism. 5, 15, 35, 238, 240, 242–45, 247, 269
- Mesopotamia. 41, 59, 68, 69, 226, 227, 247, 255, 264–66, 270
- messianism. 140, 269
- metalworking
and female vanity. 32, 35, 37, 38, 164, 176, 178, 267
and idolatry. 38, 256–57
and violence. 32, 38, 164
as angelic teaching. 31, 32, 37, 38, 40, 114
as invention of Cainites. 38
Greco-Roman etiologies of. 40
- Metatron. 236, 245–47, 249, 253, 255–56, 262, 265, 269
- Methuselah. 1, 79, 195, 196
- Michael. 109, 115
- Michael Syrus. 153, 225, 229
- Midrash. 10, 207, 236, 237, 249, 251, 259, 260
- Midrash of Šemḥazai and Azazel. 16, 240, 248, 258–60, 266, 268, 270, 271
- Minicius Felix. 175

- minut, minim*, 139–40, 142–43, 147, 207, 210, 275
- Moses. 145, 172, 215, 234, 263, 268
and Greek philosophy. 172, 181, 184, 202
as author. 54, 87, 89, 200
- motif of illicit angelic instruction. 11, 25, 28–31, 33, 34, 47, 81, 92, 93, 113, 120–21, 256–57
- Christian redeployment of. 15, 120, 160–61, 172, 174–75, 185–86, 188, 220
- chronographical use of. 219, 223, 224, 229
- epistemological ramifications of. 44, 46, 48, 65, 75, 181, 182, 184
- etiological use of. 6, 37, 47, 174, 179, 180, 224
- heresiological use of. 176, 177
- in medieval Judaism. 236, 261, 266–68
- inversion of. 89, 90, 113, 120, 181, 183, 229
- origin of. 39, 42
- polemical use of. 15, 161, 174, 188
- suppression of. 6, 14, 73, 75, 81, 86, 102, 120, 122
- Naamah. 264
- Nephilim*, 5, 107, 213–16, 263, 265–66
- New Prophecy. 197
- New Testament. 123
and Enochic texts and traditions. 4, 104, 105, 106, 109, 151, 229
canonization of. 193, 200
demonology in. 176, 188
Jews and Judaism in. 122
- Nicea, Council of. 148
- Noachite Commandments. 38
- Noah. 78, 79, 89, 91–94, 96, 158, 262
- North Africa. 149, 152, 188, 199, 228
- Og. 215, 235
- Ohyah. 96, 97
- orality and textuality. 9–12, 22, 23, 54, 55, 118, 145, 236–37, 269
- Origen. 20, 119, 138, 145, 148, 155, 188, 193–94, 197–98, 201, 204–5, 217, 219–20, 229, 271
- orthodoxy
Christian construction of. 125, 150, 162
Rabbinic construction of. 125, 143, 147, 150
- ouranography. 62, 67, 243
- “outside books”. 134, 140, 142, 143, 208, 234, 239, 271, 275
- Panodorus. 224, 229
- parabiblical literature. 9, 10, 16, 54, 55, 144, 145, 201, 228, 238, 270
- Paul. 86, 122, 178, 188
- Penume. 115
- persecution. 61, 62, 67, 77, 161, 162, 165, 168–74, 186, 187
- Pharisees. 85, 132, 142
- pharmacology. 40
as angelic teaching. 37, 40, 109
revelation to Noah of. 94
- Philo of Alexandria. 102, 107, 117, 198, 217, 220
- philosophy
and Christianity. 162, 171–73, 184, 186
as angelic teaching. 176, 181, 183, 184
- Pico della Mirandola. 2
- Plato. 172
- polytheism. 37, 165, 166, 172–74, 181
- priests, priesthood. 39, 60, 64, 65, 85, 124, 128, 146
- Prometheus. 39, 40, 184
- prophets, prophecy. 25, 46, 60, 72, 105, 146, 186, 193, 202, 247, 275
biblical. 62, 63, 68
Christian views of. 152–54
- Pseudepigrapha. 57, 134
history of scholarship on. 9, 274
- pseudepigraphy. 54, 55, 144, 145
apostolic. 147
Enochic. 54, 57, 80, 103
Isaiac. 200
Mosaic. 54, 87, 89, 200
- Pseudo-Clementine literature. 128, 264
- Ptolemy I Soter. 59
- Qumran community. 66, 73
Enochic texts and traditions in. 13, 14, 66, 85, 95, 98–101, 118–20, 133, 275
Jubilees in. 95, 99, 133
- R. Abbahu. 139
- R. Akiva. 134, 142–45
- R. Berekiah. 211
- R. Ishmael. 244, 249, 252, 254
- R. Joseph. 211, 259, 261, 266
- R. Moshe ha-Darshan. 258, 259, 263, 267, 268
- R. Simeon. 137, 138, 207, 208, 216, 219
- R. Yose. 139
- R. Zadok. 260, 262
- Rabbinic Judaism. 129, 146, 147, 240, 248
and 3 *Enoch*. 246, 250, 251
and Enochic texts and traditions. 13, 15, 16, 84, 123, 136, 140, 206–9, 213, 218, 237, 238, 273
and Hekhalot literature. 238

- and Second Temple Judaism. 156, 238, 240,
269, 271
emergence of. 124, 125, 129, 132, 159
Enoch in. 139, 234, 273
Ramael. 110
Rambam. 216
Raphael. 51
Rashi. 216, 261, 263
redaction
as authorial activity. 10, 14, 22
in Rabbinic literature. 144
Refaim. 215
Reuchlin, Johannes. 2
Roman Empire
christianization of. 189, 192, 194, 199, 207
Enochic texts and traditions in. 8, 15, 149,
191, 206, 226, 227, 273
Jews and Christians in. 161, 192, 222
Rufinus. 228
- sacrifice. 50, 164, 168, 186
Sadducees. 85, 142
Samael. 252
Sassanian Empire. 222, 226–28
Satan. 52, 98, 114, 116, 176, 177, 183, 252
and Azazel. 115, 178
and fallen angels. 115–16, 149, 168, 177,
187–88, 220
Scaliger, Joseph. 2
scribes, scribalism. 10
and apocalyptic literature. 43, 58
and Wisdom literature. 43
post-70. 124, 128, 146
Second Temple Jewish. 52, 55, 59, 60, 64, 65,
67–71, 73, 80, 84, 124, 144, 273
Scripture
Christian views of. 152–53, 189
concept of. 132, 133
Jewish views of. 53, 54, 56, 132, 143–46, 207,
239
sectarianism
Geslanic. 275
post-70. 129, 132, 147
Second Temple Jewish. 64, 66, 73, 85, 86
Seleucus I. 59
Seleucus IV. 73
self-definition
and text selection. 129, 159
Christian. 15, 122, 124, 129, 156, 157, 161, 162,
167, 174, 185, 187, 190
Rabbinic. 124, 142–44, 147, 156, 190
Šemḥazai. See Šemḥazah
Semiazos. 225
- Šemḥazah, Šemḥazai. 16, 28, 34, 97, 213–15,
235, 236, 240, 251, 263, 265, 267, 268
as father of Giants. 235, 262
as heavenly angel. 251, 261
as leader of Watchers. 27, 28
as one of the *Nephilim*. 214–16
as teacher. 30, 32, 33, 40, 261
repentance of. 262, 266, 267
Septuagint. 105, 107, 116, 118, 157, 165, 217
Serenus. 220
Serpent. 51, 178
Seth, Sethians. 76, 221–25, 266
Shekhinah. 256, 257
Shem. 93, 94
Sihon. 215, 235
sin
doctrine of original. 52, 189
human culpability for. 37, 73–74, 78, 81, 89,
95, 166
shared human and angelic culpability for.
31, 32, 35, 81
supernatural etiology of. 6, 35, 37, 47, 170,
186, 257
women's role in origins of. 35, 37, 179
Sinai, Mt. 89, 144, 145
Socrates. 170, 171, 173
Sodom, Sodomites. 11, 71, 104, 106–7, 210,
211–12
sons of God. 57, 123, 206, 214
allegorical interpretations of. 107, 198, 220,
222
as angels. 5, 15, 82, 102, 107, 116, 118, 137–38,
148, 156–57, 168, 213, 217–18, 251, 264, 266,
273
as Sethians. 221–25, 266
euhemeristic interpretations of. 107, 116,
137, 139, 156, 193, 202, 206–10, 212–13,
216–18, 220, 226, 235–36, 273
nature of intercourse with daughters of
men. 211, 212
Spain. 199
Symmachus. 117, 205, 216–18, 226
Syncellus, George. 2, 3, 6, 8, 20, 21, 36, 56, 153,
184, 214, 225, 229–31, 257, 258, 272
Syria. 128, 149, 152, 156, 199
- Targums. 136, 139, 213–16
Tatian. 149, 175
Temple. 60
Christian views of. 168
destruction of Second. 125, 128, 135, 147, 191
heavenly. 48, 64, 121
Second. 58, 60, 64, 65, 69, 70, 73, 85, 124

- Tertullian. 15, 20, 138, 149, 152–53, 155, 157–58, 175, 178–81, 183, 188–89, 194–98, 202, 204–5, 217, 220, 231
- testimonia*. 21, 153, 154, 157, 276
- textual transmission
 modern. 21, 231
 premodern. 11–12, 20, 22, 231, 274
- theodicy. 63, 71, 91, 100
- Theodotion. 205, 217
- Throne of God
 Enoch's vision of. 5, 48, 64, 242, 244
 in Hekhalot literature. 242, 244
- Titans. 107
- Torah. 41, 66, 131, 210
 and Enochic literature. 18, 38, 40, 52, 64, 89, 112
 and Jewish magic. 142, 207
 authority of. 52, 55, 60, 130, 131, 133, 144
 Oral. 10, 144, 145
 tours of heaven and earth. 3, 25, 41, 46, 48, 103
- Tubal-Cain. 38, 264
- Uriel. 50, 164
- Uzael. 264, 265, 267
- violence
 antediluvian. 6, 30–35, 38, 77, 81, 164
 demonic. 168, 170
- Watchers. *See* fallen angels
- Wisdom literature. 42, 43, 63, 68
 and apocalyptic literature. 60, 67, 69, 70
- women
 as temptresses. 35, 36, 111, 178–79
 vanity of. 35, 40, 112, 176, 178, 187
- writing
 as angelic teaching. 115
- Yavneh, so-called council of. 129
- Yeḳon. 114
- Yerahmeel ben Solomon. 258
- Yom Kippur. 91, 97, 98, 263
- Yosippon. 258, 260, 270
- Zamzumim*. 215
- Zohar*. 233
- Zoroastrianism. 255

REVELATION

