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The origins of jewish apocalyptic literature: Prophecy, babylon, and 1 enoch

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The Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature:
Prophecy, Babylon, and 1 Enoch

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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University of South Florida

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Dedication

This is dedicated to the people who have sacrificed for me over the last five years: my family. Kailey, who heard too many times, “Mommy can’t right now because I’m working on my thesis.” Now, Boo, Mommy can. Benjamin, for hearing the same words and for all those bike rides home with your sister in tow. Your sense of responsibility and cooperation make a mother proud. And to my Douglas: Your everlasting patience and support has been amazing. More powerful than any supernatural revelation is the devotion and loyalty of your love. *C’est finis.*

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THE ORIGINS OF JEWISH APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE:
PROPHECY, BABYLON, AND *I ENOCH*

Sarah Robinson

ABSTRACT

From what wells did the apocalyptic writers draw? What motivated them to write such bizarre and fantastic stories about the future end of history and battles between the forces of good and the forces of evil? The *Book of Daniel* is considered the first and only apocalypse of the Hebrew Bible, and it was the primary inspiration for much of the *Book of Revelation*, *Apocalypse of John* in the Christian New Testament. But well before *Daniel*, apocalyptic passages appeared in Jewish literature. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 came also the discovery of the oldest Jewish apocalypse, written in ancient Aramaic, and well-known in both ancient Judaism and early Christianity: a collection of books known as *I Enoch*. It was in these texts, especially the first and oldest one, the *Book of Watchers*, that apocalyptic imagery, including the Son of Man figure, first appeared in Jewish writing. Though scholars note developments from the Hebrew Prophets, particularly the Latter ones, a significant evolution took place. The question is why and when? My thesis is that the earliest Jewish apocalyptic writing, the *Book of Watchers*, *I Enoch 1-36*, was written as a result of the Babylonian Exile and its authors syncretized the Hebrew prophetic books with Babylonian elements. With the help of scholars specializing in Jewish apocalyptic origins, I hope to show how the roots of this fascinating aspect of religion, which captivates and often frightens twenty-first century humans, took hold twenty-five hundred years ago in Mesopotamia.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Few books of the Bible have captured the imagination of believers and nonbelievers alike as well as the apocalyptic ones. Their visions of other worlds and eschatological judgments have inspired countless interpretations and predictions of the end of history for over two millennia. And while many ancient cultures, including Egyptian, Greek and Persian, produced apocalyptic texts, it is the Jewish authors, canonized in the Bible that have been the basis for most of Western civilization's apocalyptic notions, inspiring writers from Dante to Le Haye. So, from what wells did the Jewish apocalyptic writers draw? What motivated them to write such bizarre and fantastic stories about the future end of history and battles between the forces of good and the forces of evil? What social position did they occupy? Were they, as E.P. Sanders says, written by "the oppressed within Israel or from "Israel" conceived of as oppressed"¹? Or were they written by "power holding priestly groups,"² as Stephen Cook proposes? What inspired the new themes and imagery in their writing? These types of questions have intrigued religious scholars for centuries.

History

According to Kvanvig, early scholars used the canonical writings, the Old Testament *Book of Daniel* and the New Testament *Apocalypse of John*, or *Revelation*, as a starting point for apocalyptic studies.³ Employing an historical-critical methodology, it was

¹E.P. Sanders. "The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses." In *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1983) 457.

²S. Cook. *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) 3.

³H. Kvanvig. *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch figure and of the Son of Man*. (Neurkirchen-Vluyn, 1988) 3.

initially presumed the apocalyptic writings developed out of prophecy.⁴ Kvanvig credits the foundation of apocalyptic studies to F. Lücke and A. Hilgenfeld, respectively, in the 1830's. During this time, due, in large part, to the publication of the Persian *Zend-Avesta* in 1774,⁵ there was great interest in Persian religion's influence on Judaism, with some scholars arguing it was the source of apocalyptic thought, which was considered too strange to have originated within Judaism.⁶ Lücke's hermeneutical considerations emphasized "the Jews not only as adopters but also as transformers of the materials" of Persian religion.⁷ So scholars concluded the source of angels and demons, and dualism in *Daniel* was Persia. Then, new sources became influential in the mid-nineteenth century, including the *Book of Jubilees* and Syriac *Baruch Apocalypse*.⁸ These were followed by the publication of the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, prompting Lenormant and Gunkel to argue for Babylonian influence on *Daniel*. And by the turn of the century, Boussett was considering the importance of folk traditions on apocalyptic literature.⁹

Twentieth Century

Two major archeological discoveries in the twentieth century were no less than revolutionary to the field of apocalyptic studies. The first was the Ugarit tablets discovered in 1929 at Ras Shamra, containing ancient Canaanite myths understood to be

⁴Cook, 3.

⁵Kvanvig, 5.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid, 7. See also N. Cohen of *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993) 166-67.

⁸Ibid. With these discoveries, in 1850 for *Jubilees* and 1866 for Syriac *Baruch*, came a growing understanding of the importance of non-canonical and non-Jewish influences on Jewish apocalypses..

⁹J.J. Collins. "Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism." *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 8.

source material for the book of Genesis.¹⁰ The second was the celebrated Dead Sea Scrolls, which brought the importance of the Enoch tradition to center stage. While research was limited for various reasons for over forty years following the initial discovery in 1947, with the full publication of the microphotographs of the scrolls in 1991 scholarship has continued to yield fruit. Of significant importance to apocalyptic studies has been the view that the Enoch books were written by priests or scribes, in contrast to earlier views that the apocalypses were the fruit of popular imagination, or non-Jewish influences. "While the apocalypses were regarded as evidence for folk beliefs by scholars such as Bousset at the beginning of the century, recent scholarship has tended to view them as scribal phenomena."¹¹ But this is still in dispute.¹² Finally, 1979 has been called a "landmark year in the study of apocalypticism"¹³ as the Uppsala symposium brought scholars together and, while much remained in dispute, there was agreement on the corpus of relevant literature for the first time. "There was widespread agreement that a distinction should be made between the literary genre *apocalypse* and the wider, looser categories of 'apocalyptic' or 'apocalypticism'."¹⁴ Of the genre *apocalypse*, two types were discussed: 'historical,' such as Daniel, and heavenly ascents, as with Enoch.¹⁵ Agreeing the "research history of apocalyptic [is either] exciting or confusing,"

¹⁰Kvanvig, 9.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²See, for example, J. Charlesworth, "Folk Traditions in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature." In *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 91-113.

¹³Collins, 8.

¹⁴Ibid. But in the very same book, Hellholm rejects there was any consensus on this at all. "Methodological Reflections on the Problem of Definition of Generic Texts." In *Mysteries and Revelations*, 135.

¹⁵Ibid, 13.

depending on one's point of view, Kvanvig argued for a focus on the oldest apocalyptic tradition in Jewish texts, that is, *I Enoch*, hence the title of his book.

Research Problem

And so, while scholars mostly agree on the corpus of texts considered apocalypses, there is still disagreement over terminology and origins. It is origins that are of my concern. If apocalypses were written by conventicles under stress, then it is easy to explain them as wishful thinking. The authors may have lacked power, or perceived themselves as such, but their writing gave the persecuted hope for a better time and/or place, where God would provide relief from their struggle and exact punishment on their enemies. But if apocalypses were written by power holders, the question arises as to why? What motivations were at play? Could they have served to affirm that power? And what were their influences? Were they drawing primarily from prophetic tradition but also borrowing from 'outside' influences? Or were there different currents within Judaism that produced apocalyptic literature at different times for different reasons? While there is ample evidence that Jewish apocalyptic literature draws from many wells from the cultural milieu of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, the earliest, the *Book of the Watchers (Enoch 1-36)*, seems to date from the Babylonian exile or shortly thereafter and, therefore, was indeed written under social pressures. While there is still the argument that Zoroastrianism is the source of Jewish apocalypticism, the lack of reliable sources makes any certainty unlikely. In addition, even if reliable sources dating to the Persian period existed, the Babylonian Exile predates it anyway. So, therefore, my focus is on the oldest threads, the ones written in Mesopotamia. In order to understand any piece of writing, one must attempt to know some basic information: who wrote it? Why? Where? For Whom? And for what purpose?¹⁶ My focus then will concern these

¹⁶ See George Nickelsburg's exhaustive work *I Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of I Enoch*, Chapters 1-36; 81-108. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001)1-3. He explains two fundamental approaches he takes toward understanding *I Enoch*: literary analysis and historical investigation.

fundamental questions. My thesis is that the earliest Jewish apocalypse, *1 Enoch 1-36*, *The Book of the Watchers* was written as a result of the Babylonian exile and syncretizes the Hebrew prophets with Babylonian elements. This implies, then, that the first apocalyptic writing was not dualistic in nature, but later additions, most likely during the Persian period added that element.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Nickelsburg, 40-41 for a discussion of dualism in Enoch. Thank you to Dr. Paul Schneider for pointing out this implication of my thesis, which I otherwise would not have realized.

CHAPTER TWO: OUT OF PROPHECY

When modern scholars first began exploring the origins of apocalyptic writing in the nineteenth century, most of them looked for non-Jewish influences, particularly as new sources became available to Western scholars, beginning with the Persian *Zend-Avesta* in the late eighteenth century, and continuing with various other apocalyptic texts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This viewpoint dominated scholarship well into the twentieth century, and is evident in, for example, the introduction to his book on the subject by Russell, who comments that the apocalyptic writings “contain elements that clearly show the influence of alien thought.”¹⁸ And so much effort was put forth into the exact nature and origins of this “alien thought.” But Stephen Cook calls these quests for outside origins misguided, and calls it a watershed moment when modern scholars started looking to Israelite society for the roots of apocalyptic literature instead.¹⁹

In 1959, Otto Plöger presented an influential original study of the origins and development of Old Testament apocalyptic literature. His argument traced two lines of development in Israelite religion. One of these lines had no traces of eschatological thinking, while the other was thoroughly apocalyptic. Plöger associated these two lines of thought with two groups that opposed the policies of Antiochus Epiphanes. One group, the Hasidim, produced the Daniel apocalypse and represented a dualistic-eschatological tradition. In contrast, the second group, the Maccabeans, interpreted events from a noneschatological point of view and saw themselves as involved in a this-worldly revolt against mundane oppressors.²⁰

¹⁸D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press: 1964) 20.

¹⁹Cook, 6.

²⁰*Ibid.*

But since Daniel was not the first Jewish apocalypse, the Hasidim were drawing on earlier apocalyptic expressions already existing in Jewish writing. And while Cook agrees that the origins of apocalyptic lie in Israel's own traditions, he disagrees with the view held by many current scholars that apocalypticism is the child of prophecy. He recognizes the importance of the prophets to apocalyptic writings, and uses the term 'proto apocalyptic' to discuss certain prophetic books, but his main disagreement is with those who argue that disenfranchised conventicle groups are behind the creation of apocalyptic texts. Citing scholars who argued "wisdom is the source of apocalyptic literature," he suggests, therefore, that it is also possible to conceive that other circles, "such as priestly groups are also possible sources of apocalyptic literature."²¹ But even as he argues that priestly elites were not socially oppressed, he does allow that they may have written and used apocalyptic texts to unite postexilic factions "in a time of crisis."²²

Conversely, Norman Cohn explains that the exiled elite, "a few thousand nobles, officials, priests and skilled artisans, with their families," while given homes and land in Babylon, were, nevertheless "an unhappy people: exile was perceived as a state of chaos, comparable with death itself."²³ Over the course of just a few generations, these exiles wrote texts that contain apocalyptic ideas. And while it seems very likely that there was diversity among exilic groups, with some continuing but changing the traditions of the pre-exilic prophets, and some producing the earliest Enoch books, all were molded by their Babylonian experience. Therefore, while I agree with Stephen Cook to the extent that there are apocalyptic origins within Old Testament tradition, I disagree that it is the

²¹Cook, 12.

²²Ibid, 84.

²³N Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 148. Not everyone agrees with this point of view. For an alternative take on the situation in Babylon, see Sacchi.

only source. Those traditions were themselves influenced by “foreign elements.” And while the main focus of my study is *1 Enoch(1-36)*, a brief discussion of these Hebrew Bible books will serve as a foundation to which the Enoch books may be compared and contrasted. While there are some dissenters when it comes to apocalyptic roots, no one denies the importance of Old Testament prophecy, whatever other influences or motivations might have been at play.

Most scholars believe that apocalyptic writing developed out of prophecy, indeed that it was a continuation of the ideas of the prophets, recast in “new lines in the light of new needs.”²⁴ Or, as Barton puts it, apocalyptic writings “are the lineal descendants of the old tales about prophets who had been admitted to the council of Yahweh,” but adds that “they are immensely more complex and elaborate, reflecting the taste of a later time.”²⁵ But, as we shall see, the beginnings of those distinct lines began well before the Maccabean period that produced the first biblical and only apocalypse in the Hebrew cannon, that is, the *Book of Daniel*.

While acknowledging distinct differences between prophecy and apocalypses, such as longer periods of history or seemingly more definitive divine intervention in the latter, Barton actually rejects the notion that there was a transitional phase from prophecy to apocalyptic (even rejecting the noun ‘apocalyptic,’) arguing that prophecy continued, but the manner of revelation changed. The prophet became the seer that continued to warn Israelites of divine consequences for their actions. Hanson agrees with this to the extent that “the visionary element which lies at the heart of apocalyptic extends throughout Israel’s religious history; that is, the element of the prophet’s vision of the saving cosmic activities of the Divine Warrior and his council.”²⁶ Hanson points to early

²⁴D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic Writing* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964) 92.

²⁵Barton, 124.

²⁶Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) 16.

Israelite literature, where powerful visionary elements are evident, for example, *Josh* 10.12:

On the day that the Lord gave the Amorites over to the Israelites,
Joshua spoke to the Lord: and he said in the sight of Israel,
‘Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.’
And the sun stood still, and the
moon stopped,
until the nation took vengeance
on their enemies.

Cohn says this “Deuteronomistic History,” of which the *Book of Joshua* is a part, interprets Israelite history “in terms of the twin concepts of election and covenant,” and that every military or political defeat was interpreted as Yahweh’s punishment of his chosen people for their infidelity to the Law.²⁷ But a series of political disasters culminating in the overwhelming defeat and desecration of the Temple, and the subsequent captivity in Babylon was more than even the prophets had foretold of. “It was experienced as a collapse of the ordered world itself,”²⁸ and the desperation is felt in *Jer* 4.23-5. But Cohn says the response to these events produced the new outlook of future redemption, begun by the exiled priest Ezekiel.

Ezekiel

The book of *Ezekiel* was started by the Jerusalem priest who was taken into captivity in 597 BCE and who spent the rest of his life ministering to the exiles. He and his disciples represent what Cohn calls the “Yahweh alone” faction that had existed for a long time in Israelite tradition, right along with other polytheistic ideas exhorting Yahweh as superior to other gods.²⁹ While some Jews must have interpreted the

²⁷Cohn, 146.

²⁸Ibid, 147.

²⁹Cohn discusses this in the history of the Northern and Southern kingdoms as evident in numerous books, such as Hosea 11:2; 13:4 and Zephaniah 1:4-6, pp. 141-44.

Babylonian conquest as Yahweh's weakness next to the Babylonian Marduk's strength, and while the superior sophistication of the Babylonian civilization must have seemed perplexing to Yahweh's chosen people (for how could their enemies seemingly be rewarded?) Ezekiel saw Yahweh's hand firmly in control. While the Israelites had not been faithful in the past, if the ones now in exile in Babylon were, they would be redeemed.

The present crisis, we are assured, will be the final crisis. The community of deportees will make it so—for the deportees are repenting, they are returning to Yahweh without reservation, abandoning all other gods. So the exiled Israelites will become the true Israel, Yahweh's own people, the one and only group with a claim to his support. And Yahweh in return will bring them back to Judah where, in the Temple rebuilt on Mount Zion, they will establish his worship as the one and only cult."³⁰

Not only will Yahweh restore his chosen people to their rightful place in Jerusalem, he will bring justice to their enemies: "I stretch out my hand against you to make a desolation and a waste. I lay your towns in ruins;" (*Ezek 35:3-4*). Cohn goes on to say that the restoration has no place for the majority population that remained in Judah, and that the "contempt for the peasantry" felt by the "social and intellectual elite," represented by *Ezekiel*, is evident in the punishment Yahweh will bring: "As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and those who are in the open field I will give to the wild animals to be devoured." (*Ezek 33: 27*).³¹

A new order, a new creation will follow the devastation. This new creation will be superior to any time in Israel's past. Sacchi explains, "It was understandable only in that age of the First Covenant was an age of imperfection, as could easily be seen in common experience. The great leap comes about with Ezekiel. God has already applied

³⁰Ibid, 149.

³¹Cohn, 149.

the new retributory principle, that of the new order.”³² The older idea that God punishes the sons for the sins of the fathers gave way to the new idea of individualism and especially of individual retribution.

Here the idea of “election,” that is, reward to a certain part of Israel and simultaneous punishment for the rest, is clearly in play. This idea plays prominently in apocalyptic literature. And, whereas the pre-exilic prophets had emphasized Yahweh’s hand in history, the writers of *Ezekiel* emphasize his hand in the future. In chapters 38 and 39, which many see as the seeds of apocalyptic writing, these ideas are combined with imagery that will become standard features in later apocalyptic texts. “The writer makes use of the battle motif in which the powers of evil, and in particular the Gentile nations are destroyed. Reference is made to ‘Gog of the land of Magog’, a mysterious figure who leads the forces of evil against God in battle.”³³ Frank M. Cross summarizes it this way: “The transformation of classical prophecy into proto-apocalyptic takes place in the oracles of Ezekiel before’s one’s eyes.”³⁴

Scholarly opinion varies, however, on the exact nature of the Ezekiel school and some have particularly relevant ideas for my main focus on the Enoch books. For example, according to Boccaccini, “Ben Zion Wacholder takes Ezekiel as the forerunner of an anti-Zadokite opposition party, emphasizing the importance of the exiled prophet-priest for the development of Enochic Judaism, a role of founding father that scholars in Jewish mysticism and apocalypticism also attribute to Ezekiel.”³⁵ He says, though, that Zadokite Judaism also claims *Ezekiel* as its ‘parent.’ (See Cook) Boccaccini says this is

³²Sacchi, 107.

³³Russell, 89. Much speculation has occurred on the origin of Gog and Magog. Some see Babylonian origins.

³⁴F. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 225, n. 15.

³⁵Boccaccini, 75.

perfectly understandable.

In the context of the Babylonian exile, Ezekiel's dissociation of God's heavenly abode from the Jerusalem temple offered the common priestly background from which both Enochic and Zadokite traditions arose. The disagreement and therefore the emergence of two distinctive parties would occur only later, after the return from the exile, and would concern the modalities of the restoration. While the Zadokites claimed that God's order had been fully restored with the construction of the second temple, the Enochians still viewed restoration as a future event and gave cosmic dimensions to a crisis that for the Zadokites had momentarily affected only the historical relationships between God and Israel.

The problems of the Exile and Restoration are central to understanding certain ideas that grew in importance in post-exilic Judaism. For example, following the deportation of the king, there were prophecies of Jehoiachin's return. "Therefore, the hopes of restoration and freedom did have some concrete basis in the historical situation itself."³⁶ In addition, since it was the wealthy and ruling class that was deported, and since the Babylonians were basically "hands off," Sacchi, who dates Ezekiel to 520-15 BCE, suggests that the Jews who remained may not have necessarily been unhappy about the situation.

In Judea it was still held that Yhwh had remained in the temple and continued to protect Israel with his presence. As far as the exiles were concerned, it was believed that Yhwh had caused them to be sent away, that they were no longer under his protection. "Even some prophets, called 'foxes' by Ezekiel (13.4), were busy pronouncing oracles in favour of the stability of the situation. Ezekiel, in exile, proclaimed the opposite to the exiles (11.17;15, 20 and 38); the Glory of god had left the temple (chs. 1 and 10)."³⁷

³⁶Sacchi, 47.

³⁷Ibid, 49.

The only policy allowing the Davidic line's survival meant favouring the Judean subjects and the Great King. The Exiles must have seen the monarchy as a traitor- they could not accept the restructuring of Judea and the confiscation of property. "Ezekiel's reaction against those remaining in the homeland and against the monarchy was characterized by harsh tones (22.6 and 45.9) and radical theology. He demolishes the idea that Israel's salvation is bound to the house of David, as prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah."³⁸

David was no longer the Messiah's ancestor, a figure from the past; the real David was yet to come, but not necessarily from his line. Sacchi concludes then that the notion that the kingdom of Judah came to an end with the death of Zedekiah in 587 is incorrect.

All of this illustrates how the Babylonian Exile divided Jews to the point that they would fight a civil war, and develop differing and opposing views, some of which were expressed in the form of apocalyptic writing. The Enochian view will be discussed in detail in my next chapter. For now, I will just briefly mention here that some scholars see the seeds of the Enochic tradition in *Ezekiel*. For example, Vanderkam presupposes an *Ezekiel* primacy for *1 Enoch*. In reference to the Tree of Life, "the terse text of Genesis has been enriched in *1 Enoch* 24-25 by addition of imagery from *Ezekiel* 28:13-14. There the prophecy says about the king of Tyre:

You were in Eden, the Garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering
{nine kinds are listed}.
With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed you
you were on the holy mountain of God;

From *Ezekiel* the author has taken the stone imagery, the mountains, and the reference to stones of fire."³⁹ Vanderkam also says *1 Enoch* borrowed from *Ezekiel* in naming the middle of the earth in 26:1 (*Ezek* 5:5, 38:12), another concept I will discuss

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹VanderKam, 56-57.

further in the next chapter. Finally, VanderKam suggests the emphasis on water may have come from *Ezek* 47:1-2.

And from there I was conveyed to the centre of the earth and saw a blessed place in which there were trees [whose branches blossomed continuously.] There I was shown a holy mountain; and there was water coming out] from underneath [the mountain, from the East, and going down towards the South.] (*1Enoch* 26.1-3)

While Cook disagrees with earlier scholars who dated *Ezekiel* 38-39 later than the rest of the book,⁴⁰ he does agree with the importance of those chapters as the root of all apocalypses, including *1Enoch*, *Daniel* and *Revelation*. However, unlike Wacholder, Cook argues Zadokite priests made up the Ezekiel school, although he does accept the idea of diversity within Zadokite priesthood. Cook takes issue with Hanson (a lot) who claimed that apocalyptic writing in these books was written by visionary circles in opposition to temple priests who compromised themselves during the Persian period. Whatever the truth is, one thing is clear and that is that later the prophets “forged the visionary and realistic aspects of the religious experience into one tension-filled whole, allowing Yahwism to develop into an ethical religion in many ways unique in the ancient world.”⁴¹ This is most evident, Hanson says, in *Isaiah*, where the prophet integrates cosmic vision with earthly, mundane responsibilities. And particularly in Second Isaiah, which seems to be in tension with some of the priestly concerns of *Ezekiel*.

⁴⁰See, for example, Russell, 88

⁴¹Hanson, 17.

Isaiah

From specific details mentioned in oracles in the first part of the book of *Isaiah*, scholars have dated it to before the Exile. However, like the early *IEnoch* books, *Isaiah* 40-66 (Deutero or Second Isaiah) was written during the exile, and Cohn explains how Second Isaiah developed Ezekiel's ideas about the chosen exiles. Not only will they be restored and their enemies punished, Yahweh's omnipotence and position as one and only 'Lord of creation' is emphasized: "The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (*Isa* 55:12).⁴² Cohn says the prophet repeatedly describes how shocked Israel's opponents will be, some of them made slaves to the Israelites in order for all to know "that men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am Yahweh, there is no other" (*Isa* 45:6). "The author's interest in cosmogony was unique up to his time; it was used to emphasize the concept of God as exclusive creator and lord of all, whose ultimate glorious manifestation will be accompanied by a new creation."⁴³ This new creation was in the future, and "Babylon will be the object of Yahweh's wrath," while Jerusalem "will be the home to which the delivered will return."⁴⁴ According to Hanson, when this reality did not occur, the optimism that characterized prophecy up to that point was replaced by "the pessimism of apocalyptic eschatology,"⁴⁵ and of the visionaries that believed less in the ability of human activity as a means to salvation and more in the belief that only sudden Divine intervention would save Israel from earthly evil. (This will be discussed in the next section on Zechariah.)

⁴²Cohn, 156.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Hanson, 25.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Drawing on the language of the Near Eastern combat myth of a “Creator God and his opponent, the Dragon of chaos,”⁴⁶ *Isaiah* 51:9-10 places “Yahweh’s imminent deliverance of his people from their exile in Babylon . . . in the perspective of the cosmogonic struggle:

Awake! Awake! Clothe yourself in strength, arm of Yahweh.
Awake as in the past, in times of generations long ago. Did
you not split Rahab in two, and pierce the Dragon through?
Did you not dry up the sea, the waters of the great Abyss, to
make the seabed a road for the redeemed to cross?⁴⁷

Hanson suggested this transformation from prophecy to apocalyptic writing was a result, then, of an “inner-community struggle in the period of the Second Temple between visionary and hierocratic elements.”⁴⁸

This is supported by Sacchi, who says that the changing of attitudes followed the return to Jerusalem, where a new “unified conception of the Covenant,” arose.⁴⁹ Explaining how tension between those who left and those who stayed (i.e. between the exiles/priests and Judeans/king (Zerubbabel) resulted in an attempt at compromise. Sacchi sees evidence in *Isaiah*. 42.6 for the idea that the king embodied the Covenant. But the exiles’ idea that God had left and now returns is behind Isa. 40.3, 10 (‘In the wilderness, prepare the way of Yhwh’). Ultimately, civil war broke out, and the role of the monarchy was reduced. The exiles won and the perception of the Law and Covenant changed. The author of “Deutero-Isaiah” attempted to salvage the idea of the Davidic kingship by “confirm[ing] that the instrument of salvation was not the Law, understood

⁴⁶McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994) 22.

⁴⁷Ibid, 24.

⁴⁸Hanson, 29.

⁴⁹Sacchi, 102.

as the foundation and essence of the Covenant, but the divine Promise once made to David, and now extended (again by divine goodness) to the entire people-to the whole people, not to the temple.”⁵⁰ In this way, Second Isaiah can be seen to be in tension with Ezekiel, who promoted a very strict priestly hierarchy based on Zadokite lineage. Sacchi explains that this left some problems open and the priesthood tried unsuccessfully to inherit the role of heir to the monarchy, protector of the Covenant. Ultimately, there were differences in views that were not reconciled:

On the one hand the Deuteronomic idea that the Covenant and the Law coincided seems to be confirmed, that is, that the Law was considered to be the sum of the clauses making up the Covenant. At the same time, on the other hand, the idea that the Law had its own value independent of the Covenant remained alive as well. In other words, in some circles the idea that the Law was the only instrument of salvation remained alive, while the concept of the Covenant seems to have been assimilated into that of election.⁵¹

It is this idea of ‘election’ that is most relevant to apocalyptic writing. God “elects” special individuals to receive and relate revelations which, in turn, are meant to be received by the ‘elect’ of a future generation. “In Second Isaiah . . . from the sixth century, and in part in the latter oracles of the book of Ezekiel, we discern a vast transformation in the characters of prophecy.”⁵² It is worth mentioning that our classification, our distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic writing is next to meaningless for the writers of the texts. Over history, too, they were categorized

⁵⁰Ibid, 100.

⁵¹Sacchi, 102.

⁵²F.M.Cross, “New Directions in the Study of Apocalyptic,” (Journal for Theology and the Church, 6 Apocalypticism, ed. By R.Funk, NY: Herder and Herder, 1969) 164.

differently, as Barton points out.⁵³ “In discussions of the transitions from prophecy to ‘apocalyptic’ it is quite common to speak of a lengthening of historical perspective in post-exilic prophecy, which eventually led to features such as the periodization of history.”⁵⁴ The last period, the eschaton, became increasingly more important, as is evident in the post-exilic book of Zechariah.

Zechariah

Further development of apocalyptic ideas can be found in the post-exilic prophecy of Zechariah. The son of a priest, the prophet Zechariah is concerned about the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of the Jerusalem community with the power of the priesthood in the forefront of his mind. This focus on the priesthood in *Zech* 1-8 supports Cook’s thesis that priestly circles in power in postexilic Jerusalem authored apocalyptic texts.⁵⁵ There is a radical eschatology and a dualism not expressed before; Cook views Zechariah’s dualism as representing two camps: those who side with God in Jerusalem vs. those who are against him at the anti-temple in Babylon. His audience is urged to choose sides (leave Babylon).⁵⁶

Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the Lord;
for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven,

⁵³Barton, 144. Origen, he notes, considered Daniel a prophetic book. He points out that nobody would dispute calling Jacob a prophet, yet he is not officially labeled as one. He also does not distinguish between the manner of prophecy, that is, utterances, or the manner of apocalypses, that is dream visions. Origen was more concerned about the *status* of the books, as opposed to the categorizing of them.

⁵⁴Barton, 198.

⁵⁵Cook, 153.

⁵⁶Ibid, 130..

says the Lord. Up! Escape to Zion, you that live with daughter Babylon. (Zech. 2:6-7).

These political inspirations are also supported by Sacchi who suggests historical records show that the exiled Jews may have been slow to return to Jerusalem. As I mentioned above, Sacchi notes the divisions between those who left and those who stayed behind. “The returned exiles ended up coming more and more into conflict with those who had remained, to the point of excluding the latter from the community and considering them foreigners.”⁵⁷ Zechariah depicts the growing power of the high priest in the anointment of both Zerubbabel and Joshua, “once an exclusively royal attribute.”⁵⁸ Zechariah’s view that God is in control, that a new restoration is at hand, is evident in how there is no need for walls around the Temple. “For I will be a wall of fire all around it, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within it.”(Zech. 2:5). The conception of God as “the real ruler over the coming age of bliss,” was replacing, at least for some, the notion of a future Davidic king as “the chances of a restoration of the dynasty dwindled to nothing.”⁵⁹ Israel’s collective historio-mythical past was increasingly employed as a reminder of God’s power. Just as he once controlled the Red Sea and liberated them from the powerful Egyptians, so too would Yahweh protect unarmed Jerusalem and his sanctuary. By choosing Joshua and completely dismissing the charges of Satan, seen here as merely the prosecuting angel of God’s court, God was seen as in charge and the people of Judah and Israel need only to unite. “God himself would be the true and impregnable defense against all enemies (Zech. 2.8-9).”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Sacchi, 125

⁵⁸Ibid, 63.

⁵⁹Cohn, 159.

⁶⁰Sacchi, 65.

And so, on one hand, some scholars detect an optimism in Zechariah. Hope for the coming of the “Golden Age,” ushered in by a messianic leader following God’s battle victory over evil Gentiles is expressed in apocalyptic ideas that, for the first time, shows a considerable increase of interest in angels and the role played by Satan as ‘the adversary’ (3.1). Likewise, Cook points to an eschatological feast theme (*Zech* 14:16) as the Feast of the Booths became very important to the postexilic community. It was envisioned as part of “the much-hoped-for millennial prosperity (*Zech* 8:12; 10:1) and its motifs thus logically shaped the apocalyptic expectations and expressions of the Zechariah millennial group. YHWH’s eschatological kingship and this cultic feast are properly linked at *Zech* 14:16.”⁶¹

On the other hand, other scholars also detect a pessimistic view of history, a feature that is often described as being characteristic of full-blown apocalypses. For example, Cook asserts, “In 1973, Hartmut Gese argued that *Zechariah* 1-8 is the oldest “apocalypse known to us,” and it is clear that Zechariah lacks hope in history and does not think anything but God’s intervention will overthrow evil.⁶² And while Cook interprets *Zech.* 4:14 as containing Davidic ideas, with Zechariah looking forward to the expected high priest and the prince of the coming millennium, Sacchi argues that *Zech.* 6:9-15 was altered “with the precise intent of making the anointed one of the house of David disappear,” in favor of a priestly one.⁶³ Clearly, there is still a lack of consensus, just as there seems to have been in post-exilic Jerusalem, regarding the interpretation of God’s plans according to Zechariah.

More relevant to my thesis, *Zechariah* 1-8 contains similar features to those seen in *Ezekiel*, for example, visionary experiences “with colorful imagery and fantastic

⁶¹Cook, 148.

⁶²Ibid, 156.

⁶³Sacchi, 67.

symbolic figures, which may reflect the influence of Babylonian mythology.”⁶⁴ These include another-worldly mediator, superhuman entities: Satan, stork-women, multicolored horses, and numerology, particularly an emphasis on the number seven.⁶⁵ In the second part of the book, attributed to a contemporary of Zechariah, there are also very interesting features. “The prophecy of Zechariah contains similar imagery [to *Enoch* 26.1] about the future: ‘On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter’ (*Zech* 14:8).”⁶⁶ Similarly, Kvanvig draws parallels between the journeys of *Enoch* 20-36 and the visions of Zechariah. “In four of these visions we find the same main structure as in the Enoch sequences: Vision; Question of the visionary; Answer by the *angelus interpretes*. The difference is that the passage about movement is lacking in Zechariah.”⁶⁷ Finally, on one last interesting note, Sacchi explains that after the restoration, prophecy was limited for “reasons of stability of the state,” where there was to be only one prophet per generation. That explains *Zech.* 13 1-6, on which he comments: “Even though the text seems to refer to eschatological time (‘On that day’), the context demonstrates that it is rooted in the situation of the author’s day.”⁶⁸

Joel

The final prophetic book that is particularly relevant to this study is the book of Joel. To begin with, Vanderkam notes the prophecy mentioned above in *Zech* 14:8, containing similar imagery as found in *Enoch* 26.1 is also present in *Joel*. Vanderkam

⁶⁴Russell, 90.

⁶⁵Cook, 130.

⁶⁶VanderKam, 58.

⁶⁷Kvanvig, 67.

⁶⁸Sacchi, 115-16.

says “Joel combines features found in *Ezekiel* and *Zechariah* regarding a miraculous river that flows from the temple:

‘In that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
the hills shall flow with milk, and all the stream beds
of Judah shall flow with water; a fountain shall come
forth from the house of the Lord and water the Wadi Shittim’”
(*Joel* 3:18 [English]; 4:18 [Hebrew]).

Speaking of geography, Milik points out that in *Joel* 4:18, there is an important ravine, the Wa[^]di Qaddum, which is also mentioned in *En.26*.⁶⁹ The importance of geography will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

Cook calls the book of *Joel* “an important witness to the millennialism within the Zadokite priesthood of Yehud long after the completion of the temple in 515 B.C.E.”⁷⁰ He disagrees with scholars who divide *Joel* into an historical part one and an apocalyptic part two, maintaining that doing so ignores cultic emphases of *Joel* 1-2. Cook also, therefore, disagrees with crediting the second part to “peripheral groups, seen as those opposed to those in power in the temple.”⁷¹ He cites several scholars who adopted this point of view, including Hanson, who asserted the authors of *Joel* “criticized the Zadokite hierocracy and viewed the central institutions of their society as defiled.”⁷²

Cook argues, in direct contrast, that there is unity in *Joel* and that the locusts and drought in the beginning were catalysts for apocalyptic worldview of temple priests who saw them as harbingers of the ‘Day of YWHW.’ But, not willing to accept crises or

⁶⁹Milik, ed., with collaboration of Matthew Black. *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, 36.

⁷⁰Cook, 167.

⁷¹Ibid, 168.

⁷²Cook, 170.

social stress as inspirations for apocalypticism, Cook explains that the priests had already accepted the idea of the eschaton based on their readings of *Ezekiel* or *Zechariah*, and so they saw the locusts and drought as just putting the end time on their radar screen. Arguing that the millennial group of Joel was like the group of *Zechariah*, he explains that they both “held central power within an endogenous environment,”⁷³ and that the Persians left Judeans alone. He sees no evidence of an anti-temple authorship, nor is there any evidence of anger against another faction, thus dismissing the notion of scholars who say factional infighting is behind postexilic apocalyptic. In fact, Cook thinks Joel avoids alienating other groups and calls for unity in the temple cult to find God’s salvation. “Joel’s message thus functioned as a strong support for the Zadokites.”

However, while Cook may be correct about Joel’s priestly authorship and calls for unity, does that not indicate that there *was* division in Judea? And just because apocalyptic writing was, perhaps, by this time,⁷⁴ being penned by power-holding temple priests, this does not mean it took root in such circles. As the next chapters will show, there is plenty of evidence that apocalypses had already been written by Jewish authors for quite some time by the time of the book of *Joel*. And there is also evidence to suggest that Cook is wrong about the factional fighting.

Nevertheless, apocalyptic ideas certainly found expression in the Hebrew Prophets. But, as Collins comments, this is only part of the puzzle of the rise of Jewish apocalypses. “While prophecy may indeed be the single most important source on which the apocalyptists drew, the tendency to assimilate apocalyptic literature to the more familiar world of the prophets risks losing sight of its stranger mythological and cosmological components.”⁷⁵ As Martha Himmelfarb points out, the trauma of the

⁷³Cook, 170.

⁷⁴Sacchi dates Joel to the 4th -3rd centuries BCE., 194.

⁷⁵Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 15.

Babylonian conquest and exile resulted in “a feeling of distance between God and humanity, a feeling unknown in the religion of Israel before the exile.”⁷⁶ One of the results of this distance was a change in authority from prophecy to interpretation, interpretation of visions. This would require special visionaries who would, in turn, require assistance in deciphering revelations. “The heroes of the Bible talked with God, but the heroes of the apocalypses, on the whole, talk with angels.”⁷⁷ The next chapter will explain the first Jewish hero who did just that.

⁷⁶M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983, 89.

⁷⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE- ENOCH: CHILD OF A MIXED MARRIAGE

When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methusaleh. Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. (Gen. 5:21-24)

Besides a brief appearance in the book of *Genesis*, Enoch is only mentioned, in references to that appearance, in a few other biblical books, none of them in the Hebrew canon.⁷⁸ But in many extracanonical books, from Jewish, Christian, Manichean and Muslim traditions, he figures prominently. Enoch is, in a sense, a sort of religious superhero, and he was viewed that way in antiquity, as the many texts ascribed to him attest. Only the oldest, however, and therefore a Jewish text, is of concern here. Known collectively as *1 Enoch*, in contrast to the later Christian apocalypse *2 Enoch*, it exists in full in Ethiopic, which was translated from Greek in the 4th century CE. Found abundantly in fragmentary form at Qumran, the Aramaic originals have been dated to the 3rd century BCE, and are thought to contain older segments.

These books contain the first full-blown Jewish apocalypses, and Enoch is the first character to experience a revelatory journey to an otherworldly realm. Thought to have been written over the course of several hundred years following the Exile and the Restoration, they mark the beginnings of a genre that would eventually develop and include the biblical apocalypses, the book of *Daniel* and the *Apocalypse of John*, or *Revelation*. In addition, they were considered scripture by some, including the Qumran sect and some early Christians.⁷⁹ Milik even suggests there was a Pentateuch of Enoch at

⁷⁸Heb 11:5; Sir 44:16; Jude 14.

⁷⁹See VanderKam/Adler, eds. *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

the beginning of the first century BCE, which was later rejected by Rabbinic Judaism and altered by Christians. One book replaced by Christians was the *Book of Giants*, which “was ‘canonized’ by the Manichaeans” in the third century.⁸⁰ While scholars differ on the exact dating of the Enoch books, and particularly whether or not the oldest sections predate the final redaction of *Genesis*, there is near universal agreement on the importance of *1 Enoch* for the understanding of the origins of Jewish apocalyptic writings. As John J. Collins puts it:

Postexilic prophecy undoubtedly supplied some of the codes and raw material utilized by the later apocalypses. However, if we wish to examine the matrix in which the configuration of the genre emerged, we must surely begin with the earliest actual apocalypses, rather than with their partial antecedents.⁸¹

Book of Watchers

The earliest actual apocalypses are the *Astronomical Book* (*1 Enoch* 72-82) and the *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1-36), copies of which have been dated paleographically from Qumran to the late third century BCE. While the *Astronomical Book* (chs. 72-82) is often held to be the oldest of the five, there are arguments that the oldest part of the *Book of Watchers* (chs. 6-19) is even older. I will discuss this shortly. Besides the question of primacy, the *Astronomical Book* lacks some of the features common to most apocalypses⁸², consists primarily of calendrical observations and astronomical movements of the sun and moon, and its present form is thought to be much altered from

⁸⁰Milik, 4. Milik thinks the five Aramaic works making up the Enoch Pentateuch were as follows: *The Astronomical Book*, *the Book of Watchers*, *the Book of Giants*, *the Book of Dreams*, and *the Epistle of Enoch*.

⁸¹Collins, 25.

⁸²Most notably it lacks “a narrative framework concerned with eschatological salvation,” a part of the definition given by Collins in *Semeia 14* and widely used by scholars. See Collins, 5.

the original.⁸³ Therefore, the *Book of Watchers* is a better text to consider, as it is the first example of early Jewish apocalypses available to us. For this reason, there has been much scholarly attention paid to this book, with different revelations coming from different people, depending upon the approach. Some see a natural progression from the ‘proto-apocalyptic’ segments of prophecy; others see a direct adaptation of Mesopotamian myths and cosmology. I will start with the former viewpoint.

Cook plots what he sees as an evolution of apocalyptic writing, beginning in pre-exilic and then exilic prophets, such as *Isaiah* and *Ezekiel*, followed by *1 Enoch* and eventually the canonical *Daniel* and *Christian Revelation*. He illustrates this by tracing the use of certain motifs, for example, ‘chaos’:

In Isaiah 34, YHWH reduces “Edom” to a place just like primordial chaos. Similarly, Isaiah 24:1, 20, part of the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse, pictures a return to cosmic tumult. This chaos motif, and especially the idea of mountains collapsing, is developed further in full-blown apocalypses. Thus 1 Enoch describes the final judgment as a time when ‘the lofty mountains shall be shaken; they shall fall and be disintegrated’ (1 Enoc 1:3-9).⁸⁴

Then Cook traces the development of this “earthquake motif,” in *Ezek* (38:19-20), *Joel* (2:10; 4:16) and *Zechariah* (14:4-5). By the time of the New Testament, the earthquake motif has become standard fare, and is evident in the Gospels (Mk 13:8; Mt 24:7-8; Lk 21:11) and especially *Rev* (6:12-14; 11:13; 16:18, 20). The earth shaking, as Cook puts it, “was a standard part of the picture of the birth pangs of the new age.”⁸⁵ Thus, Cook has clearly demonstrated a continuation, a development, however one chooses to describe

⁸³See F. Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, Trans. Wilfred G.E. Watson (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd ed. 1994) 444.

⁸⁴Cook, 93.

⁸⁵Cook, 94.

it, between the Hebrew prophets, the Enoch books and New Testament apocalypses. But what other factors contributed to this development? Likewise, what if the Enoch books, or parts of them, predate the prophets? Certainly there was heterogeneity within Zadokite tradition, not to mention other possible schools within Babylonian Judaism.

Priestly Authors

As Cook has suggested, there were priestly writers living in Babylon that produced ‘proto-apocalyptic’ prophetic books. And while he argues for Zadokite priestly authorship of the biblical books, he is largely silent on the authors of the Enoch books, making only passing references to them when doing so advances his central argument that “deprivation theory” does not apply to the rise of apocalyptic texts in Judaism. For example, when discussing the idea that the ‘elect’ will escape God’s wrath depicted in *Ezekiel* 38, Cook cites *1 Enoch* 1:19 as proof that this idea is not unusual, without discussing any other possible connections between the two traditions. And although he maintains that life in Babylon was not oppressive for the exiles, citing *Jeremiah* 29:5-6 as proof that “the exiles became integrated into Babylonian society,” he attributes virtually no influence on apocalyptic ideas in Judaism to Babylonian culture.

This, however, does not make sense to me. How do educated, elite members of society’s upper class become integrated *into* without, in turn, being influenced *by* a sophisticated and advanced civilization like ancient Babylon? Subsequent periods in Jewish history don’t support this. Attributing the rise of apocalypticism solely to traditions within Judaism ignores a great deal. For example, who wrote *The Book of Watchers*, and why? If it is contemporary with these exilic prophets, or perhaps succeeds them by a short time period, what connections might there be? Already we have seen how Cook suggests a development in writing by tracing the use of certain motifs, for example, those of chaos and earthquake that suggest a primacy for the Latter prophets. But the fact that the *Book of the Watchers* was compiled and edited over time might

explain the later insertions of such by-then-standard motifs. So, the question remains, from whence did the book spring?

According to Boccaccini, the writers of the *Book of Watchers*, or the Enochians, a term he credits to VanderKam, were contemporary with and in opposition to the Zadokite priesthood that returned from exile and gained control of the Jerusalem temple. The Enochians claimed superiority over the Zadokite priesthood, which “claimed its origin in Aaron at the time of the exodus, in an age that, for the Enochians, was already corrupted after the angelic sin and the flood.”⁸⁶ Unlike the Zadokite priests, who placed temple rites and observance of the Law at the very center of Jewish faith, the Enochians ignored Mosaic Torah and the temple, deeming the priests powerless over salvation, as the only hope was for God’s intervention. (We have already seen this last idea developing in the prophecy of Zechariah, although it clearly has a ‘pro-temple’ stance.) “Enochic Judaism directly challenged the legitimacy of the Second Temple and its priesthood. ‘We are witnessing a harsh indictment against the temple cult and its expository tradition, an indictment originating within the sectarian perspective of a highly developed apocalyptic eschatology.’”⁸⁷

This view is shared by VanderKam. In the preface to his book on Enoch, he writes:

The traditions associated with Enoch preserve for us a glimpse at a different option within ancient Judaism—that is, a perspective that put almost no emphasis on the Mosaic law. It focused its attention, rather, on special revelations granted to Enoch before the flood. These revelations dealt not only with the past but also with the future and its meaning for the present. It was a tradition that was hardly to survive but which for a time exercised a

⁸⁶G.Boccaccini. *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism*. (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdsman, 1998) 74.

⁸⁷Ibid, 73. Boccaccini quotes Hanson here.

noticeable influence among some Jewish people and certainly among some early Christians.⁸⁸

So why was it not to survive? What was so objectionable to the priestly redactors of the Torah? Why would Ben Sirach and later Rabbinic Judaism reject Enochian Judaism? The answer is the main theme of the *Book of Watchers*: the origin of evil.

Origin of Evil

It is well-accepted that the *Book of Watchers* is composite in origin and may be divided into several sections. Chapters 1-5 introduce the older section, chs. 6-11, which tells the story of the Watchers, the fallen angels who descended to earth because they desired women, and whose sexual union with them produced monstrous giants who filled the earth with sorrow. The Watchers also teach humans forbidden knowledge, including metallurgy, which leads to war, and cosmetology, which leads to fornication.⁸⁹ After men cry to heaven for help, God commands loyal archangels to kill the giants and punish the Watchers, but evil spirits remain inciting humans to sin. This, therefore, negates the origin of evil traditionally held in Judaism to stem from the breaking of the covenant received by the revelation on Sinai and taught by Moses.

There are two important novelties introduced by the *Book of Watchers* into the history of Jewish thought and religion. The first of these is the idea that evil is not of human origin, and the second is that of the immortality of the soul where the soul is conceived of as an entity capable of living, disembodied, after the death of the body and in a dimension where evil does not exist.⁹⁰

If the origin of evil is supernatural, then human free will is of no consequence. It matters not what Israelites do; only God can destroy evil in this world. Boccaccini concludes that

⁸⁸VanderKam, *Enoch: A Man for All Generations*, preface.

⁸⁹VanderKam, *Enoch: A Man*, 36.

⁹⁰Sacchi, 175.

Ben Sira's reflections on human free will and the origins of evil were directed against apocalyptic viewpoints, as it renders the Covenant meaningless as a means of salvation.⁹¹ Likewise, Sacchi reads "the negation of the immortality of the soul" in *Eccl.* 3:18-21 and other passages critical of apocalyptic viewpoints as reaction to the "Enochic current of thought."⁹²

Following the story of the Watchers, chaps. 12-16 "introduce Enoch and provide the point of departure for his revelatory journey," which he takes as a result of the crisis caused by the Watchers, acting "as an intermediary between them and heaven."⁹³ In the remaining chapters, 17-36, Enoch describes two visions where he journeys to heaven and the ends of the earth, and also views God's final judgment. These journeys will be considered further in the next chapter on Babylonian influences.

On one interesting side note, the word 'watchers' literally means "awake" in Hebrew and Aramaic, from 'ir (verb 'ur-to rouse/awake).-- The only place it was seen prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was in an inscription related to synagogue caretakers in Dan. It is prevalent in the Qumran literature and is also connected to astronomical teachers.⁹⁴ This is most interesting, considering the astronomical themes in *1 Enoch*.

As far as biblical influences go, there are many connections. Obviously, the flood story and references to Methusaleh and Noah are most notable.(Sacchi explains that *1 Enoch* 6-11 is actually a "further development of a pre-existing work known in antiquity as the *Book of Noah*."⁹⁵) As in *Zechariah*, Enoch has an angelic guide during his

⁹¹Ibid, 41.

⁹²Ibid, 180.

⁹³Collins, *Apoc. Imagination*, 49.

⁹⁴Kvanvig, 304.

⁹⁵Sacchi, 175.

visions. Noting that the *Book of Watchers* has the first ascent to heaven in Jewish literature, Himmelfarb explains how heaven is understood as a temple. Enoch stands before God like a heavenly priest, that is, an angel. “After his ascent, his journey to the ends of the earth shows that he is indeed a fit companion for angels (*1 Enoch* 17-36). This claim appears to have its roots in the prophetic claim to participation in the divine council.”⁹⁶ In addition, there are textual similarities, for example, the opening verse “blessing of Enoch” (1:1) is reminiscent of the “Blessing of Moses” in *Deuteronomy* 33.⁹⁷ This is followed by “several phrases borrowed from the Balaam stories in *Numbers* 22-24.”⁹⁸ Also, the prophecy of God’s coming in judgment recalls theophanies in numerous books, but one in particular stands in interesting contrast to the Watchers. Again in *Deuteronomy* 33, God comes *from* Sinai. In *1 Enoch* 1:5, God *walks to* Sinai, thus symbolizing that “Sinai has a place in Enoch’s revelation, but it is not the ultimate source,”⁹⁹ again underscoring the tension with the Mosaic tradition mentioned previously.

Dating Enoch

What is most interesting, then, is the notion of authorship. If there is tension between the Enochians and the priestly writers that favored Mosaic tradition, what would explain this? Could they have been, contrary to Cook’s view, factional parties during or following the Exile? Dating would certainly help solve this question. While some scholars date the *Book of Watchers* in the third century, others suggest the tradition may extend all the way back to the Exile, especially if the hypothetical *Book of Noah* is

⁹⁶M. Himmelfarb, “From Prophecy to Apocalypse: The Book of the Watchers and Tours of Heavens.” In *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, edited by A. Green (New York: Crossroad, 1986) 82.

⁹⁷Collins, *Apoc. Imag*, 49.

⁹⁸VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 115.(This particular feature will be explored further in the next chapter on Babylonian influence.)

⁹⁹*Ibid*, 48.

considered. While Milik argues that the author lived in Judea in the third century, citing geographical and cultural references as evidence,¹⁰⁰ he does “accept as obvious, however, the author of the *Book of Watchers* used an early written source which he incorporated without any great changes in his own work (*En.* 6-19). It is this section that Milik agrees that *Genesis* 6:1-4 is dependent on: “The very close inter-dependence of *En.* 6-19 and *Gen.* 6:1-4 is perfectly obvious; the same phrases and analogous expressions are repeated in the two texts.¹⁰¹ However, this view is not universal. Vanderkam presupposes a Genesis primacy for Enoch, but he does not say why. Whereas Milik attributes Mesopotamian geography/mythology, Vanderkam uses the word “Greek” mostly, suggesting later Hellenic influences.

Another scholar who argues for a Genesis primacy is Kvanvig, who dates *En* 6-11 to the late 4th century B.C.E.¹⁰² Charting quantitatively the verses he says share commonalities, he notes “about half of the verses in *En* 6-11 allude to *Gen* 4-9,” which give “an impression of how intimately the two texts are woven together.”¹⁰³ What is key to understanding the Enoch text, he argues, is the way the Enoch authors interpreted the Genesis story, adding new features to it and shifting the origin of evil, as I already discussed is Sacchi’s view as well. Kvanvig puts it this way:

The Watcher story was not meant only as an etiology about the origin of evil or a didactic paradigm of the nature of evil, but also as a story about the evils in the author’s own historical setting. This affected the composition in the way that the figures of the past, the sons of the gods/the watchers and giants, are meant to reflect circumstances of the historical

¹⁰⁰See Milik, pp. 25-28.

¹⁰¹Ibid, 31.

¹⁰²Kvanvig, 275-80.

¹⁰³Ibid, 275.

present, such as authorities of false wisdom and devastating power.¹⁰⁴

For Kvanvig, the “historical present” for the Enochians were the Diodochan wars, 322 to 302 BCE, when the successors of Alexander the Great fought for supremacy over Palestine. The people of Palestine felt the burden of a long period of oppression and violence, during which political power over them changed hands seven times. “The political government was in chaos as each ruler sought to gain so much income as possible during his brief reign.”¹⁰⁵ He says the divine origins of the giants reflect the claim of divinity put forward by the Hellenistic rulers, rooted in Alexander’s celebration in Egypt as successor to Pharaoh and son of Ammon. The idea of watchers revealing knowledge, Kvanvig argues, suggests the new emphasis on Hellenistic wisdom and way of life exerting heavy influence on Jews in this time.

But Italian scholars, most noteworthy Sacchi and Boccaccini, argue for an even earlier date for *The Book of Watchers*. Boccaccini argues it predates the Genesis story, which he says “can no longer be attributed to J, but rather to a post-exilic editor who rejected Enoch’s mythology, preferring to call the giants not evil spirits, and, therefore, the origin of sin, but rather, ‘the mighty men that were of old, the men of reknown,’ and the men destroyed by the flood in the next chapter.”¹⁰⁶ Identifying “five different strata, including an even older *Book of Noah*,” Boccaccini says this implies “a very long redactional process, whose beginning had to reach back to the fifth century BCE.”¹⁰⁷ In

¹⁰⁴Ibid, 318. Kvanvig gives a detailed exegetical analysis of key words in Genesis and Enoch, such as *nefilim* and *gibborim*, to illustrate the multiple sources for the Genesis text (J and P) and the connection to Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Babylonian mythologies. He argues these sources are key to understanding the complex reasons why the Watchers story differs from Genesis in its depiction of the Primeval catastrophe striking semi-divine beings instead of humans.

¹⁰⁵Kvanvig, 97.

¹⁰⁶ Boccaccini, “The Contribution of Italian Scholarship,” in *Mysteries and Revelations*, 34.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

the oldest stratum, Asael is the reason for sin, but in later strata this is pushed back in time in order to explain the sin of Cain. “On the fourth day of creation, the angels of the seven planets that revolve around the earth carried their planets outside the orbit ordained by God, damaging creation from the beginning,” even before Adam and Eve.¹⁰⁸

Boccaccini goes on to suggest that the concept of the immortality of the soul introduced in *1 En.22* places humans in a “two-dimensional universe,” the earthly dimension being evil and destined for destruction at the hands of God. It is this conception that is essential, Boccaccini states, to understanding Qohelet’s strong criticism of those holding beliefs in the immortality of souls.¹⁰⁹ This is another example of how scholarship is shedding new light on ancient mysteries, and exposing the many layers of tradition that make up *1 Enoch*.

While he is somewhat more conservative in his estimate of how old *Enoch 6-11* is, and while he leans toward a *Genesis* primacy, Collins leaves open the possibility of the opposite holding true, noting that “it seems clear enough that *Genesis* is alluding to some more extensive traditions.”¹¹⁰ More importantly, like Nickelsburg, Collins also recognizes that, while the paleographical evidence goes no further back than the Hellenistic age, *1 Enoch* “undoubtedly draws on older traditions.”¹¹¹

Finally, the translator of the Aramaic Enoch scrolls found at Qumran, J.T. Milik, also argues for a *1 Enoch* primacy. He maintains that *Gen. 6: 1-4* refers back to *Enoch*, and points out that *Genesis* quotes *Enoch* verbatim in two or three phrases, which was stylistically in vogue in ancient times.

If my hypothesis is correct, the work incorporated in *En. 6-19*

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 40.

¹⁰⁹Ibid, 41.

¹¹⁰Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 45.

¹¹¹Ibid, 44. See also G. Nickelsburg, 1.

is earlier than the definitive version of the first chapters of Genesis. It is thus contemporary with, if not older than, the calendrical document attributed in Enoch, which was also exploited thoroughly by the final redactors of the Pentateuch. Both are perhaps of Samaritan origin.”¹¹²

An interesting addition to this discussion of the Watchers is Bernard McGinn’s book in which he notes the importance of *I Enoch* 1-36 to “the evolution of the Satan myth.”¹¹³ Noting the difference between the “sparse and neutral account of Genesis,” and the *Book of Watchers*’ “rich tale of evil originating in the world through the descent of two hundred bad angels who intermarry with human women,” and teach them magic and father the giants, McGinn adds:

Most important for the development of the Satan myth, these angels have a leader, variously called Semihazah and Asael (the differing names reflect the different traditions that have become intermingled in the text.) What is clear is the way in which the author has projected the world judgment of Noah’s time into a coming condemnation of the evil angels and their Satanlike leader.¹¹⁴

Boccaccini also notes the significance of this, saying that the “leader of the fallen angels, who later would be called the Devil,” is clearly the cause of sin in *I En.* 10.8.¹¹⁵ As I will explain in the next chapter, these angels have roots in Mesopotamia. Likewise, while scholars disagree with the age of *I Enoch*, they agree that the figure of Enoch himself has Mesopotamian origins as well. The next chapter will explore these origins and the evidence that the Babylonian Exile gave birth to the Jewish apocalyptic tradition.

¹¹²Milik, 31.

¹¹³McGinn, 25. McGinn asserts that while the origins of the myth of Satan as an opposing cosmological force predates the rise of apocalyptic eschatology, “the crystallization and spread of the myth of Satan clearly owes much to apocalypticism in both Jewish and Christian traditions.”

¹¹⁴McGinn, 25.

¹¹⁵Boccaccini, “The Contribution,” 40.

CHAPTER FOUR: BABYLONIAN FOOTPRINT

While the Babylonian Exile only lasted a few generations, and while only the upper-stratum of Jewish society went to begin with, it changed the religion of the Jews forever. As Stephen Cook has already shown, it is quite likely that Zadokite priestly circles held in captivity in Babylon, but enjoying a certain amount of autonomy, authored ‘proto-apocalyptic’ prophetic texts. Likewise, authors of *1 Enoch* 1-36 incorporated priestly themes (depicting heaven as a temple, for example) and Israelite notions of its historio-mythic past. But they also incorporated new elements, many of which stem from Babylonian tradition. Many scholars have written on these traditions.

Enmeduranki

To begin with, it is well-accepted that Enoch, seventh in the genealogical line from Adam, derives from the Mesopotamian figure of Enmeduranki, the seventh king listed on the famous Sumerian king list. The two figures have much in common. Besides being seventh on their respective lists, both are associated with astronomy, divine secrets and immortality. Both are also regarded as composers of primeval books and “the first link in the chain of oral transmission,” the Jewish authors using a structure that is “a fairly exact parallel to the Mesopotamian model.”¹¹⁶

In his exhaustive work on the origins of Enoch, VanderKam traces the history of Enoch scholarship. A brief summary of the field pertaining to Mesopotamian influences illustrates how productive that field has been. He credits Zimmern as being the first to draw parallels between Enoch and the Babylonian king list written by Berossus, the Babylonian priest who wrote a Greek account of his people’s history/mythology circa 280 BCE.

¹¹⁶Kvanvig, 266.

The particulars that he noted were: (1) like Enmeduranki Enoch was especially blessed by God; (2) Enoch's removal to God corresponds to Enmeduranki's entry into the fellowship of Shamash and Adad and his initiation by these gods into the secrets of heaven and earth; and (3) Enoch's 365 years are related to the fact that Enmeduranki was affiliated with the cult of the sun god.¹¹⁷

VanderKam then credits Müller as the first to argue for the influence of Babylonian mantic wisdom on the Enoch character. "In his view, the arts and writings of the diviner lay at the base of apocalyptic literature."¹¹⁸ Müller noted that references to mantic wisdom (Joseph is an exception) appear in Exilic and post-Exilic writings. Hence, Enoch, was a "Jewish literary crystallization of Sumero-Akkadian lore about the seventh antediluvian king Enmeduranki," founder of the guild of diviners-the *b-rûs*.¹¹⁹ Enoch bore divinatory associations and this figure appears as the seer in the earliest apocalypses. In the *Book of Watchers*, there is a strong scientific interest, and this will be discussed further in a moment.

Vanderkam then discusses the work of Jansen, who conducted an exhaustive study of Enoch in all traditions and noted the differences in which he is portrayed, sometimes as prophet, sometimes as sage, and sometimes as a divine figure. When depicted as the latter, he "appears as the one who in effect saves Noah from the flood by disclosing salvific information to him, as Ea did to Utnapishtim, the Babylonian flood-hero."¹²⁰ Jansen said Enoch fused prophecy with astronomical teachings from the Chaldeans, who also divided history into three parts (in contrast with Daniel's two). Berossus used a three-part division, as well. According to Jansen, social pressure inspired

¹¹⁷VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 12.

¹¹⁸VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 6.

¹¹⁹Ibid, 8.

¹²⁰Ibid, 13.

the writing of the earliest Enoch literature: “The Enoch figure was created in order to teach the elect how to escape disaster and to comfort them in difficult times. In those times, the pre-flood conditions seemed to be repeating themselves.”¹²¹ So, in that sense, the idea that apocalyptic literature is “the literature of the oppressed, or seemingly oppressed” finds support in Jansen.

VanderKam then discusses Grelot, who noted further similarities between Enoch and Babylon: including situating Paradise in the North-West, which will be elaborated upon momentarily. He concluded that the composite Enoch figure was “the product of a school in the Babylonian diaspora, perhaps after the Jewish restoration to Palestine or possibly earlier.”¹²² Grelot thinks “the context of the Babylonian captivity provides the most plausible *Sitz im Leben* for the borrowing or contact” of the Enoch figure. He also views the development of this legend “as a priestly way of helping Jews better to resist the lure of pagan cults in Babylon by incorporating (but definitely modifying) mythological traditions of Mesopotamia into Jewish antiquities.”¹²³ So, again, the idea that apocalyptic writing is rooted in social oppression has some support, as is the argument for priestly authorship, but there are other factors to consider.

One scholar that has presented many of those other factors is Kvanvig, who also demonstrates Enoch’s Mesopotamian heritage. For example, he notes that the figure of Enoch in 12.1 resembles the Mesopotamian visionary Ziusudra, in that they both were transported from earth. He also notes parallels between Enoch and the three leading

¹²¹Ibid, 15.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³VanderKam, 19. While VanderKam acknowledges the contribution of these scholars, he finds they are too simplistic, especially in light of more recent scholarship that has revealed the complexity and variety of the Enoch tradition. He adds that his work is an attempt to fill a void that had existed regarding the Mesopotamian origins of the Enoch figure.

figures in Mesopotamian primeval traditions: Enmeduranki, Adapa and Ziusudra, in that they all were taken away to the heavenly assembly.¹²⁴ In addition, Kvanvig draws parallels between names of the angels in *Enoch 6-7* and names of primeval gods in Hittite mythology, and says both were disposed to the underworld in primeval time. Kvanvig says the only place in Near Eastern sources where this is combined with the Flood story is in mythic material about the *apkulla*'s, the sons of the Mesopotamian god Ea. Kvanvig lists eight ways the *Book of Watchers* parallel the story of the *apkullas*, as taken from different Mesopotamian traditions. This is illustrated in Table I.

Table 1: The Apkallu's and the Watchers

1. The apkallu's are described as the sons of the god Ea. The watchers are described as "the sons of heaven".
2. The apkallu's had two primary functions:
 - * They were the guardians of the cosmic order.
 - * They were the servants in Marduk's temple.

The function of the watchers is described in the same way:

 - * They are put in charge of the cosmic order.
 - * They are servants in the heavenly temple.
3. In primeval time both the watchers and the apkallu's visited the earth.
4. Both the watchers and the apkallu's taught men wisdom and skills.
5. The watchers mixed sexually with human women. This is not explicitly stated about the apkallu's. The sources seem, however, to presuppose a sexual mingling, since the latest apkallu is a mixture of apkallu and ordinary human being.
6. The watchers rebelled against the divine order. Some of the apkallu's offended the gods.
7. The watchers were condemned to the nether world at the same time of the flood. The apkallu's were dispatched to the nether world at the same time.

¹²⁴Kvanvig, 245.

8. The Watcher story reflects the practice of invoking underworld divinities for magical purposes. The apkallu's were invoked for the same purpose.¹²⁵

While Kvanvig does not suggest a direct literary dependence for Enoch on the apkallu story, he does think they must have stemmed from the same oral tradition. The strong similarities support, in my opinion, the latter, if not the former as well.

There is yet another source with perhaps a more direct literary connection to the *Book of Watchers* that Kvanvig discusses and that is the *Poem of Erra*, which involves night visions similar to *I En* 19. It also transfers the Flood story to a historical setting, similar to *I Enoch*, demonstrating, that this “was not a totally new invention by the author of the Watcher story. This technique of narration was also practiced by Babylonian scribes.”¹²⁶ Finally, Kvanvig sees parallels in the function of the Watchers story as an etiological text and the closest Mesopotamian traditions, most notably Atrahasis, which not only concludes “by recounting how the gods created the basic institutions in human society after the flood,” but is also eschatological in nature. It not only “explains the origin of the divine beings invoked by the Babylonian mantic priests,” but it is also concerned with the future, not with primeval time.¹²⁷ Clearly, Kvanvig illustrates the strong argument that the Enoch tradition has deep Mesopotamian roots, and hints at when this might have started. While acknowledging many Near Eastern influences and the difficulty of tracing the exact origins of them all, he does “assume that the contamination of Babylonian and Jewish traditions took place in the Babylonian diaspora.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵See Kvanvig, 314-15.

¹²⁶Kvanvig, 318.

¹²⁷Ibid, 316.

¹²⁸Ibid, 326.

Another interesting example of Babylonian influence is geography. In the descriptions of Enoch's global journeys, Milik notes a striking resemblance to the Babylonian *mappa Mundi*. For example, in 33:1, near the eastern ends of the world there is a region filled with huge beasts and birds, and during Enoch's journey towards the setting sun (*En* 17:1) "he finds himself in a region watched over by the beings of fire, and in a dark place (17:2a)¹²⁹. The latter must be the region of the Babylonian map of the world situated right in the North," and then in (*En* 17:5-6a and 6b) Enoch crosses rivers, and "ends up 'as far as the Great River and as far as the Great Darkness there where no being of flesh may go.' Milik recognizes in this the circular ocean, the Bitter River of the Babylonian map, and the sphere of darkness already located by our author in front of the north-eastern paradise."¹³⁰ Also, in Enoch's circular journey around the world, (18:1-5), he goes West again and ends up at the mountain of God, which Milik says is clearly in the north-western corner of the universe, surrounded by seven mountains, sweet smelling trees and the Tree of Life. Behind this is the place where heavens end, and where Enoch sees a deep abyss and columns of fire, etc., which coincides with Ugaritic poetic myth and which Milik says appears almost unaltered in *En* 17:7-8.¹³¹ This also parallels the direction of paradise in the Babylonian tradition of Gilgamesh, where the flood hero, Utnapishtim, travels north-west to reside with his wife at the mouth of the rivers. Milik talks about this geographical mythology resonating at Qumran, where bodies were buried "stretched out South-North, with the head on the southern side so that when brought to life the just elect will be facing the Paradise-Abode of God."¹³² These two depictions of the world are compared in Figures 1 and 2.

¹²⁹Ibid, 38.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid, 39.

¹³²Milik, 141.

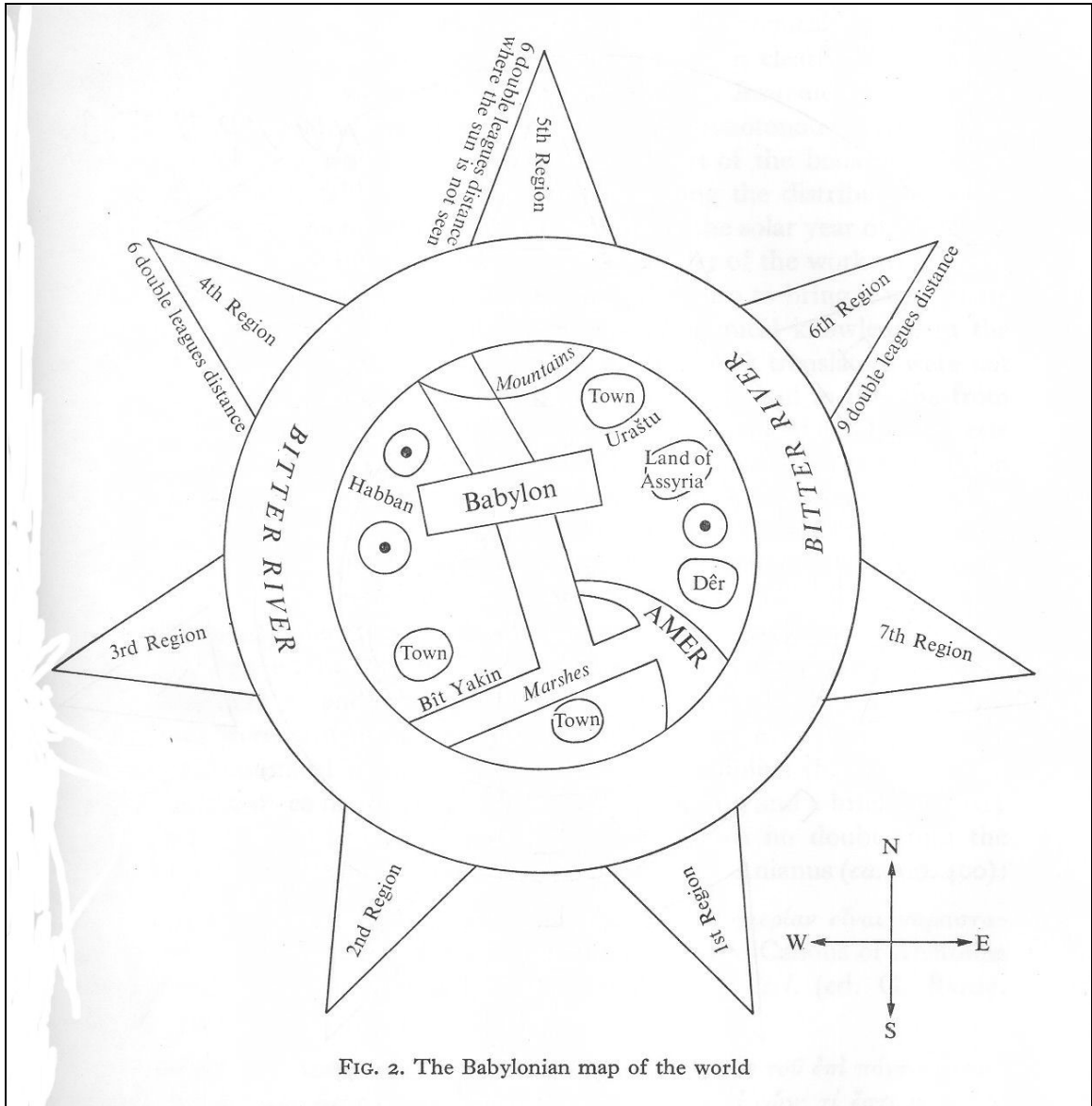


FIG. 2. The Babylonian map of the world

Figure 1. The Babylonian Map of the World

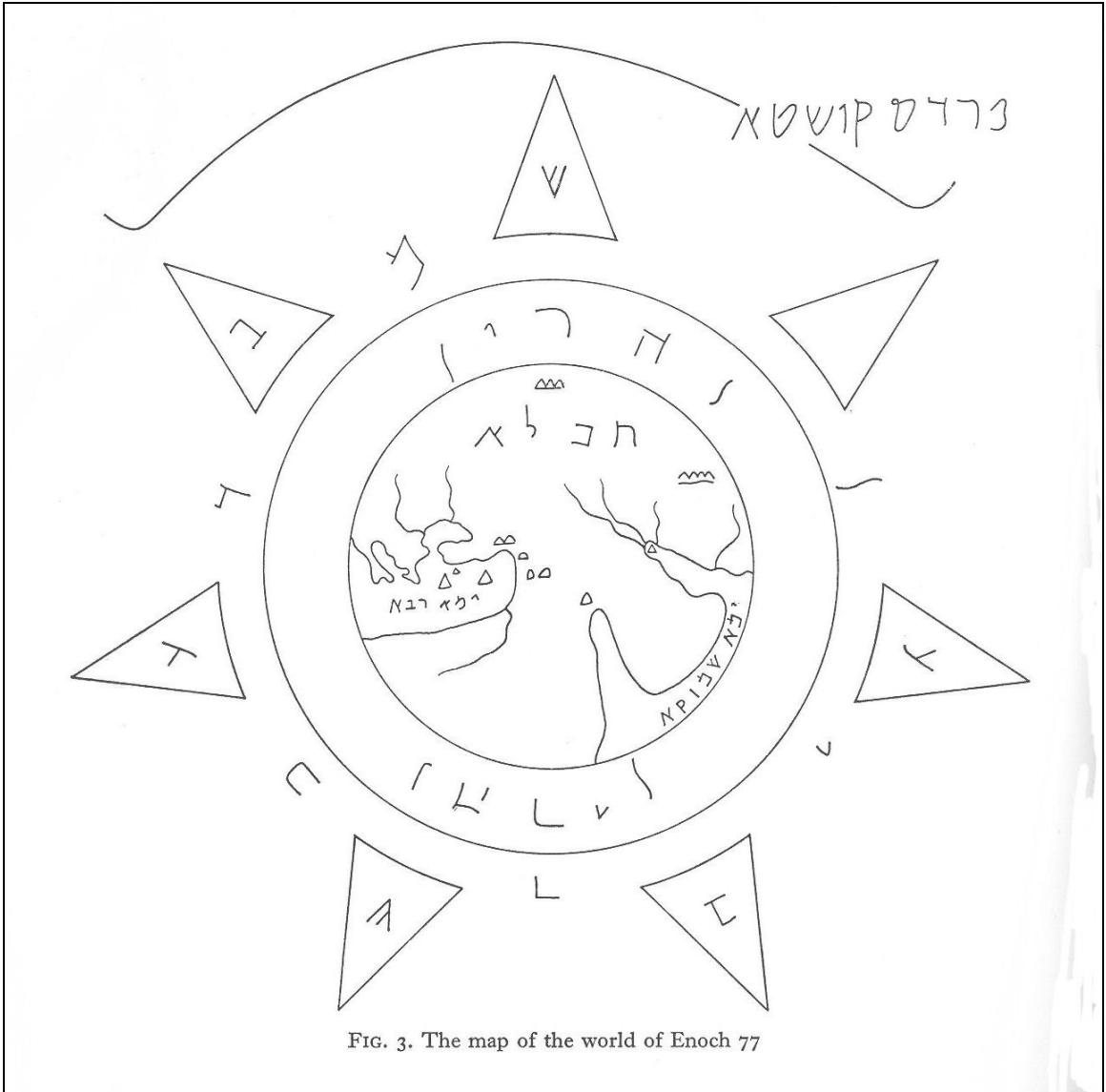


FIG. 3. The map of the world of Enoch 77

Figure 2. The Map of the World of Enoch

Conversely, there is an interesting connection to the geography in the names of some of the watchers. “ The writer imagines two chiefs of the fallen angels, a king (Šemîhazah) and a sage (‘AṾa’el), each presiding over about ten Watchers (and each of these ten presiding over about ten anonymous angels), thus drawing on the Babylonian model of antediluvian kings and sages.

The names of the twenty principal Watchers (En. 6:7), of which the fragments of 4Q give the correct form (with the exception of the name of the fifth), are for the most part derived from astronomical, meteorological, and geographical terms. The eleventh, Hermonî, takes his name from mount Hermon (6:6), whilst Danî’el is none other than the Canaanite hero Dan’el whose wisdom is sung in Ugaritic poems and mentioned in Ezek. 28:3 and 14:14,20.”¹³³

Milik says another “extremely archaic Babylonian feature is retained in the name of the prison of ‘AṾa’el. He is to be thrown into the darkness and hurled down into a gulf which will open up in the desert which is in (or between) Dadouel.”¹³⁴ Milik explains the origin of the word ‘Dadouel’-the (two) breasts of ‘El’- is the same as the Akkadian *Mašû*, the twin mountains associated with the star-god in ancient Mesopotamia and mentioned in the Epic of Gilgamesh. According to Milik, Dadouel is located in the extreme North, “just like the prison of the seven erring stars and of the fallen angels in *En*18-19,” and which will, in later Christian times, become the place where Behemoth dwells.¹³⁵ And so if setting is any indication, then the location of Enoch’s apocalypse was, without a doubt, based on Mesopotamian mythology.

Divination

Another very important way Babylonian culture influenced the Israelites was with the tradition of divination. “The sheer mass of omen texts that have been unearthed at

¹³³Ibid, 29.

¹³⁴Ibid, 30.

¹³⁵Milik, 30.

various sites in Mesopotamia indicates that divination was a prominent aspect of life in the civilizations of that region.”¹³⁶ It was believed that the gods communicated knowledge of the future and with proper skills and techniques, certain individuals could divine this information. VanderKam explains that diviners kept records of their observations and predictions from an early time and were copied throughout the history of cuneiform writing. This included observations of animals and people, and astronomical and meteorological occurrences, and *oneiromancy*, or dream interpretation. There are numerous, famous collections, including the *En@ma Anu Enlil*, which include an estimated 6,500-7,000 omens. “It appears that the diviners and those who enlisted their services conceived of the universe much as a vast tablet on which the gods could engrave announcements of their will for the future and from which experts could read them.”¹³⁷ One of these types of experts, and there were many, was called a *b-rû* “one who sees/observes.” The *b-rû* was “a very high-ranking kind of diviner, and it comes as no surprise that such people often held important positions within the government.” VanderKam notes that Enmeduranki founded a guild of *b-rûs*, and “it is this Enmeduranki with whom the Jewish Enoch shows so many similarities.”¹³⁸

And while VanderKam notes the differences between omen lists, as found in great numbers in cuneiform tablets, and Jewish apocalyptic writing, he notes the general similarities: both are concerned with learning about the future by interpreting signs of a divine nature. Interpretation is possible only to persons with special interpretive powers or skills, as God, or the gods, do not communicate in plain, straight-forward ways; “they symbolized or encoded it, and the symbols or code had to be deciphered before they could be understood by their recipients. This structure, which is common to

¹³⁶VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 52.

¹³⁷Ibid, 55.

¹³⁸VanderKam, 58.

Mesopotamian divination and Jewish apocalypticism, separates them from biblical prophecy.”¹³⁹ VanderKam then goes on to trace the development or the use of these omen lists on Akkadian prophecies, which he says are very important in understanding the development of Jewish apocalyptic writing. He notes two distinct ways this omen literature was used: first, scientifically, particularly in the field of astronomy which the Babylonian scholars refined to an astonishing degree in the first millennium”¹⁴⁰; secondly, in the creation of prophetic literature, of which there are five examples and of which several scholars have categorized as apocalypses.¹⁴¹ These convey predictions of the fall of the Seleucid regime-perhaps conveying “strong anti-Seleucid sentiment among some learned residents of Babylon.”¹⁴² What is significant is the way the development of the Enoch figure can be compared. In the earliest books, the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of Watchers*, he is mostly concerned with “pseudo-scientific pursuits, and hardly at all with predictions,” but in the later books, he became the seer or visionary of apocalypses.

In other words, Enochic traditions reveal central features and developments which parallel very closely the twofold nature of omens and their evolution in scientific and predictive directions in Mesopotamia. It seems unlikely, given the traditional association of Enoch with Enmeduranki, that these developments occurred independently. It is far more reasonable to suppose that mantic traditions from Mesopotamia provided a considerable part of the context within which Jewish Enochic literature arose and grew. This sort of influence from Mesopotamia was possible over a long historical span and was directly possible from

¹³⁹Ibid, 62

¹⁴⁰VanderKam, 69.

¹⁴¹However, some scholars are reluctant to call them apocalypses, as they lack the common characteristic of eschatology. See VanderKam pg. 66-67.

¹⁴²VanderKam notes the strong similar sentiment in Daniel and other contemporary Jewish literature.

the exile onwards into the Hellenistic age.¹⁴³

But one does not even have to look outside the Bible to find another figure associated with divination who also shares many similarities with Enoch: Balaam, from the book of *Numbers*. VanderKam notes the similarities in the opening paragraph of the *Book of Watchers* (1:2-3a) with *Numbers* 22-24, adding, however, that it might seem strange, since Balaam is a foreign diviner “who, though summoned to curse the Israelites, was eventually compelled to bless them.”¹⁴⁴ Balaam and Enoch both have “strong associations with the world of divination and more specifically with *b-rûtum*.”¹⁴⁵ Balaam is paid by the king of Moab to explain revelations he gets from God at night (*Num* 22:8, 19-20); He also has divine visions regarding the “latter days,” (24:14), which, VanderKam says, Hellenistic writers would have associated with the eschaton. Thus, both Enoch and Balaam are eschatological visionaries. VanderKam maintains that the casting of Enoch in a Balaam mold seeks to authenticate Enoch, while, at the same time, negating the importance of *Gen* 5:21-24. The Mesopotamian Balaam (*Num* 22:5; 23:6) is seen in a positive light by the Enoch author. If the Enochian was from Mesopotamia, had lived there, or was at least favorable to Mesopotamian traditions, this portrayal of the foreigner Balaam is understandable.

Iconography

Finally, one last field of scholarship that provides a different and impressive picture of the Mesopotamian influence is the field of iconography. As Charlesworth comments, “the search for the origin of Jewish apocalypticism, and for the earliest prototypes of the apocalypses themselves, must be attuned not only to Prophecy . . . but also to the social matrix of humor, the motifs in folklore, and the symbolic consciousness

¹⁴³Ibid, 70.

¹⁴⁴Ibid, 116.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

of the ancient Near East.”¹⁴⁶ While he suggests that humor and folklore deserve serious considerations in regard to apocalyptic origins, it is outside the scope of this paper. The “symbolic consciousness of the ancient Near East,” however, is well-within its scope and well worth examining. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the iconography of the Near East, which predates apocalyptic literature by 2-3,000 years, is priceless.

Charlesworth writes convincingly that the origins of the “fantastic imagery of the apocalypses” lie “not in the free imagination of the scribe,” but in the “symbolism of the ancient Near East.”¹⁴⁷ While he discusses numerous examples, such as the Assyrian bronze plaques that may be key in understanding the ten-horned, seven-headed demon of the *Apocalypse of John* fame (*Rev.* 13:1-2), to name just one example, two figures are of particular interest to *1 Enoch*: cherubim and dragons.

Charlesworth notes how ubiquitous winged creatures were in the ancient Near East, in particular, figures similar to the Cherubim.¹⁴⁸ These are mentioned in *1 Enoch* 20.7 in a description of the archangel Gabriel, “the official in charge of paradise, of the dragons, and of the cherubim.”¹⁴⁹ Now this is quite interesting. In his book on cylinder seals from the ancient Near East, in his section “Giants, Demons and Monsters,” Collon explains that the “combinations of bird, lion and reptile produced dragons which became the attribute animals of various gods, the most famous being the *mushhushshu* of Marduk.”¹⁵⁰ In another section on deities, Collon includes a seal of the god “Iba’um, who

¹⁴⁶Charlesworth, 110.

¹⁴⁷Ibid, 104.

¹⁴⁸See *ibid*, 105. Charlesworth notes the Cherubim are mentioned: 1 Kings 8:6-7 as protectors of the Ark of the Covenant in the inner shrine of the Temple.

¹⁴⁹Milik, 231.

¹⁵⁰Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 186.

appears with a dragon, who came to be associated with Marduk of Babylon.”¹⁵¹ So, the Enochian author places winged creatures, that is the Cherubim and dragons, in Paradise with God, guarded by the angel Gabriel. The only thing missing from the record is a cylinder seal. The text will have to suffice.

Collon also includes a few examples of giants on seals, rare as they are, he says, due to the challenge of depicting their size. Nevertheless, there were giants in Near Eastern mythology. “In order to instill fear in enemies and to portray the evil powers surrounding him, man has always resorted to the fantastic.”¹⁵² An example of this is Gilgamesh’s opponent, Humbaba, who was a giant. And so the illicit offspring of the Watchers and women, symbolic of the violation of the natural order of creation, are *nephilim*, giants. Again, here is another example of how the Enochians incorporated the symbolic consciousness of Mesopotamia into their writing.

One last figure depicted on seals and that is relevant to Enoch is Shamash, the sun god--called Utu in Sumerian-- who remained the most popular deity in Mesopotamia from Akkadian times onwards.

At night he was believed to go by boat through the waters of the underworld (where he is accompanied by one of the earliest representations of a sphinx). He is also shown under a baldachino supported by twisted columns, with bullmen holding the gateposts. This probably depicts a famous shrine. Other representations of him appear on seals 102-5 and 766-7 but the one which was to survive shows him with one foot placed on a mountain, identified by rays, by his saw-toothed knife or by both together; on later seals the knife alone was used. From Ur III times onwards he is represented by the star-disc and later, under Syrian influence, he came to be symbolized by a winged disc.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹Ibid, 170.

¹⁵²Collon, 183.

¹⁵³Ibid, 167.

What is particularly relevant to Enoch is the connection Shamas has to *oneiromancy*. It just so happens that the name of one of the primary texts on this subject, *Ziqāqu*, comes from the name of one of the god of dreams, said to be the son of Shamash and the brother of the dream goddess Mamu.¹⁵⁴ So, the sun god was also the father of divinatory gods. So Enoch, who lived 365 years and who flew, was also associated with divination. And so, Charlesworth comments: “The Jewish apocalypses certainly reflect the brilliance and erudition of the scribal schools-in that sense they represent scribal phenomena-but they also inherit ancient myths, symbols, and folklore-in that they preserve popular (perhaps religious) phenomena.”¹⁵⁵

Not only do they reflect brilliant scribes and rich symbolism, but also an alternative strain of Jewish thought, as was pointed out before. That strain placed no emphasis on Mosaic Law, instead adhering to a belief that evil has supernatural origins and will only be defeated by God’s intervention. God reveals knowledge to special individuals regarding when this will happen, and this is communicated through revelations, or apocalypses, such as *I Enoch*. As Rabbinic Judaism became the mainstream after the Roman victory in 70 CE, this form of Judaism was suppressed or neglected, and, eventually, mostly forgotten. Modern discoveries of ancient documents have given new life, however, to our own knowledge about the Enochians. Likewise, discoveries at Nag Hamadi, Egypt have given a second life to another religious movement from antiquity that provided an alternative point of view, mostly to what would become Orthodox Christianity, and that was Gnosticism.

While there are significant differences between Gnosticism and Enochian Judaism, there are some interesting parallels. Both perceive the material world as tainted

¹⁵⁴VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth*, 62.

¹⁵⁵Charlesworth, 113.

with evil, but both also perceive a way to salvation through revelatory knowledge.

“Gnosticism asserts that ‘direct, personal and absolute knowledge of the authentic truths of existence is accessible to human beings,’ and this knowledge, or ‘gnosis,’ comes from revelation.”¹⁵⁶ There was a belief that “God would reveal many and wonderful things.”¹⁵⁷

While much Gnosticism became a Christian heresy, there is much diversity in the texts found at Nag Hamadi. The one most relevant to this discussion is the *Apocalypse of Adam*, which lacks clear Christian references:

This has led several interpreters to see in it a witness to a non-Christian Gnosticism which contains an already well developed redeemer myth. On the other hand, its close dependence on Jewish apocalyptic tradition suggests that it may represent a transitional stage in an evolution from Jewish to gnostic apocalyptic. In this case the document may be a very early one, perhaps first or second century C.E.¹⁵⁸

Like the *Book of Watchers*, it recounts the Flood and is closely related to parts of Genesis but diverges considerably from it. There are many angels named, and, like Enoch, Adam has visions and passes on his knowledge to future generations. Also like the *Book of Watchers*, the *Apocalypse of Adam* contains “seams in the text,” leading scholars to suspect later additions.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *The Gnostic Society Library*, “An Introduction to Gnosticism and the Nag Hamadi Library” pg. 1.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ MacRae, Intro. to *The Apocalypse of Adam* in *The Nag Hamadi Library*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988) 277.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Is it possible that these books share some common threads? There are still many missing pieces to that puzzle, but further scholarship may yet reveal the answers. Suffice it to say that there was much religious syncretism in antiquity, and the exact origins of all aspects of respective traditions are elusive. “‘The Jews,’ writes F.C. Porter, ‘knew how to borrow what they liked and use it as they liked. They knew how to appropriate foreign mythological figures without the mythology, and even dualistic conceptions without the dualism, and could build a Babylonian story of creation into their system. . .’”¹⁶⁰ Likewise, it is possible the Gnostics later did the same.

¹⁶⁰Russell, 186.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

An examination of the Latter Prophets and of *I Enoch* 1-36 has shown how apocalyptic threads were present in the religion of the Jews at the time of the Babylonian Exile, beginning with the first deportation in 597 B.C.E. Pre-exilic writing had a visionary element to it, and ancient phrases like the 'Day of Yahweh' were used to exalt the God of Israel and inspire his followers to keep their faith during stressful times. Yahweh had acted in history and, in Babylon, it was thought, he would act again, restoring his faithful to their rightful place and return himself to his rightful place, the Jerusalem Temple.

However, the rift created by the separation of the Jewish community during the Exile found expression in the literature. Together with the Babylonian influences, some of this literature took new forms. Two different strains of apocalyptic writing emerged: the historical, which would eventually produce the *Book of Daniel*, and the revelatory, which would produce *I Enoch*. Later Jewish, Christian and Gnostic writers would draw from both. But Judaism would never be the same. Even Cook, who argues that power-holding priests authored apocalyptic writing comments

The new era brought about by the exile was accompanied by much change for people to absorb, and groups can be predisposed for millennialism by changes in their world. . . . By the same token, the exile must have been a foundation-shaking change. This change in the exiles' world was accompanied by changes in their beliefs and ways of thinking. For example, at this time many people realized their conception of God was too small: YHWH must be more than just a national God working within history. In other words, older worldviews did not account for people's new world-scale consciousness. As a result, they were predisposed for acceptance of a new universe of meaning.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹Cook, 200.

This “new universe of meaning” had a distinctively Babylonian accent. As I have demonstrated, there were many ways Jewish authors syncretised the religion of the Israelites with Babylonian elements. While their traditions had, no doubt, been born of various Near Eastern traditions, as was the nature of the ancient world, the Babylonian Exile was particularly influential. As Kvanvig puts it

The characteristics [of Enoch lit.] arose out of the transformation of Mesopotamian primeval traditions, partly consisting of mythical material, into a literature marked by a Jewish historical-eschatological perspective of reality. This transformation did not happen in one step, but gradually by emphasizing and selecting elements already extant in the Mesopotamian traditions.¹⁶²

And so the origins of the strange depictions of the end time so famous in the apocalyptic biblical books are slowly but surely being revealed. In the beginning, apocalyptic literature contained no dualism, so central to the genre by the time of the *Apocalypse of John* in the late first century of the Common Era. While there is still much work to be done, and it would be an overstatement to suggest there might be any strong consensus anytime soon as to definite dates or authors, there is hope that with the future, more revelations are possible. Until then, much can be learned from the knowledge scholarship has already revealed. This paper has been an attempt to summarize the hard work of many scholars who have shed new light on the oldest Jewish apocalypse, *1 Enoch 1-36*, *The Book of Watchers*, and to show how it was born in Babylon of Jewish and Mesopotamian parents.

¹⁶²Kvanvig, 335.

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