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0521853788 - Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature

Annette Yoshiko Reed

Excerpt

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## Introduction

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

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

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

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

<sup>2</sup> See Ch. 2 n. 86.

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

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

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

From the Middle Ages to early modern period, the early Enochic pseudepigrapha<sup>4</sup> were largely lost to the West. To an even greater degree than in ages past, the mystery surrounding Enoch came to be associated with lost books and secret scrolls, wisdom suppressed and writings forgotten. Even as the books themselves were gone, the ancient allusions remained. It could not have escaped the attention of Christian Kabbalists that early Christian literature and Jewish mystical texts like the *Zohar* both mentioned “book(s) of Enoch”; Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) even professed to have bought such a book at a very high price, to the amusement of his more skeptical colleague, Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522).<sup>5</sup> Likewise, occultists such as John Dee (1527–1608) sought direct access to the secrets revealed to Enoch, appealing to the precedent of this ancient visionary when claiming to have received angelic revelations of their own.<sup>6</sup>

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

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

<sup>5</sup> Schmidt, “Traces,” 45–46.

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

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

<sup>8</sup> See Adler, *Time*, 6–7.

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Rumors about the continued preservation of Enochic literature in Ethiopia finally led, after several failures and false starts, to the Western rediscovery of the *Book of the Watchers* and other early Enochic pseudepigrapha in 1773, when three manuscripts containing *Maṣḥafa Henok Nabi* were brought to Europe by James Bruce.<sup>9</sup> The publication and translation of this work – later dubbed *Ethiopic Enoch* or *1 Enoch* to distinguish it from an Enochic pseudepigraphon preserved in Slavonic (*2 Enoch*) – prompted further investigation into this intriguing book and its influence on early Christians,<sup>10</sup> later facilitated by the discovery of a Greek manuscript containing *1 En.* 1:1–32:6 in 1886–1887.<sup>11</sup>

Thanks largely to the pioneering research of R. H. Charles (1855–1931), it was established that *1 Enoch* is a collection of at least five separate writings and that Syncellus' quotations derive from the first one (thus dubbed the *Book of the Watchers*).<sup>12</sup> Speculations about the date, provenance, and original language of these books varied until the discovery of Aramaic fragments of *1 Enoch* among the Dead Sea Scrolls and their publication by J. T. Milik from 1951 to 1976.<sup>13</sup> The distribution of material in the eleven fragments confirmed Charles' theory that *1 Enoch* is a collection of originally distinct documents. In addition, the paleographical evidence of the earliest fragments suggested that two of these documents, the *Astronomical Book* (*1 En.* 72–82) and the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 En.* 1–36), date from the third century BCE, making them our oldest known apocalypses and among our most ancient nonbiblical examples of Jewish literature.<sup>14</sup>

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

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

<sup>10</sup> Charles, *Commentary*, xxvii–xxx.

<sup>11</sup> Codex Panopolitanus, also called the Akhmim MS or Gizeh Fragment.

<sup>12</sup> Charles, *Commentary*, xlii–lii; Milik, *Commentary*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> 4QEn<sup>a,b,c,d,e,f,g</sup>, 4QEnastr<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>; Milik, *Commentary*.

<sup>14</sup> 4QEnastr<sup>a</sup> and 4QEn<sup>a,b</sup>. Milik, *Commentary*, 164–65, 273–74; Nickelsburg, *Commentary*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 1–9, 47–59; idem, "Towards the Morphology," 1–19.

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

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

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

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

<sup>17</sup> Milik, *Commentary*, 70–138.

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

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

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

<sup>21</sup> E.g. Knibb, "Christian Adoption."

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>22</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends*, 43–45.

<sup>23</sup> Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, esp. 45.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>31</sup> Knibb, “Christian Adoption,” 402.

<sup>32</sup> Adler and Tuffin, *Chronography*, liv–lv.

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

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

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



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

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

## 3. ORAL AND LITERARY CHANNELS OF TRANSMISSION

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

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

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

<sup>37</sup> E.g., Dimant, "Fallen Angels," 49, 101–2.

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

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

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

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House*, 266–68.

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

<sup>40</sup> Esp. Jaffee, *Torah*.

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