

Introduction

The proliferation of traditions associated with angels in Second Temple and late antique Judaism and Christianity is well known by the scholars and students of the texts associated with these periods. Especially striking are the numerous writings that take up various aspects of the myths about angels who descend from heaven to mate with women—an account only briefly mentioned in Gen. 6:1–4. In an enigmatic sequence of events, the “sons of God” leave heaven and sire the “warriors” (הַגִּבּוֹרִים) and “men of renown” (אֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׂם) with earthly women (Gen 6:4). This succinct story in Genesis stands in contrast to the many traditions that circulated in the Second Temple period that elaborated upon the angels themselves, their deeds on earth, and their divine chastisement. These interpretive traditions make frequent reference to the angels who descend to earth as “Watchers” (in Aramaic, עִירִיךְ or in Greek, ἑγρηγόροι), and their union with mortals has grave consequences.

Well-known stories about fallen angels were engaged either directly or indirectly by much of the literature of this period. Diverse communities of Jews and Christians expanded upon, reacted against, and appropriated the varied traditions concerning the Watchers and their fall from heaven. Their wide reach is demonstrated by the currents that run through later Jewish mystical traditions, the Qur’an, medieval Christianity, and even seventeenth-century Western writers. While scholars have traditionally sought to study Judaism and Christianity in antiquity by separating and isolating aspects of each religion as distinct from one another and from various other cultural influences, it is clear that memorable stories like the ones associated with the Watchers moved easily among religious communities. These stories about the fallen angels, known especially from Second Temple Jewish traditions, contain many elements from even older myths of the Near East. Narrative traditions about angels circulated in ways that defy scholarly attempts to isolate and segregate them in an orderly manner. Indeed, stories about heavenly beings descending to earth and falling in love with humans, along with the theme of the origin of evil and cosmic battles between good and evil, continue to entertain popular audiences, both religious and secular, to this day.¹ Interpretive traditions did not circulate in predictable and tidy ways in antiquity; nevertheless, the contributors

1. New York Times bestsellers by Anne Rice, *Memnoch the Devil: The Vampire Chronicles* (New York: Knopf, 1995), and Danielle Trussoni, *Angelology* (New York: Viking, 2010), along with the movie

in this volume take up the challenge of providing historical contexts for these texts, realizing that anchoring them in this way artificially freezes the dynamic movement of traditions.

The present volume seeks to complement what is a rapidly growing body of studies on the fallen angels traditions.² Building on the insights of recent scholarship on the Watchers, the fourteen essays in this collection examine a range of topics surrounding these traditions and sharpen scholarly understandings of their transmission and transformation in various literary contexts throughout history.

Legion (2010), are but a few recent examples of the lasting hold that these ancient myths have on the modern imagination.

2. Some of these works include the collection of essays edited by F. Reiterer, T. Nicklas, K. Schöpflin, *The Concept of Celestial Beings: Origins, Development and Reception*, DCLY (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007) and the stimulating monograph by Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005). A significant volume that examines how otherworldly beings rebelled against the divine was edited by Christoph Auffarth and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Fall of the Angels* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Two other resources associated with the Watchers traditions also merit mention. The first, *Fallen Angels in Jewish, Christian and Mohammedan Literature* by Rabbi Leo Jung, appeared initially as a *Jewish Quarterly Review* article that in its revised and expanded form was published by Ktav in 1926 (and reprinted in 1974). Jung approaches the topic of “fallen angels” more generally, and explores especially traditions that involve Satan (and to a lesser extent Samael, Asmedei and other accounts where a single malevolent otherworldly being predominates); the Watchers account is discussed in the final chapter of Jung’s book. James C. VanderKam’s seminal survey of the Watchers traditions in various early Christian writings, “1 Enoch, Enochic Motifs, and Enoch in Early Christian Literature,” in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity*, CRINT 3.4, ed. James VanderKam and William Adler (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 33–101, esp. 60–88, like that of H.J. Lawlor, “Early Citations from the Book of Enoch,” *The Journal of Philology* 25 (1897): 164–225, helps scholars follow the trajectory, growth and development of watchers traditions among early Christians. Contemporary scholarship on the Watchers traditions in Enochic literature is benefited especially by the publication of the Hermeneia commentaries on *1 Enoch* (George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001]) and Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012); Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012). Other important studies that illumine especially Watchers traditions in early Enoch literature include D. Dimant, “The Fallen Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books Related to Them,” PhD diss. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1974) (Hebrew), Siam Bhayro, *The Shemihazah and Asael Narrative of 1 Enoch 6–11: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary with Reference to Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Antecedents*, AOAT 322 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005), Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6.1–4 in Early Jewish Literature*, WUNT 2.198 (Mohr Siebeck, 2005) and Claudia Losekam, *Die Sünde der Engel: Die Engelfalltradition in frühjüdischen und gnostischen Texten*, TANZ 41 (Tübingen: Francke, 2010).

While traditions about the fallen angels flourished in pre-modern times, few resources exist for students of the Bible and non-specialists in Second Temple Judaism to consult today. Thus the primary purpose of this collection is to provide convenient access to the myriad ways myths about the fallen angels left their mark in the literature and imagination of ancient Jewish and Christian communities. To this end, the collection serves to guide educated non-specialists in an exploration of many primary texts and also offers some discussion of the influence that each vantage had on later traditions as well. The topos of the fallen angels makes for an ideal study of interpretive traditions because these figures appear in a broad range of texts from various periods, providing a useful window into ancient practices of interpretation and transmission of traditions.

Where should one begin a study of the fallen angels or the Watchers? Those familiar with the Hebrew Bible would think especially of Genesis 6, which describes the “sons of God” who descend to earth just prior to the account of the flood. Yet, given the opaque nature of this pericope, readers of Genesis rightly ask what the author and audience assumed or took for granted about this account. Further, scholars have also explored the biblical account in light of Near Eastern and Hellenistic parallels, with the aim of shedding light on this brief and provocative text.³

Extended traditions about angels who “fall,” not only in terms of a descent from heaven but also as a sort of moral failing, flourished in post-exilic Judaism. Writings associated with the patriarch Enoch (cf. Gen. 5:21-24) provide the fullest expression of the fallen angels tradition. The classical form of the account appears in the *Book of the Watchers*, chapters 1–36 of *1 Enoch* (also known as Ethiopic Enoch because the entire anthology is extant only in Ge’ez), where angels, both loyal and rebellious, are referred to by the designation “Watchers” (עִירִיין).⁴ The designation “Watchers” may derive from the notion that angels are vigilant (or “awake” per the root עִירִיין [עוֹר]) and do not sleep (cf.

3. See, for example, Ronald Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 13–26 and “The Nephilim were on the Earth: Genesis 6:1-4 and its Ancient Near Eastern Context,” *The Fall of the Angels*, 11–34; Jan Bremmer, “Remember the Titans!” in *The Fall of the Angels*, 35–61 and Andreas Schüle, *Der Prolog der hebräischen Bibel: Der literar- und theologiegeschichtliche Diskurs der Urgeschichte (Genesis 1–11)* (Zürich: Theologischer, 2006), 222–32 and “The Divine-Human Marriages (Genesis 6:1–4) and the Greek Framing of the Primeval History,” *TZ* 65 (2009): 116–28.

4. For examples of the designation in Aramaic (עִירִיין), see 4Q206 4, 19 *1 En.* 22:6 and Dan. 4:10, 14, 20; the Greek expression, ἐγγύγοροι, which renders עִירִיין, may be observed in Gr. *1 En.* 10:7 and the Ge’ez *teguhān* occurs in *1 En.* 1:5.

1 *En.* 71:7). Or, the title might indicate that these beings keep watch over humankind (see, for example, 1 *En.* 20:1).⁵ Whatever the origin of the term, the Watchers appear in early Jewish literature as a type of celestial being, likely a particular class of angels.⁶ The *Book of the Watchers* presents in dramatic fashion the descent of angels (designated also in the versions as “Watchers, sons of heaven”) to earth, how their descent negatively impacts humans and the earth, and their punishment by the Divine. The nucleus of the account (1 *En.* 6–11) offers in its final form the merging of two different stories that concern angelic leaders and their transgressions. In one stream, the leader of the angels, Shemihazah, instigates other angels to have sexual relations with human women. These unions lead to the birth of the Giants that subsequently cause much bloodshed and violence on earth. The other interwoven tradition features the angelic leader Asael, who reveals knowledge otherwise forbidden to human beings. This knowledge relates to sexuality, metalworking, makeup, weaponry, alchemy, magic, and astrology. Archangels play a role in calling God’s attention to the dire situation of the world and in asking for divine intervention. God’s response involves not only judgment against the Watchers, but also their imprisonment and punishment, which are recounted in detail. Enoch, here presented as a scribe, serves as an intercessor for these rebel angels. In that role, Enoch ascends to the Divine, to the heavenly throne room, where he receives God’s judgment against the angels. Thereafter, Enoch is granted visions of otherworldly sites, some of which relate to the angels’ incarceration and judgment.

Scholars have long explored the relationship of the tradition described in 1 *En.* 6–11 to the tradition in Gen. 6:1–4, though there is no absolute consensus as to how that relationship might be named. In the last fifty years, scholars have tended to favor the idea that the *Book of the Watchers* depends on the account in Gen. 6:1–4; still, some prominent dissidents have argued that Genesis features an abbreviated account of the Enochic version. Recently a growing number of voices have suggested that both Genesis and the *Book of the Watchers* feature independent renderings of a common tradition; nevertheless, the Watchers traditions were hardly univocal. Many of the texts surveyed in the volume speak to the pluriform nature of the Watchers traditions. For example, references to

5. Helpful studies on the designation and this class of celestial beings include Robert Murray, “The Origin of Aramaic (*ʿir*, Angel,” *Or* 53 (1984): 303–17, Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 140 and Maxwell J. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran: A Comparative Study of 1 Enoch 1–36, 72–108 and Sectarian Writings from Qumran*, JSPSup 11 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 38–39.

6. For further discussion of the Watchers as a class of angelic beings, see Kevin Sullivan, “The Watchers Traditions in 1 *Enoch* 6–16: The Fall of Angels and the Rise of Demons” in this volume.

the Watchers appear in Dan. 4, but these beings are not associated with rebel angels who sin with the daughters of men; rather, they are presented as “holy” celestial beings who serve as licit messengers. Similarly, accounts of angels who descend to teach and representations of biblical personae as Giants—the wicked offspring of the rebel angels in many Watchers traditions—suggest that there were multiple views of angelic descent and hybridity. At this juncture, we recognize that there is much yet that we do not know about Watchers myths and attempts to gain a clear account of origins are not always fruitful.

Nevertheless, there is a value in beginning our discussion with the traditions that are known to be the most ancient. In light of the critical scholarship that has demonstrated connections and points of contact between many early Watchers and Near Eastern traditions, the volume opens with a discussion of the Watchers within a Near Eastern context. Ida Fröhlich establishes the broad currency of the antecedent Watchers traditions in the ancient lore of Mesopotamia and Persia. She proposes that these angelic myths were introduced into Jewish interpretive traditions in the sixth century BCE, during the time of the Babylonian exile. Her essay provides an important study of the vitality of the long-lived traditions about angels and demons that circulated in the ancient Near East and contributed characteristic elements to the Watchers lore.

While myths about the fallen angels (the angels who mate with women) held sway over the imagination of various Jewish and Christian communities for some time, elements of these traditions receive only fleeting mention in the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps the most striking reference to the Watchers appears in the apocalyptic Book of Daniel. In Dan. 4, the Watchers are the celestial beings who bear nighttime visions to King Nebuchadnezzar (NRSV Dan. 4:13, 23; Hebr. 4:10, 20). They are also said to sentence decrees (NRSV Dan. 4:17; Hebr. 4:14).⁷ Brief references to the “Nephilim,” familiar from Genesis 6 and the Enoch traditions about the Watchers, are also found in the Book of Numbers and the Book of Ezekiel. In Numbers, the mysterious Giants make a fleeting

7. The relationship of Danielic and Enochic traditions has also been explored by scholars who have long noted similarities in the throne visions of Dan. 7 and *1 En.* 14. See T. Francis Glasson, “The Son of Man Imagery: Enoch XIV and Daniel VII,” *NTS* 23 (1977): 82–91; Helge S. Kvanvig, “Henoch und der Menschensohn. Das Verhältnis von Hen 14 zu Dan 7,” *ST* 38 (1984): 101–33; Kvanvig, “Throne Visions and Monsters: The Encounter between Danielic and Enochic Traditions,” *ZAW* 117 (2005): 249–72; Loren Stuckenbruck, “Daniel and Early Enoch Traditions in the Scrolls,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol. 2, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 368–86; Ryan Stokes, “The Throne Visions of Daniel 7, *1 Enoch* 14, and the Qumran *Book of Giants* (4Q530): An Analysis of Their Literary Relationship,” *DSD* 15 (2008): 340–58.

appearance in the reconnaissance mission of the Israelites in the land under the leadership of Joshua the son of Nun (Num. 13:33). According to the Book of Ezekiel, the “Nephilim” are the fallen soldiers who go down to Sheol (Ezek. 32:27). There may be yet another brief biblical reference that can be associated with the Watchers traditions: Leviticus 16 refers to a wilderness spirit known as Azazel who receives the goat in the scapegoat ritual.⁸ The Dead Sea Scrolls also know of an Azazel (4Q180) who, along with the angels siring Giants, leads the world astray. One also recalls from the *Book of the Watchers* the principal Watcher by the name of “Asael” (Aramaic), whose name appears as “Azazel” in the Ethiopic version of the text.

Given the long and sustained attention that the fallen angels and Watchers traditions receive in later Jewish and Christian interpretive traditions, it is surprising to see how rarely this myth of human and angelic encounter occurs in the Hebrew Bible. A discussion of the biblical passages, the relationship between the textual traditions, and the key terms in the narratives about the fallen angels is offered here by Chris Seeman. He discusses key lexemes that are attested in the versions of Gen. 6:1–4 that are found in the MT and LXX and explores the expressions used in the texts to describe various characters in the brief drama such as “sons of God,” “daughters of men,” and the “Nephilim,” the offspring of the angels’ union with women, who possess extraordinary powers and are called Giants.

The discussion of the Watchers by Anthea Portier-Young sets the stage for the Hellenistic period and identifies significant parallels between the Jewish angel traditions and Greek mythology. Given the paucity of references to the Watchers traditions in the Hebrew Bible, it is perhaps not surprising to see that traces of them appear unevenly in the deuterocanonical/apocryphal texts. Jeremy Corley’s essay presents some evidence for the Watchers traditions in the deuterocanonical/apocryphal literature of Wisdom of Ben Sira, Baruch, 3 Maccabees, and the Wisdom of Solomon, but the data for some of these texts is not overwhelming.

The biblical locus for the tale about the angels who mate with women, Gen. 6:1–4, is both brief and enigmatic and appears with some variation in the MT and LXX textual traditions. While stories about fallen angels are not well-attested in the Jewish Scriptures, traditions related to the judgment and imprisonment of the Watchers appear in select texts of the New Testament, with the so-called Catholic Epistles asserting them in a distinctive way. While the theme of judgment—so critical to the Watchers myths—is steadily

8. Paul D. Hanson, “Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6–11,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 195–233, esp. 220–26.

represented throughout the New Testament literature (Matt. 25:31–46; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 15:51–52; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7–10; Rev. 20:11–15), the clearest reference to the judgment of the fallen angels appears in Jude 6. The passage in 2 Pet. 2:4 is thought to be dependent upon this reference in Jude. Eric Mason’s essay takes up the task of describing the Watchers traditions in these Catholic Epistles. So too, references to angelic beings play a role in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, as we see in Scott Lewis’s treatment of the topic. Kevin Sullivan’s essay on the fallen angels and the rise of demons establishes the distinctive traits and actions that characterize the Watchers and the theme of their downward movement from heaven to earth by these heavenly angels and the resulting moral decline of humanity. Sullivan proposes that these are two aspects of the “fallen” Watchers that eventually develop in characteristic ways in early Christian demonology. His essay proposes that references in the Gospel traditions presume fallen angel motifs.

Watchers traditions are also known to have flourished in a number of texts designated in contemporary times as pseudepigrapha (so-called “false writings”). While a number of these writings were well known and influential in the Second Temple period, they ultimately did not achieve canonical status by the majority of communities that later became Judaism and Christianity. Many of the instances of the Watchers that appear in this body of literature belong to the corpora designated today as *1 Enoch* and *2 Enoch*, and also the *Book of Jubilees*. Each section of *1 Enoch* has its own history of composition and context. Authors in this section discuss how aspects from the specific Enochic booklet known as the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 En.* 1–36) come to be transformed in new literary contexts. Karina Hogan’s essay focuses on the specific theme of angelic sexual transgression as it appears in the “*Animal Apocalypse*” (chapters 85–90 of the *Book of Dreams* from *1 En.*). The *Book of Jubilees*, a pseudepigraphic retelling of traditions from Gen. 1 to Exod. 12, has its own distinctive history and rendering of the Watchers traditions, described by John Endres whose essay traces how the Watchers in *Jubilees* descended initially for good purposes. Their subsequent sin with women—a source of evil corresponding to the Eden story—occurred on earth, not in the heavens. Moreover, *Jubilees* suggests that the example of the Watchers should serve to encourage human responsibility. Watchers traditions are well represented among the Second Temple literature associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls, with a notable concentration of texts found among the Cave 4 scrolls. Samuel Thomas discusses the distinctive traditions about the Watchers that appear in the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen) and other Aramaic Scrolls from Qumran. Leslie Baynes discusses the Enochic booklet known as the *Book*

of *Parables* (1 En. 37–71), a text whose dating is obscure but is traditionally located shortly after the Second Temple period.

In the final section of the collection, themes associated with the fallen angels are explored in late antique Christian and Jewish literature. Randall Chesnutt's essay details the significant influence of Watchers elements in the writings of Justin Martyr. Silviu Bunta's essay on "Cain the Giant" describes how traces of the Watchers traditions appear in the later manuscript traditions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (*LAE*). And Joshua Burns examines rabbinic references to and knowledge of these traditions in his essay.

Authors of ancient and late antique interpretive traditions found the myths about the Watchers and their fall from heaven to be compelling. While the core of the traditions about these angels is likely rooted in ancient Mesopotamian lore, stories about the Watchers came to exert a lasting influence on the imaginations of Jewish and Christian interpreters. Like the Watchers themselves, the stories about these angelic beings passed with ease among the boundaries that modern scholarship has conceptualized as separating Judaism and Christianity. The vivid details and unusual aspects of these angelic traditions have left a lasting legacy on the Western imagination and is a testimony to the compelling power of these tales.⁹ Even in contemporary times, mythical traditions associated with the fallen angels continue to provide rich fodder for storytellers of popular audiences.

The essays in this volume seek to present foundational information for particular texts and offer a look at the *status quaestionis* for each. Essays focused on a specific text follow a template that discusses the authorship, audience, and, at times, manuscript history of that writing. The introductory material is then followed by a synopsis of the Watchers traditions as they appear in the text under consideration, suggestions for further research, and a brief bibliography. Thus, this collection can easily serve as a resource for a classroom study of the reception history of the Watchers traditions that stretches from antiquity into the early medieval period of the rabbinic literature. At the same time, these studies provide a broader context for a discussion of these interpretive traditions and will be of use to specialists as well. This collection seeks to fill out and deepen general scholarly understanding of mythic elements that have especially captivated contemporary imaginations—heavenly beings, origins of evil, scenes of judgment—all of which can be considered stock elements of an apocalyptic worldview.

9. For example, modern readers are likely most familiar with Milton's retelling of the fallen angels myth in his *Paradise Regained*, Book 2, lines 178–81.