

Sexual Desire in the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 6-36) and the New Testament Exhortation to Sexual Abstinence

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Abstract

This article claims that according to the Book of the Watchers in 1 Enoch, the sin of the angels is not only in copulating with the daughters of men, but also in bringing sexual desire to the world. Sex had already existed beforehand, but without sexual desire. This conception, which has parallels in the Qumran Scrolls as well as in the Pseudepigrapha, influenced Christian tradition. In the NT letters, the sin of the angels comes up several times, invariably in a sexual context, and Christian believers are presented as new angels who are called to put this sin to death. But the most explicit comparison of Christians to angels is provided by the synoptic Gospels: 'For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven' (Matthew 22:30 and par.). The development of this Christian ideal is backgrounded by the tradition of the angels' sin in Enoch: instead of the fallen angels who left heaven and brought sexual desire to the world, the new angels will utterly abstain from sex and sexual desire, and dwell in heaven forever. Thus, sexual abstinence is conceived as a means to eschatological redemption.

Introduction

The Book of the Watchers (BW) is the first of five major sections which comprise the apocalyptic book of 1 Enoch.¹ Based on the biblical tradition about the fallen angels and their intercourse with women (Gen 6: 1-4), it describes the revolt by the heavenly watchers that leads to the evil and corruption of all men on earth and predicts their doom by God's judgment.

1 The five sections are: The Book of the Watchers (1-36); The Book of Parables (37-71); The Book of Luminaries (72-82); The Dream Visions (83-90); The Epistle of Enoch (92-105).

The affinity between 1 Enoch and early Christian thought is well known. As George W.E. Nickelsburg writes: "Because the early church arose in the circles of apocalyptic Judaism, the Enochic texts and traditions were known and significantly influenced early Christian thought. Sometimes the knowledge of specific text was direct; in other cases, the influence was indirect."²

In this article, I argue that the description of Christian believers as angels in heaven in the New Testament positions them as a replacement of the angels who sinned in the Book of the Watchers. Instead of the fallen angels who left heaven and brought sexual desire to the world, the new angels will utterly abstain from sex and sexual desire and will dwell in heaven forever.

The Fallen Angels and Sexual Desire in the Book of the Watchers

It is no coincidence that, although the Book of the Watchers describes human procreation and childbirth prior to the descent of the angels, it makes no mention of sexual desire in this context: "And when the sons of men had multiplied, in those days beautiful (ὠραῖαι) and comely (καλαί) daughters were born to them" (BW 6:1). That procreation is disconnected from sexual desire until the descent of the angels is also evident in the BW's description of the end-time. Using the *Urzeit-Endzeit* typology, it reflects the age preceding the angels' sin and descent as a prototype for eschatological events of the End. Accordingly, after the destruction of all the passions, humans will be able to procreate without sexual desire: "And now all the righteous will escape, and they will live until they beget thousands, and all the days of their youth and their old age will be completed in peace" (BW 10:17).

The story embarks from the premise that while the sexual act is natural to flesh-and-blood life on earth and essential for perpetuating

2 G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *1Enoch 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 82-83; E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), I, 9; A.Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122-129; 147-159; M. Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and its Influence on Christianity* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2005).

Sexual Desire in the Book of Watchers

human existence, its practice requires no sexual desire. The view that sex is strictly for procreation rather than pleasure was widely held throughout the Greco-Roman world. Thus, according to Plutarch (c.46-120 CE), men should refrain from “sowing seed from which they are unwilling to have any offspring.”³ And Ocellus Lucanus (5th century BCE) expounds:

In the first place, indeed, this must be admitted that we should not be connected with women for the sake of pleasure, but for the sake of begetting children. For those powers and instruments and appetites, which are subservient to copulation, were imparted to men by Divinity, not for the sake of voluptuousness, but for the sake of the perpetual duration of the human race.⁴

This notion also finds expression in other pseudepigraphic writings close to the BW: God “perceived that she [Rachel] wanted to lie with Jacob for the sake of children and not for sexual gratification” (*T. Iss.* 2:3); “the person who is pure with love does not look on a woman for the purpose of having sexual relations” (*T. Benj.* 8:2).

The currency of this perception is evidenced by Jewish as well as Christian writers. Philo views sexual relations as justified only when there is hope for legitimate offspring: “the end we seek in wedlock is not pleasure but the begetting of lawful children” (*Jos.* 4.3).⁵ Josephus reports that the “Essenes [or rather one group of Essenes] have no intercourse with them [women] during pregnancy, thus showing that their motive in marrying is not self-indulgence but the procreation of children” (*War.* 2: 161).⁶ And Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215CE) writes:

A man who marries for the sake of begetting children must practice continence so that it is not desire he feels for his wife, whom he ought to love, and that he may beget children with a chaste and controlled will. For we have learnt not to “have thought for the flesh to fulfill its desires.” We are to “walk

3 Plutarch, *Mor.*144B (*Plutarch's Moralia*, LCL, II, 887-888).

4 Ocellus Lucanus, *Nature of the Universe*, ch. 4 (trans. T. Taylor, London: printed by R. Taylor, 1831, 21-22).

5 Philo's commentary in *Abr.*137 and *Sec. Leg.* 3.20 (113), and see further R.A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 94-95.

6 *Wisd.* 3:13; for more, see D.C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 199-200.

honorably as in the way,” that is in Christ and in the enlightened conduct of the Lord’s way, “not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and lasciviousness, not in strife and envy.”⁷

This idyllic state on earth dissipated upon the descent of the angels and their union with daughters of men. The angels saw them and “desired them” (ἐπεθύμησαν; ἐπιθυμέω [6:2; 15:4]). The text uses the verb ἐπιθυμέω, which in this context means “to have sexual interest in someone, to desire.”⁸ The noun derived from this verb is ἐπιθυμία, which pseudepigraphic literature and Christianity associate with sexual promiscuity and fleshly desires (ἐπιθυμία σαρκός),⁹ in their negative sense. Desire resonates powerfully throughout the description of the angels, and all the verbs for their union with women emphasize the sexual aspect of this desire. While in heaven, they saw the beautiful women and “desired them” (6:2); whereupon “they began to go into them” (ἤρξαντο εἰσπορεύεσθαι 7:1) and “defile” themselves (μαίνεσθαι 7:1; 15:3), and “have lain with them” (συνεκοιμήθησαν 9:8; 15:3).¹⁰ It is noteworthy that all these verbs first come up in the story in connection with the angels’ intercourse, not

- 7 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 3.7.58 (ed. and trans. Henry Chadwick, *The Library of Christian Classics: Volume II, Alexandrian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 40-92; idem, *Stromata*, 3.6.46; 3.11.71; 3.12.79; *Paed.* 2.83, 91,93,95; Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 29.1; Athenagoras, *Plea for the Christians*, 33; Athenag, *Leg.* 33; Dio Chrysostom, *Orat.* 7.133-37; A.W. Heth, “Unmarried ‘For the Sake of the Kingdom’ (Matthew 19:12) in the Early Church,” *Grace Theological Journal* 8 (1987): 70; D.C. Allison, “Divorce, Celibacy and Joseph (Matthew 1.18-25 and 19.1-12),” *JSNT* 49 (1993): 7-8; Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet*, 99-100; R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 355.
- 8 F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 372; W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press and Cambridge University Press, 1957), 293.
- 9 *GLAE*, 19:3; *Test.Reub.* 4:10; 5:6; 7:4; *Test.Jud.* 14:3; 16:1; *Test.Jos.* 4:6; 7:8; 9:1; and in the NT: Matt 5:28; Gal 5:16, 24; Eph 2:3; 1 Pet 2:11; 2 Pet 2:10, 2:18; 1 John 2:16; Rom 7:7,8; 13:14; Col 3:5; 1 Thess 4:5.
- 10 εἰσπορεύω - to go into, enter; μαίνω.- to stain, to defile, sully; συνεκοιμάομαι - to sleep with, lie with another. D. Dimant, “*The Fallen Angels*,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books Related to Them* (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1974) (Hebrew), 33-44.

Sexual Desire in the Book of Watchers

before, presumably because, in the eyes of the BW tradition, sexual desire had hitherto been nonexistent.

The fact that the BW places particular emphasis on the sexual aspect of the angels' act and its attending sexual desire, as against the conventional mode of procreation before the angels' fall, lends support to my assumption that it conveys something new.

Likewise instructive on the angels' introduction of sexual desire to the world is the description of the angels' sin in the Animal Apocalypse, which was acquainted with and based on the BW.¹¹ Until the descent of the angels, human procreation is described without any mention of sexual desire: Adam and Eve, likened to cattle, gave birth to two sons, Cain and Abel; Cain, in turn, begat many bulls; the birth of Seth was followed by the birth of many cattle and black cows; and from the white cattle issuing from Seth came forth similar offspring – “one followed the other, being many” (85: 3-10), in an uninterrupted line. However, on the descent of the angels, sexual desire makes its first appearance, as the angels are likened to sexually charged horses: “And I looked at them and I saw and behold they all let out their privates like horses, and they began to mount upon the heifers of the bulls. And they all became pregnant and bore elephants and camels and asses” (86:4. Trans. Tiller, 235) [...] “And when I saw in the vision, behold, then one of those four of those who had come forth threw (something) from heaven, and they gathered and took all the large stars, whose privates were like the privates of horses” (88:3. Trans. Tiller, 251). In symbolic terms, the horse's phallus stands for sexuality, promiscuity, and prostitution.¹²

That the angels introduced the world to sexual pleasure is made explicit by what they taught the women. About the band of angels

11 On the affinity between AA (83-90) and BW (6-36) see R.H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or 1Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), lii, 179-180, who points “to a close connection between the two Sections either in identity of authorship, or in the acquaintance of one of the authors with the work of the other” (179). He prefers the latter alternative: “similarities in phraseology and idea prove that one of the authors had the work of the other before him. Of the two Sections, there is no room for doubt that 83-90 is the later”; Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic and Myth in 1Enoch 6-11,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 393; Reed, *Fallen Angels and History of Judaism and Christianity: the Reception of Enochic Literature*, 80-83.

12 For this image, see Jer 5:8 “lusty stallions” and Ezek 23:20 “whose members were like those of asses and whose issue was like that of horses.” See P.A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholar Press, 1993), 240.

headed by Shemihaza, we are told: “And they began to go into them and to defile themselves through them, and to teach them sorcery and charms and to reveal to them the cutting of roots and plants” (7:1). And Asael taught them about silver, how “to fashion it for bracelets and ornaments for women. And he showed them concerning antimony and eye paint and all manner of precious stones and dyes. And the sons of men made them for themselves and for their daughters, and they transgressed and led astray the holy ones. And there was much godlessness (ἀσέβεια) upon the earth and they made their ways obsolete” (8:1-2).

It was the angels that taught women about materials useful for their beautification: silver, gold, and precious stones for jewelry and ornaments; minerals for eye paint; and dyes for colored garments. Namely, they edified the women on what may potentially tempt men and intensify sexual pleasure.¹³ The inference is that such edification had hitherto been nonexistent in the earthly world, and was therefore an innovation introduced and necessarily taught by the angels.¹⁴

Likewise indicative that the angels introduced sexual desire to the world is the description of their offspring. They are the “children

13 Eye paint is mentioned by biblical authors only in connection with women of ill repute: Nickelsburg, *1Enoch 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 190,194. Sorcery is likewise associated with prostitution: Nah 3:4; 2 Kgs 9:22. E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zecharia, the Book of Watchers and Apocalyptic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 179, refers to L. Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberesen*, Strassburg I E 1898, 18, 21-2, 24, 51-2, who dwells on the connection between sorcery and adultery. Other examples are Mart. Isa. 2:4 and Epiphanius, *Haer.* I, 3. Colored garments of women “בגדי צבעונין” and pieces of jewelry which entice men to commit sin also appear in late Talmudic literature in a midrash on Šemḥazai and Aza’el: *Yal. Šim.* 6.44; *Ber. Rabbati*, ed. Albeck, 31; R. Martini, *Pugio Fidei* (Leipzig, 1687), 938. See also *m. Zabim* 2, 2; *Yeb.* 76a; *Ab. Z.* 20ab. According to Milik, the existing information about this midrash does not allow to trace its origin beyond the 11th century: J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch, Aramaic Fragments of Qumran, Cave Four* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 321-331; S. Spiegel, “Noah, Daniel and Job,” *Louis Ginzburg Jubilee Volume* (New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 352.

14 See Pseudo Clementine, *Hom.* VIII, XIV: The angels wished to please their mistresses and showed them [...] all things “which are for the adornment and delight of women, are the discoveries of these demons bound in flesh.” The effect of Asael's teaching is described as “godlessness” (ἀσέβεια), which can be used of sexual immorality (8:2; e.g., *Test.Reub.* 3:14). See Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End*, 179; Tertullian, *De cultu feminarum*, 1.2.1; 2.10.2-3.

Sexual Desire in the Book of Watchers

of lust” (ὁμοῦς τῆς πορνείας 10:9),¹⁵ from whom issued “spirits of lust” (τὰ πνεύματα τῶν κιβδήλων 10:15 according to the Greek^{pan}), or “evil spirits” (ጠናፍሕተ እኩያነ 15:8-9 according to the Ethiopic version).¹⁶

In explaining the birth of giant offspring, scholarship usually refers to their origins combining “spirits and flesh” (15:10). Angels properly dwell in heaven, and humans properly dwell on earth, but the nature of the giants is mixed.¹⁷ However, the birth of giants may also be accounted to sexual desire. The union between the angels and women, which was triggered by sexual desire, did not beget “beautiful (ὠραῖαι) and comely (καλαί) daughters”, as did humans before (6:1), nor “thousand” who are to end their lives peacefully, as in the description of the end-time (10:17). Rather, it produced giants, whose spirits continue to spread sexual desire and subject the world to ruin and corruption “until the day of the consummation of the great judgment, when the great age will be consummated. It will be consummated all at once” (16:1).¹⁸

Significantly, then, the angels introduced the world to sexual desire and taught the daughters of men how to enjoy sex and use it promiscuously. For the author of this text, the angels’ teaching was the principal cause of distress in the world.¹⁹

15 In the Greek version of Enoch 9:10, the giants are bastards μαζήραιοι, namely offspring of an illicit marriage. D.W. Suter, “Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6-16,” *HUCA* 50 (1979): 118-119; L.T. Stuckenbruck, “The Origins of Evil in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4 in the Second and Third Centuries B.C.E.,” in *The Fall of the Angels*, ed. C. Auffarth and L. Stuckenbruck (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 101.

16 M. Knibb, *Ethiopic Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon 1978), 1: 59; 2: 101. The Greek sync reads “They will be evil spirits, the evil spirits which have come out from the bodies of their flesh,” stressing the affinity between evil and the physical aspect of these spirits.

17 Reed, *Fallen Angels and History of Judaism and Christianity*, 46; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 272-273; A.T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6.1-4 in Early Jewish Literature* (WUNT 2.198; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 153.

18 1En. 15:2-16:1; 10:11; see also Jub. 20:5 where judgment of the Giants appears in connection with “judgments of Sodomites” and “their fornication and impurity”; M.J. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran: A Comparative Study of 1 Enoch 1-36, 72-108 and Sectarian Writings from Qumran* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 46.

19 Mollenberg, “A Study of the Roles of Shemihaza and Asael in 1 Enoch 6-11,” *JJS* 35 (1984): 137.

1. The Fallen Angels and Sexual Desire in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Qumran literature lends additional support to the link between the angels' fall with sexual desire, notably the Damascus Document, which brings in the fallen angels as exemplars of “lascivious eyes,” who acted upon their sexual lust:

And now, sons, listen to me and I shall open your eyes so that you can see and understand the deeds of God, so that you can choose what he is pleased with and repudiate what he hates, so that you can walk perfectly on all his paths and not allow yourselves to be attracted by the thoughts of a guilty inclination and lascivious eyes. For many have gone astray due to these; brave heroes stumbled on account of them, from ancient times until now. For having walked in the stubbornness of their hearts the Watchers of heaven fell' (CD, II, 14-18).²⁰

The scrolls, moreover, use “bastards” as designation for spirits (“the spirits of the bastards”), which can be identified with the spirits of the giants in the BW.²¹ Similarly, they link them with defilement and fleshliness, as opposed to divine laws in the heart: “And through my mouth he startles [all the spirits of] the bastards, to subjugate [all] impure [sin]ners. For in the innards of my flesh is the foundation of [... and in] my body wars. The laws of God are in my heart [...]” (4Q511, 48, 2-5). “[... those who inspire him fear, all the spirits of the b]astards and the spirit of uncleanness” (4Q444, 2, 4), “and in the judgment [...] the bastards to condemn the flesh as guilty” (1QH^a 24, 2-3).

Also instructive on sexual desire in connection with the angels and their actions, as well as its novelty, is the Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGenar), which provides the closest parallel to Noah's nativity story in 1Enoch 106-107.²² Its account of the fallen angels, as in the BW, focuses on their sexual sins, causing Lamech to be concerned over the angelic appearance of his son and confront his wife Bitenosh on the matter. In a scene (lines 1-18) unparalleled in 1Enoch, she denies

20 English translation by F. García Martínez and E.J.C. Tigchelhaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), vol. 1, p. 553.

21 P. S. Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years. A Comprehensive Assessment*, ed. P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam (Leiden: Brill, 1999), II: 337.

22 On how these two texts interrelate see Nickelsburg, *1Enoch*, 541-542.

sexual contact with an angel, and proceeds to persuade Lamech that she conceived from him. In so doing, she reminds him of the sexual pleasure attending their intercourse, invoking it as a newly experienced dimension. Significantly, then, the story's underlying assumption is that sexual pleasure does not accompany every intercourse, only this particular one, which occurred after the angels' descent to earth: "Oh my brother and lord. Remember my sexual pleasure [...] in the heat of intercourse, and the gasping of my breath in my breast [...] O my lord and brother! [Remember] my sexual pleasure. I swear to you by the Great Holy One, by the King of the heavens [...] that this seed comes from you, that this pregnancy comes from you" (1QapGenar, II, 9-15).²³

2. The Knowledge of Sexual Desire is among the Mysteries the Angels Revealed to Humans

The angels are charged with revealing to humans "mysteries,"²⁴ namely secrets they brought from heaven: "You see what Asael has done, who has taught all iniquity upon the earth, and has revealed the eternal mysteries (τὰ μυστήρια) that are in heaven which the sons of men were striving to learn" (9:6). And to Raphael, God says: "Heal the earth which the watchers have ruined, and announce the healing of the earth, that I shall heal its wounds and that the children of men shall not altogether perish on account of the mystery (ἐν τῷ μυστηρίῳ) which the watchers have disclosed and taught the children of man" (10:7).

23 Translation by García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scroll Study Edition*, vol. 1, 29. P.W. van der Horst ("Bitenosh's Orgasm (1QapGen 2:9-15)," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 626-627; and I. Fröhlich ("Medicine and Magic in Genesis Apocryphon: Ideas on Human Conception and its Hinderances," *RevQ* 25 (2011): 186-189), suggest that Bitenosh's "sexual pleasure" refers to her orgasm, an event during which she emitted her own seed into her womb where it mingled with Lamech's seed to form the beginning embryo and that this interpretation exhibits an acquaintance of the Genesis Apocryphon's author with Greek theories of double seed embryogenesis. According to this theory, both male and female partners contribute to procreation with their seeds. This interpretation doesn't take into consideration two things: the novelty and the uniqueness of this special "sexual pleasure," which could be remembered by both of them and its relation to the sinful angels.

24 μυστήριον = κρη here used collectively. There was more than one "secret." M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1Enoch* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 155.

What are the eternal “mysteries” that humans strove to learn, that the angels brought from heaven, and that, once revealed, served to augment evil on earth? The inference here is that these “mysteries” encompass all the forbidden knowledge the angels taught humans, which elsewhere the text makes specific – metal working and ornamentation (8:1-2); magical skills such as sorcery and pharmacology (7:1; 8:3), and divination from cosmological phenomena (8:3) – with the added clause: “And they all began to reveal mysteries to their wives and to their children” (8:3). Mysteries, in this sense – namely, secret knowledge hitherto found in heaven and made available to humans on earth via the angels – may well extend to sexual desire. Suggestive of this is verse 16:3:

You were in heaven, and no mystery was revealed to you; but a stolen mystery you learned; and this you made known to the women in your harness of heart; and through this mystery the women and men are multiplying evils worthless upon the earth.²⁵

From this verse, it transpires that this is a secret shared by men and women alike, and through it they will corrupt the earth. Of all the teachings of the angels, only sexual activity is common to men and women.²⁶

The tradition whereby sexual knowledge resides in heaven may derive from the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, most particularly the episode concerning the tree of knowledge of good and evil (2:9). According to the biblical text, man was forbidden to eat of the tree “for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (2:17), whereas the serpent informs Eve: “You will not die; for God knows that when you

25 Trans. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 267; see also A.T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6.1-4 in Early Jewish Literature* (WUNT 2.198; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 21: “worthless mystery” (16.3).

26 In the Greek version (16:3), we are told that the mystery brought by the angels from heaven “was from God.” Nickelsburg (*1Enoch 1, 267, 269*) dismisses this phrase as “nonsense in the present context” and “evidently a corruption of μυστήριον ἔξουθενημένον (a worthless or despised mystery).” But the idea that sexual knowledge is a mystery residing in heaven with God is not so improbable and may derive from the identity of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:9). For ancient belief that sexual knowledge resides with God, see Gilgamesh Epic, I, iv, 29,34; Jas. 1:13. The phrase τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ: 1 Cor 4:1; 14:2; Rev 10:7.

eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (3:4-5). Scholars are divided over the meaning of this “knowledge.” Some read it as sexual knowledge, on the grounds that upon eating the fruit of this tree, Adam and Eve discover they are naked and cover their genitalia (3:7). In terms of language, there is support for this interpretation, because the verb “to know” is sometimes a biblical usage for sexual intercourse (Genesis 4:1; 19:8).²⁷ Some reject this interpretation, arguing that the Genesis tradition has Adam and Eve involved in sexual activity prior to eating from the fruit of the tree. Accordingly, the knowledge within the tree of knowledge should not be understood sexually, but otherwise.²⁸

Either way, it is clear that the pseudepigraphic tradition – as expressed in the Book of Adam and Eve – reads the story in a sexual context.²⁹

3. The Angels’ Sin and the Pseudepigraphic Tradition of Adam and Eve

The pseudepigraphic tradition about Adam and Eve has close ties with the BW story about the fallen angels, suggesting that both traditions may have drawn on common sources.³⁰

Both traditions treat the split in heaven between two groups of angels – those who disobeyed God and their good and pure counterparts. In the BW, the disobedient angels, grouped around Shemihazah and Asael (Azazel), desire to unite with daughters of men and descend to earth. In the Life of Adam and Eve, on the other hand, these are angels headed by the devil, who refuse to worship Adam

27 See also 1QSa, 1, 9-11: “He shall not [approach] to a woman to know her through carnal intercourse until he is fully twe[nt]y years old, when he knows [good] and evil”; see Ibn Ezra, to Genesis 3: 5-6; L.F. Hartman, “Sin in Paradise,” *CBQ* 20 (1958): 37-38.

28 These are among others based on Rashi's commentary to Gen 4:1 “Now the man knew his wife Eve”; Hartman, “Sin in Paradise,” 36-37; For more on the matter, see D.P. Wright, “Holiness, Sex, and Death in the Garden of Eden,” *Biblica* 77 (1996): 305-329.

29 For this reading in Christian sources: Clement, *Stromata*, XII, 3, 81-82; Irenaeus, *Libri Quinque Adversus Haereses*, 3, 28, 8. See E. Pagels, *Adam Eve and the Serpent*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 27-28.

30 Suter (“Fallen Angels,” 132) has dwelt on the affinity between the BW story of the angels' descent and the biblical account of Adam and Eve but has not dealt with the pseudepigraphic tradition of Adam and Eve.

after his creation in God's image.³¹ In both stories, the fallen angels are forbidden to re-enter their dwelling in heaven as a result of their sin. In both traditions, heading the group of lapsed angels is the devil or his symbolic counterpart.³² And in both traditions, human beings cause the sin of the angels and their expulsion. But most striking is their similar standpoint on sexual desire – that it has its origins in heaven, that it is a “mystery,” that it is the source of corruption and evil in the world.

In the Greek Life of Adam and Eve (GLAE), Adam and Eve live apart – he with the male animals, she with the female animals – and their encounter takes place only after Eve eats from the fruit. The serpent, acting on behalf of the devil for the motive of banishing Adam from the Garden, persuades Eve to eat of the tree: “Fear not; for at the very time you eat your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil. But since God knew this, that you would be like him, he begrudged you and said, ‘Do not eat of it’” (GLAE 18: 3). According to Eve's story, after securing her oath to give from the tree to Adam, the serpent climbs the tree and sprinkles his evil poison on the fruit which he gave her to eat. This poison, the text points out, “is

31 The story about refusal of the devil and his angels to worship Adam and their expulsion from Eden comes primarily from the Latin Life of Adam and Eve (12-16) but is also alluded to in the GLAE. See R. Nir, “The Struggle between the ‘Image of God’ and Satan in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve,” *SJT* 3 (2008): 327-339.

32 1En 10:4-6 and the image of Mastema, in the parallel tradition in Jubilee 10; D.R. Schultz, “The Origin of Sin in Irenaeus and Jewish Pseudepigraphical Literature,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, 32 (1978): 174-175; D. Dimant, “1Enoch 6-11: A Methodological Perspective,” in P.J. Achtemeier, ed., *SBLSP* 18 (2 vols.: Missoula, Mont. Scholar Press, 1978), I:327; P.J. Kreeft, *Angels and Demons: What Do We Really Know about Them?* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), esp. 53, 111, 116-18. For more, see M.D. Basil, “When Did Angels Become Demons?” *JBL* 129 (2010): 657, n.1, who argues that “angels became demons only from the beginning of the second century and only then at the hands of Christians” (657), and that “nowhere in the Enochic material are the fallen angels (or those ‘Watchers’ who sin) themselves said to be demons or even evil spirits” (667). Affinity also exists between the angels in the BW and Adam and Eve themselves, who before eating the prohibited fruit, were like angels in heaven: They had no sex, didn't procreate and could enjoy eternal life. Like the angels they also sinned and were expelled from heaven. On the similarity of Adam to an angel: 2En. 30:11; D.E. Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity* (NovTSup 28; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 40, 218.

his covetousness (ἐπιθυμία). For covetousness is the origin of every sin” (19:3).

This story reaffirms the sexual meaning of the “knowledge” within the forbidden tree. On eating the fruit, Eve immediately becomes aware of her nudity: “and I knew I was naked of the righteousness (τῆς δικαιοσύνης) with which I had been clothed” (20:1). Before she calls Adam and persuades him to eat of the fruit, she covers her nudity in recognition of the sexual dimension of her naked body (20:3). As in the BW, this sexual knowledge is described as a “mystery.” Thus, after her eyes are opened and she discovers her nakedness, Eve calls out, “Adam, Adam, where are you? Rise, come to me and I will show you a great mystery μέγα μυστήριον” (GLAE, 21:1), and persuades him to eat of the fruit.

Sexual knowledge, then, is the “great mystery.” And Adam and Eve’s sin, like the angels’ sin, is associated with sexual desire (ἐπιθυμία), which, in both stories, first appears in connection with sin and is perceived as the source of evil in the world.

Both stories are etiological narratives which were developed in the pseudepigraphic tradition to explain the source of evil in the world,³³ whether through the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden or the sin of the angels’ descent and union with daughters of men. The two explanations sexualize the source of evil, relating it to sexual desire that, until the sin, was nonexistent on earth and is a product of either the devil or his representatives that was exported from heaven. Both stories interpret and expand biblical traditions but infuse their contents with new themes.

The tradition in the Book of Adam and Eve may therefore reaffirm not just the central role of sexual desire in the angels’ sin but also its perception as a consequence of the angels’ fall and the cause of evil on earth. Indeed, these two writings are dated to disparate

33 P.D. Hanson, “Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 218; R. Bauckham, “The Fall of the Angels as the Source of Philosophy in Hermias and Clement of Alexandria,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985): 314; D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 249-251; M. Delcor, “Le Myth de la chute des anges et de l’origine des géants comme explication du mal dans le monde dans l’apocalyptique juive histoire des traditions,” *RHR* 190 (1976): 3-53. Irenaeus (*A.H.* 1, 1, 15, 6 [1, 8, 17]) fuses the two traditions, making the devil and his angels involved in Adam’s expulsion from Eden to explain the source of evil. Schultz, “The Origin of Sin in Irenaeus and Jewish Pseudepigraphical Literature,” 182-184.

periods. Nevertheless, this does not rule out the possibility that both drew on the same ideological stream flowing from the pseudepigraphic tradition.³⁴

4. The Tendency to Subdue the Angels' Sin

Sexual desire, envisioned as the source of evil in the world, is present elsewhere in the Pseudepigrapha. However, the tendency to hold the angels accountable for its birth and teaching to humans becomes increasingly subdued.

The Book of Jubilees presents two traditions alongside each other. One, according to which the angels were sent to earth by God in order to “teach the sons of man, and perform judgment and uprightness upon the earth” (trans. Wintermute in OTP. 4:15; 5:6), omits altogether the sexual aspect of the angels’ actions, nor are these actions conducive to corrupting the world. This is in line with the Genesis tradition (6:1-4).³⁵ The other has Enoch testifying about “the watchers, the ones who sinned with the daughters of men because they began to mingle themselves with the daughters of men so that they might be polluted” (4:22) and God “was very angry. He commanded that they be uprooted from all their dominion” (5:6). And Enoch subsequently says: “For on account of these three the Flood came upon the earth. For (it was) because of the fornication which the

34 On the date of *GLAE*, see M. de Jonge and J. Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1997, 77), who date the Greek version of the *Life of Adam and Eve* between 100 and 600 CE, and prefer to situate it between the 2nd and 4th centuries. The prevalent view assigns a much earlier date to the composition: D.A. Bertrand (*La vie grecque d'Adam et Eve*, (Recherches Intertestamentaires 1; Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1987, 31-32) dates the work between 100 BCE-50 CE; M.D. Johnson, (“Life of Adam and Eve,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, ed. H. Charlesworth [New York: Doubleday, 1985], 275), dates the original work between 100 BCE-200 CE, apparently towards the end of the 1st century CE; A. M. Denis (*Introduction aux pseudepigraphes grecs d'Ancien Testament* [SVTP 1; Leiden: Brill, 1970] 6) dates it between 11 BCE-70 CE; M. D. Eldridge (*Dying Adam with his Multiethnic Family* [Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 2001] 20-30) dates it between 100 BCE-200 CE. For Christian identity of the composition, see R.Nir, “The Aromatic Fragrances of Paradise in the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* and the Christian Origin of the Composition,” *NT* 46 (2004): 20-45.

35 On how the Jubilees tradition follows Genesis, see J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, “The Interpretation of the Flood Story in the Book of Jubilees,” in *Interpretations of the Flood*, ed. F. García Martínez and G.P. Luttikhizen (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 66-85.

Sexual Desire in the Book of Watchers

Watchers, apart from the mandate of their authority, fornicated with the daughters of men and took for themselves wives from all whom they chose and made a beginning of impurity” (7:21). This tradition is influenced by the BW and retains the sexual aspect of the angels’ sin, but, whereas the BW’s sin originates in heaven, in Jubilees it originates on earth. On this divergence between the BW and Jubilees, Annette Yoshiko writes:

Jubilees, however, progressively absolves the Watchers from blame. By depicting their intentions as good and their descent as divinely mandated, Jubilees characterizes these angels not as evil so much as weak and thus disobedient [...] (90) Recasts angelic descent so as to downplay the Watchers’ role in the corruption of humankind, to assert human responsibility, and to demote the fallen angels from supernatural corruptors to fallible creatures, whose sins and punishments are comparable to those of humans (95).³⁶

The tendency to subdue the angels’ sin and impose the blame on humans finds expression in *T. Reuben* (5:6-7), where the blame falls almost entirely on the women:

Accordingly, my children, flee from sexual promiscuity and order your wives and daughters not to adorn their heads and their appearances so as to deceive men's sound minds. For every woman who schemes in these ways is destined for eternal punishment. For it was thus that they charmed the watchers, who were before the flood. As they continued looking at the women, they were filled with desire for them and perpetrated the act in their mind. Then they were transformed into human males, and while the women were cohabitating with their husbands they appeared to them. Since the women’s minds were filled with lust for these apparitions, they gave birth to Giants.

36 Reed, *Fallen Angels and History of Judaism and Christianity*, 90, 95; J.J. Collins, “The Origin of Evil in Apocalyptic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Congress Volume: Paris 1992* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 28; according to van Ruiten (“The Interpretation of the Flood Story in the Book of Jubilees,” 82): “possibly the writer of 1Enoch 6-11 and the writer of Jub. 5:4-12 have taken material from the same tradition, but they reconstruct it each in their own way.”

For the Watchers were disclosed to them as being high as the heavens (*T. Reub.* 5:4-6. Trans. Kee in OTP.).

We conclude this discussion with the question: Why does the BW not state explicitly that the angels are accountable for introducing sexual desire to the world? The answer may lie in the attempt to obscure the notion that sexual desire and knowledge of its existence had their origins in heaven. If my analysis is correct, the BW presents a revolutionary stand on the source of sexual desire. As previously noted, the Pseudepigrapha, and later also Christianity,³⁷ subscribe to a negative view of sexual desire, as analogous to fornication and corruption. As such, its origins were ascribed to the animal world and the passions of earthly humans, in stark contrast to the holy, pure, and passionless heavenly world. The fact that the angels are the first to desire sexual intercourse with daughters of men, and are responsible for revealing to humans the mystery of sexual desire, paints a picture completely different from the widely accepted one. And in the BW, unlike the GLAE, there is no evil ploy of the serpent who, as an agent of the devil, casts desire into the fruit of the forbidden tree. Rather, it is a large group of angels from heaven that took divine secrets and transmitted them to all humankind. The attempt to blur this conception is behind the ever-increasing tendency to downplay the role of the angels in revealing sexual desire and reassign it to women, as apparent in later sources based on the BW.

The Angels' Sin and the New Testament Ideal of Sexual Abstinence

1. The Sin of the Angels and Sexual Desire in the Letters

In the New Testament, the tradition of the descending angels comes up several times, invariably in relation to sexual desire. In Jude (6-7), as in *Watchers*, the angels are charged with leaving their dwelling in heaven, on account of which God kept them “in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great day.” The epistle invokes Sodom and Gomorrah as comparable with the angels' sin of

37 GLAE, 19: 3; T.K. Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 211.

addiction to fornication:³⁸ “Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.” 2 Peter (2:4-10) continues in this vein, making clear the fallen angels’ affinity with sexual desire and reusing Sodom and Gomorrah as a reminder.

This affinity between the sinning angels and sexual desire is also hinted at in Colossians and Ephesians. In the letter addressing the Christians in Colossae, we read:³⁹

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient [the children of disobedience] (Colossians 3:5-6; Ephesians 2:1-3; 5:3-6).

Of note is the phrase “children of disobedience” – τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας.⁴⁰ Defined as those disobedient of God, whose wrath will

38 J. Daryl Charles, “Jude’s Use of Pseudepigraphical Source-Material as Part of a Literary Strategy,” *NTS* 37 (1991): 135. For Sodom and Gemorrah as a symbol of sexual sin in the Pseudepigrapha: Test. Naftali 3:4; Test. Benj. 9: 1; Jubilee 16: 5-9, 20: 5-6. J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Kampen: J.H. Kok Publishing House, 1990), 80-86, 122-124.

39 It is debatable whether Paul wrote Colossians. But even those who reject his authorship, point to the epistle’s close affinity with Paul’s thought. See A.Y. Collins, “The Reception of Paul’s Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Letter to the Colossians,” *SEA* 76 (2011): 21-39.

40 The phrase “children of disobedience” occurs in all manuscripts (about 200) of Colossians, except for B Papyrus 46. Some claim it was originally not included in the epistle, and entered under the influence of Ephesians. Some English translations omit it – RSV, NEB/ REB, NIV, others include it – GNB, NJB, NRSV. See arguments for its inclusion: J.D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 210; N.T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 135, n. 1; T.K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 281-282; M. Barth, and H.

come upon them, they are allied with a list of sins which are all sexual sins: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed.

Who are “the children of disobedience”? This designation is usually interpreted as applying to pagan idolaters, to whom Jews ascribed sexual sins.⁴¹ I, however, suggest that this designation alludes to the fallen angels. In the New Testament, the word ἀπειθεία means disobedience (Romans 11:30, 32) and may refer to the angels in Watchers, who disobeyed God, left heaven, their spiritual dwelling, and copulated with the daughters of men, bringing sexual desire to the world. Consequently, God’s wrath came upon them, and they were sentenced to life imprisonment.⁴²

As against the children of disobedience, both letters posit the Christian believers who are urged to put to death the earthly organs conducive to this sexual desire.⁴³ They are called “God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved” (Colossians 3:12) or saints (Ephesians 1:1, 4, 15, 18; 4:18).⁴⁴ The term “holy ones” is already applied to angels in the Hebrew Bible and 2nd Temple literature.⁴⁵ In Watchers, it applies to the sinless angels, who are called “holy” or “holy of heaven” or “holy of spirit” (15:4).⁴⁶ But it is notably the New Testament that links the title

Blanke *Colossians* (New Haven and London: The Anchor Yale Bible, 1994), 405. B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, 1994), 557.

41 Such an interpretation may infer from Colossians 3:7 (and parallel in Ephesians 4:17-19), or from Ephesians 5:5. M. Barth and H. Blanke *Colossians*, 405; E. Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

42 C. Bigg, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 329.

43 Cf. Rom 8:13; Gal 5:24.

44 The holy ἅγιοι are Christians: Matt 27:52; Acts 9: 13, 32, 41; 26:10; Rom 1:7, 8:27, 12:13, 16:2, 15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1, 2; 16:15; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 5:27; Philip 1:1; Col 1:2, 26; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; the saints in Jerusalem: Rom 15:25, 26; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:4, 9:12; the holy at Qumran: 1QH 3.21-23; 4.24f.; 6.13; 11.10-12; 1QS 11.7f.; 1QSa 2.3-11; 1QSB4.25. Christians are also the elect ἐκλεκτοί: Matt 22:14; Rom 5:33; Col 3:12; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; Rev 17:14. See Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 77.

45 Deut 33:3; Hos 12:1; Zech 14:5; Ps 17:3-4; 89:6, 8; Pro 9:3; Job 5:1, 15:15. See A. Roffe, *The Belief in Angels in Israel in the Light of Biblical Tradition* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2012), 39, 44-46; Tobit 11:14; 12:15.

46 F.W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. ἅγιος, pp. 10-11.

Sexual Desire in the Book of Watchers

holy with angels.⁴⁷ Christians, as holy ones, are the new angels called to remove the angelic sin. Instead of the fallen angels, who left their heavenly dwelling, the holy chosen ones, as stated in these epistles, will dwell in heaven and share in the destiny of the angels (Colossians 1:4; Ephesians 2:4-6). As Lohse puts it, “So the host of those chosen by God is joined to the angels and they are likewise ‘holy ones.’ As God's possession, they are holy ones who will receive the heavenly inheritance.”⁴⁸

2. The Angel's Sin and the Ideal of Sexual Abstinence

As we see, the BW's conjunction of sexual desire and the angels' sin suggests a potential soil for grounding the eventual image of Christians as new angels in heaven at the end of times – an image provided also in the Synoptic Gospels by Jesus himself. In a discussion with the Sadducees on the raising up of the dead, he says:

The people of this age marry and are given in marriage.⁴⁹ But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection (Luke 20:34-36).⁵⁰

What Jesus says is clearly expressive of the angelic image of Christian believers and should be read in the light of virginity and sexual abstinence idealized throughout the NT.⁵¹ In these verses, ‘the people

47 Mk 8: 38; Lk 9: 26; Ac 10: 22; 1 Th 3:13; 2 Th 1: 10; Col 1: 12; Rv 14:10. See also 1QM 7:6, 10:11.

48 Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 36; C. Rowland, “Apocalyptic Visions and the Exaltation of Christ in the Letter to the Colossians,” *JSNT* 19 (1983): 78.

49 In the Codex Bezae (D), “marry and given in marriage” is preceded by “are begotten and beget (γενῶνται καὶ γενῶσιν).” See Ton H.C. Van Eijk, “Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality,” in *Epektasis, Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean*, ed. Daniélou, J. Fontaine and C. Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 215.

50 For a shorter version, see Mark 12:25; Matthew 22:30.

51 G. Carton “Comme des anges dans le ciel,” *BVC* 28 (1959): 46-52. D.C. Olson, “‘Those Who Have Not Defiled Themselves with Women’: Revelation 14:4 and the Book of Enoch,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 503; D.C. Olson, *Enoch: A New Translation: The*

of this age' are distinguished from those of the next age. Whereas those inhabiting this world are mortals, who must necessarily marry and have sex to perpetuate human existence, those worthy of inheriting the next world do not marry because they are immortal and gain eternal life.⁵² These are the Christian believers whose faith in Christ as "Son of God" entitles them to resurrection. Like him, they become "God's children."⁵³ And like him, they will lead a life of celibacy.⁵⁴ They are likened to angels in heaven, who are neither male

Ethiopic Book of Enoch, or 1Enoch, Translated with Annotations and Cross-References (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2004), 46; D.C. Olson, "1Enoch," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. J.D.G. Dunn (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003), 912; A.Y. Collins, "Women's History and the Book of Revelation," *SBL SP* 26 (1987): 89; J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, AB, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), 1305-1306; Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, 195-219. This image already appears in pseudepigraphic literature which describes the righteous as angels in the end of times: 2 Baruch 51:5, 10: "[...] in the heights of that world shall they dwell [i.e. in Paradise, cf. 51:11], and they shall be made like unto angels, and be made equal to the stars, and they shall be changed into every form they desire, from beauty into loveliness, and from light into the splendor of glory." See J.H. Charlesworth, "The Portrayal of the Righteous as an Angel," *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, SBLSCS 12; ed. J.J. Collins and G.W.E. Nickelsberg (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 135-136. The believer imaged as angel is equally current at Qumran: 1QSb 4:25: "May you be like an angel of the face in the holy residence for the glory of the God of the Hosts"; 1QS 11:8.

52 The phrase "people of this age" occurs in the NT only in Luke 20:34 and 16:8. In the latter verse it comes in a comparison with "sons of light." This means that Luke saw humanity divided into two spheres of faith in the present world: C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke -Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (WUNT 2.94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 82. The expression 'marrying and given in marriage' belongs to Q (Luke 17:27; Matt 24:37-39) and is clearly eschatological. "Marrying and giving in marriage will characterize those who are not ready for the Parousia, while (presumably) it will not characterize those who are ready for that impending event [...]." See Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, 205.

53 Jesus "Son of God": Luke 1:35; 3:22; 9: 35; 10:22; 22:70. The phrase "God's children" may allude to their description as angels. It is a biblical term for angels in Gen 6:2; Job 1:6, namely בני אלוהים, and thus translated in many Greek copies of Genesis. LXX ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ J.C. VanderKam, "1Enoch, Enochic Motifs, and Enoch in Early Literature," in *Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 60, n. 183. However, "children of God" may also allude to being like Jesus, the ultimate "Son of God."

54 C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke -Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*, 87.

Sexual Desire in the Book of Watchers

nor female (Galatians 3:28), and do not engage in sex and procreation. This angelic vision also implies that they have no sexual desire.

The image of Christian believers as heavenly angels becomes understandable in light of the BW tradition of the angels' sin. As against the angels who sinned on account of sexual desire, had intercourse with daughters of men, and followed "the defiling desires of the flesh" (2 Peter 2:9-10), the new angels completely abstain from sex. Instead of the fallen angels, who left heaven and were consequently assigned to confinement beneath the earth for seventy generations until judgment day and their final consummation,⁵⁵ come new angels – the sinless Christian believers who live forever in heaven. Instead of the sexual desire introduced by the angels, who thereby inaugurated the age of sin and corruption in the world, the new angels will inaugurate the eschatological age of the End, which will be bereft of sex and sexual desire. Instead of "God's children" who sinned and are to perish, come the true 'children of God,' who confess Jesus to be the "Son of God" and are to be eternal and immortal like angels. Accordingly, the End – until which the fallen angels were kept imprisoned in the valleys of the earth (1Enoch 10:12-13) – has already dawned and will be followed by the resurrection of Christian believers who are to be like pure angels in heaven.

These verses give expression to the ideal of virginity, sexual abstinence, and restraint of the sexual drive as a central value of Christian theology and a means to eschatological salvation.⁵⁶ On how they influenced Christian life, Davis and Allison write:

The impact of Mt. 22.30 par. upon early Christianity was considerable. Largely under its influence the Christian life was popularly conceived to be an imitation of the angels. In particular, the exhortation to asceticism was often supported by appeal to the model of the angels; and virginity especially was espoused as in accordance with the angelic standard.⁵⁷

55 1En. 10:11-15; 14:5-6; 19:1-2.

56 On the connection between the ideal of virginity and sexual abstinence and eschatology, see Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet*, 175-216: "Enthusiastic eschatology and the self-discipline of abstinence, including sexual continence, have often gone together," 196.

57 Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3 volumes (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 1997),

Though an ideal associated with eschatological future life after the resurrection, as implied by the sayings in Matthew and Mark, believers could also interpret virginity and abstention from marriage as applicable now, in their present earthly life, whether on the understanding that Christians already live in the eschatological age, namely in between Christ's resurrection and the Parousia,⁵⁸ or their will to hasten the coming of this age. Such an interpretation is implied by Luke. For him, unlike Matthew and Mark, abstention from marriage is not consequent to the resurrection, but rather belongs to the present – earthly life – as a sign marking those worthy of resurrection and afterlife. This meaning is made clearer in the Old Syriac translation of the passage: “Those who have become worthy to receive that world and that resurrection from the dead, do not marry, nor can they die, for they have been made equal with angels, (and being) the sons of the resurrection (they are) like the sons of God.”⁵⁹

III:229-230; Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet*, 178. Cyprian, *De Hab. Virg.* 22; Ephraem, *De Paradiso* 7; *Hymn on Faith* 10.9; Ambrose, *Exhort. Virg.* 4.19; Clement of Alexandria, *Ecl.* 57; Jerome, *Ep.* 108, 23; Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Macrina*; idem, *Hom. on Cant.* 3,4,11,15; Apophthegmata Patrum, in PG 65 (John the Dwarf 2); Hesychios, *On Watchfulness* 200-1; Clement, *Stromata* 3:48: 1f.; bk. 3, ch. 6.45.3 and parallels; bk. 3, ch. 6.49.3; bk. 3, ch. 9.63. 2. C. Osiek and D.L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997) 152-153. Van Eijk, “Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality,” 214-216.

58 What can be called “a realized eschatology”: Van Eijk, “Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality,” 216.

59 S. Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism,” *Numen* 20 (1973): 6; Heth, “Unmarried ‘For the Sake of the Kingdom’ (Matthew 19:12) in the Early Church,” 87-88; W.R.G. Loader, “Attitudes towards Sexuality in Qumran and Related Literature – and the New Testament,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 354; Aune (*The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, 205): “in Luke 20:34-36, the Evangelist views abstinence from marriage and sexual intercourse as characteristic of believers who as ‘sons of that age/world’ refrain from the entanglements of marriage because of the nearness of the Parousia.” R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 303; Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet*, 189; Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts*, 216-219; C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, “Luke – Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology” (*WUNT* 2.94; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 80-88; W. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2004, 19; W.R.G. Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012), 436; Van Eijk, “Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality,” 215. For a similar reading of this verse in Marcion and the

Sexual Desire in the Book of Watchers

By adopting the Encratite way of life, Christians could experience their present life as already part of the resurrection and the new \AA on. Thus, virginity came to be perceived as realizing the glory of the world to come in the present day.⁶⁰ Accordingly, atonement for the sin of the angels, who introduced $\epsilon\pi\theta\upsilon\mu\iota\alpha$ to the world and taught humans about sexuality and promiscuity, was available to each and every individual who, already in the immediate life, before the coming of the End, could decide to embrace celibacy, renounce sexual relations, and become an angel on earth – one among the “*angelorum candidati*,” as Tertullian called them.⁶¹ And Methodius likewise describes virginity ‘as walking on earth with her head touching the heavens.’⁶²

The angelic image of the Christian believer as expressive of the ideal of sexual abstinence and virginity, which would be fully realized

Marcionites see Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, 22, 195-219; Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 355; T.M. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 174.

60 Van Eijk, “Marriage and Virginity, Death and Immortality,” 215; P. Nagel, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung der Monchtums*, TU 95 (Berlin: Akademie, 1966), 35-36; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, III:2; K. Seim, *The Double Message: Patterns of Gender in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 217; H.T. Feltcher-Louis Crispin, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 82-83.

61 Tertullian, *De Oratone*, 3; Clement of Alexandria alludes to Christians becoming angels (Frg. 2). Fletcher-Louis (*Luke – Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*, 87-88).

62 Methodius, Symposium, I, I, in H. Musurilo, *The Symposium: A Treatise on Chastity*, ACW 27 (New York: Newman Press, 1958), 42. The Gospel call to sexual abstinence also comes up in Matt 19:12. I.G. Smith “Celibacy,” *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* (ed. W. Smith and S. Cheetham; New York: Hartford: The J.B. Publishing Co., 1968), I:323-27; Olson, “Those Who Have Not Defiled Themselves with Women,” 503; D.C. Allison, “Eunuchs Because of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 19:12),” *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* 8 (1984): 2-5; D.C. Allison, “Divorce, Celibacy and Joseph (Matthew 1.18-25 and 19.1-12),” *JSNT* 49 (1993): 3-10; D.C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 175-176; Heth, “Unmarried ‘For the Sake of the Kingdom’ (Matthew 19:12) in the Early Church,” 82; Contra: Q. Quesnell, “Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 19, 12),” *CBQ* 30 (1968): 335-358. Paul also preached virginity and sexual abstinence as the ideal lifestyle for Christians in Corinthians: 1 Cor 7:1; 7:7, and describes himself as a virgin 7:8, 25. Although he doesn’t use the angelic image for Christians, he was familiar with the tradition of the angels’ sin as might be seen from 1Cor 11:10. Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality*, 447-490.

at the End in the heavenly world, in the Garden of Eden, is clearly evident in Revelation:

Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste *παρθένοι*; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless (14:1-5).

The hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed are the Christians following Jesus, the virgins who renounced sexual life on earth and are as angels in heaven. These virgins stand in stark opposition to the BW fallen angels. Unlike the sinning angels who had sex with daughters of men, the angels of Revelation are to remain virginal forever. Adela Yarbo Collins rightly reads these verses as part of the call to Christians of both sexes to practice sexual abstinence.⁶³

63 A. Yarbo Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 129; Loader, "Attitudes towards Sexuality in Qumran and Related Literature – and the New Testament," 342: "It may also have influenced the depiction of the 144,000 of Rev. 14.4 as those who, unlike the Watchers, had not defiled themselves with women, but had apparently already in this life chosen the celibate life of angels." See also R.H. Charles (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920, 2. 8-9), who regards the last line of v 3 and the first line of v 4 as an interpolation by a "monkish" interpolator "convinced that the highest type of the Christian life was the celibate, naturally identified the 144,000, who form the 'first fruit' (or best portion of the Christian Church), with the celibates" (9); Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1940), 267-268; Smith "Celibacy," *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* 1:323; Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet*, 194. R. Zimmermann, "Die Virginitätsmetapher von Apk. 14, 4-5 in Horizont von Befleckung, Loskauf und Erstlingsfrucht," *NovT* 45 (2003): 59.

Likewise, W. Loader understands the image of the hundred and forty-four thousand as referring to those who had espoused the call to celibacy:

They are the first fruits in the sense of being those who already in this life lived the way they would live in the age to come, eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:12) [...] The 144.000 in sustaining celibacy, would have achieved what the angels did not. Now they will be joined by the multitude living celibate lives in the holy place [...] This then coheres with understanding the age to come as without sexual activity along the lines of Mark 12:25.⁶⁴

The ideal of virginity attains its ultimate fulfillment only in the ideal and perfect world established after Jesus' return, on the consummation of the present world and resurrection of the believers. This world is to be the new Garden of Eden, replacing its predecessor, from which Adam and Eve were expelled and which the fallen angels left at their own will. Into this Eden will enter the Christian believers who, by adopting virginity or chastity, take on the image of pure angels and thereby atone for the sin of the fallen ones. Like the first Eden, which in the Christian context was without sex, the anticipated perfect Eden will be bereft of sex.⁶⁵

64 Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality*, 480.

65 Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 366. For the Christian notion that Adam and Eve had no sex before the Fall, see E.A. Clark, *Heresy, Asceticism, Adam, and Eve: Interpretations of Exegesis* (Lewistown, NY: Edwin Mellen Pr. 1988), 99-133. The ideal of virginity and sexual abstinence associated with the angelic image of believers assumes an increasingly prominent place in Christian literature of the second century: The Acts of Paul and Thecla, 5-6 (J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 365); Tertullian, *De Orat.* 3; Cyprianus, *De Hab. Virg.* 22; Augustin, *Enchiridion*, 29; *City of God*, 22.1. This process fits in with the popularity of Enoch in general, and the BW in particular, in 2nd and 3rd century Christianity, see R. Bauckham, "The Fall of the Angels as the Source of Philosophy in Hermias and Clement of Alexandria," 316; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, III:27, 229-230. In her book *Fallen Angels and History of Judaism and Christianity*, Reed attempts to prove that the angels' sin becomes central in Christianity only in the 2nd and 3rd centuries among apologists, such as Justin Martyr. This is presumably why she underscores the tradition about the angels in the Gospels and does not at all treat it in affinity with the story of the descent of the angels; U. Bianchi, "The Religio-Historical Relevance of Luke 20:34-36,"

Conclusion

The Book of the Watchers implies that sexual desire – the source of evil in this world – was brought to earth from heaven, and was revealed and taught to humans by the fallen angels. This radical departure from the conventional point of view, which associates sexual desire with earthly passions and the animal world, has its roots in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, but draws primarily on the interpretation this story acquired in the pseudepigraphic Adam and Eve tradition.

How the BW conceives of the fallen angels is fundamental to the ideal of virginity and sexual abstinence that developed within early Christianity. Accordingly, Christian believers came to replace the fallen angels. Instead of the corrupted angels, who left heaven in pursuit of sexual desire and procreation, there appear new angels. Righteous and pure, they embrace a life of sexual abstinence as a means to hasten “the age to come,” “the resurrection from the dead,” and the final defeat of the sexual inclination. In this new age, the Christian believers will be like angels in heaven – without sex and procreation.

The references to the tradition of the descending angels in the letters, but especially Jesus’ logion in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 12:25; Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:34-36) and its affinities with the BW, point to early Christianity’s close acquaintance with this 1Enoch text, and sheds light on one of the channels through which apocalyptic literature influenced the New Testament theology.⁶⁶

in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions, Festschrift for Q. Quispel*, ed. R. Van de Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (Leiden: Brill 1981), 32-33. In Talmudic literature, a similar idea is found in *b. Ber. 17a*: “In the world to come there is no [...] propagation”; *Midr. Ps. on Ps.145:7*: There will be no intercourse in the age to come because the presence of the Shekinah will be constant. And see Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 177, who relates this tradition to the sentiment in the rabbinic source.

66 On more affinities between the synoptic Gospels and 1Enoch, see D.C. Sim, “Matthew 22.13a and 1Enoch 10.4a: A Case of Literary Dependence,” *JSNT* 47 (1992): 3-19; A.E. Richter, *Enoch and the Gospel of Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publication, 2012).