

1 ENOCH BOOK OF WATCHERS AND ASTRONOMICAL BOOK: THEODICY IN THE CONTEXT OF A PROTO-SCIENTIFIC COSMOLOGY¹

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ABSTRACT

In the earliest book of *1 Enoch*, the *Astronomical Book*, Enoch the “seer” exhorts the reader to contemplate cosmological phenomena. The book displays a keen interest in cosmology and meticulous observation of the natural world. Such characteristics still today form the foundation of the discipline of science. The second earliest Enochian writing, *1 Enoch Book of Watchers*, in addition to proto-scientific observations, propounds an alternative explanation for the existence of evil to the traditional Christian belief in the doctrine of “original sin” as a result of the “fall” of Adam and Eve. The origin of evil is recognised to be divine, but the deity is exonerated from responsibility for it. There is an intriguing relation between the observations of natural phenomena, cosmology, divination, and angelic activity in these earliest Jewish apocalypses. This article considers the striking similarity between the use of proto-scientific elements in this pseudepigraphical literature to offer a solution to the vexed problem of theodicy, and the scientific observations that culminated more than two thousand years later in the new paradigm of evolution as the means of creation, and hence for understanding the inevitability of suffering and evil in cosmological terms.

INTRODUCTION

This article was stimulated by Nickelsburg’s (2005:237) recognition of the need to explore “the source of revealed wisdom and knowledge” in *1 Enoch*. Two kinds of apocalyptic themes can be distinguished in Jewish literature (Yarbro Collins 1999:117; Murphy 2012:49). Apocalypticism is commonly understood to be concerned with eschatological judgement, but although it includes a cosmological explanation of the operation of natural phenomena, apocalypticism does not necessarily imply a cosmic disaster. This study focuses on the marked interest in, and

¹ For the purposes of this article theodicy (the term coined by Leibniz in 1710) is broadly understood to mean “the defense of God’s goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil” (www.merriam-webster.com).

employment of, cosmological phenomena in the two earliest Jewish apocalypses: *Astronomical Book* (*1 Enoch* 72–82, henceforth *AB*), and *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1–36, henceforth *BW*).

There has been a tendency in scholarship to overlook the scientific element in ancient Judaism.² Yet Alexander (2003:4) notes that by the fifth century B.C.E. Jewish Wisdom writings displayed a lively debate about the physical world. Jewish apocalypses started to emerge at about the time of the Greek conquest of the Persian Empire in 331 B.C.E. when Hellenistic philosophy with its penchant for logic and close observation of nature spread throughout the ancient Near East. The earliest book in *1 Enoch*, *AB*, in its concern with calendrical and cosmological observations displays characteristics that still today are the foundations of scientific research: “a strong interest in understanding how the physical world works, together with an assumption that the world is regular, an attempt to reduce phenomena to underlying principles, and some use of direct observation” (Alexander 2014:26). Although today scientists may not be so sure that the world is all that regular on the quantum level, science is still founded on the principles identified by Alexander in *AB*. VanderKam (2014:53) suggests that the combination in *AB* of observation of natural phenomena with the use of earlier scientific data probably spread from the eastern diaspora where the priests needed astronomical information for calendrical purposes. Stone (1976:414–452) noted the lists of revealed things in Jewish apocalypses such as the number of raindrops, of stars, the length and breadth of the earth, and the length and height of heaven. These lists may even have supplied some data for the more strictly scientific advances in astronomy.

In its wake the Hellenistic era also brought a heightened awareness of divinatory practices.³ The incipient scientific tendency to be seen in the detailed and precise descriptions of natural phenomena can also be seen in omen literature from Mesopotamia. Diviners began keeping records of their observations and predictions

² Reed (2014:200). In his review of Ben-Dov and Sanders (2014), Collins (2016:3) urges that this work should serve as a stimulus to further exploration of an aspect of ancient Judaism that “has received minimal attention to date”.

³ See Jovanovic (2013) on the perception of Joseph the dream interpreter and diviner: “wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?” (Gen 44:15b).

from a very early time, especially astronomical divination. Mesopotamian divination consisted of predictions based upon the particular character of what was closely observed in natural objects, which is probably what led to the primitive kind of scientific listing and classification found in *AB* and *BW* (VanderKam 1984: 53–56, 69, 188). These practices were based on a variety of concepts about the ways in which communication between deity/deities and mankind could be conceived. In *AB* and *BW* the figure of the “seer” Enoch is combined with a proto-scientific approach to cosmology which stresses the order, symmetry and regularity of nature and sets out the laws which govern the movement of the great heavenly bodies (Gruenwald 1980:10; Alexander 2003:4). That the author of *BW* believed the origin of divinatory techniques to be divine, i.e., heavenly, is revealed in *BW* 7.1: “And they [the sons of God] taught them charms and spells” (Knibb 1978:77); “and to teach them sorcery and charms” (Nickelsburg 2001:182); “... sorcery and spellbinding” (Milik 1976:167). Reed (2014a:49) notes evidence of “socially marginal ‘magical’ practices” which recall the “ambivalent culture-heroes of Graeco-Roman mythology”.

The texts of *1 Enoch* have been dated on the basis of the Aramaic fragments found at Qumran (VanderKam 1984:21). The current consensus is that they were originally written in Aramaic over a period between the end of the fourth century B.C.E., and before 200 B.C.E., most probably somewhere in Palestine (Charlesworth 2005:446, 448; VanderKam 1996:33; Murphy 2012:3; Reed 2014a:47).⁴ In most Jewish apocalypses the connection between cosmology and divine communication is made through the concept of angels as divine messengers.

The Jewish sages regarded divine justice as a very important attribute, but recognised that evil and suffering mitigate against the notion of “a perfected cosmic order” (Perdue 1994:47).⁵ Divine retribution remained a problem because the Hebrew Bible takes it for granted that God created the world and proclaims (axiomatically)

⁴ According to Nickelsburg (2001:1; 2003:12) the earliest section of *1 Enoch* (72–82) the *Book of Heavenly Luminaries (Astronomical Book)*, can be dated to ca. 400 B.C.E., and the *Book of Watchers* (1–36) was written ca. 315 BCE. Some sources do not include chapters 81–82 in the *AB*.

⁵ Reed (2014a:50) sees in *BW* “a poignant reflection of the power of knowledge, both to corrupt humankind and to save us”.

that creation was good, but not even the Wisdom books provide “any explainable coordination between moral integrity and human suffering” (Gruenwald 1980:4, 6–8).⁶ *AB* and *BW* show a special concern with veiled knowledge secreted in heaven. The apocalypticists responded to the pressing concern of theodicy by conceiving of a connection between knowledge of the secrets whereby nature functions to an understanding of divine justice in the context of the natural world and human suffering (Gruenwald 1980:12–15; Metzger and Murphy 1994:802).

Whereas *AB* is mainly concerned with the calendrical aspects of cosmology, Reed (2014a:74) notes the “strikingly negative counterpart to the apocalyptic revelation of heavenly secrets” in *BW* (composed a little later than *AB*). The concern of the author with respect to theodicy is revealed in a move away from purely scientific interests toward what Metzger and Collins (1994:326 NT) describe as the characteristic content of “apocalyptic revelation and narratives about the reception of revelation through dreams, visions, hearing voices, or taking journeys to heaven and other normally inaccessible places”. In his 2014 monograph, Stuckenbruck considers the diverse ways that third- and second- century B.C.E. authors appropriated the story of the “sons of God” and their offspring in Gen 6:1–4 in order to explain the existence and source of evil. In effect, in *BW* the cosmological connection to the angels of Gen 6:1–4 offers an alternative explanation to the Eden story of “the fall”.⁷ In *BW* it is the Watchers who have caused “all manner of wickedness” on earth. This view thus justifies the bringing of the flood by the Lord God (Κύριος ὁ Θεός, יהוה). Evil originates in heaven, but is not accountable to the deity; it is the cosmological effects and their connection to divination, i.e., the rebellious angels, who are to blame for the evil and suffering on earth (*I Enoch* 6–8; cf. Gen 6:1–4).

⁶ Cf. Gericke (2013:213). For instance Job implies that mankind should withhold any criticism of God’s wisdom because man is limited in his ability to understand the wisdom of God in the various operations of Nature (Job 38:4ff.).

⁷ The doctrine of “original sin” was only formulated in the early centuries of Christianity, and is not directly expressed in the Bible (Nickelsburg 2001:102; Evans 2012b:85–89; Spangenberg 2014:619–621).

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this article is to explore the interplay of two interacting epistemes in *AB* and *BW*: a proto-scientific cosmology, and mantic/divinatory activity as a source of divine knowledge.⁸ Relevant extracts from the following versions of *I Enoch AB* and *BW* are presented:

1. Knibb's 1978 translation of the Ethiopic translation of older versions. Knibb's main text is a fifth to sixth century C.E. Ethiopian translation of a Greek translation of the Aramaic original: Rylands Ethiopic MS 23, in the John Rylands University Library, Manchester.
2. Milik's 1976 publication of eleven Aramaic manuscripts found at Qumran, subsequently published in *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*. The Book of Watchers is represented in 4Q201 (Stuckenbruck 2000:3). 4Q208 and 4Q209 correspond to the Ethiopic *Astronomical Book* – "Book of the Revolution of the Luminaries of Heaven" (Tigheelaar and Garcia Martinez 2000:95–171).
3. Nicklburg's 2001 Hermeneia commentary on *BW* – an eclectic synthesis of all the major available texts. The synthesis strives to preserve the original word order as far as possible.

To note similarities and differences, translations from all three sources are given.

ENOCHIC COSMOLOGY AND THE PROTO-APOCALYPTIC ELEMENT IN EZEKIEL 1

I Enoch starts with the prediction of a theophany (the result of Enoch's vision in which he ascends to heaven), described in 14:8–23 in typical ancient Near Eastern cosmological terms.⁹

⁸ Divination was widely practiced in the ancient Near East (Nicklburg 2001:57; Dodds 1951:140). In this respect, Wyatt's (2001:29) comment is apt: the cultures of the ancient Near East were like a "seamless robe". Cross-fertilization of symbolic ideas and practices must have taken place if not as a result of war, certainly trade, particularly after 515 B.C.E. when Judah became a major corridor for international trade (Brown 2014:141).

⁹ In the intervening chapters punishment by the "Lord of Lords" is prophesied, and the source of evil is explained as the rebellion and conspiracy of the angels. Four archangels intercede for the "hard of heart", and the "Most High, the Great Holy one", commissions

And in (the) vision it was shown to me thus: Behold, clouds in the vision were summoning me, and mists were crying out to me; and shooting stars and lightning flashes were hastening me and speeding me along, and winds in my vision made me fly up and lifted me upward and brought me to heaven. ... and they began to frighten me. ... Fear enveloped me, and trembling seized me; and I was quaking and trembling, and I fell upon my face. ... And I saw a lofty throne; and its appearance was like ice; and its wheels were like the shining sun, and its guardians were cherubim; and from beneath the throne issued streams of flaming fire. And I was unable to see. And the Great Glory sat upon it. (1 Enoch 14:8, 9b, 13b, 18–20, Nickelsburg 2001:257)¹⁰

This description echoes the proto-apocalyptic elements described in Ezekiel's sixth century theophany, such as the presence of a heavenly throne, chariot, and four "living creatures" and that Ezekiel hears a voice and reacts with fear (Murphy 2012:49):

a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. In the middle of it was something like four living creatures, ... as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, on for each of the four of them ... and the four had the same form, their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel. ... Over the heads of the living creature there was something like a dome, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads. ... And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire, and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form. ... this was the appearance of the likeness of the

them to deal with the evil and "destroy all perversity from the face of the earth" (10.16). At Chapter 12 a new section starts; now it is Enoch who is sent to the fallen Watchers, and they commission Enoch to intercede for them.

¹⁰ Alexander (2003:8, 9) stresses that here in the older Enochic literature it is not implied that Enoch *physically* ascended to heaven; it is a dream vision, as in Ezekiel. However, Sacchi (2005:402) regards the ascent to heaven described in *1 Enoch* 14 as a "real experience for the author, who reached ecstasy through opposite extreme physical sensations".

glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking. (Ezek 1:4, 5, 15, 22, 26, 28b, NRSV)

In *1 Enoch* 2:1–3 some of these key notions are extended with a proto-scientific observation of natural phenomena in combination with wisdom aspects (Alexander 2003:3ff.; Gruenwald 1980:vi, vii). For instance *BW* Chapter 2 commences with Enoch's exhortation to contemplate and observe the cosmological and earthly natural environment:

1 Enoch 2:1–3:

Contemplate all the events in heaven, how the lights in heaven do not change their courses, how each rises and sets in order, each at its proper time, and they do not transgress their law, ... Consider the earth, and understand from the work which is done upon it, ... Consider the summer and the winter, how ... etc. (Milik 1978:61–62)

Contemplate all (his) works, and observe the works of heaven ... Observe the earth, and contemplate the works that come to pass on it ... Observe the signs of summer and winter. (Nickelsburg 2001:150)

1 Enoch 33.3 echoes *AB* in referring to observable laws and rules in terms which even now remain the foundation of scientific research: measurement, weight, quantity, and proportion:¹¹

And I saw how the stars of heaven come out, and counted the gates out of which they come, and wrote down all their outlets, for each one individually according to their number and their names, according to their constellations, their positions, their times, and the months, as the angel Uriel, who was with me showed me. And he showed me everything and wrote it down, and also their names he wrote down for me, and their laws and their functions. (Knibb 1978:123)

¹¹ See Stone (1976:414–452) for lists in early Jewish apocalyptic writings such as the number of raindrops, of stars, the length and breadth of the earth, and the length and height of heaven.

... Uriel, one of] the Watchers. And he sh[owed me and wrote down everything for me; also he wrote for me their names] according to the resemblance to [their] fixed times. (Milik 1976:235)

I saw how the stars of heaven come forth, and I counted the gates from which they come forth, and I wrote down all their outlets, one by one, according to their number and their names, according to their conjunction and their position and their time and their months, as Uriel, the holy angel who was with me, showed me. He showed me and wrote down for me everything, and also he wrote down their names and their appointed times and their functions. (Nickelsburg 2001:329)

Such proto-scientific interests and the belief that the secrets of the various operations of nature are accessible to mankind through the mediation of angelic figures are particularly obvious in the cosmological aspects of *AB*. At *1 Enoch* 72:2 (*BW*), Enoch states that this book is to be a description of all that Uriel shows him about “the revolutions of the lights of heaven, each as it is, according to their classes, according to their (period of) rule and their times, according to their names and their places of origin, and according to their months” (Knibb 1978:167).¹² The description includes mountains, rivers, and seas, and symmetrically placed gates through which the sun and the moon set and rise. The reference to gates supplies the connection between cosmology and Jewish angelology; the gates, which imply exit and entrance, refer to the sections of the horizon where the sun or the moon appears or sets (Tigchelaar and Garcia Martinez 2000:100). Interestingly, in 4Q403 *Songs of the Sabbath sacrifice*, frgs 1i/1ii, gates are mentioned in a detailed description of angelic messenger activity.¹³

¹² At *1 Enoch* 33:3–4 Uriel is a teacher of astronomy, and he retains this role throughout *AB*.

¹³ A further similarity to Qumranic angelology, specifically in the seventh song of *Songs of the Sabbath sacrifice* is noticeable in the marked preoccupation with the number seven.

DIVINATORY OR MANTIC ASPECTS

Muller (1972:268–93) proposed that mantic wisdom lies behind the phenomenon of Jewish apocalyptic, and concludes that although they forbade some mantic techniques, the Judeans of the Hellenistic period clearly practiced various forms within the framework of their monotheistic theology. The role of a diviner is essentially that of an intermediary between the human and superhuman worlds (Nissenen 2010:341). Nissenen (2010:341) makes the connection of divination in Jewish beliefs clear in his definition of divination as “a system of knowledge and belief that serves the purpose of the maintenance of the symbolic universe in a society sharing the conviction that things happening on earth are not coincidental but managed by superhuman agents, reflecting decisions made in the world of gods or spirits”. As interpreters, the apocalyptists drew on a wide range of biblical, Jewish, and Hellenistic materials: scriptural texts, dreams, history, or the phenomenal world – “they wedded pagan and biblical themes into a creative union” (VanderKam 1984:73–75,188–190).

Enochian writings depict Enoch as a “seer”. The “mystical, visionary element” is particularly noticeable in *BW* 12–16 (VanderKam 1984:135). For instance, in *1 Enoch* 13:8, 10 Enoch obtains knowledge about the future through one of the most universal of divinatory means:

and behold a dream came to me, and visions fell upon me, and I saw a vision of wrath, (namely) that I should speak to the sons of heaven and reprove them. ... And I spoke before them all the visions which I had seen in my sleep, and I began to speak these words of righteousness and to reprove the Watchers of heaven. (Knibb 1978:94)

And behold, dreams came upon me, and visions fell upon me. And I saw visions of wrath, and there came a voice saying, “Speak to the sons of heaven to reprimand them. ... And I recited in their presence all the visions that I had seen in the dream, and I began to speak the words of truth and the vision and reprimand to the watchers of heaven. (Nickelsburg 2001:248)

[... And behold, dreams came down upon me, and visions] fell upon me until [I lifted up] my eyelids to the gates of the palace [of Heaven ...]; and I saw a vision of the wrath of chastisement, [and a voice came and said: “Speak to the sons of heaven to reprimand them. ...] And I spoke before them all [the visions which I had seen in dreams, and I began to speak] in words of truth and vision and reprimand to the heavenly Watchers [...]. (Milik 1976:195)¹⁴

I Enoch 12:1–4a indicates that the access to the information by a combination of observation and contemplation is preceded by a ritual that in essence, is not different from mantic activity. Nickelsburg (2001:233) points out that as a paraphrase of Gen 5:24 it refers not to Enoch’s disappearance at the end of his life, but to the beginning of a period of association with the angels, during which he is instructed in the secrets of the universe.

And before everything Enoch had been hidden, and none of the sons of men know where he was hidden, or where he was, or what had happened, And all his doings (were) with the Holy Ones and with the Watchers in his days. And I Enoch was blessing the Great Lord and the King of Eternity, and behold the Watchers called to me, Enoch the scribe, and said to me: “Enoch, scribe of righteousness, go, inform the Watchers of heaven who have left the high heaven and the holy eternal place, ... (Knibb 1978:92)

Before these things, Enoch was taken; and none of the sons of men knew where he had been taken, or where he was, or what had happened to him. And his works were with the watchers, and with the holy ones were his days. I, Enoch, was standing, blessing the Lord of majesty, the King of the ages. And behold, the watchers of the Great Holy One called me, Enoch the scribe, and said to me, ‘Enoch, righteous scribe, go and say to the watchers of heaven – ...’. (Nickelsburg 2001:233–234)

¹⁴ 4Q209.

The only extant Aramaic fragment of 12:3 states that it is a single Watcher who speaks to Enoch: the “great holy Watcher”.

3. ואנה חנוך הוית קאם ומברך למרא רבותא למלך עלמיא וארו עירא וקדישא רבא

And I Enoch began to bless the Lord of Majesty and King of the ages, and] behold, the [great holy] Watcher [called me ...] (Milik 1976:190, 192).¹⁵

A second example of how the access to the information by a combination of observation and contemplation is preceded by a ritual that is not different in nature from mantic activity is described at *BW* 13:7–8a:

and I went and sat down by the waters of Dan in Dan which is south-west of Hermon; and I read out the record of their petition until I fell asleep. And behold a dream came to me, and visions fell upon me, and i saw a vision of wrath, ... (Knibb 1978:94)

And I went and sat by the waters of Dan in the land of Dan, which is south of Hermon, to the west. I recited (to God) the memorandum of their petition until I fell asleep. And behold, dreams came upon me, and visions fell upon me. (Nickelsburg 2001:248)

And I went on [sitting by the waters of Dan, in the land of Dan, which is to the south of] Hermonin, on their west side; [and I read the book of the account] of their requests [until I fell asleep.. and behold, dreams came down upon me, and visions] fell upon me until [I lifted up] my eyelids to the gates of the palace [of Heaven ...] (Milik 1976:195)

¹⁵ The terminology of “Watchers” is confusing: Nickelsburg (2001:140, 174) regards the Aramaic root עיר to be awake, watchful, as a neutral meaning, and concludes that the consistent use of the Aramaic “watchers and holy ones” indicates the unfallen heavenly beings, whereas the “watchers of heaven” is a neutral term that designates both the good and evil beings of “heavenly provenance”. The Greek translators adopted ἐγρηγόροι “watchers” as the designation for the rebels, to distinguish them from the “angels”/ἄγγελοι υἱοὶ οὐρανοῦ, “sons of heaven”. The use of “heaven” for “God” is a typical circumlocution in rabbinic passages.

1 Enoch 25:2 reveals the mainspring of Enoch's ability as a seer: the desire to understand (a characteristic of a scientific approach (Alexander 2014:26). Michael the archangel asks him

‘Enoch, why do you ask me about the fragrance of this tree, and (why) do you inquire to learn?’ Then I Enoch, answered him, saying; ‘I wish to learn about everything, ...’ (Knibb 1978:113)

‘Enoch, why do you inquire and why do you marvel about the fragrance of this tree, and why do you wish to learn the truth?’ Then I answered him – I. Enoch – and said, ‘Concerning all things I wish to know, ...’ (Nickelsburg 2001:312)

DISCUSSION

Jude 14–15, quoting from *1 Enoch* 1:9, designates Enoch as a prophet. Nissenen (2010:345) has noted the close relationship between prophecy and divination, and Von Rad (1968:8–12) recognised that wisdom also sometimes involved mantic aspects. Von Rad discussed the development from older forms of prophecy which sometimes manifested as mantic activity, to the material now found in the apocalyptic books. He was criticised for not distinguishing sharply enough between an “educational kind of wisdom and the less rational sort that found expression in divination”, but if one compares VanderKam's (1984: 5, 56) discussion of the type of diviner called the *baru* (to see), it becomes possible to recognise the peculiar instructions given to Ezekiel in Ezek 3:1; 4:1ff.; 5:1–4 in terms of the process of divinatory activity. The combination of mantic aspects with the cosmological description in Ezekiel of the “wheel within a wheel” in Ezek 10: 6, is also suggestive of divinatory associations, especially in 10:13 where the wheels are addressed as though they are living beings:

לאופנים להם קורא הגלגל באזני

As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, ‘O wheel’”. (KJV; NRSV has *wheelwork*).

The strangeness of addressing the wheels as though they are alive conveys the impression hinted at earlier that this construction was understood by Ezekiel as some kind of cosmological and supernatural being, i.e., angelic.¹⁶ Milik's (1976:199–200) translation of the description of the *galgali* in the Aramaic text of *I Enoch* 14:18 ןגלגל ןגלגל ןגלגל ןגלגל ןגלגל as “and its wheels [*galgali*] were like the disk of the shining sun, and its sides] were *cherubim*”, affirms the cosmological associations with angelic activity in a context of communication from God's throne in heaven in the case of both Ezekiel and Enoch (see Evans 2015:25).

CONCLUSION

By mixing cosmology and angelic activity the Enochian author of *AB* and *BW* offers an alternative to the vexed question of theodicy: within the conceptual matrix in *AB* and *BW* the just and merciful God is absolved from responsibility for the divine origin of evil. Charlesworth (2003:471–473, 452) noted that a central question in early Jewish writings was “Where is the God who elected us as a covenant people, and why does this God seemingly not care about what has been happening to us?” He states that for the authors of the Old Testament Apocrypha the Deuteronomistic view that the good people will be rewarded in this time or at the time of the general resurrection, and that the evil people will “suffer tremendously,” was not always acceptable (Charlesworth 2003:482). Perdue (1994:48) recognises that in upholding divine justice the only recourse for the Jewish sages was to see the created world as dynamic in character.

Such an interpretation brings the interdisciplinary discourse between faith in God's providence and the science of evolution to a point where they can begin to interact (Evans 2013:326–329). Just as the proto-scientific cosmology of these two early apocalyptic books, combined with their “faith in the divine control of history” (Metzger and Collins 1994:363 NT), made possible the formulation of a divergent

¹⁶ “... for the spirit of the living creature (*was*) in the wheels (*ophanim*)” (Ezek 1:20b). See Evans (2012a:230).

theodicy, so too, in the scientifically established evolutionary paradigm, evil and suffering is not punishment for sin, but an inevitable part of the process of evolution (see Spangenberg 2014:631; Evans 2013:321–323).¹⁷

If the monotheistic religions are to continue to claim that God was the agent who initiated the coming into being of the world, then it is helpful to recognise the seminal fertility of the Enochian author in combining scientific observation with the striving for communion with God. Nickelsburg (2001:1) and Collins (2003:36) both recognise that *1 Enoch* had a “profound impact on the development and shape of emergent Christianity”. Sacchi (2005:402) claims that Enoch’s “scientific knowledge is the basis of his piety; he seeks God in the structure of the universe”. It may be fruitful to reconsider Enoch’s divinatory connection of cosmological phenomena with mediation between creative agent and creatures as a relevant pointer to a continuing “faith in the divine control of history”.

¹⁷ The importance and value of evolutionary theory for the monotheistic religions is that it explains the inevitability of the existence of suffering in terms that are coherent with our current scientific cultural context. However, it does raise other problematic issues, and Ferguson (2014:88) recognises the common fear that evolutionary theory threatens “to undermine our most fundamental convictions about the intellectual, moral and spiritual distinctions of being human”. He observes that such a fear “continues to infect much of the debate concerning being human in creation”. Johan van Rooyen (2016:1) has recently stressed the need for theologians to take evolution seriously: “theology must accept that evolutionary science has changed our understanding of the world dramatically”. He claims that evolutionary epistemology will enhance theological disciplines. By rescuing “something of the old and venerable idea of freedom” evolutionary epistemology will provide “an exhilarating vision of God”. Cf. Van Huyssteen (2006).

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