

- dreams pessimistically and optimistically (4Q531 22);
- (k) [initial punishment of the angel Azazel (cf. 4Q203 7a);
- (l) the giants anticipate their judgment (4Q203 13);
- (m) an initial punishment of the giants (4Q203 7b i) and intramural fighting among the giants (cf. 4Q531 7);
- (n) reading of the second tablet (4Q203 8; 4Q530 1; cf. 4Q203 7b ii);
- (o) Gilgamesh and some giants remain hopeful (4Q530 2 ii + 6 + 7 i + 8-11 + 12.1-3);
- (p) second pair of dreams given to 'Ohyah and Hahyah (4Q530 2 ii + 6 + 7 i + 8-11 + 12.4-20);
- (q) Mahaway's second journey to Enoch (4Q530 2 ii + 6 + 7 i + 8-11 + 12.20-24 and 4Q530 7 ii 3-10);
- (r) Enoch's interpretation of the second pair of dreams (4Q530 7 ii 10-11); and
- (s) prophecy (Enoch's?) of final bliss (1Q23 1 + 6 + 22).

After this, there would have been just enough space (based on a reconstruction of 4Q530) to have included a brief narrative about events of the great flood portended in the dreams (Noah and his sons' deliverance, and the giants' punishment).

Special Features of the Book

The *Book of Giants* recounts and elaborates on the myth of the fallen angels that is found in or alluded to in a number of other Second Temple texts: *1 Enoch* 6-11, 12-16; *1 Enoch* 85-88; *Jubilees* 5-10; *1 Enoch* 106-7; *Genesis Apocryphon* 2-5; *Pseudo-Eupolemus* (in Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 9.17.1-9; 9.18.2); CD 2; 4Q180-181; 4Q370; 11Q11; 4Q510-511 par. 4Q444; Sir. 16:7; Wis. 14:6; 3 Macc. 2:4; Philo, *De Gigantibus*; 3 Bar. 4:10. The very fragmentary evidence of *Book of Giants*, when compared with these other texts, allows for the identification of several distinguishable features. These characteristics are as follows: first, and most obviously, the story of the antediluvian fall of the angels is only here told from the perspective of the giants themselves, who serve as protagonists in the narrative. The giants' activities are not only recounted, but they themselves also become the recipients of revelation that they will be punished for their malevolent deeds. The effect of the story is to reinforce the view that demonic evil is aware of its ultimate demise in a world that is under divine rule.

Second, in extant Second Temple literature, it is only in the *Book of Giants* that the giants are actually given proper names. The names, as far as they are preserved, are 'Aħiram, 'Adk, Mahaway (who functions as a mediary between the giants and Enoch), 'Ohyah and Hahyah (brothers and offspring of the fallen angel Shemiħazah), Ĥobabis(h), and Gilgames(h). These proper names indicate how much of the narrative centers on an account of antediluvian evil and its punishment from the giants' point of view. Significantly, at least two of the names, Ĥobabis(h) and Gilgames(h), have their background in the famous *Gilgamesh Epic*, where their equivalents — Humbaba (Neo-Assyrian; Huwawa in the Old Babylonian tradition) and Gilgamesh — engage

in a fierce battle as the latter and his companion Enkidu try to gain entrance to the Cedar Forest.

Third, more explicitly than in the *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 10), the great flood plays a crucial role in the *Book of Giants* as a decisive act of judgment against the giants. The flood exemplifies the unbridgeable gap between humans (Noah and his sons) who escape the flood and the giants who are unable to escape punishment. The event is thus placed in service of drawing a categorical line of distinction between human nature and the giants. Perhaps to a greater degree than any other document from the Second Temple period, the *Book of Giants* may be regarded as a response to traditions that were casually treating Noah, and even Abraham, as giants (so the *Pseudo-Eupolemus* fragments cited by Eusebius). Humanity, as created by God, is the object of God's redemptive activity in the world, and not giants who are illegitimate mixtures between realms that should be kept apart (similarly, see the assertions in *Birth of Noah* in *1 Enoch* 106:1-107:3 and *Genesis Apocryphon* cols. 2-5 that Noah was not sired by the fallen angels).

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Gnosticism

The term "Gnosticism" was coined in the eighteenth century to describe an ill-defined and broadly diffuse set of ancient religious phenomena associated with knowledge (Gr. *gnōsis*) as the path toward salvation. In

modern scholarship, Gnosticism is usually understood as a kind of philosophical and religious revolt staged by a disaffected intellectual elite who protested against the dominant cultural and social structures of late antiquity. The dualistic and antiworldly outlook of Gnosticism received expression in a myth depicting humanity's enslavement to the powers governing the physical cosmos. In the various formulations of this myth, the human spirit is trapped in a fleshly body and imprisoned in a material realm governed by a hostile lower god. Escape from this realm depends upon the experience of gnosis into one's true origin, nature, and destiny, so as to enable the enlightened to return home to the transcendent spiritual realm with the true God in the highest heaven.

Gnosticism and Judaism

The commonly posited nexus between Gnosticism and Judaism has been addressed in two lines of inquiry: (1) whether some movements in early Judaism contributed to or even originated religious currents in late antiquity labeled Gnostic by early church fathers and modern scholars; and (2) whether certain texts and interpretive traditions in the Hekhalot, Ma'aseh Bereshit, and Ma'aseh Merkavah literature constitute a parallel brand of Jewish gnosis.

There has been a pronounced trend over the past decade to question the cogency of the very label Gnosticism and to deny it meaningfulness as a heuristic category in the study of ancient religions (e.g., Williams 1996; King 2003). In this trend, the prevalent classification of various religious movements as species of Gnosticism is accused of presuming an identity of orientation, expression, and purpose among these movements and of masking their important differences. Such a lumping together encourages scholars to work within flawed paradigms that posit dubious historical relationships. This approach is typified when Gnosticism is considered a distinct type of religiosity that can be situated alongside other reified categories of religious or cultural identity such as Judaism, Christianity, and Hellenism.

Over the past two centuries the genealogy of Gnosticism has been traced backward to a variety of older non-Western worldviews (Indian, Iranian, and Babylonian roots have each had their advocates), certain Greek philosophical currents, imagined renegade Jewish thinkers, influential Christian heretics, and varying combinations of two or more of these ideational strands. Since the discovery and publication of the Nag Hammadi Codices, it has been common to emphasize the indebtedness of Gnosticism to Judaism and to argue that Gnosticism reacted to or even grew out of Jewish teachings (e.g., Grant 1966; Wilson 1974; Rudolph 1983; Pearson 1984). The Gnostic literature excerpted by heresiologists or recovered in manuscripts has been seen to exhibit a number of features which point to Judaism's constitutive role. These include:

- the use of early Jewish literary genres like the pseudepigraphic apocalypse or testament;

- the narrative prominence of biblical characters like Adam, Eve, Cain, and Seth;
- the occasional quotation of or reference to Jewish biblical texts (e.g., Gen. 1:26; Exod. 20:5; Isa. 46:9);
- the presence of wordplays suggestive of a Semitic linguistic background (e.g., *Testimony of Truth* 46:28–47:4; *Hypostasis of the Archons* 89:11–90:12, where the occurrences of the proper name “Eve,” the noun “serpent,” and the verb “instruct” can reflect a dependence upon a series of puns in Aramaic);
- the presence of unusual terminology that may indicate knowledge of or reliance upon exegetical traditions known from Jewish midrashic literature (e.g., “abortions” [Hebr. *nēfālīm*] as a reading of the term Nephilim found in Hebrew versions of Gen. 6:4);
- the clear echoes of the story of the angelic Watchers known from early Jewish texts like those compiled in *1 Enoch*;
- the employment of a demonology featuring biblical or postbiblical names or epithets like Sabaoth, Samael, or Sakla(s), as well as the proliferation of faux-Semitic designations such as Yaldabaoth, Barbelo, and Eleleth; and
- the likely derivation of the female figure of Sophia from a wisdom theology in which her name is usually explained as the Greek rendering of an allegedly hypostatized Hebrew *ḥokmā*.

While the cumulative weight of these oft-cited features may seem impressive at first glance, a closer assessment reveals a number of problems with a strictly Jewish provenance for these aspects of Gnostic literature. First, the features are not unique to Jewish and Gnostic literatures. Christian writers, too, employed the apocalyptic and the testamentary genres and composed pseudepigrapha as well; indeed, these types of literary works were rife among a variety of ancient religious traditions (nativist, hermetic, Zoroastrian, Manichean, etc.). Characters like Adam or Noah and passages like those from the books of Exodus or Isaiah also appear in Christian writings, as do written versions of numerous stories and traditions like those attested in *1 Enoch*. Knowledge of the legend of the Watchers or fallen angels was widespread among all the biblically affiliated religious communities in late antiquity; its literary promulgation, creative adaptation, and learned exposition need not be limited to the activities of disaffected Jewish scribes or teachers. Similarly one cannot restrict the manipulation of Semitic linguistic features to the Jews alone; various dialects of Aramaic, for example, were spoken and written by nativist and Christian communities over a broad swathe of territory stretching from central Asia to the shores of the Mediterranean. Some of these communities (e.g., Mandeism) likely possessed and transmitted scriptural and exegetical traditions analogous to those branded as Gnostic by ancient heresiologists and modern scholars. So, too, Semitic-sounding names, whether authentic or fake, are not confined to Jewish texts; they swarm throughout the

multilingual corpus of magical amulets, charms, and grimoires produced by a number of ethnic and religious groups in late antiquity, serving no doubt to impart a hint of Oriental mystery to their recipes and adjurations. Finally, any literate Grecophone for whom texts like Proverbs, Ben Sira, or the Wisdom of Solomon enjoyed some level of cultural authority (note that all three are contained in most early Christian canons) could construct a divine female entity named Sophia thanks to the easily accessible Old Greek collections of biblical works.

Second, many scholars who advocate a Jewish matrix for Gnosticism falsely presume a geographic and diachronic uniformity of discourse and practice for Judaism in the eastern Roman Empire. While the presence of a few "aberrant" strands (e.g., Essenes; Philo; the *minim*) is acknowledged and often privileged as a possible font for Gnosticism, by and large Second Temple Judaism is assumed to be essentially equivalent to rabbinic Judaism. Even though no one expresses the equation quite so blatantly, the underlying assumption is plainly at work in most of the proffered reconstructions. Similarly, the vast sea of literature generated by rabbinic sages and their scholastic heirs over the course of several centuries in a variety of locales and cultural contexts is treated as if it were an atemporal verbal continuum whose components were always accessible and perennially meaningful at every place and point in time. This anachronistic approach often results in the accumulation of assemblages of textual citations that disregard the very real differences in provenance and cultural context reflected in such compilations as *Genesis Rabbah*, the Babylonian Talmud, *Midrash ha-Gadol*, and the Zohar, in authors like Philo, or in the tradents of *Sefer Yetzira* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*. The massing of undifferentiated piles of alleged evidence reflects a superficial use of concordances and indices and a fundamental misunderstanding of the complexities of ancient Judaism.

Nevertheless, when one carefully attends to the cultural contexts of the literary and material evidence, it is undeniable that there are some homologies between certain forms of Jewish religious expression and material conventionally associated with Gnosticism. In this sense Gershom Scholem was correct to speak of a type of Jewish gnosis in the Hekhalot and other mystical texts that intriguingly resembles aspects of traditions evidenced in the Nag Hammadi texts and patristic citations (Scholem 1965). Although Scholem and others have sought to situate the earliest expressions of this type of religiosity in the late tannaitic and early amoraic periods — thus rendering them contemporary with the *floruit* of Gnosticism as conventionally defined — no manuscript evidence has emerged that would confirm such an early dating for the Hekhalot corpus.

Even so, within indisputably early Jewish material there are affinities with certain motifs and themes found in so-called Gnostic literature. For example, a number of passages in early Jewish sources clearly model or at least presuppose a binitarian or even ditheistic divine realm, some of whose aspects recur in

medieval mystical literature (Segal 1977). Moreover, in some passages of the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., 1QS 3-4) there is a fundamental bifurcation of the physical realm into warring camps associated with the categories of light and darkness, or good and evil, each of which is under the control of an angelic being or "prince" (*šar*). Knowledge and illumination are associated with the adherents of light, while foolishness and wickedness pervade the servants of darkness, whose ultimate destiny is death and perdition. Like the textual remains of "Gnosticism," the Dead Sea Scrolls also have passages that focus on the formation of the cosmos and primordial times. Some of these passages mirror the content of Genesis and its interpretive traditions, but a number do not. It is these latter narrative formulations that arguably preserve (rather than rewrite) portions of the ancestral epic lore out of which fixed biblical canons eventually crystallized.

Recognition of a common discursive heritage in all biblically affiliated religious groups suggests an alternative explanation for the affinities among their different expressions, including those associated with Judaism and Gnosticism. Instead of envisioning "Gnosticism" emerging out of or in response to "Judaism," it is better to think of several local and national narrative discourses being received, manipulated, and even freshly minted by the ethnic and ideological claimants to Israelite culture throughout the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. As the material evidence increasingly attests, some of these statements and pronouncements move in directions that hostile observers and modern scholars brand as Gnostic. Others, though, follow trajectories that eventually lead to the application of labels like Samaritan, Rabbanite, and so on. Still others reject, blend, and refine various combinations of the welter of interpretive streams as they converse and interact with one another. The core value that unites all of these disparate expressions of social identity is an exegetical fixation upon Israel's cultural memory, creatively transformed in novel and unexpected ways.

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See also: Hekhalot Literature; Mysticism

JOHN C. REEVES

God-fearers

A number of ancient witnesses attest to the existence of Gentiles who adhered to certain characteristically Jewish practices and beliefs without undertaking formal conversion to Judaism. In contrast to proselytes, or Gentiles who did formally convert to Judaism, these individuals had no defined status in the Jewish legal tradition and thus occupied no fixed position within ancient Jewish society. These Gentiles were often described in terms that appear to reflect a common commitment to fear the God of the Jews (cf. Deut. 10:20). Many modern scholars have therefore classified these individuals as God-fearers. Although it is often assumed that the so-called God-fearers were semiproselytes, which is to say informal converts to Judaism, the diverse evidence of the phenomenon in question resists such a uniform definition.

The Book of Acts

The point of origin for most discussions of the God-fearers is the New Testament book of Acts. The book's author uses the Greek terms *phoboumenos* (Acts 10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26) and *sebomenos* (Acts 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17, 18:7), often with the object *ton theon* (Greek for "[the] God"), in reference to Gentiles who "fear" or "revere" the God of the Jews. The book locates these sympathetic Gentiles in proximity to the Jewish communities which Peter and Paul visited in the first century C.E. However, the book's narrative misrepresents the roles that these friendly Gentiles played within ancient Jewish society. Underlying the author's depiction of the God-fearers is a presumption that they shared a common attraction to Judaism that somehow fell short of formal conversion. The book therefore presents Christianity as a means for these semiproselytes to achieve soteriological equality with the Jews without having to assume the halakic burdens incurred by converting to Judaism. However, the book of Acts only refers to God-fearers when contrasting them to those Jews who rejected the apostolic mission. As Gentiles who were already favorably disposed toward certain aspects of the Judaism, the God-fearers in Acts invariably embrace Christianity. By deploying them merely as a supply of potential Christian converts, the author of Acts adduces the God-fearers only in order to validate the Christian mission to the Gentiles (Kraabel 1981). As a result, the author's apologetic agenda yields a distorted image of the God-fearers as a defined class of semiproselytes without offering any insight onto why these Gentiles might have been attracted to Judaism in the first place.

Nevertheless, the book's implication of the God-

fearers as a prominent presence in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora seems to reflect a credible aspect of the phenomenon of proselytism. The God-fearers in Acts evince an intermediate stage of concerted interest in Judaism which was likely an obligatory stage of the process of formal conversion.

Other Literary Sources

Although the phenomenon in question is attested in a range of ancient literary sources, the God-fearer typology occasionally appears outside the New Testament. Referring to Aseneth's impending conversion to Judaism, the pseudepigraphic *Testament of Joseph* counts the Egyptian princess among the *sebomenoi ton theon*, or "those who revere God" (*T. Jos.* 4:6). Josephus employs the term *sebomenoi* in reference to Gentiles who contributed to the Temple treasury (*Ant.* 14.110) as well as the related term *theosebēs*, or "one who reveres God," in reference to Nero's wife Poppaea Sabina (*Ant.* 20.195). The Roman satirist Juvenal uses the Latin term *metuens*, or "one who reveres," in reference to a Gentile who observed the Jewish Sabbath (*Sat.* 14.96). Justin Martyr, perhaps alluding to God-fearers, contrasts the *phoboumenoi ton theon*, Gentiles who allegedly followed certain Jewish laws, with Gentile Christians who neglected these laws (*Dialogus cum Tryphone* 10.3-4, 24.3). Later rabbinic texts refer to friendly Gentiles as *yirē šamayim* ("those who fear heaven"), juxtaposing this designation with the standard terms for Jews and proselytes (e.g., *Mekhilta* 18). The substitution of the denominative "heaven" for "God" should be attributed to the lack of an idiomatic Hebrew equivalent to the Greek term *theos*, which the rabbis would not have considered a violation of the third commandment. Although the rabbis were favorably disposed toward these individuals, they afforded them no special status for practical purposes, in contrast to proselytes, who were classified under the biblical law of the "alien" (Hebr. *gēr*; cf. Feldman 1993: 342-82).

Although they all apply variations of the terminology employed in Acts, these literary witnesses do not indicate that the God-fearer typology connoted a common standard of commitment to Judaism. For example, while indicating that many Gentiles venerated the God of the Jews, they do not indicate that these Gentiles had concomitantly rejected all other deities and cults in favor of Judaism. Since this commitment was a prerequisite for formal conversion, it seems unfeasible to assume that these God-fearers were classified as such according to a fixed typology of semiproselytes. Therefore, the God-fearers should not be categorically distinguished from the many other Gentiles who were favorably inclined toward Judaism. Nevertheless, these sources both corroborate and advance our knowledge of the social phenomenon underlying the use of the God-fearer typology in the book of Acts.

Epigraphic Evidence

Amicable social interaction between Jews and Gentiles continued long after the first century. Although the literary sources generally portray God-fearers as Gentiles

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