

Chapter 5

The Sleeping God: An Ancient Near Eastern Motif of Divine Sovereignty

The psalms appear to give contradictory images of God in relation to sleep. Psalm 121 says that Yahweh never sleeps, that he is eternally vigilant in protecting his people from all evil. Psalm 44:24[23] gives exactly the opposite picture, however. The psalmist calls upon God to wake up and save his people from the wicked who threaten to devour them. Similar images of God asleep while his people perish can be found in Ps 7:7, 35:23, and 59:5–6.

Previous commentators have usually explained the image of God sleeping in various ways. One group considered it to be a metaphor for the apparent inattentiveness of God (*deus absconditus*) to the prayers of his people, especially in times of distress.¹ As such, it was considered to be one of the bolder anthropomorphisms found in the Bible, employed more for psychological effect than any theological significance.² A second group, taking its cue more from the word *qûmâ* “Arise!” sometimes found in parallel cola,³ understood the psalmist’s cry “Wake up!” to be a plea to God to ascend his divine throne to render judgment against wicked enemies who unjustly persecute the faithful.⁴ Opinions have differed as to whether

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1. So, among others, C. A. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906) 1.382; E. Kalt, *Herder's Commentary on the Psalms* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1961) 24, 165; M. Dahood, *Psalms I* (AB 16; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965) 267–68; and A. A. Anderson, *Psalms* (2 vols.; New Century Bible; London: Attic Press, 1972) 1.345, 436.

2. See H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought* (London: SCM, 1956) 75; W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961–67) 1.211–14; Anderson, *Psalms*, 1.284. Specifically on Ps 44:23–24, W. O. E. Oesterley (*The Psalms* [London: SPCK, 1939] 248) opines that the psalmist’s words are a taunt to God (cf. 1 Kgs 18:27) intended to stir him from his inattentiveness or inaction.

3. See below, n. 47.

4. So B. Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament 14; Freiburg: Mohr [Siebeck], 1899) 25; J. J. S. Perowne, *The Books of Psalms: A New Translation with Introduction and Notes* (2 vols.; Andover: W. F. Draper, 1901) 1.121. B. Bonkamp (*Die*

this judgment theophany was expected in the present time,⁵ or only eschatologically.⁶ Some commentators have felt it sufficient to juxtapose Ps 121:4 with a passage like Ps 44:24, as if the assurance of the former that the “keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps” proves that the sleeping of the deity in the latter must be understood only metaphorically.⁷

There have also been attempts to explain the sleep of God from an ancient Near Eastern cultural context. Relying on a very questionable interpretation of Canaanite religion, some have professed to find in Ps 121:4 a Yahwistic polemic against the Canaanite Baals who as fertility gods were alleged to die and rise annually, which in turn supposedly was portrayed as sleeping and awakening (cf. 1 Kgs 18:27).⁸ G. Widengren,⁹ followed in part by H.-J. Kraus,¹⁰ proposed that the cultic shout “Awake!” was a vestige of the cult of Tammuz, the dying and rising vegetation god, which Widengren claimed was widely practiced in the royal ritual of the ancient Near East. Widengren’s hypothesis has rightly been rejected, however, both because of the now discredited myth and ritual basis upon which it was built and because the motif of God’s sleep in biblical tradition does not fit the typology of the Tammuz liturgy.¹¹

A much more compelling proposal has been put forward recently by M. Weippert.¹² Comparing ancient Near Eastern texts which portray the

Psalmen, nach dem hebräischen Grundtext übersetzt [Freiburg: W. Visarius, 1949] 69 n. 4, and 277 n. 5) explains the call to awaken from the presupposition that such judgment sessions began at dawn.

5. So Briggs, *Psalms*, 1.58; Anderson, *Psalms*, 1.96. A. Weiser (*The Psalms* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962] 68) claims that this theophany was expected to occur within the context of the annual covenant festival.

6. So H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (HKAT II 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926) 24; Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 138.

7. E.g., Briggs, *Psalms*, 1.382; Dahood, *Psalms I*, 268; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen* [2 vols.; BKAT 15; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959–60] 1.58; A. Cohen, *The Psalms: Hebrew Text, English Translation and Commentary* (Hindhead, Surrey: Soncino Press, 1945) 139; Anderson, *Psalms*, 1.436.

8. So H. Schmidt, *Die Psalmen* (HAT 15; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1934) 222; Oesterley, *Psalms*, 504.

9. G. Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum im Alten Testament und im Judentum* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1955) 63–66; “Early Hebrew Myths and Their Interpretation,” *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (ed. S. H. Hooke; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958) 149–203, esp. pp. 191–93.

10. Kraus (*Psalmen*, 1.58), although accepting Widengren’s hypothesis about the myth and ritual origins of the cultic shout “Awake!,” maintains that any connection with the cult of the dying and rising vegetation deity has been lost when applied to Yahweh within the biblical tradition. A. Weiser (*The Psalms*, 39) holds a similar position but is even more cautious about connecting this cultic shout with the Tammuz-type liturgy.

11. See W. Moran, “Review of *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship*,” *Bib* 40 (1959) 1026–28; Dahood, *Psalms I*, 267–68.

12. M. Weippert, “Slapende en ontwakende of stervende en herrijzende goden?” *NedTT* 37 (1983) 279–89; “Ecce non dormitabit neque dormiet qui custodit Israel: Zur Erklärung von Psalms 121:4,” *Lese-Zeichen für Annelies Findeiss* (ed. C. Burchard und G. Theissen; Diehlheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament 3; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1984) 75–87.

great gods as not exercising their divine jurisdictions during the night while they sleep,¹³ Weippert suggests that some within Israel thought of Yahweh too as sleeping when the wicked were allowed to oppress the innocent. Nonetheless, the more authentic Israelite impulse affirms that Yahweh is always vigilant (Ps 121:4). Although such religious psychology may account partially for biblical portrayals of God sleeping, it is not the complete story.

It is the contention of this writer that the biblical images of God sleeping and awaking are grounded in a hitherto unrecognized ancient Near Eastern motif of the sleeping god. Accordingly, the purpose of this paper is twofold: 1) to outline the content and use of this neglected motif from ancient Near Eastern extrabiblical texts, and 2) to demonstrate that in appropriating this motif as their own biblical authors found a powerful and effective vehicle for theologizing about their own God as creator and savior.

1. The Motif within Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting

To judge from the literature of the ancient Near East, the motif of the sleeping deity actually involves several related concepts which for convenience may be grouped under two headings: A) rest as a divine prerogative, and B) sleeping as a symbol of divine rule.¹⁴ As would be expected, the motif is never formally stated in any ancient Near Eastern text but must be reconstructed from its deployment in diverse literary texts from Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt. Moreover, these texts are all concerned with the origins of the cosmos and its ordering, so that one may suspect *a priori* that the motif of divine sleep ultimately is connected with the concept of the deity as creator.

A. Rest as a Divine Prerogative

Widespread in the history of religions is a motif of the leisure (*otiositas*) of the creator god. This leisure belongs to the very nature of the creator. Creation is a unique, primeval event that cannot be repeated. The divine rest that follows creation is, as it were, a statement that the creative activity is complete and that the work of the creator is perfect.¹⁵

13. In particular, *Atrahasis* I 57–84 (see W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-ḫašis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; reprinted Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999] 46) and the Old Babylonian “Prayer to the Gods of the Night” (see *ANET*, 390–91).

14. In addition, one commonly encounters the anthropomorphism that the gods required their regular physical sleep each night for refreshment and revitalization, such as Homer depicts for the Greek gods (*Iliad* i 605–11). Their retirement at night and their arising in the morning may be accompanied by cultic rituals (see A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964] 183–98; A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* [trans. Aylward M. Blackman; London: Methuen & Co., 1927] 12). The notion that the gods did not exercise their normal jurisdictions while they slept (“Prayer to the Gods of the Night”; see n. 13) is derived at least partially from this anthropomorphism.

15. See R. Pettazzoni, “Myths of Beginnings and Creation-Myths,” in *Essays on the History of Religions* (Numen Suppl. 1; Leiden: Brill, 1954) 24–36, esp. pp. 32–34.

This motif of divine leisure is found in a straightforward manner in the Egyptian text known as “the Theology of Memphis.”¹⁶ This text attempts to supplant the authority of older, recognized creator gods by portraying the Memphite god Ptah as the real creator, prior in time and principle to all the other gods. After describing how Ptah brought into being everything that exists, including the other gods, the text states, “And so Ptah *rested*¹⁷ after he had made everything, as well as all the divine order.” In a text so explicitly self-conscious about justifying every facet of Ptah’s role as creator, this statement is a clear witness to the belief that a creation account should conclude with a description of the creator resting. The creator may relax because his work is finished, perfect.

The theme of leisure for the divine creator seems also to have been part and parcel of the common Semitic *Chaoskampf* myth.¹⁸ In the Ugaritic version, the weather god Baal, the Canaanite embodiment of prosperity and order, was for a time swallowed up by the underworld god Mot (Death). During that time the earth languished for lack of rain and prosperity perished, i.e., chaos reigned. But Baal’s sister Anat came to the rescue and freed Baal from the clutches of Mot. The god El, head of the Canaanite pantheon, subsequently had a dream of the heavens raining down oil and the wadis flowing with honey, and so El knew that Baal was truly alive and functioning. Among the Canaanites it was El, not Baal, who was regarded as the creator.¹⁹ Accordingly, El’s reaction to his dream is noteworthy. Once Baal had been revived and order returned to the earth, El rejoiced and announced:

Now I can sit and rest,
Even my inmost being can rest. (CTA 6 iii.18–19)²⁰

16. ANET, 4–5; M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature. Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) 51–57.

17. Following Wilson’s (ANET, 5 n. 19) alternative translation. Fearing that they were being too much influenced by the parallel in Gen 2:1–3, some scholars have preferred to translate more neutrally, “so Ptah was satisfied”; see J. Wilson in *The Intellectual Adventure of Man* (ed. H. Frankfort et al.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946) 59. The translation “rested” has been accepted by, among others, C. Westermann (*Genesis 1–11* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984] 167) and H. Brunner (*Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* [ed. W. Beyerlin; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978] 4–5).

18. Representatives include the Babylonian myth of *Enuma Elish*, the Ugaritic Baal epic, the Canaanite/Israelite myth reconstructed from diffuse allusions in the Bible, the Egyptian stories of “Astarte and the Sea” and “the Repulsing of the Dragon,” and the Hittite Illuyankas myth.

19. The controversial issue of El as creator has been discussed most recently by J. Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 17–18.

20. *atbn.ank.wanhn wtnh.birty.npš*. These identical words are also found in the mouth of Danel at the birth of his heir (CTA 17 ii.12–13). In both cases the speaker implies that he can relax because his task is successfully completed.

The creator, father of the gods and humankind, could relax and rest because the cosmos was in order once more.

The motif of divine leisure is encountered again in the Mesopotamian stories of *Atrahasis* and *Enuma Elish*.²¹ In both of these texts leisure is viewed as a divine prerogative, a right of all the gods and not just the creator. Indeed, *Atrahasis* takes its departure from this very theme, as the opening lines attest:

When the gods like men²²
Bore the labor, suffered the toil,
The toil of the gods was immense,
The work heavy, the distress severe.
The Seven great Anunnaki
Were making the Igigi suffer the labor (I 1–6)

The implication is that there was something amiss in this situation. The high gods (Anunnaki) had imposed virtual slavery upon the lesser gods (Igigi). While the lesser gods bore the total burden of producing food for all the gods, the high gods lounged in comfort. In short, the lesser gods were not able to participate in the divine prerogative of rest. Accordingly, when the lesser gods subsequently revolted against Enlil, their king, there was justification for their mutinous conduct.

The solution is illuminating for what it reveals of the Babylonian conception of the divine vis-à-vis the human realm. The rebels' ringleader was killed and humankind fashioned from his blood mixed with clay. Henceforth humans would bear the burden of providing food for the gods; thus would all the gods enjoy rest like Enlil and the other high gods. In short, the lesser gods were to acquire full divine status; no longer would they have to slave like humans.

A reflex of this theme is encountered again in *Enuma Elish*. After Marduk defeated Tiamat, he split her lifeless body in twain to form the heavens and the earth. Then, in a scene imported from *Atrahasis*, Marduk also slew Qingu (Tiamat's husband-king and henchman) and from his body and blood fashioned humankind. As in *Atrahasis*, the stated purpose for

21. Composed during the Old Babylonian period (1950–1500 B.C.E.) out of prior Sumerian traditions, *Atrahasis* is the older of the two mythological texts and represented the standard or "pan-Mesopotamian" view of creation. *Enuma Elish*, probably composed around 1100 B.C.E., was a specifically Babylonian adaptation of the creation myth designed to promote Babylon's own god Marduk as head of the pantheon (see W. G. Lambert, "The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion," *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek* [ed. W. S. McCullough; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964] 3–13).

22. Alternatively, "When the gods (still were) human . . ." For a survey of the scholarly debate over this controversial line and important observations on its implications, see R. Oden, Jr., "Divine Aspirations in *Atrahasis* and in Genesis 1–11," *ZAW* 93 (1981) 197–216, esp. pp. 199–200.

creating humankind was that the humans might “bear the toil of the gods so that they may rest (*lu pašḫū*)” (*En. El.* VI 8, 36, 131). Once again it is emphasized that the proper “posture” for deity is to be at ease.

B. The Sleeping Deity as a Symbol of Divine Rule

Divine rest or leisure was closely connected with a second theme, namely, sleep as a symbol of divine authority. Because rest was a divine prerogative, it was attributed to the head of the pantheon in a preeminent manner. The ability of the divine king to sleep undisturbed was accordingly a symbol of his unchallenged authority as the supreme deity. A corollary concept was also present: to interrupt or to disturb the sleep of the supreme deity was tantamount to rebellion against his dominion.

This aspect of the sleeping deity motif may be illustrated from *Atrahasis*. It is no accident that the revolt of the lesser gods against their divine king was set in the dead of night. These gods marched on Enlil’s palace, their mutinous cries rousing the divine king from his peaceful sleep.

This challenge to the divine king’s authority was supposed to have ended with the creation of humankind to do the toiling for the gods. However, as the humans multiplied on earth, so did Enlil’s problems:

Twelve hundred years had not yet transpired
 Before the country expanded and the people multiplied.
 The country was bellowing like a bull;
 The god was disturbed by their din (*ḫubūru*).
 Enlil heard their cries (*rigmu*)
 And addressed the great gods,
 “The cries of humankind have become too much;
 Because of their din I am unable to sleep.” (I 352–59 & //s)

According to one theory now fairly widespread, Enlil was deprived of his sleep because of excessive noise generated from an overpopulated earth²³ and even that Enlil’s actions were wholly capricious.²⁴ But is it most unlikely that the Babylonian poet-theologians meant to suggest that the flood happened as the result of an arbitrary and malicious decision by their chief deity, especially over such a petty reason as the loss of physical sleep.

Key here is the meaning of the human outcry which prevented Enlil from sleeping. According to the overpopulated earth theory, this outcry was understood to mean the noise generated by an excessive number of people on earth. But noise is not the primary characteristic intended by the ancient Babylonian poets. Rather, the Akkadian terms *rigmu* and *ḫubūru* indicate the *cries of rebellion* of humankind against the authority of the

23. See A. Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in Mythology,” *Or* 41 (1972) 160–72; and W. Moran, “Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood,” *Bib* 52 (1971) 51–61.

24. See T. Frymer-Kensky, “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1–9,” *BA* 40 (1977) 147–55.

deity.²⁵ In the prior revolt by the lesser gods Enlil's sleep was also interrupted by a similar outcry from the rebel gods. The humans are thus portrayed as carrying on in the spirit of the slain rebel god out of whose flesh and blood they were created. Indeed, in the scene describing the creation of the first humans, it is said that humankind will possess the slain god's ghost (*eṭemmu*), as well as his capacity to scheme or plot (*tēmu*).²⁶ Having inherited the rebellious spirit of their divine "ancestor," the humans duplicated the actions of the rebel god(s). Instead of promoting divine rest, they violated their mission by preventing the deity from sleeping. Accordingly, in this Mesopotamian story, as in Genesis, the divine decision to send the deluge was occasioned by human transgression against divine authority.

These same themes are present also in *Enuma Elish*.²⁷ In the opening scene Tiamat and Apsu, the progenitors of the gods, are being disturbed by the actions of their offspring, the young gods. Apsu complains,

Their behavior distresses me.
By day I cannot rest; by night I cannot sleep.
I will destroy, put an end to their behavior
That quiet may reign. Let us have sleep. (I 37–40)

The interruption of Tiamat's and Apsu's sleep by the young gods' behavior should be understood as a denial of the former's authority. This disturbance was not merely a matter of youthful frivolity. Such an interpretation is rejected within the myth itself. As Apsu deliberated over how to deal with the young upstarts, Tiamat at first suggested indulgence, "Their behavior is indeed sickening (*šumruṣat*), yet let us attend(?) kindly" (I 46). But there could be no indulgence. As the vizier Mummu warned Apsu, the young gods' actions constitute an act of insurrection:

Do destroy, my father, the mutinous²⁸ ways.
Then you shall rest by day, sleep by night. (I 49–50)

25. See Oden, "Divine Aspirations," 201–10. I discuss this issue further in my article, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Ancient Near Eastern Motif," *CBQ* 49 [1987] 187–211 [reprinted in this volume as chap. 7].

26. See W. Moran, "The Creation of Man in Atrahasis I 192–248," *BASOR* 200 (1970) 48–56; Oden, "Divine Aspirations," 202–3.

27. They may also be present in the Egyptian text, "Astarte and the Tribute of the Sea," *ANET*, 17–18. This hybrid tale, often compared to *Enuma Elish* and the Canaanite Baal myth, apparently recounts how the Egyptian gods appealed to the goddess Astarte to free them from the oppression of the Sea. Interestingly, the messenger to Astarte was instructed to wake her from her sleep—perhaps another example of the theme that the deity cannot sleep while chaos threatens right order. Any interpretation is uncertain, however, due to the extremely fragmentary condition of the text.

28. Because *ešītu* "confusion/disorder," is used (frequently in conjunction with terms signifying anarchy or rebellion) to describe situations involving political unrest, the Akkadian vocable seems to carry a connotation of mutiny or sedition; cf. *CAD* E 365–66.

However, in attempting to follow Mummu's counsel, Apsu lost both his crown and his life. The god Ea used his magical skill to cast a spell²⁹ upon Apsu and then killed him. After stripping off the divine tiara, Ea crowned himself king in Apsu's stead. Significant for our motif, the text says of Ea after he had vanquished his foe, "[Ea] rested in ease (*šupšuhīš inūh̄ma*) within his private chamber," i.e., in his new palace (*En. El. I 75*). The contrast between the former divine king being unable to rest and the new divine king taking his rest is surely intentional. Once again kingship and rest or sleep are linked concepts.

As was the case with Ea's victory over Apsu, so also in the later description of Marduk's victory over Tiamat and her forces there is a conscious attempt to portray Marduk as taking over the symbols of kingship. By taking "the tablets of destiny" away from Qingu (Tiamat's latest king-husband) and fastening them upon his own breast, Marduk overtly claimed for himself supreme authority. As confirmation of Marduk's kingship, the gods built him a palace (= Esagila in Babylon) and proclaimed his fifty titles—a litany of Marduk's powers as the supreme deity.

Within this context, so explicitly conscious of portraying Marduk as the ultimate authority in heaven and earth, it behooves one to pay closer attention to the first words acknowledging Marduk's victory over Tiamat (IV 133–36):

His fathers (the gods) watched, joyful and jubilant;
They brought gifts of homage, they to him.
Then the lord rested, surveying her [Tiamat's] cadaver,
How to cleave the monstrosity and make ingenious things.

Previously little significance has been placed upon the statement here that Marduk rested (*inūh̄*). Indeed, one well-known translation totally obscures the idea of rest, "Then the lord paused to view her dead body."³⁰ Resting is integral to the scene, however, as it is part and parcel of the Mesopotamian symbol of divine kingship.

Nevertheless, at this point in the story Marduk's rest had to be momentary. Only after the monster of chaos has been transformed into an ordered and inhabitable cosmos will the deity be able to enjoy absolute rest.

The handling of this absolute rest is delicately done in *Enuma Elish*. On the one hand it is implied that such rest was achieved. The celebration following Marduk's triumph over Tiamat was more than an enthronement of

29. Ea's powerful incantation put Apsu into a sleep-trance and turned his vizier Mummu into a zombie: "Sleep came upon him, he slept soundly. / [Ea] caused Apsu to sleep, sleep having overtaken (him). / Mummu the counselor though awake was in a daze" (*šit-tu ir-te-ḫi-šu ṣa-lil tu-ub-ba-tiṣ / ú-šá-aṣ-lil-ma ABZU ri-ḫi šit-tu / ʰmu-um-mu tam-la-ku da-la-piṣ ku-ú-ru* [I 64–65]). It is clear from the context that this "sleep" is of a very different nature than the restful sleep of the supreme deity with which we are concerned in this paper.

30. So E. A. Speiser, *ANET*, 67.

Marduk; it was also a celebration of the arrival of the true order of things. From the gods' perspective, one of the most important was the securing of their right to rest. Marduk assigned each of the gods a shrine so that each god would have his own place of rest (VII 10–11). But in addition there was Esagila. As Marduk's personal temple-palace, Esagila was "the Babylonian Mount Olympus." It was the seat of all authority, the place where the gods assembled for their divine councils. Esagila was always open to the other gods to come and rest by night, especially at the times of their assemblies (VI 121–30; VII 51–59). Thus, Esagila was at one and the same time the symbol of Marduk's kingship and the place of supreme rest. Once again divine kingship and divine rest appear as linked concepts. On the other hand, it is not said that Marduk himself actually rested along with the other gods. This appears deliberate. From one point of view Marduk's work was complete. The image of Marduk literally hanging up his bow (VI 82–90) is as graphic a symbol as possible that Marduk will never have to face another challenge; the order of the cosmos was secure. In traditional terminology, Marduk could now rest and enjoy undisturbed sleep. But from another point of view, the battle against chaos could be considered a perpetual struggle. Human experience certainly taught just how fragile was the order in the world.

A conception of this perpetual struggle was certainly present in the Egyptian text known as "the Repulsing of the Dragon"; each day the sun-god Re arose out of the primeval ocean Nun to repulse anew Apophis, thus daily dispelling darkness and chaos from the world.³¹ Similarly at Babylon the annual New Year Festival, during which Marduk's kingship was celebrated and *Enuma Elish* recited (in the Neo-Babylonian Period at least), may have been conceived partially as a periodic renewal of Marduk's triumph over Tiamat.³² Certainly one passage near the conclusion of *Enuma Elish* suggests that the Babylonians believed Marduk's battle with Tiamat to be an ongoing conflict. Tucked within Marduk's forty-ninth title is the prayer:

May he vanquish Tiamat, constrict and shorten her life,
 Until the last days of humankind, when even days have grown old,
 May she depart, not be detained, and ever stay far away. (VII 132–34)

The tension between story (myth) and experience (history) is a common phenomenon within the history of religions. The ancients surely believed the "salvation" proclaimed in the myth to be true, even though experience taught them that the promised transformation of their everyday world was at best still being worked out. A recognition of this tension between myth

31. See S. Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, 1973) 167–69.

32. This is not an endorsement of the ritual theories of myth which have been justly criticized by, among others, G. S. Kirk (*Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970] 8–31) and J. W. Rogerson (*Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* [BZAW 134; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974] 66–84).

and history restrained the Babylonian composer of *Enuma Elish* from concluding the epic with the expected statement that Marduk himself rested or slept.

To recapitulate briefly the ancient Near Eastern usage, the motif of divine sleep often was bound together with that of divine rest or leisure. The latter stemmed from the notion that it was proper for god(s) to enjoy leisure. This theme was conjoined to creation in two ways, one suggesting that the purpose of creation was to afford the gods their rightful rest, the other suggesting that the creator himself enjoyed rest upon the completion of his "work." Further, the explicit portrayal of the creator sleeping functioned as a statement of the deity's status as the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. The ability to sleep undisturbed was the symbol of the deity's absolute dominion over the heavens and the earth and the underworld. The most vivid image of this dominion was that of the creator-king subduing the chaos monster and then retiring to his chamber to sleep peacefully without fear of interruption.

2. *Biblical Appropriations of the Motif of Sleeping Deity*

The P creation account concludes (Gen 2:2–3) with God resting after completing the work of creation. Even so, the presence of a theme of God resting has been questioned by some who argue that *šābat* primarily means "to cease" or "to stop,"³³ thus yielding the translation, "(God) ceased from all his work."³⁴ Nevertheless, the connotation of rest cannot be eliminated from *šābat*, as the larger biblical tradition shows. Exod 20:11 urges observance of the Sabbath commandment for the reason that "in six days Yahweh made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested (*wayyānah*). Therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath and hallowed it." The linking of the Sabbath rest with the pattern established at creation demonstrates that the Israelites themselves understood God to have rested upon the completion of his work (see also Exod 23:12 and Deut 5:12–15).

Furthermore, *Chaoskampf* themes are not so absent from Gen 1:1–2:3 as is often asserted.³⁵ It is true that chaos (*têhôm* in Gen 1:1, cognate to "Tiamat") is presented less as a personal foe than as the raw material that the creator organized in causing the ordered cosmos to appear. But as demonstrated by Heidel and improved by Speiser, the structure of this P creation account corresponds to that of *Enuma Elish*.³⁶ One may, therefore,

33. So J. Morgenstern, "Sabbath," *IDB* 4, 135–41; cf. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 173.

34. So *NEB* and *JPSV*. Note also the ambivalence of Vg in translating *šābat*: *requievit* (Gen 2:2) and *cessaverat* (Gen 2:3).

35. See my article, "Red Sea or Reed Sea?," *BAR* 10/4 (July/August 1984) 57–63, esp. p. 63.

36. A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) 128–29; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB 1; Garden City: Doubleday, 1964) 9–13.

legitimately suggest that the rest of the deity (Gen 2:1–3) is more than the leisure appropriate to the divine craftsman satisfied with his completed masterpiece (as with Ptah in “the Theology of Memphis”). The theme of the divine king resting in his newly built temple-palace after his victory over the monster of chaos (cf. Baal on Mount Zaphon and Marduk in Esagila) seems to be present also. Proof of this may be found in Psalm 8, which is generally acknowledged to have close affinities with the P creation account. Precisely because of the presence of such creation motifs in Psalm 8, Dahood³⁷ appears to be correct in translating Ps 8:3 as “You built a fortress for your habitation,³⁸ having silenced your adversaries, the foe and the avenger” and in understanding this “fortress” (*oz*) as the temple-palace of Yahweh from which he rules. Behind Gen 2:1–3 apparently lies this same pattern of the creator-victor retiring to his palace, except that here the emphasis is upon the motif of the divine victor *retiring to rest* in his new palace.

As with Baal’s palace on Zaphon and Marduk’s Esagila, Yahweh’s “resting place” had both a geographical-historical referent and a mythic-heavenly referent, with the former being the physical manifestation of the latter. According to the royal Davidic/Zion theology, the temple on Mt. Zion was the earthly locus of Yahweh’s dwelling. The Chronicler claimed that in proposing the temple David intended only to build this “house” as a “resting place” (*bēt mēnûḥâ*) for the ark of the covenant, the footstool of Yahweh (1 Chr 28:2; cf. 2 Chr 6:41). This late tradition is patently sensitive to the theological problems in claiming that an earthly building built by human hands could be the authentic “resting place” (*māqôm mēnûḥâ*, Isa 66:1; cf. Acts 7:48–49) of the divine sovereign whom the earth and the heavens cannot contain (1 Kgs 8:27). Nevertheless, earlier Zion traditions did not hesitate to say that the Jerusalem temple was authentically Yahweh’s chosen residence, his eternal “resting place”:

For Yahweh has chosen Zion,
 he desired it for his residence (*môṣāb*).
 This is my resting (*mēnûḥātî*) for ever;
 here I will reside because I have desired it. (Ps 132:13–14; cf. v. 8)³⁹

37. Dahood, *Psalms I*, 48–51.

38. Reading *lēmāʿôn* for MT *lēmāʿan*.

39. Within Ps 132 v. 8 may contain a slightly different thought than v. 14. As the *lectio difficilior* the reading of 2 Chr 6:41 *lēnûḥekā* “to your rest” is preferable to *līmñûḥatekā* “to your resting place” of Ps 132:8, the latter likely being altered under the influence of *mēnûḥātî* in v. 14. Accordingly, v. 8 should be an invitation to Yahweh to enter the temple so as to take his rest: “Arise, Yahweh, to your rest / You and the Ark of your Might.” D. Hillers, “Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132,” *CBQ* 30 (1968) 48–55, followed by F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 95, translates as “Arise O Yahweh from your resting-place.” But as M. Dahood, *Psalms III* (AB 17A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 245 notes, the parallelism between v. 7 and v. 8 requires one to translate *lē* as “to” and not as “from.”

By extension the whole of Zion and the land surrounding it could be referred to as Yahweh's resting place. In Ps 95:11 Yahweh denies the rebellious Israelites entry into "my resting place." Reference here is to entry into the promised land, analogous to the manner in which Exod 15:17 speaks of Israel being planted on Yahweh's mountain sanctuary. The theme of Yahweh's kingship following his victory over his foes present in this latter text⁴⁰ is also implicit in the designation of Zion as Yahweh's resting place.

Chaoskampf motifs figure even more prominently in the composition of other biblical writers (e.g., Pss 74:12–17; 89:10–15; 104:1–9; Job 3:8; 7:12; 9:5–14; 26:5–14; 38:8–11). Fortunately, there has been a plethora of monographs and articles on this topic.⁴¹ We can, therefore, limit our consideration to passages involving the motif of divine sleep.

Nowhere do we find an actual description of God retiring to sleep after his battle with the chaos monster. But the image is presupposed in several passages. One of the most illuminating of such passages is Isa 51:9–11, the so-called Ode to Yahweh's Arm.

Awake! Awake! Robe yourself in Power,
 O arm of Yahweh
 Awake as in primordial days,
 (the) primeval generations.
 Is it not you who cleaves Rahab in pieces,
 who pierces the Sea-dragon?
 Is it not you who dries up the Sea,
 the waters of the great Abyss (*têhôm*)?
 The one who makes the depths of the Sea a road
 for the redeemed to pass over?

Both the image of the battle against the chaos monster and the image of the divine victor retiring to sleep lie behind this appeal for help.

However, an analysis of the context within Deutero-Isaiah reveals that this Israelite adaptation of the motif of the sleeping deity was shaped by

40. F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman ("The Song of Miriam," *JNES* 14 [1955] 237–50, esp. pp. 249–50) rightly insist upon the enthronement connotations of *mākôn lēšibtēkā*, "the dais of your throne," in v. 17. Note also "Yahweh will reign forever" (v. 18).

41. The most recent scholarly treatment of the subject is that of J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge, 1985). [More recently, in a major new study, Rebecca S. Watson (*Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of "Chaos" in the Hebrew Bible* [BZAW 341; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005]) has attempted to show that the Combat Myth is absent from the Hebrew Bible. But in my own reassessment of Combat Myth motifs in the Hebrew Bible, I find Watson's methodology to be defective and her conclusions invalid, and that Combat Myth motifs are indeed present in a number of biblical passages; see my paper "The Combat Myth in Israelite Tradition Revisited," delivered at the Joint Meeting of the Midwest Region of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Middle West Branch of the American Oriental Society, and the American Schools of Oriental Research, held at Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais, IL, February 11–13, 2011; publication forthcoming in *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaoskampf Hypothesis*, ed. JoAnn Scurlock (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns).]

her unique theological tradition and the catastrophe of exile. The larger contextual unit (Isa 51:9–52:3) is cast as a dialogue between the exiles and God.⁴² Isa 51:9–11 is the community's lament to the effect that God has no thought for his people's plight in exile. This is followed by a series of divine assurances (51:12–16; 51:17–23; 52:1–3) that God has not forgotten his people but is even now in the process of returning them to their homeland.

In their lament the exilic community calls upon God—or more exactly, his mighty arm—to “wake up!” (*‘ûrî*) and come to their rescue. They appeal to the tradition of his past saving acts as the reason why he should act in the present crisis. God's salvific power was most manifest in his victory over the chaos monster at the creation of the world and in his splitting of the (Red) Sea in order to allow his people to escape from Egypt. This is not a case of myth in one instance and history in the other. Rather, as was the case with other biblical authors, Deutero-Isaiah understood the two as essentially one and the same act of salvation. Egypt was viewed as an historical manifestation of the power of chaos (cf. Ezek 29:3; Isa 17:1; 30:7), while the exodus was seen as an extension of God's creative power. Just as God split the primeval sea to create dry land, so he split the sea again during the exodus to create a special people for himself.⁴³ It is worth noting that tradition credited Yahweh's victory during the exodus also to his mighty right arm/hand (Exod 15:6, 12, 16).⁴⁴

The dependency of Isa 51:9–11 upon the old semitic *Chaoskampf* myth is patent. Not only is the victory over the chaos monster attributed to Yahweh, but it is even implied that he retired afterwards to his private chamber to sleep, as in the traditional story. But—so the exiles complain—Yahweh's “victory celebration” is premature, given the straits in which they, Yahweh's people, find themselves. The power of chaos is everywhere manifest. With the temple razed and Jerusalem in ashes, it was obvious that the monster of chaos was far from vanquished. Yahweh's work was even now being undone.

Not to be overlooked in Isa 51:9–11 is the grammatical tense. Practically every translation renders the action in the *past* tense, “Was it not you who *didst* cut Rahab? . . . *didst* dry up the sea?,” etc. However, the use of participles rather than verbs in the grammatical perfect reveals that the Hebrew poet thought of God's saving actions as continuing into the present.⁴⁵ The appeal to Yahweh to wake up is therefore also a statement that Yahweh's

42. See C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 239–40.

43. For a more detailed discussion of this topic see my article, “The Reed Sea: *Requiescat in Pace*,” *JBL* 102 (1983) 27–35 [reprinted in this volume as chap. 6].

44. One may compare the frequent iconographic portrayals of the West Semitic storm god with an upraised right hand clutching a weapon and the descriptions in the Canaanite *Chaoskampf* myth of Baal's victory over Prince Yamm achieved by means of his club-wielding right hand (*CTA* 2 iv 11–27; 4 iii 40–41).

45. See C. Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (AnBib 43; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970) 49–51.

supreme authority is at stake. How can Yahweh sleep when his archfoe is even now challenging his dominion?

Yahweh's response (51:17–23) artfully reverses the tables. It is not Yahweh but Israel who is asleep and who needs to wake up. It is the exiles themselves who must rise from their own drunken stupor. To be sure, they have drunk deeply from the cup of Yahweh's wrath. But that cup, drained to the dregs, is now finished. The reversal is even more explicit in 52:1–3. Echoing 51:9, Zion is commanded to awaken and robe herself in power, because God is taking her home.

At the base of this dramatic dialogue lay Judah's conviction that Yahweh's creative power continued unabated into the present and that his absolute dominion has never been in doubt. Even in her darkest hour Judah was challenged to put her trust in "her maker Yahweh, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundations of the earth" (51:13; cf. 16). Stung by the taunts of his captors, the Babylonians who claimed that it was their god Marduk who slew the chaos monster and created the world, the exilic poet did not flinch at attributing these very powers to Yahweh. The recrudescence of chaos in this catastrophe of the exile, therefore, need not be feared. Although some may feel that Yahweh's authority has slipped away, in actuality Yahweh is very much in control, "stilling the sea when its waves rage" (51:15).⁴⁶

This Isaian passage is instructive for understanding the imagery of those psalms which speak of God sleeping or arising from sleep (Pss 7; 35; 44; 59; and 74). All of these psalms belong to the category of laments. As universal prayers for times of duress, they employ stereotypical language and stock images as the vehicle within which to make their plea to God for help.⁴⁷ This makes their witness all the more valuable, for it reveals what was the "typical" thought in ancient Israel.

Psalms 44 was composed in nearly identical circumstances to Deutero-Isaiah. It also betrays an exilic origin when Israel was "scattered among the nations" (v. 12). The community laments that, in contrast to former days when God's saving acts were so manifest (vv. 2–4), God now seems to have cast off his people and made them the taunt of their enemies (vv. 10–17), and this despite their innocence and fidelity (vv. 5–9, 18–23). Having heard these complaints before, how the world is collapsing and reverting to chaos, one can almost anticipate the following appeal to God (vv. 24–25, 27):

Awake! (*‘ûrâ*) Why do you sleep (*tîšān*), O Lord?
Wake up! (*hāqîšâ*) Do not cast us off forever!

46. Similarly Jer 31:35; cf. Job 26:12. For *rg* "to still" (not "to disturb" [BKB] or "to stir up" [RSV]), see M. Pope, *Job* (AB 15; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965) 166.

47. Note even the standardized language for awakening God: *hā‘ûrâ* // *hāqîšâ* (Ps 35:23), *‘ûrâ* // *hāqîšâ* (Pss 44:24[23]; 59:5–6[4–5]), *qûmâ* // *‘ûrâ* (Ps 7:7[6]), or *qûmâ* alone (Ps 74:22; cf. 44:27[26]).

Why do you hide your face?

Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?

Get up! (*qûmâ*) You must come to our rescue

And deliver us for the sake of your steadfast love.

Here again the motif of the sleeping deity is used to express Israel's belief in Yahweh's absolute kingship (cf. *malkî*, v. 5). But this very conviction gives her the confidence to appeal for help. Yahweh's reign is supreme and he can be counted on to "awaken" and to maintain that right order which he decrees as creator and sovereign of all.

Psalms 74 is in many respects similar to Psalm 44. It too is a community lament and obviously composed with the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the temple fresh in mind (vv. 2–8). But the similarity to Isa 51:9–11 is even closer. The psalmist appeals to the strong arm of God to act (v. 11) as in the days of old, both at the exodus (v. 2; cf. Exod 15:12–13) and at creation (vv. 12–17). This reference to creation is particularly instructive, for it explicitly links God's eternal kingship (*malkî miqqedem*, v. 12) with his victory over the mythical chaos monster (vv. 13–14) and the creation of the cosmos (vv. 15–17), the traditional context of the sleeping deity motif. It comes as no surprise, therefore, when the psalmist calls upon God to "Get up!" (*qûmâ*, i.e., get out of bed, v. 22)⁴⁸ and do something about the enemy who scoffs at him and his people (vv. 18–23). The marauding Babylonian infidels were regarded as an historical extension of God's arch enemy, primeval chaos.⁴⁹

Psalms 7, 35, and 59 are all laments of the individual. They are so stereotypical in content as to contain virtually no indications of the date or the occasion of their composition. There are the standard references to the unjust attacks of the "enemy"—whoever that may be. Though in dire straits, the psalmists are confident that God will vindicate his faithful servants. These psalmists appeal to an image of Yahweh as the ruler of the whole world (Ps 59:14; cf. vv. 6, 9) who dispenses justice upon all from his judgment seat on high (Ps 7:7–9). As supreme ruler and judge Yahweh has to be so outraged that he must surely "awaken" (*qûmâ* // *ûrâ*, Ps 7:7; *ûrâ* //

48. The presence of the phrase *ribâ ribekâ* in the parallel colon here does not vitiate our thesis that *qûmâ* originates in a motif of the sleeping god. The root *rib* is not restricted to a legal setting but can designate a conflict in which one's rights are defended with physical force (Gen 13:7; 26:20; Exod 21:18) and even military action (Deut 33:7; Judg 11:25). Similarities with Ps 35:1–2 (cf. v. 23) suggest that *ribâ ribekâ* might be translated as "Fight for your rights!" Furthermore, the appeal *qûmâ* YHWH normally occurs in contexts involving military action rather than legal action (so J. Willis, "QÛMĀH YHWH," *JNSL* 16 [1990] 207–21).

49. The image of God awakening from sleep in Ps 78:65 may also derive from the sleeping deity motif; the allusion to wine and the possibility of a drunken stupor image make this uncertain, however. This text, despite its uncertainty, formed the principal support for Widengren's now discredited hypothesis concerning the origin of the cultic shout "Awake!"; see above, pp. 154–55.

hāqîšâ, Ps 59:5–6) for the purpose of pronouncing judgment.⁵⁰ The thought is expressed succinctly in Ps 35:22–24:

You have seen, O Yahweh; do not remain silent.
 My Lord, be not far from me.
 Arise! Wake up! (*hā'îrâ wêhāqîšâ*) for the sake of my justice,
 My God and my lord, for the sake of my cause.
 Judge me in accordance with your righteousness
 And let them not gloat over me.

Behind each of these psalms are vestiges of the ancient Near Eastern motif of the sleeping deity. The portrayal of Yahweh as asleep was a culturally conditioned theological statement to the effect that Yahweh is the creator and absolute king of heaven and earth. Likewise, the appeal to Yahweh to “wake up,” far from being a slur on the effectiveness of divine rule, was actually an extension of Israel’s active faith in Yahweh’s universal rule even in the midst of gross injustice and manifest evil.

Zech 2:17[13] is based precisely upon the belief that Yahweh does awaken to judge in favor of his faithful. In the midst of eschatological visions about the advent of Yahweh comes the command for all flesh to keep silence, “for Yahweh has roused himself from his holy dwelling” (*kî nê'ôr mimmê'ôn qodšô*). The preceding and following context shows Yahweh exercising his universal dominion on behalf of Zion and the high priest while their accuser, the Satan, is rebuked. In stark contrast to this awesome portrait of Yahweh stand the idols, who can be parodied precisely because they have no power to awaken and arise for the benefit of their devotees (Hab 2:18–20; cf. 1 Kgs 18:27).

Obviously, the motif could be inverted, with equal effect. In Psalm 121 the image of Yahweh as never slumbering nor sleeping (*lô' yānûm wêlo' yîšān*, v. 4), like its opposite, functioned in Israel as an effective expression of her faith in Yahweh as creator and absolute sovereign. The devotee could walk in the confidence that his world would not collapse around him because “the keeper of Israel” is eternally vigilant in maintaining the order which he has divinely ordained.

The final stage⁵¹ in the biblical adaptation of the motif of the sleeping deity comes in the New Testament story of Jesus calming the sea. This

50. Appeals to the deity to act as universal judge are not incompatible with the motif of the sleeping god, despite our rejection of the thesis that the expression “Arise, Yahweh!” originated primarily within a forensic or courtroom setting (see above, pp. 139–140). The role of the divine sovereign in establishing justice is implicit in the sleeping god motif. Accordingly, there may be yet additional allusions to this motif in other passages where *qûmâ* lacks any parallel explicit reference to sleeping or awaking (e.g., Num 10:35; Pss 3:8; 9:20; 10:12; 12:6; 17:13; 68:2; Isa 14:22; 31:2; 33:10; Amos 7:9); see further n. 48. Similar usage is attested at Qumran (1QM xii 9; xix 2).

51. The Talmud (*b. Soṭa* 48a) makes reference to Levites who, prior to the reforms of John Hyrcanus, used to perform a daily ritual in which they cried, “Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord?” (Ps 44:24). It is likely that this “rite of the Awakeners” had nothing to do

incident is found in all three synoptic gospels (Matt 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:23–27). As with the related story of Jesus walking on the sea (Matt 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21), the evangelists attached special significance to this story as revelatory of who Jesus is. From the manner in which the evangelists shaped these two stories using traditional biblical language and images of divine activity, it is evident that they regarded both stories as epiphanic, that is, as manifesting the divine presence.⁵²

In the Old Testament the power both to still the raging sea (Job 26:12; Isa 51:15; Jer 31:35; cf. Pss 89:9[10]; 107:29) and to trample upon the back of the sea (Job 9:8; Hab 3:15; Ps 77:20) belongs to God alone, deriving ultimately from his victory over primeval sea.⁵³ Accordingly, it is not accidental that Jesus' walking upon the sea (Matt 14:25; Mark 6:48; John 6:19) is described in the language of Yahweh's walking or trampling on the back of the sea (note especially Job 9:8 LXX: *kai peripatōn hōs ep' edaphous epi thalassēs* "and (who) walks on the sea as if on ground"). Similarly, Jesus' calming of the sea borrows upon the terminology of Yahweh's stilling of the hostile sea, especially when this stilling is done through the divine rebuke (*gār*, LXX: *epitimân*, Job 26:11). The sea is also the object of the divine rebuke in Pss 18:15[16] (= 2 Sam 22:16); 104:7; 106:9; and Isa 50:2; Satan is similarly rebuked in Zech 3:2. Whether Jesus' stilling of the sea still retained the age-old connotations of a battle against the chaos monster (as in Job 26:11–12; Ps 89:9–10[10–11]) or only the power of the creator to control his creatures (as in Ps 107:29), Jesus is clearly depicted as exercising divine control: "Who is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41 & //s). The evangelists used the theophanic connotations of this language to suggest that Jesus possessed divine power.⁵⁴

The matter of Jesus sleeping on the storming sea must be interpreted within this epiphanic context. Previous commentators have failed to appreciate the full significance intended by the evangelists. Some⁵⁵ have missed the point totally, taking Jesus' sleep as an indication of his humanness. Fatigued by the demands that the crowd had made upon him, Jesus was

with the motif of the sleeping deity, however. Since its suppression was justified by appeal to Ps 121:4, presumably the ritual was similar to the daily morning routine designed for the care and feeding of (anthropomorphically conceived) gods, common in ancient temples; see above, n. 14.

52. For a recent, comprehensive treatment, see J. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Gospel Functions of Matt 14:22–33, Mark 6:45–52 and John 6:15b–21* (AnBib 87; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981).

53. For the mythic background of the deity trampling the back of the sea, see Pope, *Job*, 69–70.

54. 2 Macc 9:8 claims that Antiochus IV had thought himself capable of commanding the waves of the sea, only to find himself a lowly mortal indeed. Antiochus, as his name Epiphanes implies, regarded himself as an incarnation of the god Zeus.

55. So A. Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (ICC; New York: Scribner, 1910) 130; and N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) 251–52.

forced to seek refuge in the boat where he promptly fell asleep, oblivious to developments around him. Closer but still wide of the mark are those⁵⁶ who interpret Jesus' ability to sleep peacefully and undisturbed in such circumstances as a sign of his perfect trust in the sustaining and protective power of God. However, it is not the faith of Jesus but of his disciples that is on trial here. Finally, despite obvious similarities between Jesus' calming of the storm and Jonah 1, the sleeping Jesus cannot be adequately explained as the evangelists' attempt to portray "one greater than Jonah."⁵⁷ Both the motive and the result of sleep are different in the two stories. Jesus' disciples do not awaken him to intercede with God as in Jonah 1:6. Rather, the disciples call upon Jesus even as the distressed sailors of Ps 107:23–30 called upon Yahweh to save them from the storm.

Since this is the only passage in the New Testament in which we read of Jesus sleeping, it appears that the evangelists attached special significance to it. Its function is most obvious in the original Marcan formulation of this scene.⁵⁸ Mark personified the sea and identified it with the demonic. Accordingly, the sea is rebuked (*epitimân*) by Jesus in almost identical terms (*siôpa, pephimôso* "Quiet! Be silent") as the demon in Mark 1:25 (*phimôthēti* "Be silenced!"). Even the reaction of the bystanders is similar (compare 4:41 with 1:27). The sea as an extension of the demonic is evident also in the following incident of the possessed man in the land of the Gerasenes (Mark 5:1–20). When Jesus cast the legion of demons out of the man, these entered the swine and rushed headlong over the cliff into the sea—appropriately to their rightful home, for the sea was considered to be the source of evil (Dan 7:2–3; Rev 13:1; contrast Rev 21:1).

Patently, Mark was drawing upon the long biblical tradition of the creator's battle with the chaos monster, though the latter is reinterpreted more specifically as the diabolic kingdom of Satan and his cohorts. Indeed, a major theme in Mark is the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil; it is a battle to the death. Just as the Israelites had called upon Yahweh to awaken and save them in their tribulation, so Jesus' beleaguered disciples wake Jesus for help against the sea which threatened to engulf them. And like Yahweh, Jesus arises and stills the demonic sea. Accordingly, the image of the sleeping Jesus is modeled after that of the sleeping divine king. His sleeping indicates not powerlessness but the possession

56. So D. Nineham, *Mark* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963) 146–47; A. Oepke, "Καθεύδω," *TNDT* 3, 436; and E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1970) 109.

57. S. R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT 2; Freiburg: Herder, 1980) 1.267–81. The superiority of Jesus to Jonah (Matt 12:41/Luke 11:32) is a Q saying and apparently unknown to Mark, the principal architect of the synoptic formulation of the calming of the sea.

58. Following the majority opinion within New Testament scholarship, the priority of Mark among the synoptic gospels is here assumed; the validity of this analysis is not dependent upon any particular order of composition among the gospels, however.

of absolute authority. The power of the demonic kingdom is only apparent, not real, as is evident when Jesus awakens and stills the raging of the sea.

Matthew, for his part, strengthens the epiphanic connotations in the scene. He speaks not of a "great windstorm" (*lailaps anemou megalē*) but of a "great earthquake" (*seismos megas*, 8:24). Earthquakes both in the Old and the New Testaments, and in various apocalyptic texts as well, are frequently associated with the end times. Since Matthew elsewhere employs earthquakes to great effect in evoking the eschatological significance of Jesus' death and resurrection (27:51, 54; 28:2), it may be that the evangelist wished to suggest here the advent of the eschatological times when the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan engage in the definitive battle (cf. Matt 24:7).⁵⁹

Another change in Matthew's presentation may point in the same direction. Whereas in Mark 4:38 the disciples address Jesus as "Teacher" (*didaskale*)⁶⁰ and in Luke 8:24 as "Master" (*epistata*), in Matt 8:25 they call upon him as "Lord" (*kyrie*) and add "save us." (Note that in the similar story of Jesus walking on the sea Matthew has suppressed the Marcan statement that the disciples did not understand and instead has the disciples worship Jesus as the "Son of God"; compare Matt 14:33 with Mark 6:52.) Presupposing that this was an intentional alteration deriving from the post-resurrection faith of the evangelist, one concludes that Matthew intended his readers to associate Jesus closely with *kyrios*, the normal LXX rendering of the divine name Yahweh.

The Matthean reworking of this pericope made the adaptation of the motif of divine sleep to Jesus complete. The implication of Jesus' divinity suggested by the use of sleep motif was made explicit through the faith of the disciples in Jesus as Lord and Savior.⁶¹

59. See G. Bornkamm, "σειώ, σεισμός," *TDNT* 7, 196–200, esp. p. 199; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 154–55.

60. In Mark the title "Teacher" has christological significance not present in Matthew and Luke; see P. Achtemeier, "'He Taught Them Many Things': Reflections on Marcan Christology," *CBQ* 42 (1980) 465–81.

61. Luke may have tried to deemphasize some of the mythic overtones of the Marcan version by reinterpreting the incident as a "natural" event. He placed the incident on "the lake" (*hē limnē*, i.e., Gennesaret), thus avoiding all the mythic connotations associated with "the sea." For Luke the peril seemed to consist solely of unusually large swells caused by the "windstorm," rather than some demonic force per se. After the calming of the water, in Luke 8:25 the disciples exclaim, "Who then is this, that he commands the wind and the water [*kai tois anemois epitassei kai tō hudati*] and they obey him?," whereas in Mark and Matthew reference is to "the wind and the sea (*hē thalassa*)." Nevertheless, the demonic element has not been totally eliminated for Luke retains the verb "rebuked" (*epitimân*). In Luke 4:35, 39 as in Mark this verb often is used in a technical sense of solemnly commanding demons; see J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* (AB 28; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981) 546 and 730.