

# The Gilgamesh Traditions and the Pre-History of Genesis 6:1-4

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A number of scholars have suggested that behind the present form of Gen 6:1-4 lies a broader ancient Near Eastern tradition of which only a portion has been preserved in the biblical account. Wellhausen describes the text as an "erratic boulder."<sup>1</sup> Hermann Gunkel reflects this assessment when he refers to the story as "a torso" of an original tradition which was much fuller.<sup>2</sup> Following their lead, many scholars have attempted to trace the biblical story back to a broader ancient Near Eastern tradition.<sup>3</sup>

Proposed histories of the tradition linking it with other known ancient Near Eastern myths have suffered from the fact that, to date, the only myth which explicitly narrates the taking of human women as wives by gods and the birth of an entire race of semi-divine offspring is found in Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*, fr. 204 M-W. In this text, Zeus devises the Trojan War as a means of destroying the demigods, as well as humanity so as to prevent the birth of more demigods by the mating of gods with humans. Ronald Hendel has argued on the basis of this text that Gen 6:1-4 originally served as the motive for the Flood story, with the Semitic Flood paralleling the Greek Trojan War.<sup>4</sup> Most scholars,

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<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzies; Meridian: New York, 1957), 317.

<sup>2</sup> *Genesis* (trans. Mark E. Biddle; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 59.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 139-47; Emil G. Kraeling, "The Significance and Origin of Gen 6:1-4," *JNES* 6 (1947): 200; B. S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (SBT 27; Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1960), 54-57; W. H. Schmidt, "Mythos im AT, Kap. IIa, Gen 6:1-4," *EvT* 27 (1967): 237-54; O. Loretz, "Götter und Frauen (Gen 6:1-4). Ein Paradigma zu AT—Ugarit," *BibLeb* (1967): 120-27; O. Loretz, *Schöpfung und Mythos: Mensch und Welt nach den Anfangskapiteln der Genesis* (SBS 32; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 31-48; M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (1972); Rüdiger Bartelmus, *Heroentum in Israel und seiner Umwelt: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Gen. 6, 1-4 und verwandten Texten im Alten Testament und der altorientalischen Literatur* (ATHANT 65; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979); C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 365-83; Ronald S. Hendel, "Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4," *JBL* 106 (1987): 13-26. U. Cassuto regards Gen 6:1-4 as in dialogue with ancient Near Eastern myths, but does not see it as a fragment of myth but a response to them ("The Sons of God and the Daughters of Man," in *Biblical and Oriental Studies* [trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes/Hebrew University Press, 1973], 1:23, 28).

<sup>4</sup> Hendel, "Of Demigods and the Deluge," 16-20. According to Hendel's analysis, the Yahwist detached Gen 6:1-4 from the Flood story in order to replace it with "a more purely ethical motive," namely human wickedness (vv. 16-17). Yet none of the known ancient Near Eastern Flood stories include anything close to the mating of gods and humans as a reason for the Flood, and the equation of the Trojan war with the Semitic Flood lacks any

however, have tended to view Gen 6:1-4 as a separate tradition unrelated to the Flood account,<sup>5</sup> and later Jewish tradition clearly distinguished between the punishment of the בני האלהים and their children and the sending of the Flood (cf. *1 En.* 10:4-15). As for the relationship between Hesiod's account and Gen 6:1-4, it is generally recognized that much of the Greek mythic tradition derives from Near Eastern sources, which would provide a more likely prototype for Gen 6:1-4.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the *Catalogue of Women* is most likely a "cousin" of Gen 6:1-4, bearing witness to a common source tradition.

The gap between Gen 6:1-4 and any other possible representations of the original tradition is compounded by the seemingly fragmentary condition of the biblical text. It behooves the interpreter, first, to seek possible evidence from within the literary traditions of ancient Israel for what may have originally filled these gaps in the narrative. This evidence may then be compared with possible ancient Near Eastern parallels in order to confirm originality of these elements to the tradition.

Using this comparative approach, I wish to propose that the early apocalyptic work, *1 Enoch*, preserves elements of the broader original tradition upon which Gen 6:1-4 is based. This broader tradition included, most notably, the motif of divine instruction in the arts of civilization, especially the arts of divination and magic, as evidenced by the merging of the tradition of the semi-divine hero of mixed divine-human parentage with the tradition of the culture hero who obtains and transmits secret knowledge necessary for the rise of civilization, within a literary tradition which pre-dates both *1 Enoch* and Gen 6:1-4. The tradition which *best* embodies both of these motifs, although certainly not the only,<sup>7</sup> is the Gilgamesh tradition, the earliest layers of which originated in the late third millennium B.C.

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support, so that Hendel is forced to attribute the change to some unknown "peculiar twist of tradition" as the story entered Greek mythology.

<sup>5</sup> Probably by virtue of its placement in the canonical text of Genesis, Gen 6:1-4 did eventually become absorbed into the Flood story, as is evident in the version recorded in *1 Enoch* and referred to in the New Testament (2 Pet 2:4-5; Jude 6). Yet even here the Flood does not serve the same function as the Trojan War—to destroy the demigods—for the giants are killed *before* the sending of the Flood. They die in battle, a *gigantomachia*, at the hands of one another (*1 En.* 10:9-10).

<sup>6</sup> See Hans Gustav Güterbock, "The Hittite Version of the Hurrian Kumarbi Myths: Oriental Forerunners of Hesiod," *AJA* 52 (1948): 123-34.

<sup>7</sup> At least two other ancient Near Eastern traditions also display a combination of the semi-divine hero motif and the divine instruction motif. The first is the Mesopotamian *apkallu* tradition (see E. Reiner, "The Etiological Myth of the Seven Sages," *Or* 30 [1961]: 1-11; Paul D. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11," *JBL* 96 [1977]: 227-29; Helge S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* [WMANT 61; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988], 191-209, 295-318). The second is the tradition of the Phoenician culture heroes, related by Philo of Byblos in his *Phoenician History* (see Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary* [Leiden: Brill, 1981], 156-57).

### The Enochic Tradition in Relation to Gen 6:1-4:

The portion of *1 Enoch* which is most relevant for the study of Gen 6:1-4 is the *Book of Watchers* (chs. 1-36), and in particular, chs. 6-11. The *Book of Watchers* is among the earliest portions of the Enochic corpus and is generally dated to the mid-third century B.C. in its final form.<sup>8</sup> Its great antiquity increases the plausibility of its containing original traditional material from the biblical period. In fact, Milik has argued that the Genesis account is actually *dependent* on the version of the myth preserved in the *Book of Watchers*, but his proposal has found very few followers.<sup>9</sup> A similar suggestion has been offered by Margaret Barker, who argues on the basis of the observations of Von Rad and others that the text of Gen 6:1-4 has been "dislocated and truncated," that "the 'accretions' [i.e., the instruction motif] were integral to the original myth, and that their *removal* from Gen. 6 caused the dislocation of the text."<sup>10</sup> Like Milik, Barker has found very few followers among scholars, and the majority opinion continues to be that the *Book of Watchers* is dependent upon Genesis and has supplemented the original myth with additional traditions. Chief among these is the instruction motif.

The basic story line of *1 En.* 6-11 runs as follows: When humans had multiplied on the earth, the Heavenly Watchers saw the daughters of man and desired them. Two hundred of the Watchers, under the leadership of Shemiha-zah, descended to Mt. Hermon, where they bound themselves with an oath to take wives from among the human women and have children by them (ch. 6). The Watchers took wives from whomever they chose among the women and had sexual relations with them. At the same time, they began to teach their wives sorcery and other magical arts. The women gave birth to giants, who devoured the works of humans. The giants began to kill and devour humans and animals and, eventually, one another (ch. 7). Chapter 8 provides greater detail concerning the teachings of the Watchers, this time under the leadership of Asael. In addition to sorcery, the list of what they teach now includes metallurgy and the making of weapons, cosmetics, and astrology. Four angels, Michael, Sariel, Raphael, and Gabriel, observe what is taking place and petition God to act (ch. 9). God sends the four angels to warn Noah of coming judgment, imprison the Watchers, destroy the giants by setting them to war against each other, and restore the earth from the pollution caused by the Watchers (chs. 10-11).

Helge Kvanvig has analyzed the contents of *1 En.* 6-11 in comparison with Gen 4-9, and Gen 6:1-4 in particular, and has found that while the biblical text comprises the primary source for the *Book of Watchers*, non-biblical material makes up a considerable portion of the narrative. This non-biblical material falls into three main motifs: "1) divine beings associated with Mt.

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<sup>8</sup> Nickelsburg argues for the mid-third century as the lower limit for the completion of the entire *Book of Watchers*, while the core traditions of the book must be pushed back into the fourth century (*A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001], 36).

<sup>9</sup> See J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 30-32.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1987), 18-19.

Hermon; 2) the condemnation of these beings to the nether world; 3) the association of these beings with the teaching of magic, divination, and astrology.”<sup>11</sup> Although there is evidence which suggests that the first two motifs may also be original to the Gen 6:1-4 tradition, I will focus my investigation on the third motif: divine instruction in the arts of civilization, in particular, divination, magic, astrology, and the like.

### **The Semi-Divine Hero and Culture Hero Motifs in the Gilgamesh Tradition:**

The association between Gilgamesh and the children of the בני האלהים/Watchers goes back to at least the first century B.C.E., when Gilgamesh and Humbaba are named as giants in the Enochic *Book of Giants*, primarily preserved in Manichean texts, but also found at Qumran.<sup>12</sup> The reasons for this association are obvious to anyone who has even a basic knowledge of both the Gen 6:1-4 and Gilgamesh traditions. The first tablet of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* describes him as being a mix of human and divine: “two-thirds of him [is] god and one-third of him [is] human” (*šittīnšu ūlumma šullultašu amēlūtu*).<sup>13</sup> He is consistently identified as divine throughout the epic, having the divine determinative affixed to his name (<sup>d</sup>GĪŠ-*gim-maš*), and in the extant iconographic evidence, Gilgamesh often wears the horned cap of divinity, thus identifying him as a god.<sup>14</sup> Yet he is clearly mortal, as the central theme of the epic is his failed quest to achieve immortality and escape death. While according to Mesopotamian mythology gods were capable of being *killed*, for Gilgamesh death is considered inevitable and natural. In the Sumerian poem *The Death of Bilgames*, the gods consider whether Bilgames (Gilgamesh) should be granted immortality. They recount his heroic deeds and the fact that his mother was a goddess, but they conclude that

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<sup>11</sup> Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, 275-80. To the third category should also be added metallurgy/weapon making and cosmetics (cf. *1 En.* 8:1). Kvanvig excludes metallurgy due to the discovery of metallurgy by Tubal-cain in Gen 4:22, but there are a number of significant differences between the skills described in Gen 4:22 and *1 En.* 8:1. The biblical text says nothing explicit about weapon making, although the placement of the episode in the Cainite genealogy, which is framed by the murderous acts of Cain and Lamech, could suggest that the working of metals had violent applications. Nothing in Gen 4-9 suggests anything regarding cosmetics.

<sup>12</sup> Though only a few fragments have been found at Qumran, Gilgamesh is mentioned twice in the extant Qumranic version (4Q530 II, 2; 4Q531 17, 12). Thus, the association between Gilgamesh and the Gen 6:1-4/Watchers story existed in Palestinian Judaism by *at least* the first century B.C.E. Reeves argues that the *Book of Giants* pre-dates *Jubilees*, which he dates between 225-175 B.C.E., thus placing the *terminus post quem* for the *Book of Giants* in the third century B.C.E. (John C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichean Texts: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions* [MHUC 14; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992], 52-54).

<sup>13</sup> *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, SBV I.48 (Andrew George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* [2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 1:540-41).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal depicting the slaying of the Bull of Heaven by Gilgamesh and Enkidu (in Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992], 49, fig. 41).

he is still a human and must therefore die.<sup>15</sup> Enlil, however, promises him that he will become an important figure in the Netherworld after his death. Thus, Gilgamesh, like the children of the בני האלהים, stands somewhere in between a god and a human, sharing characteristics with both.

There are at least two different traditions concerning Gilgamesh's birth. According to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, his mother was the goddess Ninsun, while his father was Lugalbanda, who was also a divinized mortal.<sup>16</sup> This may explain why Gilgamesh is called two-thirds god, rather than half-god, which would have been the case if his mother were a goddess and his father an ordinary human. However, a second tradition comes from the Sumerian King List, where Gilgamesh is once again divinized, but in which his father is said to have been a *lillû*.<sup>17</sup> The term *lillû* refers to a type of demon associated with women and children. The female equivalent, *lilitu* (related to the Hebrew לילית), were believed to attack women and their babies shortly after childbirth,<sup>18</sup> but another variety of *lilitu*, the *ardat lili*, was a female vampire who slept with men and bore them "ghostly children." The male equivalent, the *idlu lili*, was apparently capable of impregnating women.<sup>19</sup> Presumably this is the type of *lillû* that the text has in mind as the father of Gilgamesh. Though not entirely clear, this evidence indicates that alongside the tradition that Gilgamesh was the son of the divine mortal Lugalbanda and the goddess Ninsun there stood a tradition which held that his father was a demon who impregnated a human woman. Similarly, a tradition related by Aelian indicates that there was something unusual about Gilgamesh's conception. He describes Gilgamesh's father as an "obscure man" who impregnates the daughter of Enmerkar, whom he had locked away in a tower in order to prevent the birth of a potential usurper to his throne.<sup>20</sup> Gilgamesh, therefore, offers a relatively consistent parallel to the motif of semi-divine hero born of a divine-human union, as found in Gen 6:1-4.

In addition to being a semi-divine hero-king, the traditions concerning Gilgamesh also describe him as a culture hero, a fact not often noted by scholarship.<sup>21</sup> He is said to have built the wall and several other features of Uruk, which "no later king can replicate, nor any man" (*ša šarru arku lā umaššalu*

<sup>15</sup> *The Death of Bilgames*, lines M 140-73 (Andrew R. George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation* [London: Penguin, 1999], 202-3).

<sup>16</sup> *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, SBV I.35-36 (George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1:540-41).

<sup>17</sup> Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* [AS 11; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939], 88-91).

<sup>18</sup> H. W. F. Sagg, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone, 1978), 99; "Tablet of the Ban," V.20 (R. Campbell Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* [2 vols.; New York: AMS, 1976], 2:98-99).

<sup>19</sup> Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*, 90-1, n. 131.

<sup>20</sup> Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*, 89, n. 128.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew George points to Gilgamesh's achievements in the extant literature as reflective of the "tendency to attribute the discovery of new knowledge (and the rediscovery of old) to a great hero of the distant past." He specifically compares Gilgamesh to Lugalbanda and Enmerkar, who, in the traditions associated with them, invent fire and writing, respectively (*The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 2:98). See also Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven," 227.

*amēlu mamma*).<sup>22</sup> Here the text highlights the great wisdom required for such construction by ascribing the foundations of the city wall to the wisdom of the “Seven Sages” (the *apkallū*).<sup>23</sup> The epic regards the building of the wall of Uruk and the wisdom he obtained and passed on as Gilgamesh’s greatest achievements.<sup>24</sup> He is also considered a culture hero by virtue of the antediluvian knowledge which he recovered from his meeting with the Flood hero—knowledge pertaining to the practical matters of Sumerian culture, especially cultic rites.

Gilgamesh’s status as a culture hero, as described above, stems primarily from his reception of secret knowledge from before the Flood during his meeting with Utnapishtim. The opening lines of the *Epic* celebrate his great wisdom:

He who saw the Deep, the country’s foundation, [who] knew. . . , was wise in all matters! [Gilgamesh, who] saw the Deep, the country’s foundation, [who] knew. . . was wise in all matters! [He. . .] everywhere [ . . .] and [learnt] of everything the sum of wisdom. He saw what was secret, discovered what was hidden, he brought back a tale of before the Deluge.<sup>25</sup>

The source of this wisdom is his encounter with the divinized Flood hero, as the Sumerian text *The Death of Bilgames* indicates:

Your matter—having traveled each and every road, having fetched that unique cedar down from its mountain, having smitten Huwawa in his forest, having set up monuments for future days, having founded temples of the gods, you reached Ziusudra in his abode! The rites of Sumer, forgotten there since distant days of old, the rituals and customs—it was you brought them down to the land. The rites of hand-washing and mouth-washing you put in good order, [after the] Deluge it was you made known all the *tasks* of the land. . . .<sup>26</sup>

The tradition preserved in *The Death of Bilgames* is quite significant for study of the pre-history of Gen 6:1-4/*Book of Watchers*, for in Gilgamesh the motifs of semi-divine hero and culture hero who obtains and passes on secret knowledge concerning the arts of civilization are united. The type of knowledge received by Gilgamesh, presumably from Utnapishtim, appears to have been primarily cultic in nature—“rituals and customs” and “rites of hand-washing and mouth-washing.” Thus it should be recalled that the list of matters taught by the Watchers in *1 En. 7:1* includes only cultic knowledge, and the majority of the teaching in *1 En. 8:1-3* concerns magic, divination, and astrology. The appearance of the instruction motif in the Sumerian and Akkadian traditions about

<sup>22</sup> *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, SBV I.17 (George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 1:538-39). Interestingly, the foundations of the city appear to be attributed to the Seven Sages in I.21.

<sup>23</sup> *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, SBV I.18-21 (George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 2).

<sup>24</sup> Tigay, *Evolution*, 213.

<sup>25</sup> *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, SBV I.1-8 (George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 1).

<sup>26</sup> *The Death of Bilgames*, lines M 52-61 (George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 198-99).

Gilgamesh strongly suggests that the instruction motif was indeed an original part of the Mesopotamian tradition of semi-divine hero-kings, upon which Gen 6:1-4 was likely based.<sup>27</sup>

### The Exclusion of Divine Instruction from the Primeval History

The chief difficulty to account for in the above reconstruction is the total absence of the instruction motif from Gen 6:1-4. Although there is wide agreement that the present form of the myth is fragmentary, there is no textual evidence for a significantly different form of the text than that preserved in the MT. Nevertheless, when one considers Gen 1-11 as a whole in comparison with ancient Near Eastern myths concerning the primeval era and the later apocalyptic traditions, a clear pattern of the biblical text shifting the origins of civilization from the divine sphere to the human sphere emerges. This shift may explain the absence of the instruction motif from Gen 6:1-4.

In Mesopotamian myths, civilization originates via the actions of the gods on some level. In a number of texts, civilization appears as a “gift” which is bestowed directly by the gods upon humanity or even upon the earth prior to humans.<sup>28</sup> Batto understands the Sumerian literature as presenting the advancement of early humans from an animal-like state to a “civilized” state as the gift of the gods to humanity.<sup>29</sup>

Elsewhere, the origin of civilization is attributed to the instruction of the *apkallū*, a group of (usually) seven semi-divine beings sent by Ea to instruct antediluvian humans in the arts of civilization. They appear in an apotropaic incantation text in the *Bīt Mēseri* series, in which they are described as “the seven brilliant apkallu’s, *purādu*-fish of the sea, [sev]en apkallu’s ‘grown’ in the river, who insure the correct functioning of the plans of heaven and earth.”<sup>30</sup> According to Berossus, they taught the people of Sumer “writing, science, and technology of all types, the foundation of cities, the building of temples, jurisprudence and geometry,” as well as such necessities as agriculture.<sup>31</sup> Berossus’ description of the *apkallū* accords well with both the *Bīt Mēseri* text and the

<sup>27</sup> Regarding the basis of the גברית of Gen 6:1-4 in the Mesopotamian hero-kings tradition, see Kraeling, “Significance,” 200-1.

<sup>28</sup> Examples of this tradition include the Sumerian creation myths “The Song of the Hoe” (COS 1.157), “Cattle and Grain,” (see Samuel N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.* [rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961], 72-73), and “Inanna and Enki,” (COS 1.161; also Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods* [trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc Van De Mieroop; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], 238-39).

<sup>29</sup> Bernard Batto, “Creation Theology in Genesis,” in *Creation in the Biblical Traditions* (ed. Richard J. Clifford and John J. Collins; CBQMS 24; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1992), 18-22.

<sup>30</sup> See Erica Reiner, “The Etiological Myth of the Seven Sages,” *Or* 30 (1961): 1-11.

<sup>31</sup> Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 247.

Seleucid era “Sage List” from Uruk, which pairs the *apkallū* with the antediluvian kings whom they purportedly advised.<sup>32</sup>

When one compares the portrayal of the rise of civilization in Gen 1-11 with the above traditions from Mesopotamia, as well as with the later apocalyptic traditions in *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, etc., the stark absence of the divine mediation of civilization is readily apparent. As Westermann notes, what is remarkable about the rise of civilization in Gen 1-11 is that it is *human* achievement, as opposed to divine bestowal.<sup>33</sup> Even the culture heroes of the Cainite Genealogy—Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain—although often regarded as having originally been divine or semi-divine figures in an earlier version of the tradition, cannot be held as evidence of divine mediation in Gen 1-11, since in its present form the text gives no indication that they were divine or received their knowledge from divine figures.<sup>34</sup> Assuming that these figures actually were considered divine in an earlier myth, it may well be that the same theological motives which led to the demythologization of the Cainite genealogy also resulted in the exclusion of divine instruction from Gen 6:1-4.

In his seminal work, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History*, Paolo Sacchi makes the following observations regarding the Hebrew Bible’s understanding of the origin of evil:

[I]f there is evil in the world, and death is not an evil, this is willed exclusively by human beings provoking the punishment-reaction from God. Sketching this understanding in modern terms, we might say that for the ancient Hebrew a) metaphysical evil did not present a problem, b) moral evil depended on human beings, and c) physical evil depended on God inasmuch as God intervened to punish moral evil.<sup>35</sup>

It is Sacchi’s middle point which is of the greatest importance here. By assigning the origin of civilization to humans, Gen 1-11 also assigns blame for the evils which accompany civilization to humans, rather than to divine beings or to God. Gen 1-11 lacks a demonology comparable to that of late Second Temple apocalypticism, in which evil is primarily the result of the influence of evil spirits.<sup>36</sup> Yet the continuity of the apocalyptic tradition of the divine origin of civilization (as well as evil) with the much older Mesopotamian mythological tradition suggests that the apocalyptic view is not a new innovation in this regard, but rather a return to an older, mythological worldview.<sup>37</sup> Here, once

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Uruk Sage List, see Alan Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel* [SAAS 19; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008], 106-20.

<sup>33</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 60-61.

<sup>34</sup> For the view that the Cainite genealogy was originally a theogony, see Gunkel, *Genesis*, 50.

<sup>35</sup> Paolo Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History* (trans. William J. Short, OFM; JSPSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 74.

<sup>36</sup> See Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1-4 in Early Jewish Literature* (WUNT 2/198; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Herman Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (trans. K. William Whitney Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); also Stephen L. Cook, “Mythological Discourse in Ezekiel

again, Sacchi is instructive: The complete story of what Genesis summarizes is found in the first part of the *Book of Watchers*, which is nothing else than a fragment of an ancient *Book of Noah*, taken over by the author of the *Watchers*, as a basis for his metaphysics, his philosophy of evil.<sup>38</sup> Sacchi understands the difference between the more sober worldview of Gen 1-11 and the mythological/apocalyptic worldview not as primarily a matter of diachronic development, but of divergent traditions in pre-exilic Israel. As the work of a Priestly redactor in the exile, Gen 1-11 reflects the northern ideology, theology, and worldview embodied in D and in P.<sup>39</sup> The northern perspective was carried into the exile by the Judahite ruling elite, where it eventually became the normative Jewish theology which was carried back to Palestine by returning exiles under Ezra and Nehemiah. The apocalyptic tradition reflects the worldview of the southern kingdom and those in the south who did not go into exile, who were subsequently marginalized by the returning exiles in the fifth century.<sup>40</sup> The southern, mythological/apocalyptic worldview would then be represented by the J tradition in the Pentateuch, at least insofar as it has escaped the hand of the Priestly editor. As a part of the J tradition, Gen 6:1-4 would likely have conformed to this worldview in which civilization/evil originated from the divine sphere, the same worldview which appears in *1 Enoch*.<sup>41</sup> The instruction motif would then have been edited out by the Priestly redactor of Gen 1-11, but *1 Enoch*, as a part of the mythological, southern tradition which continued on into the Second Temple period in the form of apocalyptic, would have preserved the original form of the myth, although no doubt with significant additions, expansions, and elaborations due to its new, Hellenistic context.<sup>42</sup>

### Conclusion

Based upon the presence of the non-biblical Enochic motif of divine instruction in the traditions concerning Gilgamesh, it plausible to conclude that the motifs of semi-divine hero and culture hero had been united in the tradition upon which Gen 6:1-4 was based, and that the writer of *1 Enoch* had access to this tradition. While the originality of the culture hero/divine instruction motif to the

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and Daniel and the Rise of Apocalypticism in Israel," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships* (ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak; JSPSup 46; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 85-106.

<sup>38</sup> Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 83.

<sup>39</sup> Here it may be helpful to note that angelic beings do not appear in any Pentateuchal texts assigned to either D or P.

<sup>40</sup> Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 72-88. In striking contrast to the negative view of the non-exiled Judahites found in post-exilic biblical texts such as Ezra and Nehemiah, Barker notes the perspective of *1 Enoch* that "those who returned from the exile were impure and apostate" (*The Older Testament*, 17). This would seem to confirm Sacchi's correlation of the mythological/apocalyptic worldview found in *1 Enoch* and similar texts with the southern tradition which was preserved by those who did not go into exile.

<sup>41</sup> See, again, Barker, *The Older Testament*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> On the re-emergence of the suppressed mythological/apocalyptic worldview as a visible element in post-exilic Judaism in the Hellenistic period, see Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (trans. S. Rudman; Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 46. See also Barker, *The Older Testament*, 22-23.

ancient Near Eastern source tradition of Gen 6:1-4 does not necessarily indicate that it was ever a part of the written narrative preserved in the biblical text, the present fragmentary condition of the text invites speculation as to what may have originally filled the gaps in the narrative. Given the great antiquity of the divine instruction motif in *1 Enoch*, a hypothetical reconstruction of at least part of this tradition may be offered. Turning to the text of *1 En.* 6-11, one notes that in a number of places, particularly in chs. 6-7, the text parallels Gen 6:1-4 in what appears to be a paraphrasing fashion, with supplementary material added into the text. While much of this supplementary material is properly understood as midrashic expansion of the Genesis text, some of it may preserve remnants of the original tradition. Based upon the evidence I have adduced from the Gilgamesh tradition, this appears to be the case with regard to the motif of divine instruction (*1 En.* 7:1b; 8:1-3).

The presence of the motif of divine instruction in the Gilgamesh tradition suggests that it may have been present in the broader tradition upon which Gen 6:1-4 is based. In short, the best parallels to Gen 6:1-4 in extant ancient Near Eastern literature also parallel *1 Enoch* with regard to the motif of divine instruction. Although none of these texts may have served as direct sources for either Gen 6:1-4 or *1 Enoch*, they attest to the merging of traditions of semi-divine warriors born from divine-human unions, of whom Gen 6:1-4 provides an etiology, with the traditions of primeval culture heroes who obtained secret knowledge of the arts of civilization, especially cultic and magical knowledge, in ancient Near Eastern literature prior to the composition of *1 Enoch*, and at least in the case of Gilgamesh, prior to the composition of Gen 6:1-4 as well.

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