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John C. Reeves and Annette Yoshiko Reed

Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Volume I: Sources from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. vi + 403. £120.

ISBN: 978-0-19-871841-3

This learned, rich and accessible book written by two experts in the field of Enochic literature is a great example of the ongoing attention for the relationship between sources and their reception. The book is the first volume of a series of two that intends to collect, compare and analyze “post-biblical Jewish, Christian and Muslim literary sources” (v) that refer to or show acquaintance with texts attributed to Enoch or one of his avatars, and are dated between the 3rd century BCE and the 14th century CE. While this first volume deals with “textual traditions about the narratological career of the character Enoch” (v), volume two will deal with “sources which arguably display a knowledge of the contents of extant Enochic literature ...” (vi). Both the project and this volume are ambitious and praiseworthy. Not only do they fill a great need for scholars of Enochic literature, also those interested in the afterlife of texts as well as those studying the intertextual and intercultural relationships between various religious communities will be happy to have this book at their disposal.

The sources that Reeves and Reed have included are diverse. Texts from early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, but above all medieval Jewish, Hekhalot, Manichean, “Gnostic,” Coptic, Syriac and Arabic (mainly Islamic, but not only) material have been collected. In all cases the authors present the readers not only with translations, but also with primary texts and references to editions, in this way providing not only a great overview, but also a good start for further research. Although it did not turn out to be possible to include all possible references (unfortunately, material in Ge’ez, Amharic, Slavonic and Armenian could not be included (16)), the number of sources found in this book remains impressive. The book’s set-up is to also be applauded. The traditions have been categorized thematically, thus providing the comparative scholar with a rich amount of material to work with, as well as showing how different strands of traditions deal with a similar motif. While the chapters are written to be consulted independently, short references (in the running text or the notes) refer the reader to other parts of the book that reflect on the same or similar passage(s). This allows for easy reading, while providing the necessary cross-references. The notes are highly informative and nearly comprehensive. Since the book is mainly intended as a source book, the analysis of the texts has been kept to a minimum. One mainly finds some context, alleged connections to other similar traditions as well as (primarily in the notes) interaction with and discussion of scholarly literature. While this approach is understandable,

I sometimes missed some basic introduction to lesser known sources. A consistent set-up, in which all sources would have been complemented by a short note containing the alleged date of the passage as well as the context in which it was written, would have been helpful.

Two (more substantial) remarks could be made in relation to the absence of a clear (explicit) methodology of this ambitious and important project. Although the preface and introduction contain a short outline of some of the works that were consulted to find the sources presented in the book (7), as well as a note on which sources could unfortunately not be included (16), one reads nothing about how the authors found or picked their sources (probably a combination of secondary literature and their own knowledge). Even more importantly it is unclear which information was actually used as the basis for the alleged “narratological career of the character Enoch” (v). In other words: where did the authors take their start when searching for later references, cognomens, roles and epithets of Enoch? Being well aware that the search for a clear definition of the “Enochic Library” is debated and underlies the project as such, the authors probably had some definition that helped them decide what to search for in the rich material they covered. Was it the text of Gen 5:21-24, the whole of 1 Enoch, or the oldest parts of it? Since the references in the book do not include 1 Enoch and the knowledge thereof is assumed, that work might have been their starting point. Alternatively, the authors might have started from a reference to the name Enoch or one of his avatars. Unfortunately, this is not made explicit. A short exposition dealing with both these issues would have been expected.

Aside from these methodological remarks, my overall impression of this book is very positive as will be clear from the following discussion of the chapters. Chapter 1 deals with epithets and cognomens given to Enoch. Here the authors not only present the reader with a great collection of passages that refer to well-known epithets of Enoch (“the seventh” or “the righteous one”), but also to some less-known characteristics of this antediluvian, including passages in which Enoch is depicted as one with a large stomach (51) and, moreover, as the messiah (48-50). Chapter 2 discusses passages that speak of Enoch as a “culture hero” to whom was revealed knowledge about (or who discovered) the luminaries, the zodiac, writing and tailoring as well as medicine and philosophy. Here the authors set out a clearer methodology, taking their start in Jub. 4:17-24 which they use as Enoch’s “curriculum vitae” (53-56). Chapter 3 deals with the roles that were given to Enoch in society, including Enoch as teacher, priest, ruler, builder (including Enoch as builder of the Ka’aba), but also as a hermit. Although the author’s designations of Enoch as a sorcerer’s apprentice and funeral director (166-69) overstate what the texts present, these titles do put a laugh on one’s face and help to remember the material.

Chapter 4 deals with Enoch's encounter with the angels. Not only the commonly cited passages are included, but also a collection of texts that describe Enoch's friendship with the angel of the sun (185-87), his interaction with the angel of death (188-200), and a lovely excursus discussing the parallels between Islamic sources on Idrīs and Medieval Jewish sources relating to the "Tale of R. Joshua ben Levi" (200-209).

Chapter 5 deals with Enoch's escape from death. Here again, the book shows its great value. It contains several references to Enoch's escape that are not commonly referenced in the literature. Regrettably, the chapter does, however, also contain some flaws, of which I will mention the four most pregnant ones. First, the material is organized in various categories, e.g. "Enoch is taken alive to Gan Eden or the (eastern) Ends of the Earth" and "Enoch is taken alive to Heaven/Paradise." Although these subdivisions are valuable, a more open category such as "Enoch is taken to an unspecified location" could have been added. Such a category could have avoided some over-interpretation of texts as well as presented the difference between references to a clear location and more debatable ones. Second, some interesting passages are missing from the first category (Enoch taken to Eden and to the Ends of the Earth). I think of some passages which place Enoch explicitly at the ends of the earth and that have been studied recently by Matthew Goff;¹ examples include passages from the Qumran Book of Giants, the Aramaic Astronomical Book and 1QapGen 2:23 (all probably well-known to the authors, the last being even mentioned on p. 301-2). Third, some texts in the second category (Enoch taken to Heaven/Paradise) probably assume that Enoch is in heaven, but do not explicitly state this in the given citation. For example, the short reference from *Chronicon Paschale* (223) as well as the passage from *Bahya b. Asher* (235-36) would have benefitted from some introduction that clarifies this. Fourth, the second category (Enoch taken to Heaven/Paradise) contains several texts of which it is debatable that they belong here, or to which some commentary proposing another option should have been added. I will mention three examples: 1). Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 4.16.2 is placed in this second category (221). However, in section 5.5.1 of the same work, Irenaeus relates the translation of Enoch to the Garden of Eden. This passage, which is not mentioned in the book, was probably overlooked and might lead to an alternative interpretation of the one in section 4.16.2. 2) *Pistis Sophia* 2.99 (221-222) is mentioned both in the second and in the first category (although in a note, p. 215 n. 28). Since the passage does not clearly state that Enoch is in heaven, further discussion

1 M. Goff, "Where's Enoch? The Mythic Geography of the Qumran Book of Giants," In *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman and Eibert Tigheelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 472-88.

or contextualization would have been welcome. 3) The same holds for a passage from Ephrem Syrus' *Stanzas against Bardaisan* (222). While this passage is placed in the second category, another text attributed to Ephrem is placed in the first (212). Since it could be the case that Ephrem held two views, further discussion would have been helpful.

Chapter 6 deals with Enoch's identification with and assimilation to heroes, gods and ancestors such as Metatron, Hermes/Thoth, Idris, Hōshang, Adam and the flood-hero. Besides collecting texts, this chapter also usefully reflects on how and when these identifications might have taken place. Regarding the connections made between Adam and Enoch in some sources (297-300), the authors, remarkably, label these connections as "forged" and "imagined syzygy" (297). This is surprising in view of the fact that, in biblical studies, several scholars have noted a connection between Adam and Enoch on the basis of the shared motif of Gottesnähe (so E. Blum), the use of the hitpa'el of *halakh* (Gen 3:8 and 5:24) and the shared motif of immortality. Finally, this chapter contains a brief excursus on passages that refer to Enoch as the "lesser YHW(H)." These demonstrate that Peter Schäfer's view that this title is unique to 3 Enoch,² should be refuted (265-70). Chapter 7 lists passages that refer to Enoch as the author or scribe of literary works as well as references that allude to passages from Enochic literature, with brief summaries of scholarly opinions as to the possible source-texts. The book concludes with a bibliography and several extensive indices that are of great value to scholars.

In sum, although I addressed some issues that ask further reflection for volume 2 of this project, this book already shows that the project is promising and valuable. The rich and extensively noted volume 1 by Reeves and Reed does not only collect a vast amount of material from several periods and places, but also shows how the character of Enoch was an inspiration to religious people belonging to various communities. Finally, the book brings joy in the life of its readers by the inclusion of some marvelous narratives and citations. It is a must-have for everyone interested in the figure of Enoch and Enochic literature as well as a commendable read to those interested in the Second Temple Period, esotericism, apocalypticism and the relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims and their religious traditions from the ancient World until the Middle Ages.

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² As set out in Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).