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Review of *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection*

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Book Review

Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection (ed. G. Boccaccini; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

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This remarkable volume signals a salient landmark in Enochic scholarship. Its thematic and methodological significance ought to be appreciated in the light of the broader scholarly project, the Enoch Seminar—a biennial international conference on Enochic literature launched in 2000 by the Department of Near Eastern Studies of the University of Michigan, in collaboration with the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and the Michigan Center for Early Christian Studies.

The current volume is part of this ongoing project and examines materials of the second meeting of the Seminar on “Enoch and Qumran Origins” held in Venice, Italy, 1-4 July 2003. The publication builds on the achievements of ongoing scholarly dialogue initiated by the first gathering on “The Origins of Enochic Judaism” in Sesto Fiorentino, Florence, Italy, 19-23 June 2001, and can also be seen as a bridge for the third meeting on “The Parables of Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man” that was held at the Monastery of Camaldoli,

Arezzo, Italy, 6-10 June 2005, whose proceedings are also forthcoming in Eerdmans.

These recent meetings of eminent international scholars in the beautiful land of Italy exemplify the best of scholarly gatherings on Jewish esoteric traditions in this geographical area since the time of the Italian Kabbalists of the Renaissance. The motif of revival does not seem inappropriate since the Enoch Seminar's participants themselves view their project as "the engine of the contemporary renaissance of Enochic studies" (8). In the words of Gabriele Boccaccini, the Seminar's Director, the project is "the laboratory for an interdisciplinary experiment that has no parallel in any other field" (11).

The volume is the product of international dialogue among forty-seven specialists from eleven countries representing various scholarly interests, methodologies, and traditions. The dialogical structure of the book reflects the unique protocol of the Seminar's meetings that stands behind the publication. The contributors are asked to prepare and distribute their papers in advance of the Seminar's sessions to assure substantive, in-depth discussion of the material. Following the format of the Seminar, the volume has five parts organized around five major topics and focusing on the work of the five specialists who serve as paper respondents. Each part of the book thus exhibits an internal dialogical structure in which the cluster of scholarly presentations are brought together by a common theme or work and then synthesized through the response of a highly esteemed scholarly authority. This organizational choice is very efficient since the responses for each section serve as important nexuses of the discussions that help to establish a hierarchy of contributions and influences and facilitate highly intensive scholarly dialogue. Each part of the book is then concluded with a cumulative reference bibliography. The introductory chapter by Gabriele Boccaccini and the conclusion by James Charlesworth contribute to the dialogical thrust of the volume by providing preparatory historical and methodological explanations and the summary of the main achievements and remaining questions.

The earlier parts of the book provide important historical and textual background for the latter parts. This organization greatly assists readers in their progress through the volume. Drawing on the work of John Collins and James VanderKam, the first two sections of

the volume provide textual support by exploring the influence of Enochic tradition on two documents that played a central role in the Qumran origins, the Book of Daniel and the Book of Jubilees. The third part concentrates on a specimen of Enochic literature that appears to be closer to the time of Qumran origins, the Apocalypse of Weeks, by focusing on George Nickelsburg's contribution to understanding this enigmatic text. The last two sections of the volume deal with two recent hypotheses on Qumran origins that envision Qumran as an outgrowth of the Enochic apocalyptic tradition, Florentino García Martínez's Groningen Hypothesis and Gabriele Boccaccini's Enochic-Essene Hypothesis.

The discussion reflected in the volume seems to be shaped by two main questions: "How do the Dead sea Scrolls affect our knowledge of Enoch literature?" and "How does Enoch literature affect our understanding of Qumran?" The volume tries to explore how the Enochic books, some fragments of which were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, help to understand the origins and development of the Qumran community.

The volume shows a growing appreciation for the contribution of the Italian school represented by the disciples of Paolo Sacchi, the school whose legacy is now becoming critically adopted into the frameworks of other schools. Sacchi's works develop an important methodological vision of the intellectual history of the Enochic movement as a distinctive apocalyptic party within the broader context of second Temple Judaism and ancient Jewish apocalypticism. As the volume shows, this vision is now being tested, modified, and appropriated by a significant number of influential scholars from Israel, Europe and North America.

This volume also points to an underlying paradigm shift in Enochic studies, a transition from the focused examination of Enochic texts themselves to the exploration of the intellectual and sociological characteristics of the groups behind the texts. This transition has in many respects been stimulated by the Italian school and especially by the works of Gabriele Boccaccini. In his introduction to the volume, Boccaccini sums up the key features of this approach to the study of Enochic materials: the texts are to be seen as a core of a distinctive movement of thought in Second Temple Judaism whose boundaries overlap without coinciding with the broader complex of oral and literary traditions associated with Enoch's figure or with the broader

corpus of Jewish apocalyptic writings. The important feature of the volume is its attempt to challenge the notion of "a monolithic Judaism" prior to 70 C.E., underlining the polyphony of thought and practice found in the Second Temple period and accentuating the voice of the Books of Enoch.

Dialogue with Boccaccini's ideas dominates the theological landscape of this book, subtly shaping discussion even in the articles that do not have direct mention of his works. Boccaccini's work serves as a powerful catalyst that re-draws the lines of inquiry about the social settings of the Enochic movement, apparent even in negative responses to his ideas. Gabriele Boccaccini might indeed, as one contributor notes, have "taken on the challenge of navigating the path to a new, more integrated history of Second Temple Judaism, so generously offering us inventive ideas, thoughtful analyses, and timely correctives which resonate both within and beyond the study of ancient Judaism." (344)

Undoubtedly, the volume offers a significant methodological contribution. Among its many lessons is the affirmation of a perspective challenging anachronistic notions of canon in the Second Temple period. The volume helps to recognize that "the canon, which often shaped the study of Second Temple Judaism anachronistically, is no longer the defining force it was in past." Several contributors note that Boccaccini's call for freeing Second Temple documents "from the cages of their anachronistic corpora" provides an important methodological guide that should be also applied in the study of materials gathered in *1 Enoch* and later Enochic compositions. The Enochic texts should too be released from the confines of their own corpora and read "in terms of their own integrity, and not according to the category in which they may be found." (446).

In conclusion, it should be noted that the methodological significance of the book transcends the field of Enochic studies. The volume's findings and insights can be engaged in the whole field of Second Temple studies and even beyond. As James Charlesworth observed at the very end of the volume, "appreciation of the world of thought and social movement represented by the books of Enoch signifies an advance not only in scholarship but also in a more pellucid perception of the origins of Western civilization." (454).

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