

Introduction

Scholars of Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity have long identified the presence of antagonistic imagery in early Jewish and Christian apocalypses. One of the traditional avenues for the exploration of such symbolism has been research on the so-called *Chaoskampf* motif, which stems from the groundbreaking study of Hermann Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*.¹ Although some of Gunkel's positions later came under criticism,² his intuitions about antagonistic imagery in ancient Near Eastern and Jewish materials have proven their lasting methodological value. Reflecting on Gunkel's legacy, John Collins notes that "since the discoveries at Ugarit, Gunkel's theory of Babylonian influence has been seen to be exaggerated, but his insight into the importance of the conflict motif has been vindicated."³ Indeed, with Peter Machinist we must say that scholarly recognition of its importance is "due to the impetus and commanding analysis offered by Gunkel's volume."⁴

Gunkel's research into patterns of primordial conflict was later appropriated and developed in a large number of further contributions to the field, all of which helped to elucidate various aspects of such imagery. In the North American academic environment, one of the most influential adaptations of Gunkel's methodology for the study of early Jewish and Christian apocalypses is the concept of "combat myth," advanced by Adela Yarbro Collins in her seminal study *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*.⁵ Analyzing the antagonistic patterns found in Revelation, Yarbro Collins argued that "much of its imagery has strong affinities with a mythic pattern of combat which was widespread in the ancient Near East and the classical world."⁶ This pattern is characterized by "a struggle between two divine beings and their allies for universal kingship. One of the combatants is usually a monster, very often a dragon. This monster represents chaos and sterility, while his opponent is associated with order and fertility. Thus, their conflict is a cosmic battle whose outcome will constitute or abolish order in society and fertility in nature."⁷ According to Yarbro Collins, "in

the first century CE, this basic pattern was current in a variety of forms; nearly every major ethnic tradition had one or more versions of its own.”⁸

Experts such as Frank Moore Cross have drawn attention to the fact that in the ancient Near Eastern *Chaoskampf* traditions, the motif of the Divine Warrior’s battle against chaos often coincides with his theophany, when he “returns to take up kingship among the gods, and is enthroned on his mountain.”⁹ In these instances, the primordial battle itself conveys the theophany, often hinted through the epiphanic nature of the Divine Warrior’s weapons.¹⁰ In this antagonistic pattern, even the theophanic splendor of the Divine Warrior becomes “not just an attendant circumstance to the battle against chaos, but rather a weapon within that warfare.”¹¹ This connection between cosmic conflict and the Divine Warrior’s apotheosis was perpetuated in a variety of biblical accounts,¹² including Daniel 7. John Collins points out that “the old Canaanite type myth of the conflict with the forces of chaos emerges clearly in Daniel 7. . . . The adversaries in Daniel 7 are four beasts who rise from the sea. The analogy with the sea monster of Canaanite myth is obvious. . . . The beasts are symbols of chaos and the chaos is reduced to order by the elevation to the kingship of one like a son of man.”¹³ In this scene the theophany of two divine figures, in the forms of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man, is juxtaposed with both the epiphany and demotion of the four-fold antagonistic figure.¹⁴ Furthermore, already in Daniel 7 the antagonist strives to imitate the anthropomorphic features of the protagonist by assuming a human posture, which in the Danielic account is envisioned as a divine attribute.¹⁵ This mirroring of attributes between heroes and antiheroes, discernable already in *Chaoskampf* traditions, will eventually become one of the chief conceptual features in Jewish and Christian visionary accounts.



Although the link between patterns of primordial conflict and divine theophanies found in Jewish lore has been acknowledged and explored in previous studies,¹⁶ the significance of such symbolic constellations for another type of epiphany, the adept’s apotheosis, has not received proper attention. Yet in Jewish and Christian visionary accounts, the ancient role of the Divine Warrior¹⁷ who fights against the demonic forces was often taken by a human adept. As a result of his encounter with the otherworldly antagonists, this human hero would be exalted and glorified.¹⁸ In early Jewish and Christian mediatorial lore, therefore, the Divine Warrior motif enters its novel afterlife, now refashioned through the stories of biblical exemplars. Like in ancient Near Eastern traditions, the hero’s conflict with the antagonist became a prerequisite for his final apotheosis. Moreover, like the monsters of ancient Near Eastern accounts who undergo their own metamorphoses during battles against the divine warriors, the antagonists

of the apocalyptic stories also change from their original forms and conditions. The antagonistic tension, present in the apocalyptic stories, plays a crucial part both in the exaltation of the protagonist and in the demotion of his opponent.

The aim of this volume is to explore the significance of such antagonistic interactions for the transformations of the hero and antihero in early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic accounts. Our study will pay special attention to the meaning of the conflict in the adept's ascent and transformation, as well as to the formative value of such interplay between antagonism and apotheosis for Jewish and Christian martyrological accounts.

Ancient Near Eastern *Chaoskampf* traditions closely connect protology with eschatology. Similarly, Jewish and Christian apocalyptic accounts often tell of heroes who undergo an eschatological reversal that returns them to the glory lost by the protoplasts in the Garden of Eden. As in their ancient Near Eastern counterparts, such transitions are dominated by various antagonistic situations in which personified adversaries attempt to interfere with the protagonist's progress. This attempted interference inadvertently serves to assist and facilitate the seer's transformation. This is a curious reversal of the protological conflict wherein the antagonist who initially participated in the corruption of humankind is also present in the final battle.

Like in the initial protological settings where the enemies of humankind, represented by the fallen angels, Satan, or the Serpent, play a crucial part in the fall of humankind, here, in the final moment, such a conflict is reiterated and finally resolved for humankind's benefit. In some ways the re-play can be seen as a cosmic psychodrama, the whole purpose of which is to heal and restore humanity to its original prelapsarian condition in the last days. Indeed, various antagonistic figures are predestined to play a decisive role at the adept's final metamorphosis. Some of them, such as Satan of the *Primary Adam Books* and Azazel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, are portrayed as the deity's former favorites, whose glorious status and luminous garments are inherited by the deity's new, human, favorites. Indeed, in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic accounts, exalted adepts often paradoxically emulate some emblematic features of their formerly exalted antagonists, thus signaling their final defeat, demotion, and the transference of their lofty attributes to the new favorites of the deity. This volume will explore these eschatological transfers. Not only the particular features, but the entire way of life and former habitats of antiheroes are radically refashioned and deconstructed at the seer's apotheosis as his progression towards the heavenly realm inversely mirrors the antagonist's exile.

These trajectories of the hero's elevation and the antihero's demotion frequently cross. In this peculiar antagonistic framework, which envisions the seer's ascent and apotheosis as a result of the ultimate test of the adept's loyalty and endurance in faith, adversaries are predestined to play a very special role in

the hero's metamorphosis. They are responsible for bringing a crucial, inimical element to the story of the seer or martyr through their nefarious plots. These plots are attempts to intimidate and discourage the hero and impede his progress to immortality. Such early Jewish patterns of the antagonistic interaction, which impede, yet also ironically assist, the adept's progress to his final apotheosis, will play a crucial role in Jewish and Christian martyrological accounts in which human and otherworldly figures, in the form of kings, monsters, and spectators, are envisioned as the protagonist's adversaries.

Furthermore, paralleling the adept's exaltation, the adversary's demotion is also understood as a crisis and a transformation. This tendency is present already in the ancient Near Eastern *Chaoskampf* traditions. In these traditions, the primordial monsters undergo the change of their original form as the result of battles with the divine warriors. Such a metamorphosis of the antagonists can be seen as a negative reaffirmation of the adept's apotheosis. During their own trials, each fallen angel and monster will ultimately encounter their own nemesis, often in the form of an archangel, whose mission will be to fulfill God's judgment toward these agents of chaos and destruction. In these gory routines, the figure of the punishing angel usually appears. One can see this element in the so-called apocalyptic scapegoat traditions, where the angelic handlers will strip garments of light from the former favorites of the deity before forwarding them into their subterranean prisons.

Another important feature pertains to the adept's inner condition, which itself is sometimes portrayed as the seat of the primordial conflict. In such traditions, various otherworldly antagonists, like Satan, Mastema, Belial, and Azazel, are able to act directly through the inclinations of the human heart, the locus of the eschatological battle.



The first chapter of this volume, "Between God and Satan: Inauguration into the Divine Image in Early Jewish and Christian Accounts," explores the antagonistic context of the protagonist's metamorphosis by concentrating on the ritual of Adam's induction into the office of the *Imago Dei*. According to a story found in several versions of the *Primary Adam Books*, immediately after Adam's creation, the archangel Michael presented the new human to the angels and asked them to bow down before Adam. Some angels acquiesced to this proposal, yet others, including Satan, rejected it. In consequence of his refusal, Satan was demoted from his exalted status.

Some peculiar features of this protological initiation were later adopted in various Jewish and Christian materials. In these stories many biblical exemplars,

such as Enoch, Jacob, and Moses, were predestined to regain the image of God in the eschatological time. As in the *Primary Adam Books*, where Satan plays a pivotal role during the adept's inauguration, antagonistic figures are also frequently present in these eschatological accounts. And like in the Adamic traditions where Satan's rebellion constitutes an important element of the ritual, in the later versions of the story, the adepts' metamorphoses unfold in the midst of conflicts with various antagonistic figures who are often represented by hostile angels, who play an important role at the adept's inauguration.

This chapter explores the tradition of the so-called angelic opposition, which became a crucial element in several versions of the *Imago Dei* ritual attested in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, *2 Enoch*, and the *Ladder of Jacob*. In the polemical framework of the inauguration ritual, exaltation and demotion are closely intertwined as the antagonist's demotion became the prerequisite for the hero's exaltation. This chapter explores these peculiar details of Adam's inauguration ritual and their impact on later Jewish and Christian accounts in which Enoch, Jacob, Moses, the Son of Man, and Jesus became inducted into the office of the image of God.

The second chapter of the volume, "Furnace that Kills and Furnace that Gives Life: Fiery Trials and Martyrdom in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," continues the exploration of the antagonist's role at the adept's apotheosis by turning to the tradition of Abraham's fiery trials. This tradition received unprecedented attention in Jewish lore at various stages of its development. In different sources, Abraham is depicted as one who fights against idolatry and one whose faith is repeatedly tested in flames induced by opponents ranging from earthly rulers to otherworldly villains. This chapter pays special attention to the developments found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the fallen angel Azazel is portrayed as an antagonistic force at the adept's ascent to heaven. An important feature of this account is that the antagonist's demotion becomes the prerequisite for the hero's metamorphosis, as the text clearly states, that the fallen angel's garment will be given to the patriarch, while Abraham's iniquities will be bestowed on Azazel.

This study demonstrates that the tradition of the fiery trial, rooted in the story of Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael in the Book of Daniel, had a rich and multifaceted afterlife in both Jewish and Christian martyrological accounts. In the course of such fiery tests, the adepts often experienced ascent and theophany. The study argues that Abraham's fiery trials in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*—trials that coincide with his ascent and theophany—might also reveal a similar martyrological dimension. Furthermore, these early Abrahamic accounts influenced the formation of early Christian martyrologia insofar as antagonists in the form of earthly or otherworldly characters are present during the trials of Christian martyrs.

The third chapter of the volume, “Leviathan’s Knot: The High Priest’s Sash as a Cosmological Symbol,” continues the investigation of the antagonist’s role in the transformation of the hero who is envisioned as the high priest. In Jewish sacerdotal traditions, the high priest was often understood as a paradigm of eschatological transformation. This cultic figure was envisioned as the new Adam entering the primordial Garden on Yom Kippur, symbolized by the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem Temple. In the earliest descriptions of this pivotal cultic event, the procession of the high priest was juxtaposed with the inverse movement of the antagonist, represented by the infamous goat for Azazel. In such inverse parallel settings, two sacerdotal agents were envisioned as sacerdotal mirrors of each other. This reflects some ancient Near Eastern traditions where the *Chaoskampf* motif was placed in sacerdotal settings. Two figures, who reflect each other, also share similar attributes, especially discernable in their cultic features. This study attempts to explore this parallelism between the attributes of the high priest and the antagonist by focusing on the high priest’s sash, which is portrayed in Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* 3.154–156 with serpentine symbolism. In light of the sash’s associations with a serpent’s skin, some scholars have suggested that this sacerdotal item might symbolize the defeated Leviathan. In order to better understand the meaning of the priestly sash, this study examines its precise function in the broader context of Josephus’s description of the high priest’s accoutrement found in the third book of his *Jewish Antiquities*. It suggests that in Josephus’s account the temple was represented by the high priest and his sacerdotal garments. In such a cultic reinterpretation, the serpentine sash was understood as the courtyard of the microcosmic sanctuary, cosmologically corresponding to the primordial sea and its ruler—Leviathan.

Our study helps to elucidate two important aspects: first, connections between the Second Temple Jewish patterns of primordial conflict and their ancient Mesopotamian mythological roots; second, connections between Josephus’s account and other pseudepigraphical testimonies about the Leviathan found in *1 Enoch*, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Ladder of Jacob*. Despite the hints in some biblical texts of an early victory of God over the sea monster, these pseudepigraphical accounts also reveal a current or upcoming conflict between Leviathan and a second character who was usually exalted as a result of this battle.¹⁹ Thus, according to Debra Scoggins Ballentine, “*2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* also utilize the conflict motif within an eschatological framework to promote a secondary figure. This secondary figure is said to be endorsed by the primary deity, and he is awarded power by the primary deity. . . . The figures promoted in *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* are the ‘Messiah’; ‘Son of Man’ and ‘Elect One’; and ‘my son’ respectively.”²⁰ For our purpose it is important that some of these pseudepigraphical texts, similar to Josephus’s account, envision their heroes as priestly figures.

The fourth chapter, “Apocalyptic Scapegoat Traditions in the Book of Revelation,” continues the exploration of sacerdotal dimensions of the antagonistic conflict by drawing attention to the imagery of the eschatological scapegoat in the Book of Revelation represented by the dragon. Scholars are in agreement that the antagonistic proclivities of apocalyptic literature reached a symbolic high point in this early Christian text. The conflict reaches its crescendo in the antagonist’s story unfolded in Rev 12 and 13. As Norman Cohn rightly observes, “Chapters 12 and 13 of Revelation offer a Christian—and most impressive—version of the ancient combat myth.”²¹ As in other previously mentioned accounts, in these chapters one can detect a cultic parallelism between the protagonists and antagonists of the story. Similar to the Yom Kippur rituals attested in biblical and extrabiblical accounts, where the high priest and the scapegoat display strikingly similar attributes, here too the features of the eschatological scapegoat, embodied by the dragon, imitate traits of the heavenly high priest, represented by Christ.

Our study suggests that the portrayal of the dragon in the Book of Revelation reiterates the main features of the final moments of the scapegoat ritual, as reflected in apocalyptic, mishnaic, and patristic testimonies. These features include the following elements: the motif of the scapegoat’s removal; the motif of the handler who binds and pushes the scapegoat off the cliff; the motif of the scapegoat’s binding; the motif of sealing the abyss of the scapegoat; the motif of the temporary healing of the earth; the motif of the scapegoat’s temporary unbinding before its final demise; and, finally, the motif of the scarlet band of the scapegoat.

As in other apocalyptic reinterpretations of the scapegoat imagery found in the *Book of the Watchers* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the processions of the apocalyptic scapegoat, represented by the dragon in the Book of Revelation, encompass a two-stage development. He is first banished to the earth in chapter 12, and then to the underground realm, which is represented by the abyss in chapter 20. The two-stage progression of the antagonist’s exile resembles the two stages of the earthly scapegoat’s movements, found in later rabbinic and patristic sources: first, the scapegoat’s banishment to the wilderness, and then its descent into the abyss when the animal was pushed off the cliff.

The fifth chapter, “Azazel’s Will: Internalization of Evil in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,” investigates the internalization of the antagonistic conflict in early Jewish accounts. In these materials, antagonistic forces were embodied not only by personified adversaries in the form of Satan, Belial, and Azazel, but also by the inner conditions of human beings—their inclinations, thoughts, and emotions. Indeed, in some early Jewish accounts, the evil deeds of the famous adversaries found in Jewish lore became closely linked to the inclination of the human heart, thus connecting the outside power of evil with the inside force. Some personified antagonists of the old demonological paradigms, like Satan or Azazel, were able

to execute their evil deeds directly through the internal faculties of a person. In such a framework, the human inclination or *yetzer* becomes envisioned as an entity that is able to bridge anthropological and demonological dimensions by connecting external personalized demonic forces with human will, thoughts, and emotions. Scholars sometimes label such symbiosis as a “psychodemonic” entity. This study explores the roots and the initial development of this entity in early Enochic accounts, the *Book of Jubilees*, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Our study also demonstrates how these early Jewish materials incorporated the external (angelic) antagonists into the framework of various psychodemonic anthropologies by assigning them the role of a decisive controlling force over inner human inclinations, both good and evil. Christian traditions further perpetuate this demonological paradigm in which the external antagonists were linked with the internal human inclinations.

Of particular interest is the concept of the malevolent spirits developed in early Enochic writings. The *Book of the Watchers* advances a certain type of demonology in which the adversaries of humankind are presented as disembodied spirits who are able to function inside a human body and soul. In the *Book of the Watchers*, this conceptual move is closely connected with the Giants’ story whose hybrid anthropology, mingling the angelic and the human, opened the door for a novel psychodemonic synthesis. The importance of the evil spirits of the Giants is that they are able to bridge conventional anthropological boundaries through their ability to afflict the human body.

This chapter concludes with an analysis of the demonological developments found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, where the main antagonist of the story, the fallen angel Azazel, receives from God a mysterious “will” enabling him to control human inclinations. It argues that such bridging of the demonological and anthropological boundaries through the category of “will” establishes a new paradigm of the internalized demonology.

Finally, the sixth chapter, “Glorification through Fear in *2 Enoch*,” deals with the role of fear in the adept’s transformation. The reference to this human reaction often precedes the adept’s apotheosis in various Jewish and Christian accounts. This chapter argues that the adept’s fear is connected with the primordial trauma, experienced by the first humans during their transgression in the Garden of Eden. In the course of the adept’s transformation, this protological crisis is reiterated through the emotion of fear as he returned in his metamorphosis to the original glorious condition of the prelapsarian Adam. Some scholars argue that Jewish and Christian apocalyptic accounts represent reactions to “the experience of trauma, both individual and collective, personal and communal.”²² Yarbro Collins suggests that apocalyptic accounts allow the emotions of the audience to be purged in such a way that “their feelings of fear and pity are intensified and given objective expressions. The feelings are thus brought

to consciousness and become less threatening.²²³ In light of this, we might say that the fear of the protagonist and the audience's fear are indeed connected. This connection provides a unique opportunity for the audience's experiential appropriation of the visionary account.

This study also proposes that in some apocalyptic accounts the antagonistic context was created not only by the external antagonistic forces embodied by the personified villains and their allies, but also by inner conditions of human beings, their inclinations, thoughts, and emotions, including feelings of fear that facilitate the adepts' metamorphoses.