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Author's Note

Unless otherwise stated, all historical dates in this book have been taken from H. E. L. Mellersh, *Chronology of the Ancient World – 10,000 BC to AD 799*, Helicon, Oxford, 1976. All biblical quotations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from the Revised Version of the Authorized (King James) Bible of 1884. Any interpolations by the author within quoted texts are printed in italic within square brackets (or in roman within square brackets in longer italic extracts), to distinguish them from interpolations existing in the originals.

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One

I HAVE BEGOTTEN A STRANGE SON

*And after some days my son, Methuselah, took a wife for his son Lamech, and she became pregnant by him and bore him a son. And his body was white as snow and red as a rose; the hair of his head as white as wool and his demdema ('long curly hair') beautiful; and as for his eyes, when he opened them the whole house glowed like the sun . . . And his father, Lamech, was afraid of him and fled and went to Methuselah his father; and he said to him, 'I have begotten a strange son. He is not like an (ordinary) human being, but he looks like the children of the angels of heaven to me, his form is different, and he is not like us . . . It does not seem to me that he is of me, but of angels . . .'*²

These words form the opening lines to what must be one of the most astonishing yet chilling fragments of religious text ever written. They are the assertions of the antediluvian patriarch Enoch as he describes the sheer distress and horror that accompanied the miraculous birth of a son to his grandson, Lamech. The passage is taken from the Book of Noah, an ancient script of Hebrew origin appended to the more famous Book of Enoch, a pseudepigraphal (i.e. falsely attributed) work, considered by scholars to have been put together in stages during the first half of the second century BC.³

The predicament conveyed by these revealing lines seems manifestly clear: Lamech has recently taken the hand of a woman who has given birth to a child that bears no resemblance whatsoever to its immediate family. His appearance is entirely unlike other 'human beings', for his skin is white and ruddy, his long curly hair is white and 'beautiful', while his eyes mysteriously enable the whole house to 'glow like the sun'. From this specific appearance

Lamech can only conclude that his wife has been unfaithful, since the infant resembles 'the children of the angels' who are 'not like us'.

This seems an extraordinary conclusion on the part of Lamech, and a very strange subject for a religious scribe to invent without good reason. If it can, for a moment, be accepted that this account records an actual event in the history of human kind, then it implies that the strange appearance of this child matched the offspring of angels, and must by inference have been the product of the union between a mortal woman and a divine 'messenger', a 'heavenly intelligence' in the service of God himself.⁴

Surely this is impossible, for according to Judaeo-Christian tradition angels are incorporeal, having neither form nor substance. They are certainly unable to reproduce by immaculate conception. If this is correct, then the story of the birth of Lamech's strange son is in direct contradiction to the rabbinical teachings of Judaism and the creed of the Christian faith. Yet here it is, in print for all to see – heretical words implying that angelic beings were able to produce children by cohabiting with mortal women.

For any reader with an open mind, this is a perplexing enigma further deepened by a more personal portrayal of the birth of Lamech's son, which is to be found in a poorly preserved fragment of religious text, discovered with many other rolled-up brittle scrolls inside a cave overlooking the Dead Sea in 1947. Known to scholars today as the Genesis Apocryphon, this unique work was written in Aramaic, the Syriac language adopted by the Hebrew scribes following the Jews' exile in Babylon during the sixth century BC. Dating back to a similar age as the Book of Enoch, the Dead Sea Scroll in question would have originally contained an alternative, fuller account of the events featured in the Book of Genesis; however, it was so badly damaged when found that only the birth of Lamech's son, an account of Noah's Ark and the biblical Flood, along with the wanderings of the patriarch Abraham, have been preserved.

The fragmentary text was translated by Nahman Avigad and Yigael Yadin in 1954 and published under the title *A Genesis Apocryphon* two years later by the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.⁵ With respect to the account of the strange birth of Lamech's son, it

differs principally from the version given in the Book of Enoch, in that the narrator has altered from the patriarch Enoch to Lamech himself – it is he who recalls the scene in his own words. The narrative begins just after the strange birth as Lamech starts voicing his suspicions concerning the suspected infidelity of his wife, here named as Bathenosh⁶ – and referred to also as his sister – for he says:

*Behold, I thought then within my heart that conception was (due) to the Watchers and the Holy Ones . . . and to the Nephilim . . . and my heart was troubled within me because of this child.*⁷

Turning to his obviously distraught wife, Lamech makes her swear by the Most High that she will tell him the truth and admit if she has lain with anyone else. In reply she beseeches him to accept her word, saying:

*'O my lord, O my [brother, remember] my pleasure! I swear to thee by the Holy Great One, the king of [the heavens] . . . that this seed is yours and that [this] conception is from you. This fruit was planted by you . . . and by no stranger or Watcher or Son of Heaven . . . I speak to you truthfully.*⁸

It is clear that Lamech is accusing his wife of sleeping not with angels in general, but with having had relations with a specific race of divine beings known in Hebrew as עִירִין, *'irin* (עִר, *'ir* in singular), meaning 'those who watch' or 'those who are awake', which is translated into Greek as ἑγρεγοῖσι, *egregoris* or *grigori*, meaning 'watchers'. These Watchers feature in the main within the pages of pseudepigraphal and apocryphal works of Jewish origin, such as the Book of Enoch and the Book of Jubilees. Their progeny, according to Hebrew tradition, are named as נֶפִילִין, *nephilim*, a Hebrew word meaning 'those who have fallen' or 'the fallen ones', translated into Greek as γίγαντες, *gigantes*, or 'giants' – a monstrous race featured in the *Theogony* of the hellenic writer Hesiod (c. 907 BC). As in the biblical account, this ancient Greek work focuses on the creation of the world, the rise and fall of a Golden Age, the coming of the giant races and finally a universal flood.

Bathenosh's touching plea of innocence to her husband and brother Lamech comes across as most convincing, and provides

tantalizing evidence that this ancient account may contain some grain of truth. Somehow it could just be based on a real-life event that occurred in a past age of mankind. If so, then exactly who, or what, were these Watchers and Nephilim who could lie with mortal women and produce offspring recognizable by their physiological traits alone? Are there any grounds whatsoever on which to consider that these apocryphal stories were based on the miscegenation between two different races of human beings, one of whom has been misidentified or falsely equated with the angels of heaven? If not, then exactly what were such stories meant to convey to the reader?

The Book of Enoch seems to provide an answer. Lamech, fearful of his predicament, consults his father, Methuselah, who, unable to alleviate the situation, embarks upon a journey to find his own father Enoch, who has withdrawn from the world and now lives 'among the angels'.⁹ After Methuselah has tracked him down in a far-off land (referred to in the Genesis Apocryphon as 'Parwain' or Paradise) and conveying the fears of his son Lamech, the ever-righteous Enoch throws light on the situation when he states:

*'I have already seen this matter in a vision and made it known to you. For in the generation of Jared, my father, they [the angels] transgressed the word of the Lord, (that is) the law of heaven. And behold, they commit sin and transgress the commandment; they have united themselves with women and commit sin together with them; and they have married (wives) from among them, and begotten children by them . . . And upon the earth they shall give birth to giants, not of the spirit but of the flesh. There shall be a great plague . . . and the earth shall be washed clean (by "a deluge") from all the corruption. Now, make known to your son Lamech that the son who has been born is indeed righteous, and call his name Noah, for he shall be the remnant for you; and he and his sons shall be saved from the corruption which shall come upon the earth . . .'*¹⁰

So the lid is finally lifted as the reader of the Book of Enoch is told that some of the angels of heaven have succumbed to carnal sin and taken wives from among mortal women. From this unholy union have come flesh-and-blood offspring, giant in stature, who, it must be presumed, match the description of the child born to

Bathenosh. This betrayal of the heavenly laws of God was seen as an abomination that would bring only corruption and evil to the human race, the punishment for which was to be a deluge to cleanse the world of its wickedness.

The Sons of God

Theologians are more or less united in their opinion that the widespread accounts of fallen angels cohabiting with mortal women, like those included in the Book of Enoch, the Genesis Apocryphon and similar texts, are no more than fanciful expansions of three verses to be found in Chapter 6 of the Book of Genesis, squeezed between a genealogical listing of the antediluvian patriarchs and a brief account of Noah's Ark and the coming of the Flood.

The first lines in question, making up Chapter 6, verses 1-2, are indelibly imprinted in my mind and read as follows:

*And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all that they chose.*¹¹

By 'sons of God' the text means heavenly angels, although the Hebrew original, בני אלהים, *bene ha-elohim*, should really be translated as 'sons of the gods', a much more disconcerting prospect (and something to be returned to in a subsequent chapter).

In verse 3 of Chapter 6, God unexpectedly pronounces that his spirit cannot remain in men for ever, and that since humanity is a creation of flesh, its lifespan will be shortened to 'an hundred and twenty years'. Yet in verse 4 the tone suddenly reverts to the original theme of the chapter, for it says:

*The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them: the same were the mighty men which were of old, the men of renown.*¹²

In the hundreds of times I have read these isolated words out aloud I have wondered to myself: what could they possibly mean?

There is no consensus in answer to this question, and scholars, mystics and speculative writers have all given their own interpretations over the past two thousand years. Theologians agree in general that such accounts are not to be taken as literal fact, but only as a symbol of humanity's fall from a state of spiritual grace to one of conflict and corruption in the days prior to the Great Flood.

What the texts are saying, the theologians would argue, is that if evil and corruption on this scale does occur in the world, then only those of the purest heart and spirit – individuals exemplified by Noah and his righteous family – will be spared the wrath of God. It is therefore a purely allegorical teaching intent on conveying to the reader the inevitable consequences of wickedness.

The references in verses 2 and 4 to 'the sons of God' coming 'unto the daughters of men', so the scholars believe, demonstrate how even those closest to the purity of God can become infected by corruption and evil. It was usually accepted among religious teachers that any such unholy union between angels and mortal women could only, because it was against God's will, lead to the creation of monstrous offspring. It was this thought-provoking concept which had, according to the early Church Fathers, inspired the creation of various apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works dealing with the fall of the angels and the corruption of mankind before the time of the Great Flood.

Celestial Mafia

So much for the theological debate, but is it correct? Is this all there is to know about the origins of fallen angels? And what about the adherents of the Jewish and Christian faiths? How were they able to interpret such 'myths'? The majority would probably have been unaware that these problematical verses even existed in the Book of Genesis. Others, who did have some knowledge of the matter, are unlikely to have been able to expand on it, while only a very small minority would have believed in the actual existence of fallen angels. Many commentators would have been unable to explain exactly how such stories related to the physical world we live in,

while other more fundamentalist Jews or Christians have seen such corruption and wickedness as the actions of blood-line descendants of those first fallen angels who cohabited with mortal women before the time of the Flood. Such suggestions may seem far-fetched, but in the United States there is an organization known as the Sons of Jared, who take their name from the patriarch Jared, the father of Enoch, during whose age the Watchers were said to have been 'cast down' from 'heaven'. In their manifesto, the Sons of Jared vow 'implacable war against the descendants of the Watchers', who, they allege, 'as notorious Pharaohs, Kings and Dictators, have throughout history dominated mankind'. *The Jaredite Advocate*, the voice of the Sons of Jared, quotes lavishly from the Book of Enoch and sees the Watchers as 'like super-gangsters, a celestial Mafia ruling the world'.¹³

Is this simply a view gained from dogmatically accepting the fall of flesh-and-blood angels of heaven? How many individuals have the Sons of Jared accused or persecuted, believing them to be modern-day descendants of the Watchers?

Some academic scholars, on the other hand, while unable to accept any basis in fact behind the concept of fallen angels and their monstrous offspring, the Nephilim, would be willing to admit that the original authors of the Book of Genesis (traditionally accredited to Moses the lawgiver) based their material on previously existing folk legends, probably from Mesopotamia (the country known today as Iraq). The historian S. H. Hooke, for instance, in his book *Middle Eastern Mythology*, accepts that:

*Behind the brief and probably intentionally obscure reference in (Genesis) 6:1-4 there lies a more widely known myth of a race of semi-divine beings who rebelled against the gods and were cast down into the underworld . . . The fragment of the myth here preserved by the Yahwist was originally an aetiological myth explaining the belief in the existence of a vanished race of giants . . .*¹⁴

This might well be so, but accepting Genesis 6:1-4 as the product of far older Middle Eastern myths allows for the possibility that, sometime during a bygone age of mankind, there existed on earth, presumably in the bible lands themselves, an élite and probably superior race of human beings. These people presumably achieved a

state of high civilization before degenerating into a corruption and wickedness that included the taking of wives from among the less civilized races and the creation of monstrous offspring of disproportionate size to their immediate family. It might also be suggested that a series of global cataclysms thereafter brought fire, flood and darkness to the earth and ended the reign of this race of 'giants'.

Should we see accounts like Lamech's torment at the miraculous birth of his son Noah, and untold others like it, as tantalizing evidence for the idea that fallen angels were something far more than simply incorporeal beings cast out of heaven by the archangel Michael, as the theologians and propagators of the Christian, Islamic and Jewish faiths have taught during the last two thousand years? Could their very existence be confirmed by making an in-depth study of Hebrew myths and legends and then comparing these with other Near Eastern and Middle Eastern religions and traditions? Most important of all, might evidence of their physical existence on earth be incidentally preserved in the records of modern-day archaeology and anthropology?

Such thought-provoking possibilities were worth further consideration. If, at the end of the day, it was found that no such evidence for the existence of a now lost race in the bible lands could be discovered, then at least an age-old enigma would have been investigated thoroughly. On the other hand, if there really was firm evidence that angels and fallen angels once walked among mankind as beings of flesh and blood, no different from you or me, then it could change our perspective of world history for ever.

Fear of Fallen Angels

There are clear signs that the concept of angels and fallen angels as corporeal beings of flesh and blood, who lived in a distant antediluvian age and left as a legacy an intimate knowledge of many things forbidden to humanity, was once widely accepted by certain elements of the Jewish population. These included the devout religious communities that lived a pious existence in the hot, rugged terrain on the west bank of the Dead Sea from about 170 BC to AD 120.

Known to history as the Essenes, their main centre is thought to have been at Qumrân, where archaeologists have uncovered extensive evidence of occupation, including a massive library room where many of the Dead Sea Scrolls are thought to have been written.

Historical works from this period suggest that the Essenes not only accepted the Book of Enoch as part of their canon, but also used its listing of angels to perform rites of exorcism and healing.¹⁵ Recent studies of the Dead Sea Scrolls have also shown that the Essenes possessed an almost unhealthy interest in Enochian-style material featuring the Watchers and Nephilim.¹⁶ Although many of these works date only to the second century BC, the hidden teachings found among the Qumrân community and known as Kabbalah imply that the Enochian and Noahic scriptures were passed on by word of mouth for thousands of years before finally being set down in written form by the Essenes themselves.¹⁷

With the advent of Christianity, the Book of Enoch and other such similar works became generally available for the first time. Many of the Early Church leaders, from the first to the third centuries AD, used and quoted openly from their pages.¹⁸ Some Christian scholars held that mortal women had been responsible for the fall of the angels, while Paul in Corinthians 11:10 advocated – according to the Church Father Tertullianus (AD 160–230) – that women cover their heads so as not to incite wantonness in the fallen angels who liked unveiled women with beautiful hair.¹⁹ Even more remarkable was the general acceptance among many prominent theologians that fallen angels possessed corporeal bodies.²⁰ Indeed, it was not until the age of the Church Fathers, from the fourth century onwards, that such matters were seriously questioned. For these people, fallen angels were *not* flesh-and-blood beings, and any suggestion that they might have been became tantamount to heresy. This attitude led to the suppression of the Book of Enoch, which quickly fell out of favour. Most bizarre of all were the comments of St Augustine (AD 354–430) in respect of the antiquity of this pseudepigraphal work. He claimed that on account of it being *too old* (*ob nimiam antiquitatem*), the Book of Enoch could not be included in the Canon of Scripture.²¹ What ever could he have

meant by suggesting it was 'too old'? It was a most extraordinary statement to be made by a respected Church father.

Curiously enough, the Book of Enoch had also fallen out of favour among the Jews, after Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai, in the second century AD, cursed all those who believed that the Sons of God mentioned in Genesis 6 were truly angels. This was despite the fact that the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, uses the term *angelos* in place of 'sons of God'.²²

The Church Fathers then went further in their attempts to stamp out the strange fascination with fallen angels among early Christians by condemning as heresy the use of the many hundreds of names given both to angels and fallen angels in various religious works.²³ No longer was the Book of Enoch copied by Christian scribes, and those copies remaining in libraries and churches were either lost or destroyed, denying the world any knowledge of the work's true contents for over a thousand years.

Subsequently, on top of all this, it became the policy of Catholic theologians to eradicate firmly from the teachings of the Church any notion that fallen angels had once been seen as material beings, a situation typified by this quote from the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*: 'In the course of time theology has purified the obscurity and error contained in traditional views about angels (i.e. the belief that they were corporeal in nature and cohabited with mortal women).'²⁴

Yet why should such beliefs have become so abhorrent to the Christian faith after the great leaders of the Early Church of Jerusalem had preached so openly on this very controversial subject? It simply did not make sense, and suggested there must have been extremely good reasons for forcing this strain of thought underground, for that was exactly where it went – underground.

From the extraordinary evidence collected together by the author, and presented in this book for the first time, there emerge firm grounds to suggest that initiates and secret societies preserved, revered, even celebrated the forbidden knowledge that our most distant ancestors had gained their inspiration and wisdom, not from God or from the experiences of life, but from a forgotten race remembered by us today only as fallen angels, demons, devils, giants and evil spirits. Should such a view prove in any way correct,

then it must indicate one of the greatest secrets ever kept from mankind.

But where was I to start? How was I even to begin the quest to unveil the forbidden legacy of this apparently fallen race? The answer lay with its main sourcebook, the Book of Enoch, for only by understanding its obscure origins and absorbing its bizarre contents could I ever hope to uncover the true picture behind humanity's lost heritage.

THE SEARCH FOR THE SOURCE

My quest to understand the importance of the Book of Enoch began with the man who single-handedly revived the scholarly world's interest in this previously lost piece of Judaic religious literature. His name is James Bruce of Kinnaird, and in 1768 he left England *en route* for Abyssinia, modern-day Ethiopia, in search of something, and it was certainly not the source of the Blue Nile, as he claimed at the time.¹

Bruce was a Scottish nobleman, a direct descendant of one of the most powerful families of Scottish history. He was also an initiate of Freemasonry,² which in Scotland could trace its roots back to the so-called Rite of Heredom, first instituted in early medieval times and later incorporated into the Royal Order of Scotland.³ This in itself was a chivalric military order of honour and valour founded on the rites of the Knights Templar by James Bruce's own illustrious ancestor, Robert the Bruce, following the celebrated defeat of the English at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314.⁴ James Bruce himself was a member of the Canongate Kilwinning No. 2 lodge of Edinburgh, known to be one of the oldest in Scotland, with side-orders and mystical teachings entrenched in Judaeo-Christian myth and ritual.⁵

Freemasonry is an organization with innumerable secrets, and many of these would have been known to the extremely knowledgeable James Bruce. For instance, he would have been aware that in Scottish Masonic tradition the patriarch Enoch, Noah's great-grandfather, was looked upon as one of the Craft's legendary founders, since he was accredited with having given mankind the knowledge of books and writing and, most important of all to Freemasons, to have taught mankind the art of building.⁶

The Antediluvian Pillars

Enoch had many associations with early modern Freemasonry, or speculative Masonry as it is known. According to one legend,⁷ Enoch, with foreknowledge of the coming Deluge, constructed, with the help of his son Methuselah, nine hidden vaults, each stacked one on top of the other. In the lowest of these he deposited a gold triangular tablet (a 'white oriental porphyry stone' in one version) bearing the Ineffable Name, the unspoken name of the Hebrew God, while a second tablet, inscribed with strange words Enoch had gained from the angels themselves, was given into the safe-keeping of his son. The vaults were then sealed, and upon the spot Enoch had two indestructible columns constructed – one of marble, so that it might 'never burn', and the other of *Laterus*, or brick, so that it might 'not sink in water'.⁸

On the brick column were inscribed the 'seven sciences' of mankind, the so-called 'archives' of Masonry, while on the marble column he 'placed an inscription stating that a short distance away a priceless treasure would be found in a subterranean vault'.⁹ Enoch then retired to Mount Moriah, traditionally equated with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where he was 'translated' to heaven.

In time, King Solomon uncovered the hidden vaults while constructing his legendary temple and learned of their divine secrets. Memory of these two ancient pillars of Enoch was preserved by the Freemasons, who set up representations of them in their lodges. Known as the Antediluvian Pillars, or Enoch's Pillars, they were eventually replaced by representations of the two huge columns named 'Jachin' and 'Boaz', said to have stood on each side of the entrance porch to Solomon's Temple.¹⁰

What exactly the nine hidden vaults constructed by Enoch were meant to represent is completely unknown. They might well refer to the nine levels of mystical initiation contained in the hidden teachings of the Kabbalah, accepted among the Dead Sea communities. On the other hand, perhaps the legends of the hidden vaults referred to actual underground chambers located

somewhere in the Holy Land and constructed to hide sacred objects of importance to the future of mankind.

Walked with God

The patriarch Enoch's legendary status among both Jewish mystics and modern-day Freemasons stems from a very strange assumption. In the Bible, Chapter 5 of Genesis contains a genealogical listing of the ten antediluvian patriarchs, from Adam down to Noah. In each case it gives only their names, their age when they 'begat' their first son, and the age at which they died, with one notable exception – Enoch. In his case, he is twice said to have 'walked with God', an obscure statement elaborated only in the second instance with the enigmatic words: 'and he was not, for God took him'.¹¹ Whatever the writer of Genesis had been attempting to convey by these words, they were taken to mean that Enoch did not die like the other patriarchs, but was instead 'translated' to heaven with the aid of God's angels. According to the Bible, only the prophet Elijah had been taken by God in a similar manner, so Enoch (whose name means 'initiated') had always been accorded a very special place in Judaeo-Christian literature. Indeed, Hebrew mysticism asserts that on his 'translation' to heaven Enoch was transformed into the angel Metatron.¹²

What does it mean: 'translated to heaven'? As we know, people are not carried off to heaven by angels while still living their life on earth. Either these words are metaphorical or else they need drastic reappraisal. Might Enoch have been simply taken away from his people by visitors from another land who were looked upon as angels by the rest of the community? And where was heaven, anyway? We know it is deemed to be a place 'in the clouds', but did this literally mean somewhere beyond the physical world in which we live?

Once in this place called heaven, Enoch would appear to have made enemies immediately, for according to one Hebrew legend, an angel named Azza was expelled from Paradise – the alternative name for the heavenly domain – for objecting 'to the high rank given to Enoch' when he was transformed into Metatron.¹³



Fig. 1. The patriarch Enoch being 'translated' to heaven by two angels, after an eleventh century English manuscript. Enoch was said to have been the first mortal to enter Eden since the expulsion of Adam and Eve after the Fall of Man. Are heaven and Eden ethereal realms of our creation or actual geographical locations in the Near East?

All these legends and traditions concerning Enoch show that the patriarch was highly venerated in Jewish mythology because of his trafficking with the angels. This position led many scholars to believe that apocryphal works, such as the Book of Enoch, were imaginative stories based on his much celebrated translation to heaven, where he now lives in the presence of God.

The Search for the Book of Enoch

James Bruce of Kinnaird was one giant of a man, 'the tallest man you ever saw in your life – at least gratis', or so said one woman who met him.¹⁴ He was fluent in several different languages, including some no longer spoken. These included Aramaic, Hebrew and *Ge'ez*, the written language of the Ethiopian people. Even before his travels in Abyssinia, Bruce had journeyed far and wide, visiting Europe, North Africa and the Holy Land, exploring ancient monuments and searching out old manuscripts ignored by all but a few inquisitive Westerners. In spite of his Blue Nile story, the noble Scotsman would appear to have spent much of his time in Ethiopia within the libraries of ramshackle monasteries, fingering through dusty volumes of neglected religious works, many hoary with age and in a state of advanced disintegration.¹⁵

So what had he been looking for?

After nearly two years of constant travelling, Bruce arrived at the sleepy monastery of Gondar, on the banks of the vast inland sea named Lake Tana. Having convinced the abbot of his integrity, he was admitted into the dark, dingy library room, where he found, and was finally able to secure, a very rare copy of the *Kebra Nagast*, the sacred book of the Ethiopians. It told of a romantic love affair between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the legendary founder of the kingdom of Abyssinia, and of the birth of their illicit son Menelik, who had conspired with his mother to abduct the fabled Ark of the Covenant from Solomon's Temple. According to the story, the Ark had been carried off to Ethiopia, where it remained to that day.¹⁶

Had Bruce in fact been searching for a copy of this obscure but very sacred book to take back with him to Europe?

Despite its rarity, the *Kebra Nagast* (or 'Book of the Glory of Kings') had long been known to exist, while its wild claims concerning the Queen of Sheba and the Ark of the Covenant were seen by Western scholars as having been concocted to give Ethiopian Christians an unbroken lineage and national identity stretching back to the time of Adam and Eve. Even so, there is compelling evidence to suggest that the Ark really did reach Ethiopia¹⁷ (although not at the time of King Solomon) and that James Bruce was well aware of this fact and even entered Ethiopia in 1768 with the express intent of bringing it back to Britain.¹⁸

So was this the answer – a quest for the lost Ark of God? Had Bruce been the Indiana Jones of his day?

Perhaps.

Yet beyond his interests in the *Kebra Nagast* and the Ark of the Covenant, Bruce could hardly have been unaware of the rumours circulating Europe regarding the existence in Ethiopia of the forbidden Book of Enoch. Indeed, during the early 1600s a Capuchin monk visiting Ethiopia had secured a religious text written in *Ge'ez* which was at first believed to be a long-lost copy of this very book. The find caused much excitement in European academic circles. Yet when it was finally studied by an Ethiopian scholar in 1683, the manuscript was identified, not as the missing Book of Enoch, but as a previously unknown text entitled the Book of the Mysteries of Heaven and Earth.¹⁹

No one really knew what the Book of Enoch might contain. Until the 1600s, its contents were almost entirely unknown. Yet its title alone was so powerful that at least one person attempted to learn its secrets from the angels themselves. This was the Elizabethan astrologer, magus and scientist, Dr John Dee, who, working with an alleged psychic, Edward Kelley, used crystal balls and other scrying paraphernalia to invoke the presence of angels. The spirits told Kelley they would provide him with the contents of the Book of Enoch, and there is evidence to suggest that Dee did actually possess a 'Book of Enoch' dictated through Kelley's mediumship.²⁰ It is not, however, thought to have in any way resembled the actual work of this name. In addition to this, Dee and Kelley developed a whole written language, complete with its own 'Enochian' script or cipher, from their trafficking with angels. This complex system of

magical invocation survives to this day and is still used by many occultists to call upon the assistance of a whole hierarchy of angelic beings.²¹

Scaliger's Discovery

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a major breakthrough occurred in the search for the lost Book of Enoch. A Flemish scholar named J. J. Scaliger, having decided to study obscure Latin literature in the dimly lit vaults of European libraries, sat down one day to read an unpublished work entitled *Chronographia*, written in the years AD 808–10 by a learned monk named George Syncellus. Having ploughed through lengthy pages of quite mundane sayings and quotes on various matters appertaining to the early Christian Church, he then came upon something quite different – what appeared to be extensive tracts from the Book of Enoch. Handwritten in Greek, these chapters showed that Syncellus had obviously possessed a copy of the forbidden work and had quoted lavishly from its pages in an attempt to demonstrate the terrible transgressions of the fallen angels. Scaliger, realizing the immense rarity of these tracts, faithfully reproduced them in full, giving the world its first glimpse at the previously unknown contents of the Book of Enoch.²²

The sections quoted by Syncellus and transcribed by Scaliger revealed the story of the Watchers, the Sons of God, who were here referred to by their Greek title *Grigori*. It told how they had taken wives from among mortal women, who had then given birth to Nephilim and *gigantes*, or ‘giants’. It also named the leaders of the rebel Watchers and told how the fallen angels had revealed forbidden secrets to mankind, and how they had finally been imprisoned until the Day of Judgement by the archangels of heaven.²³

We may imagine the conflicting emotions experienced by Scaliger – on the one hand excitement, and on the other horror and revulsion. As a God-fearing Christian of the seventeenth century, when people were being burnt as witches with only the most petty charges brought against them, what was he to make of such claims? What, moreover, was he to do with them? Angels

lying with mortal women and the conception of giant babies? What could this all mean? Was it true, or was it simply an allegorical story concerning the consequences of trafficking with supernatural beings such as angels? Merely by making copies of this forbidden text, he ran the risk of being accused of practising diabolism.

Yet this incredible chance discovery begged the question of what the rest of the book might contain. Would it be as shocking as these first few chapters appeared to suggest?

Bruce must have been aware of the controversial nature of the sections of the book preserved for posterity by Syncellus in the ninth century. He must also have been aware of the enormous implications of retrieving a complete manuscript of the Book of Enoch. It was perhaps for this very reason that he spent so long talking to the abbots and monks at the Ethiopian monasteries. In the light of this supposition it becomes crystal clear that one of the primary objectives of Bruce's travels must have been to secure and bring back to Europe a copy of the Book of Enoch.

And Bruce's efforts did not go unrewarded, for he managed to track down and obtain not one but *three* complete copies of the Book of Enoch, with which he returned to Europe in 1773.²⁴ One was consigned to the National Library of Paris, one he donated to the Bodleian Library in Oxford; and the third he placed 'amongst the books of Scripture, which I brought home, standing immediately before the Book of Job, which is its proper place in the Abyssinian Canon'.²⁵

The earth-shaking consequences of these gracious acts of literary dedication can scarcely have been realized by Bruce himself during his lifetime, for they would ultimately lead to the recirculation of heretical stories concerning humanity's forbidden trafficking with the fallen race. And yet from the very moment of Bruce's return to Europe with his precious Ethiopian manuscripts, strange events were afoot. Having deposited the copy with the Paris library, Bruce made tracks to return to England, where he planned to visit the Bodleian Library at his earliest convenience. Even before he had a chance to leave France, however, he learnt that an eminent scholar in Egyptian Coptic studies, Karl Gottfried Woide, was already on his way from London to Paris, carrying letters from the Secretary of State to Lord Stormont, the English Ambassador,

desiring that the latter help him gain access to the Paris manuscript of the Book of Enoch, so that a translation could be secured immediately. Permission was duly granted to Woide, who after admission into the National Library wasted no time in making the necessary translation of the text. Yet as Bruce was to later admit in his *magnum opus* on his travels to Ethiopia 'it has nowhere appeared'.²⁶

What therefore were the motives behind this extraordinary urgency in translating the Book of Enoch, before even the Bodleian Library had received its own copy? The absurdity of the situation lies in the fact that no outright translation of the valuable *Ge'ez* text was to appear in any language whatsoever *for another forty-eight years*.

Why this delay? Why should such an important piece of lost religious literature have been ignored for so long, especially since there were now not one but two extant copies available to the theological world? This ridiculous situation must have infuriated James Bruce after he had gone to all the trouble of finding and securing these manuscripts in the belief that they would be presented to the public domain in a translated form before the expiry of his own life (he died in 1794).

Tempting as it may be to evoke the idea of some kind of organized conspiracy behind these extraordinary actions on the part of Woide and the English Secretary of State, the truth of the matter was far more mundane and lay in the economical and political climate of the time. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a massive decline in the popularity of the Christian Church in many parts of Protestant Europe. Attendance at church services was dwindling, and churches everywhere were being neglected and left to fall into ruin under the impact of Newtonian science and the arrival of the Industrial Revolution. In an age of reason and learning, there was little place for the alleged transgressions of angels, fallen or otherwise. Most of the general public were simply not interested in whether or not angels had fallen through grace or lust, while any theological debate as to whether or not fallen angels possessed corporeal bodies was simply not a priority in most people's minds.

Fuelled by Fallen Angels

The Book of Enoch remained in darkness until 1821, when the long years of dedicated work by a professor of Hebrew at the University of Oxford were finally rewarded with the publication of the first ever English translation of the Book of Enoch. The Reverend Richard Laurence, Archbishop of Cashel, had laboured for many hundreds of hours over the faded manuscript in the hands of the Bodleian Library, carefully substituting English words and expressions for the original *Ge'ez*, while comparing the results with known extracts, such as the few brief chapters preserved in Greek by Syn-cellus during the ninth century.²⁷

It is fair to say that the publication of the Book of Enoch caused a major sensation among the academic and literary circles of Europe. However, its disturbing contents were not simply being read by scholars, but also by the general public. Churchmen, artists, writers, poets all sampled its delights and were able to form their own opinions on the nature of its revelations. The consequences of this knowledge passing into the public domain for the first time were to be enormous in many areas of society.

Romantic writers, for instance, became transfixed by the stories of the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men, and began to feature these devilish characters in their poetic works.^{28,29} A little later, Victorian painters started portraying this same subject matter on canvas.³⁰ One might even be tempted to suggest that the Book of Enoch was a major inspiration behind the darker excesses of the so-called Gothic revival, which culminated in such literary works as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, in which the eponymously named character is himself a fallen angel.³¹

Why should such satanic subjects have inspired or repulsed people to this extent? Why are people so fuelled by stories of fallen angels?

It also seems certain that the Book of Enoch was readily accepted as a work of great merit among the Freemasons, who used it to revive their ancient affiliation with the antediluvian patriarch; indeed, my own 1838 copy of Laurence's translation once belonged to the library of the Supreme Council 33°, the highest ranking

enclave of Royal Arch Freemasons in Britain. There is even a rumour that the third copy brought back to Europe was presented by Bruce to the Scottish Grand Lodge in Edinburgh.³²

Gradually, as the Oxford University edition of the Book of Enoch reached wider and wider audiences, scholars began checking in library collections across Europe, the result being that many more fragments and copies of the Enochian text in Ethiopian, Greek and even Latin were found tucked away in neglected corners. New translations were made in German and English, the most authoritative being that achieved in 1912 by Canon R. H. Charles.³³ Even a sequel to the original text entitled the Book of the Secrets of Enoch was found in Russia and translated in 1894.³⁴

Since that time, the authenticity of the Book of Enoch has been amply verified with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Many fragments of copies written in Aramaic have been identified among the hundreds of thousands of brittle scraps retrieved over the years from the caves on the Dead Sea, where they were placed in around AD 100 by the last survivors of the Essene communities at Qumrân and nearby En-Gedi.³⁵ The Ethiopian copyists had kept true to the original Aramaic text, which had probably passed into their country in its Greek translation sometime during the second half of the fourth century AD.³⁶ For generation after generation, the Book of Enoch had been copied and recopied by Ethiopian scribes, the old battered and torn manuscripts being either cast away or destroyed during the many bloody conflicts that took place in Abyssinia over a period of fifteen hundred years.

The fact was that somehow the Book of Enoch had survived intact, despite its heavy suppression by the Christian Church, and it was to the authoritative English translation made by Canon R. H. Charles in 1912 that I would next turn to discover for myself the dark secrets within its pages. Only by absorbing the obscure contents of this unholy treatise could I begin to understand why its forbidden text had become abhorrent to so many over the previous centuries.

Three

DEMONIC DOCTRINE

Reading the Book of Enoch for the first time was quite an unnerving experience, which on more than one occasion sent unexpected shivers down my spine. Here was perhaps one of the oldest accounts of mankind. It had been passed down orally from one storyteller to the next over thousands of years. Finally it became a book in its own right sometime after 200 BC, almost certainly at the hands of the Essene community at Qumrân on the Dead Sea. Yet what were its contents, and why had it caused so much consternation to the Jewish rabbis and the Early Church of Christianity?

I found the Book of Enoch to be a colourful but often confusing and contradictory patchwork of material that required extensive disentanglement before any cohesive picture could be gleaned from its contents. Much of it appears to have been written – originally on sheets of fine animal skin – during or shortly after the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king who ruled Judaea at the time of the Maccabean revolt of 167 BC.¹ Among its 108 short chapters is irrefutable evidence of the battles fought and won against the hated Syrian ruler by the Jewish reactionary movement, the Zadokite Hassidaeans, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus.² Other parts were written shortly after this period, while some passages even reflect an age postdating the commencement of the Christian era.

So what does it contain? What element is it that so offends its opponents?

In the opening chapters the narrator reiterates the story told in Genesis 6 concerning the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men and taking wives from among their number. The reader then learns how, ‘in the days of Jared’, two hundred Watchers

'descended' on 'Ardis', the summit of Mount Hermon – a mythical location equated with the triple-peak of Jebel esh Sheikh (9,200 feet), placed in the most northerly region of ancient Palestine. In Old Testament times its snowy heights had been revered as sacred by various peoples who inhabited the Holy Land; it was also the probable site of the Transfiguration of Christ when the disciples witnessed their Lord 'transfigured before them'.³

On this mountain the Watchers swear an oath and bind themselves by 'mutual imprecations', apparently knowing full well the consequences their actions will have both for themselves and for humanity as a whole.⁴ It is a pact commemorated in the name given to the place of their 'fall', for in Hebrew the word Hermon, or *herem*, translates as 'curse'. Why the two hundred angels should have picked this location as opposed to any other to make their descent into the lowlands is never made clear. Yet this is what they do, travelling down to mix and mingle among humanity in the hope of sampling the delights of mortal women.

The reader is then introduced to Shemyaza, the leader of the Watchers, while nineteen of his minions are also named; these, it says, are 'their chiefs of tens'.⁵ At this stage I will not question the authenticity, origin or reality of this curious narrative, but simply continue with the story as told in the Book of Enoch.

After the Watchers find themselves wives and 'go unto them', the women give birth to the enormous Nephilim babies, who grow up to become barbaric in every way possible. The words here are pertinent and must be quoted in full:

*And they [the mortal women] became pregnant, and they bare great giants, whose height was three thousand ells: who consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, the giants turned against them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.*⁶

The height of the Nephilim, here given as 3,000 ells, with one English ell being the equivalent of forty-five inches, is an exaggeration of the sort so often found in Jewish myth. It is used only to emphasize a specific point, which is to record that these *gibborim*,⁷ or

'mighty men', were of great height and possessed enormous appetites. More disconcerting is the suggestion that the Nephilim turned against their mortal families and engaged in what can only be described as cannibalism.

'Sinning' against 'birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish' could either mean that they were consumed by the Nephilim as food, or that the giants committed barbaric sexual acts with them, perhaps both. Whatever the answer, they would appear to have developed a lust for drinking blood, which must also have been viewed as abhorrent by the communities in which they were born and raised.

The Secrets of Heaven

The narrative then tells how the rebel Watchers who walked among humanity revealed the forbidden secrets of heaven. One of their number, a leader named Azazel, is said to have 'taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields, and breastplates, and made known to them the metals (of the earth) and the art of working them', indicating that the Watchers were the first to bring the use of metal to mankind. He also instructed them on how they could make 'bracelets' and 'ornaments' and showed them how to use 'antimony', a white brittle metal employed in the arts and medicine. To the women he taught the art of 'beautifying' the eyelids, and the use of 'all kinds of costly stones' and 'colouring tinctures', indicating that before this time the wearing of make-up and jewellery was unknown.⁸

Through this unforgivable act, the Daughters of Men were believed to have been 'led astray', and because of it they became 'corrupt', committing fornication not only with the Watchers themselves, but also, it must be assumed, with men who were not their regular partners. Azazel also stood accused of teaching women how to enjoy sexual pleasure and indulge in promiscuity – a blasphemy seen as 'godlessness' in the eyes of the Hebrew story-tellers.

Linguistic experts believe that the names Azazel and Shemyaza probably derive from the same source, but were made into two separate fallen angels before their introduction to the Book of Enoch; however, since they both have quite independent legends

attributed to them, each will be dealt with separately as and when they appear.

Other Watchers stand accused of revealing to mortal kind the knowledge of more scientific arts, such as the knowledge of the clouds, or meteorology; the 'signs of the earth', presumably geodesy and geography; as well as astronomy and the 'signs', or passage, of the celestial bodies, such as the sun and moon. Shemyaza is accredited with having taught men 'enchantments, and root-cuttings',⁹ a reference to the magical arts shunned by most orthodox Jews, but accepted to some degree by the Dead Sea communities. One of their number, Pênêmûe, taught 'the bitter and the sweet', surely a reference to the use of herbs and spices in foods, while instructing men on the use of 'ink and paper', implying that the Watchers introduced the earliest forms of writing.¹⁰ Far more disturbing is Kâsdejâ, who is said to have shown 'the children of men all the wicked smitings of spirits and demons, and the smitings of the embryo in the womb, that it may pass away'.¹¹ In other words, he taught women how to abort their babies.

These lines concerning the forbidden sciences handed to humanity by the rebel Watchers raise the whole fundamental issue of why angels of heaven should have possessed any knowledge of such matters in the first place. Why should they have needed to work with metals, use charms, incantations and writing; beautify the body; employ the use of antimony, and know how to abort an unborn child? None of these skills are what one might expect heavenly messengers of God to possess, unless, that is, they were human in the first place.

In my opinion, this revelation of previously unknown knowledge and wisdom seems more like the actions of a highly advanced race passing on some of its closely guarded secrets to a less evolved culture still striving to understand the basic principles of life. A comparison might be drawn with the way in which supposedly civilized cultures of the Western world have introduced everything from whisky to clothes, firearms, rigid thinking and religious dogma to indigenous races in remote regions of the world. If such ancient texts are to be taken at face value, then could it be that this is what really happened – members of one highly advanced race

passing on its knowledge to a less evolved culture still struggling for survival?

Plight of the Watchers and Nephilim

One by one the angels of heaven are appointed by God to proceed against the Watchers and their offspring the Nephilim, described as 'the bastards and the reprobates, and the children of fornication'.¹² Azazel is bound hand and foot, and cast for eternity into the darkness of a desert referred to as Dûdâêl. Upon him are placed 'rough and jagged rocks' and here he shall forever remain until the Day of Judgement, when he will be 'cast into the fire' for his sins.¹³ For their part in the corruption of mankind, the Watchers are forced to witness the slaughter of their own children before being cast into some kind of heavenly prison, an 'abyss of fire'.¹⁴ Although the Watchers' leader, Shemyaza, is cast into this abyss alongside his brothers, in other versions of the story he undergoes a more dramatic punishment. Since he was tempted by a beautiful mortal maiden named Ishtahar to reveal the Explicit Name of God in exchange for the offer of carnal pleasure, he is to be tied and bound before being made to hang for all eternity between heaven and earth, head down, in the constellation of Orion.¹⁵

The suggestion that the rebel Watchers had to look on as their children were murdered hints at a form of infanticide in which those born of the union between fallen angels and mortal women were systematically rounded up and slaughtered as their fathers watched helplessly. If this supposition is correct, then it could explain the fear and revulsion instilled in Lamech and Bathenosh at the birth of their son Noah, who apparently resembled a Nephilim baby; their horror being connected not simply to their own son's strange appearance, but to the fact that the offspring of the Watchers were being murdered by those angels still loyal to heaven.

Following the incarceration of the rebel Watchers, Enoch is summoned to 'heaven' and addressed by the archangels, who are also, confusingly, referred to as Watchers. They request that he intercedes on their behalf and puts to the rebel angels the crimes they have committed against mankind. Enoch accepts this task and

goes to see them in their place of incarceration. On his approach, he finds them 'all afraid, and fear and trembling seized them'.¹⁶ Fear of punishment is surely a human tendency, not the emotions one might expect of incorporeal messengers of God, and where was this prison, so accessible to Enoch? The text suggests it was near 'the waters of Dan, to the south of the west of Hermon.'¹⁷ The 'waters of Dan' refers to one of the tributaries of the river Jordan in northern Palestine. The root of the Hebrew word *dan* means 'to judge', and Canon R. H. Charles in a footnote to this particular reference in his widely accepted translation of the Ethiopian text, concedes that this location was specifically chosen 'because its name is significant of the subject the writer is dealing with, i.e the judgement of the angels [*author's italics*].'¹⁸ The geographical positioning of this story is therefore symbolic and not actual. Clearly the author of the Book of Enoch is attempting to create some kind of sound geographical perspective to the narrative, in this case establishing the rebel Watchers' place of incarceration close to the location of their original descent upon Mount Hermon. In other words, many of the sites given in the Book of Enoch were chosen simply to give credence to the stories it contains.

The corruption still left in the world after the imprisonment of the Watchers, and the death of their Nephilim offspring, is to be swept away by a series of global catastrophes, ending in the Great Flood so familiar within biblical tradition.¹⁹ In a separate account of the plight of the Nephilim,²⁰ this mass-destruction is seen in terms of an all-encompassing conflagration sent by the angels of heaven in the form of 'fire, naphtha and brimstone'.²¹ No one will survive these cataclysms of fire and water save for the 'seed' of Noah, from whose line will come the future human race.²²

This is how the Dead Sea communities and the earliest Christians understood the Book of Enoch, yet never is there any insinuation that the rebel Watchers were beings of flesh and blood, only that they assumed physical form in order to lie with mortal women. Having read and reread the story of the fall of the Watchers several times over, I began to realize that such a view of events could be seriously challenged, for there seemed compelling evidence to suggest that the rebel Watchers – and, by virtue of this, the angels of heaven themselves – might originally have been a race of human

beings who existed in the Middle East at a distant point in history. If this were so, then memories of these monumental and quite horrendous events would appear to have been distorted and mythologized across the passage of time, until they became simply moralistic folk-tales in a slowly evolving religious history adopted by the Jewish race during Old Testament times.

Did this provide a valid answer? To me it appeared as credible as any. Yet if my solution was incorrect, then what were the alternatives?

There were two. Either the reader can accept that religious literature of this nature is pure fantasy, based on the deep psychological needs and values of a God-fearing society. Or he or she can accept that incorporeal angels not only exist, but that they can also descend to earth, take on human form and then couple with mortal women, who afterwards give birth to giants that grow up to become ruthless barbarians of the sort portrayed in the Book of Enoch.

Which of these solutions seems easiest to accept?

Which of these choices feels most right to accept?

And even if the rebel Watchers *were* once human beings of flesh and blood, where did they come from, in what time-frame did they live, and what was the *true* fate of their progeny? Did they all either perish in the mass genocide orchestrated by the angels still loyal to heaven or die in the cataclysms which culminated in the Great Flood? Did any survive? The Book of Enoch provided no immediate answers, though my mind lingered over one particular passage in Chapter 15 concerning the final fate of the Nephilim:

... because they are born from men (and) from the holy watchers in their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called . . . And the spirits of the giants (will) afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble; they (will) take no food, [but nevertheless hunger] and thirst, and cause offences. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of men and against the women, because they have proceeded (from them).²³

The text here speaks of 'evil spirits' – demons and devils might be more appropriate terms. Yet if it could for one moment be assumed that 'blood descendants' is what was originally intended, then these

enigmatic lines imply that those born of Nephilim blood are, by virtue of their ancestral 'spirit', destined to 'afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth'.

These are chilling thoughts indeed, yet in the puritanical words of the Book of Enoch these corrupted souls are also destined to become the damned, who will 'take no food, [but nevertheless hunger] and thirst'. The djinns, the malevolent spirits of Islamic tradition, are said to 'suffer from a devouring hunger and yet cannot eat',²⁴ while in East European folklore, as well as in popular romance, there are likewise supernatural denizens that drink blood yet can 'take no food, [but can nevertheless hunger] and thirst', and these are, of course, *nosferatu* – vampires. Whatever the reality of such beings in anthropological terms, vampires live on in the dark, sinister world of Gothic horror, which, as I had already realized, owes much of its character to the way in which the initial publication of the Book of Enoch in 1821 influenced the inner visions of the poets and artists of the romantic movement.

Perhaps the 'spirit' of the fallen race does therefore live on in the collective unconscious of modern-day society. Perhaps the descendants of the Nephilim, the hybrid offspring of the two hundred rebel Watchers, are still inside us, their presence hinted at only by the unsettling knowledge that our dark past holds hidden truths which are now beginning to reveal themselves for the first time – secrets that only a few enlightened souls have ever realized are preserved in the heretical Book of Enoch, this 'demonic doctrine', as it was aptly described by the Canon R. H. Charles.²⁵

Descendants of Noah

Despite the Book of Enoch's extraordinary material concerning the story of the Watchers, much of its later chapters appeared to be unconnected with my search to discover the origins of the fallen race. Indeed, they seemed to have been written by a different hand altogether. This supposition was confirmed when I realized that the chapters featuring the fall of the Watchers, the birth of Noah and the Flood narrative had all been taken from the much earlier, now lost, apocalyptic work known as the Book of Noah.²⁶ It would

simply confuse matters if I were to start referring to the Book of Noah instead of the Book of Enoch, but knowledge that Noah, not Enoch, was the original narrator of this story is important indeed and may well provide the key to understanding the reasons behind the Essenes' interest in this demonic literature.

Because of the covenant Noah had made with God at the time of the Great Flood, the Dead Sea communities accredited him with having been God's first bringer of rain, or rainmaker, and saw themselves as direct lineal descendants of this rain-making line – a point emphasized again and again in their religious literature. Many Jews in the last two centuries before Christ actually believed that wandering holy men, or *zaddiks*, 'the righteous', were direct descendants of Noah and could therefore perform rain-making feats – a divine virtue bestowed upon them by birthright.²⁷ Most renowned of the rainmakers in Jewish tradition was Onias the Righteous, also known as Honi the Circle-drawer. His daughter's son, Hanan the Hidden, and another grandson named Abba Hilkiyah, were also able to repeat their grandfather's rain-making feats.

From research into rain-making traditions, it seems probable that the priests would achieve these inexplicable weather changes by retiring from the community and drawing rings of sand on the ground. They would then stand in the centre of this magic circle and perform their supernatural conjuration – the effectiveness of such wild talents never being doubted.²⁸ When they were not drawing down rain, the *zaddiks* would live wild existences, crossing great distances on foot and spending long periods among the harsh, rugged hills on the west bank of the Dead Sea. Here they would enter into the isolated caves and spend long periods deep in meditation and contemplation.

More important, however, was the knowledge that these wandering *zaddik*-priests, who walked freely among the Dead Sea communities, were the teachers of the Kabbalah, the arcane knowledge passed on orally from person to person.²⁹ With their great understanding of the Kabbalah, and their claimed descent from Noah, it seemed extremely likely that it was these wandering holy men who had first conveyed knowledge of the Watchers' story to the Essenes.

If this theory was correct, then who were these wandering *zaddiks*? Why did they believe themselves to be direct descendants of Noah? And where and when did they obtain these stories concerning the fall of the Watchers? Until I could answer these questions, the authenticity of the Book of Enoch must inevitably remain difficult to assess as historical fact. For the moment, I needed to understand more about the roots behind the story of the Watchers, how their 'fall' came about and, most important of all, its point of origin.

Four

INSANE BLASPHEMY

Not everyone agreed on what the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men actually represented so far as the accepted history of the Bible was concerned. By the late fourth century, the Syrian Church had begun to circulate a brand-new religious text claiming to give a true rendition of the lines in Genesis 6. In this variation of the story, the Sons of God are no longer dark angels but the Sons of Seth, a righteous community of men and women who reside in peace on the Mountain of God. This mythical location lies beyond the Gates of Paradise, out of which humanity's First Parents, Adam and Eve, had been cast many generations before.

Living among the Sons of Seth are the now familiar antediluvian patriarchs, such as Jared, his son Enoch, his grandson Methuselah and his great-grandson Lamech. In their midst is the entrance to the so-called Cave of Treasures, within which lie the earthly remains of the first men and women, including Adam and his wife Eve, as well as the Three Gifts of God. These latter are caskets containing the frankincense, gold and myrrh destined to remain in the possession of Israel and Judah until they are finally presented to Christ at the time of the Nativity. Elsewhere in the enormous cave burns a perpetual flame symbolizing the light of God given to Adam in his darkest hour.

Down in the lowlands lives a somewhat more primitive culture that, without the just guidance of God, leads depraved lifestyles of sin and corruption. Among them are the Daughters of Cain, the progeny of Adam's first son, Cain, who, according to Genesis 4, slew his brother Abel and was cursed and 'sent out' by God to dwell 'in the land of Nod on the east of Eden'.¹

The Daughters of Cain are easily led into unbridled debauchery, a vice that conjures the manifestation of Satanail, i.e. Satan or the Devil. Convinced that he can take advantage of their wicked ways to lead astray the Sons of God, the arch-fiend hatches a cunning plan. He convinces the naïve Daughters of Men to wear make-up and adorn themselves with fine jewellery and exotic garments. Satanail then directs them towards the Mountain of God, where the Sons of Seth lead their pious existence in the presence of the Most High. The women try to convince the religious men to come down from the heights so that they may be tempted to commit gross acts of fornication and indecency. To this end the Daughters of Cain approach the base of the mountain and begin playing musical instruments, dancing wildly, singing loudly and calling to the 520 Sons of God² to come and join them in sweet pleasure. Hearing the women's enticing voices, many of the men descend the holy mountain and indulge in carnal delights. Only the most righteous – in other words, figures such as Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech and his son Noah – refuse to be tempted by this gross iniquity.

As a result of their unholy union, giants are inevitably born unto the godless women, and the 'fallen' Sons of Seth are prevented by God from returning to their mountain retreat close to the Cave of Treasures. The Most High then unleashes a great tempest and deluge to purge the world of all wickedness and corruption, as in Enochian and Old Testament tradition.³

This alternative rendering of the enigmatic lines of Genesis 6 appears at first to provide a major breakthrough in their interpretation, and this was the opinion shared by a great number of biblical scholars right down to the Middle Ages. Removing any reference to fallen angels nullified the story of the fall of the Watchers as it was portrayed in a convincing and quite unnerving manner within the Book of Enoch.

No fallen angels – no truth to the Book of Enoch; this was the philosophy of those who believed in the reality of the story of the Daughters of Cain coming to the Sons of Seth. It was an easy demolition of the ancient text, if it could be accepted that the Cave of Treasures story was the word of God. Unfortunately, however, these early Church Fathers, who mostly belonged to the Syrian Church, overlooked one tiny point. The Book of the Cave of

Treasures, as it became known, was almost entirely the creation of an early Christian writer named Julius Africanus (AD 200–245), and written more out of pure ignorance than deliberate design. He observed that the term *elohim* was used in the Old Testament, as well as in other apocryphal works, to denote ‘foreign rulers’ and ‘judges’.⁴ From this it was concluded that the *bene ha-elohim*, the Sons of the Elohim, were none other than the early patriarchs, the descendants of Adam’s third son, Seth. The deduction was made despite the more obvious fact that the term *bene ha-elohim* was also used with reference to heavenly hosts, or angels.

In spite of the text’s clear failings, the early Church Fathers quickly adopted Africanus’ concept of the fall of the Sons of God and pronounced it the only true and authentic interpretation of the Genesis text. Yet even this did not stop the spread of wild accounts concerning the deeds of the fallen angels. The story of the Daughters of Cain coming unto the Sons of Seth was very often placed alongside alternative material concerning the fall of the Watchers, taken either directly or indirectly from the Book of Enoch. An outstanding example of this is the account of the fall of the angels contained in the Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast*. Here, next to a précis of the Cave of Treasures story, is a somewhat shocking reference to the enormous size of the Nephilim babies and the way in which they entered the world:

*And the daughters of Cain with whom the angels had companied conceived, but they were unable to bring forth their children, and they died. And of the children who were in their wombs some died, and some came forth: having split open the bellies of their mothers they came forth by their navels . . .*⁵

Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, the eminent Egyptologist and literary scholar who translated the *Kebra Nagast* into English, openly admitted that this gruesome passage showed that the unborn babies ‘were so large that they could not be born in the ordinary way, but had to be removed from the mothers by the umbilicus’.⁶ In other words, because of their immense size, the Nephilim children could only be born by using the surgical operation we know today as Caesarian section. This was a disconcerting thought, which, although not confirmed anywhere else in Hebrew literature, will be

encountered again in connection with the birth of giant children in another Middle Eastern country (see Chapter 9).

Mani the Ignorant

Even though the Book of Enoch had fallen foul of the developing Christian Church during the early fourth century, there are firm indications that some individuals had studied its contents and had, as a consequence, begun extolling its dire consequences for mankind. One such indication of this situation comes from a tract on the Book of Enoch written by St Jerome (AD 342–420), a Syriac Church Father of renown and scholarship, who had this to say on the subject:

We have read in a certain apocryphal book [i.e. the Book of Enoch] that when the sons of God were coming down to the daughters of men, they descended upon Mount Hermon and there entered into an agreement to come to the daughters of men and make them their wives. This book is quite explicit and is classified as apocryphal. The ancient exegetes have at various times referred to it, but we are citing it, not as authoritative, but merely to bring it to your attention . . . I have read about this apocryphal book in the work of a particular author who used it to confirm his own heresy . . . Do you detect the source of the teachings of Manichaeus, the ignorant? Just as the Manichaeans say that the souls desired human bodies to be united in pleasure, do not they who say that angels desired bodies – or the daughters of men – seem to you to be saying the same thing as the Manichaeans?⁷

Manichaeus ‘the ignorant’, or Mani as he is more commonly known, was a much-hated prophet of Parthian stock who had a huge impact on the development of Christian heresy from the third century right through till the end of the Middle Ages. And St Jerome was right. There is firm evidence to show that Mani devised his holy scriptures and teachings after studying the Book of Enoch.

Mani was born in the Babylonian town of Ctesiphon, near modern-day Baghdad, in the year AD 215. Both his mother and father appear to have been directly related to the exiled Parthian

dynasty of princes who, before being deposed in AD 224, had ruled the Persian Empire unhindered since 247 BC.⁸ Their national religion had featured many elements of Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic (and partially dualistic) faith founded, according to early Iranian tradition, by the prophet Zarathustra, the Greek Zoroaster, sometime during the sixth century BC (see Chapter 8).

Perhaps influenced by the knowledge that Zoroastrianism acknowledged whole hierarchies of angels and demons, or *daevas*, Mani appears to have fully accepted the Enochian account of the fall of the Watchers. As a consequence, he formulated his own dualistic, gnostic creed, complete with its own holy scriptures and creation myths. In his sacred books he portrayed the material world not as the dominion of God, but as the domain of the Rulers of Darkness, in other words of Satan and his fallen angels. All that remained of God was the divine spirit trapped inside the physical body, and only by striving to find oneness with God could humanity hope to achieve a promised afterlife in the heavenly paradise.

According to an anathema of Manichaeism written by its Christian opposers, Mani believed Adam to have been the outcome of a fertilized embryo, produced by the intercourse of male and female fallen angels, then swallowed by Satan, who subsequently coupled with his spouse to bring forth the First Man.⁹ Such a pessimistic view of life meant that Mani and his followers saw the very roots of humanity not just as evil, but as rotten to the core.

Mani preached a synthesis of different faiths, including aspects of Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Mandaism, a strange religion native to Iraq and Iran. His faith became extremely popular for several centuries and was carried by his dedicated disciples and followers across the Orient, reaching as far east as India and Tibet.¹⁰

Manichaeism was quite obviously seen as a huge threat to the other major religions of the age. It was therefore condemned as outright heresy by the ruling Sassanian dynasty of Persian kings as well as by the early Church Fathers of Asia Minor. Followers of the faith were denounced as heretics and put to death, while a more horrific fate awaited Mani himself at the hands of fanatical Zoroastrians at Jund-i-Shapur, in south-west Persia. In AD 277 he was accused of preaching false doctrines, and as a consequence was

thrown in prison, where he was bound by chains, tortured to the point of death and left to die. His exhausted body was then publicly humiliated in the most gruesome manner: his skin was flayed and stuffed with straw before being strung up on the gates of the town as blood still issued from his warm carcass, which was decapitated and erected on a pole for all to see. Instead of quelling the growing unrest against Manichaeism by the Persian people, the death of Mani incited a sanguine crusade against his followers, who were rounded up throughout the empire and slaughtered by Zoroastrians – the price, it seems, for believing in the fall of the angels and their corruption of mankind.¹¹

Unorthodox Thoughts

The existence of heresies such as Manichaeism and other forms of Christian gnosticism once again raised the whole fundamental issue of the corporeal nature of fallen angels and the Sons of God in the minds of the most eminent theologians and churchmen of the day. One Church Father, St John Chrysostom (AD c. 347–407), an archbishop of Constantinople, spoke out vehemently against the Book of Enoch, stating indignantly that it would be ‘folly to accept such insane blasphemy, saying that an incorporeal and spiritual nature could have united itself to human bodies’.¹² It had become blasphemous and highly heretical to preach, circulate or support the doctrine contained within the Book of Enoch, or indeed any other apocryphal or pseudepigraphal work. In no way did the Church want the spread of Jewish traditions completely at variance with its gradually emerging corpus of scripture, especially if these concerned alternative views on the fall of mankind and the descent of the angels. Such subjects needed to be kept strictly out of bounds.

Is it possible for us to understand this fanatical zeal towards the unorthodox – a zeal that persisted in the name of religion throughout the Middle Ages and probably cost the lives of countless hundreds of thousands of individuals accused of heresy and witchcraft? Why should the Christian Church have been so paranoid about a narrative concerning a group of two hundred angels who fell from grace and lusted after the Daughters of Men? Surely not

all the heavenly messengers of God were perfect, so why has there been this blanket suppression of anything even remotely promoting such radical ideas even through to the present day?

Serpents that Walked

Part of the answer lies in the fact that there seems to be a clear overlap between the story of the fall of the Watchers and the account of the temptation of Eve by the Serpent as portrayed in the Book of Genesis. Since this is such an important subject in our quest to understand the origins of fallen angels, it will be worth recalling exactly what happened on that day in the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve, the idealized first man and woman in Christian, Islamic and Judaic mythology, live in a state of innocence and grace within the garden until the Serpent of Eden questions God's authority by telling Eve she will not die if she eats the forbidden fruit of the 'tree which is in the midst of the garden',¹³ for, it says: 'God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.'¹⁴

Accordingly, so Genesis informs us, Eve saw that the fruit of the tree 'was good for food' and pleasant to the eyes, and that it was 'a tree to make *one wise* [author's emphasis]'. She then picked and ate of the fruit, giving it also to her partner Adam to eat; the result being that their eyes were 'opened', enabling them to realize that they were naked. In other words, eating the fruit of the tree had somehow managed to allow them to gain the knowledge and wisdom to understand their predicament in the idealized world – all thanks to the 'subtil' serpent who 'beguiled' Eve into eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

For this heinous crime against mankind the Serpent is then:

*cursed [by God] above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*¹⁵

Adam and Eve are also cursed by God, for to Eve he says: 'I will

greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee' – mortifying words which have loomed over the heads of Western women ever since. In Adam's case, God rules that 'in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life', referring, of course, to the forbidden knowledge the couple have gained through eating of the tree.¹⁶

In order that Adam and Eve, with their new-found 'wisdom', do not want of the garden's other tree, the 'tree of life', and become immortal like gods, they are cast out of Eden 'to till the ground from whence he (Adam) was taken'.¹⁷

This is the story of the so-called 'fall of man', as well as the roots of the misery and suffering humanity is forever forced to suffer because of this act of disobedience.¹⁸ As a consequence of the sin committed by our First Parents, we are deemed to have inherited a corrupt nature, with a prevailing tendency towards evil, the very stance adopted by Manichaeism and many of the other more obscure gnostic cults that thrived during the first four centuries of the Christian era.

The fall of mankind was obviously compared by religious scholars with the angels' fall through lust and pride, while the Serpent of Temptation was commonly believed by theologians to have been the form taken by Satan to corrupt mankind.¹⁹ Satan's chosen guise as a serpent to beguile Eve was thought to have been because of its sly and cunning ability to hypnotize its prey into submission. The snake's loathsome and frightful appearance also made it an ideal totem of the darkness, and thus of the Devil himself. All these explanations are, however, somewhat naïve, for the snake is a very ancient symbol that represented the conveyance of sexual desires, hidden wisdom and secret knowledge in many different Middle Eastern faiths and religions.

The serpent makes an appearance in a great number of creation myths featuring the first humans and is often portrayed as a wise benevolent spirit, not a beguiling messenger of temptation and evil. Moreover, the serpent has an intrinsic association with the first woman in these myths, a fact confirmed in the knowledge that the name Eve is synonymous with both the word for 'life' and 'snake'. For instance, in Hebrew *hawwah*, i.e. Eve, means 'she who makes

live'. It is also related to the word *hevia*, signifying a female serpent. Furthermore, in Arabic 'serpent' is *hayya*, which is itself cognate with *hayat*, meaning 'life'; the Arabic for Eve being *hawwa*.²⁰ In other accounts from Jewish lore, Eve is actually seen as the ancestral mother of the Nephilim,²¹ who were themselves described in Hebrew myth as *awwim*, meaning 'devastators' or 'serpents'.²²

Angels, too, are integrally linked with the form of the serpent: one of the principal classes of angelic being in Hebrew lore is the Seraphim, or 'fiery serpents', who are 'sent by God as his instruments to inflict on the people the righteous penalty of sin'.²³ The link is further strengthened by an occasional statement here and there in the Book of Enoch. In Chapter 69, for instance, where it outlines the forbidden arts taught to mankind by the Watchers, one angel known as Kâsdejâ is accused of showing men how to take away 'the bites of the serpent, and the smitings which befall through the noontide heat (i.e. sunstroke . . .) the son of the serpent named Tabâ'et'.²⁴ Although the exact meaning of these lines is now lost, it clearly mentions 'the son of the serpent named Tabâ'et', a reference, it seems, to a Nephilim born to a 'serpent', or Watcher, named Tabâ'et.

So if the Watchers are intrinsically linked with the symbol of the serpent, the conveyers of sexual desire, hidden wisdom and forbidden knowledge, then how do they relate to the Serpent of Eden? One tantalizing clue to this perplexing enigma is to be found in Chapter 69 of the Book of Enoch, for included among those Watchers who have revealed the heavenly secrets to mankind is Gâdreël, identified as the fallen angel who 'led astray Eve'.²⁵

The fallen angel who 'led astray Eve'?

Here is a very revealing statement. What is it supposed to mean? And how might it be equated with our knowledge of the Fall of Man in the heavenly paradise?

If this particular passage is contemporary with the book's original construction during the first half of the second century BC, then it firmly associates the rebellion of the two hundred Watchers, during the age of the patriarch Jared, with the beguiling of Eve and thus with the corruption of humanity. Despite this realization, it would be foolhardy to accuse one Watcher alone of this most

heinous of crimes, for it seems clear that at some point in the distant past the Watchers were collectively seen as 'the Serpent' who divulged the hidden wisdom and knowledge to the First Parents, a metaphorical reference to humanity in general. In doing so, it caused them to commit the first sin, the act of self-awareness. As a consequence of this interference in human affairs, our ancestors were forced into a material existence over and beyond the natural evolution and progression it would presumably have achieved had the Watchers not intervened to change the course of destiny.

That was certainly the way it was beginning to look, and, if correct, then it meant that the story of the 'Fall of Man' in the Garden of Eden was merely a highly abstract expression of the way in which the Watchers supposedly corrupted the minds of human kind. If so, then which story influenced the other? And were we to assume that, because of the Watchers' interference in humanity's affairs, humanity now bears within it the seeds of eternal corruption and evil? And what of the connection with Satan, the Devil, God's greatest adversary? How did he fit into this gradually emerging picture, and what was his association with the Watchers of the Book of Enoch?

The Devil in Disguise

The name Satan comes from the Hebrew *ha-satan*, meaning 'the adversary'. In the Old Testament this term is used exclusively to describe either the enemies of God or the enemies of the Israelite race in general. Never is the Devil referred to as the evil one. Not until the advent of the New Testament, the collection of books and gospels relating to the period subsequent to the birth of the Christian era, does the term *ha-satan* take on this all-important role. At this point Satan becomes an angel fallen from grace and expelled from heaven, along with his fellow-rebels, by the archangel Michael. References to Satan's own fall appear in passages such as Luke 10:18, where Christ is said to have 'beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven'. It is, however, only in the Bible's final book, the Revelation of St John the Divine, written during the first century AD, that the full story of Satan's fall is revealed for the first

time. In Chapter 12, verse 9, it proclaims: 'And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to earth, and his angels were cast down with him.' And then again, in Revelation 20:2-3, it says: 'And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more.'

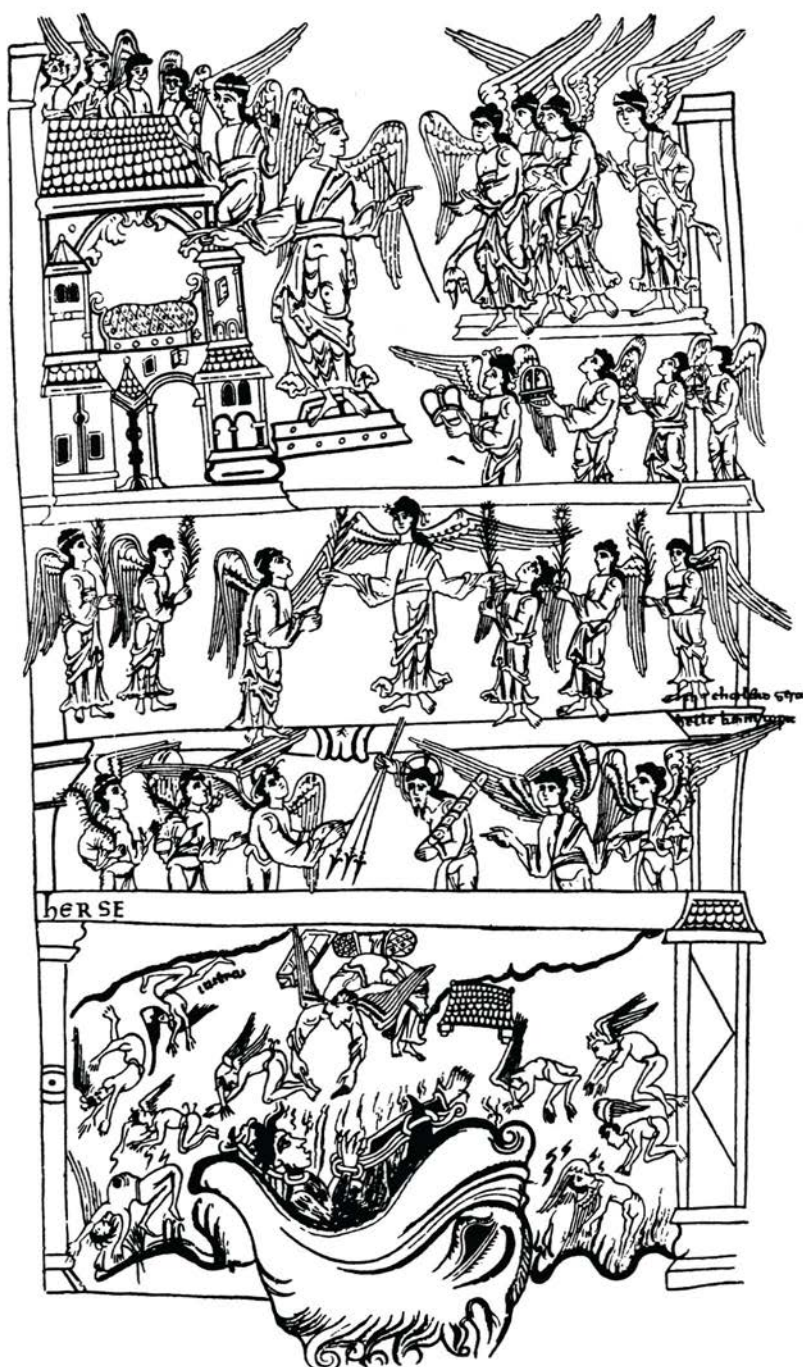
This is all that may be gleaned from the holy scriptures concerning the fall of Satan, although it is clear that St John the Divine based his visions of Satan and his fallen angels on the story of the Watchers contained in the Book of Enoch; an assertion supported by the fact that this apocalyptic work was freely circulating among early Christians around this time. Having established Satan as God's arch-enemy, the Christians adopted him as the root of all evil in the world, and any trafficking with either him or his fallen angels was seen as black magic, heresy, sorcery and, of course, witchcraft – acts that were punishable by death throughout Christendom until comparatively recent times.

In medieval times, theologians, such as Peter Lombard (c. 1100-1160), 'saw Satan in the guise of the serpent tempting Eve', while other scholars, such as the ninth-century Bishop Agobard, held that 'Satan tempted Eve through the serpent'.²⁶ Either way, such ideas became mainstream in the Christian philosophy of the Middle Ages and a general acceptance of this assumption has helped to mould religious thought right through to the present day.

So was Satan behind the story of the Serpent of Eden? Perhaps the medieval scholars actually got it right, realizing that the references in the Book of Revelation to the casting out of heaven of Satan and his adversaries was one and the same story as the pre-Christian account of the fall of the Watchers, alluded to in the story of the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men in Genesis 6. Satan is referred to in Revelation as 'the old serpent', a synonym that seems quite clearly to refer not just to the Serpent of Temptation but also to the rebel Watchers of the Book of Enoch.

Since the revealing to humanity of the hidden secrets of heaven by the Watchers appears to have been the impetus behind the rise of civilization as we know it today, and Satan and his fallen angels

FROM THE ASHES OF ANGELS



are to be identified with the fallen angels of the Book of Enoch, then it implies that, in Christian terms at least, the genesis of the civilized world can be attributed not to the will of God, but to the intervention of his antithesis – the Devil.

Mani's dualistic world must have been full of contradictions – on the one hand he was preaching the purity of God and the way of the Holy Spirit, and on the other he taught that the roots of evil lay within us all. Was this why the early Church Fathers so vehemently condemned the Book of Enoch's portrayal of the fall of the Watchers as 'insane blasphemy'? The answer is no, since they themselves came to accept this very doctrine that St Augustine named as 'original sin', which placed the blame not on the Watchers but on Eve. It is interesting to note that Augustine, who condemned the Book of Enoch as 'too old' for inclusion in the canon, had himself at one time been a Manichaean. It is more likely that those heretics, such as Mani, who wholeheartedly accepted and preached the demonic doctrine outlined in Enochian literature, were always persecuted in such ghastly ways for this reason alone. What justification could there be for such crimes against humanity, and, more importantly, just what is it the world fears *so much* about fallen angels?

Fig. 2. The expulsion of the angels from heaven after their fall through lust and pride, from an eleventh century English manuscript. Does this event record the forbidden trafficking between two entirely different races or cultures during the protoneolithic age?

Five

VISAGE LIKE A VIPER

Many people believe the Old Testament to be littered with references to the appearance of angels, but this is simply not the case. In fact there are relatively few accounts featuring angels, and when they do crop up there is often no real indication of what exactly is taking place. For instance, in Genesis there are the three 'angels in the guise of men' who approach Abraham as he sits at his tent door by the Oak of Mamre, near the ancient city of Hebron in southern Palestine. They confirm the imminent birth of a son to his elderly wife Sarah and announce their planned destruction of Sodom, the city of iniquity by the Dead Sea. The Bible says that a feast was prepared for them, and that Abraham 'took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, *and they did eat* [*author's emphasis*]'.¹

'And they did eat . . .' Angels eating food? Surely incorporeal beings would not need to consume earthly sustenance.

Then there are the two angels who visit Lot and his wife in Sodom, immediately prior to the city's destruction. They are said to have entered Lot's house, where he 'made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and', as in the case of the Abraham story, 'they did eat'.² Men of Sodom surround Lot's home, calling upon him and shouting out 'where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them'.³ In other words they wanted to have sex with them. It is, of course, from this bible passage that we gain the term sodomy, or anal penetration.

Did the inhabitants of Sodom want sex with all strangers who visited the city, or was there something noticeably different about these 'men'?

Then we have the angel, or 'man', with whom Jacob wrestles in hand-to-hand combat⁴ at Penuel, or the whole host of angels whom Jacob sees moving up and down a ladder that stretches between heaven and earth as he rests at a place known as Bethel.⁵

Are these really accounts of angels of heaven, or are they of mortal men?

Angels gain their name from the word *angelos*, the Greek rendition of the Hebrew *mal'akh*, meaning 'messenger', since they act as mediators between God and humanity. They are undoubtedly incorporeal beings, although, to allow for stories such as those concerning Abraham, Lot and Jacob, it has generally been accepted by Judaeo-Christian theologians that angels could take on physical form to carry out specific tasks on earth.

Whatever the actual nature of the angels of the Old Testament, to both the Judaic and Christian faiths they are purely that – angels, messengers of God, unconnected with the fallen angelic race of both Genesis 6 and Hebrew apocryphal tradition. At no time are the angels of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, ever equated with the Sons of God, the Watchers or the Nephilim, and there is never any insinuation that it was two hundred of *their* heavenly companions who took on physical form to lie with the Daughters of Men in the generations prior to the Great Flood. It is almost as if the writers of the Pentateuch either have no apparent knowledge of the connection between angels and the fall of the Watchers, or else they are deliberately avoiding the subject altogether.

Who, then, were the angels, whether heavenly or fallen? Where did they come from? Where did they live? What did they look like? Only by establishing these facts could I go on to speculate on the true origins of this apparent race or culture – lost to the pages of history. It seemed imperative that if I was to widen my knowledge of the fallen race, then I would need to uncover and study whatever had been written about them, not just in recorded Hebrew folklore and mythology, but also among the more recently translated Dead Sea Scrolls, which contained much new material on the nature of angels and the fall of the Watchers.

The Testament of Amram

It was this last area of study that in 1992 provided me with a vital piece of evidence which altered my whole perspective of the Watchers. In a reconstructed apocalyptic fragment, translated by the Hebrew scholar Robert Eisenman and referred to as the Testament of Amram, there is a rather unnerving account featuring the appearance of two Watchers to Amram, the father of Moses the lawgiver. The relevant section reads as follows:

[I saw Watchers] in my vision, the dream-vision. Two (men) were fighting over me, saying . . . and holding a great contest over me. I asked them, 'Who are you, that you are thus empow[er]ed over me?' They answered me, 'We] [have been em]powered and rule over all mankind.' They said to me, 'Which of us do yo[u] choose to rule (you)?' I raised my eyes and looked.] [One] of them was terr[i]fying in his appearance, [like a s]erpent, [his] c[loa]k many-coloured yet very dark . . . [And I looked again], and . . . in his appearance, his visage like a viper, and [wearing . . .] [exceedingly, and all his eyes . . .].⁶

The ancient text then identifies this Watcher as Belial, the Prince of Darkness and King of Evil, while his companion is revealed as Michael, the Prince of Light, who is also named as Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness. It was, however, Belial's frightful appearance that took my attention, for he is seen as terrifying to look upon and like a 'serpent', the very synonym so often used when describing both the Watchers and the Nephilim. If the textual fragment had ended here, then I would not have known why this synonym had been used by the Jewish scribe in question. Fortunately, however, the text goes on to say that the Watcher possessed a *visage*, or face, 'like a viper'. Since he also wears a cloak 'many-coloured yet very dark', I had also to presume that he was anthropomorphic, in other words he possessed human form.

'Visage like a viper . . .' What could this possibly mean?

How was I to interpret this metaphor used in connection with the terrifying appearance this being must have instilled in the minds of those who originally trafficked with the walking serpents of the Book of Enoch?

How many people do you know with a 'visage like a viper'?

For over a year I could offer no suitable solution to this curious riddle.

Then, by chance, I happened to overhear something on a national radio station that provided me with a simple though completely unexpected explanation.

In Hollywood, Los Angeles, there is a club called the Viper Room. It is owned by actor and musician Johnny Depp, and in October 1993 it hit the headlines when the up-and-coming young actor River Phoenix tragically collapsed and died as he left the club, following a night of over-indulgence. In the media publicity that inevitably surrounded this drugs-related incident, it emerged that the Viper Room gained its name many years beforehand when it had been a jazz haunt of some renown. As the story goes, the musicians would take the stage and play long hours, prolonging their creativity and concentration by smoking large amounts of marijuana. Apparently, the long-term effects of this drug abuse, coupled with exceedingly long periods without food and sleep, caused their emaciated faces to appear hollow and gaunt, while their eyes closed up to become just slits. Through the haze of heavy smoke, the effect was to make it seem as if the jazz musicians had faces like vipers, hence the name of the club.

This diverting anecdote sent my mind reeling and helped me to construct a mental picture of how a person with a 'visage like a viper' might look: their faces would appear long and narrow, with prominent cheekbones, elongated jawbones, thin lips and slanted eyes like those of many East Asian racial types. Was this the solution to why both the Watchers and Nephilim were described as serpents? It seemed as likely a possibility as any, though it was also feasible that their serpentine connection related to their accredited magical associations and capabilities, perhaps even their bodily movements and overall appearance.

Wingless Angels

A separate account of the appearance of two Watcher-like figures, this time to Enoch as he rests in his bed, closely parallels the way in

which they appeared to Moses's father, Amram, and seems to throw further light on their apparent descriptions:

And there appeared to me two men very tall, such as I have never seen on earth. And their faces shone like the sun, and their eyes were like burning lamps; and fire came forth from their lips. Their dress had the appearance of feathers: . . . [purple], their wings were brighter than gold; their hands whiter than snow. They stood at the head of my bed and called me by my name.⁷

I knew it was taking an enormous gamble to assume for one minute that these textual accounts from Judaic apocalyptic and pseud-epigraphal works actually recorded true-life descriptions of a race that in theory never existed outside the minds of the original storytellers. On the other hand, I felt I would be better able to investigate any historical origin if I could discover a cohesive pattern among the religious literature under study.

So what could be learnt from this second account?

I could begin by stripping away the angels' golden wings, for this part of the text was undoubtedly a very late addition, since angels were rarely deemed to possess wings until well into the Christian era. In the Old Testament, for example, only heavenly hosts such as the Cherubim and Seraphim are ever described as having multiple wings, four or six being the usual number. This feature is thought to have been a borrowing from the iconography of Assyria and Babylonia, where sky genii and temple guardians were depicted with very similar sets of wings.⁸ Yet Cherubim and Seraphim were never strictly angels, or 'messengers of God', who almost certainly received their wings at the hands of early Christian artists and scribes influenced by classical iconography, which often portrayed mythological beings with wings.

For most of us our view of angels is typified no better than in the vivid detail of Pre-Raphaelite paintings by such artists as Edward Burne-Jones, Evelyn de Morgan and John William Waterhouse, and by the ornately carved statues of angels found in ecclesiastical buildings, including churches, cathedrals and minsters. These convey to us idealized impressions of angels which contain the notion that they must have had beautiful wings, like those of the finest swans. This vision, however, bears little resemblance at all to

accounts of angels that appear either in the Old Testament or in the earliest Judaic religious literature. For confirmation of this, one has only to reread the account of the appearance of the Watchers to Amram – there is no mention of wings. Even in the Book of Enoch itself, there is concrete evidence to show that wings were grafted on to existing accounts of angels sometime after the first century AD, since earlier renditions of the text make no mention of wings at all.

As Tall as Trees

If we take away the wings we are left with two tall men, ‘as I have never seen on earth’. Why is there this obsession with height in connection with the fallen race? Was there some deep-rooted psychological need for Judaeo-Christian angels to be of enormous stature? In the stylized art of Ancient Egypt the Pharaohs, considered to be incarnations of the god Horus, were always depicted larger than any other figure around them, including their consorts and courtly entourage. Symbolic art of this nature makes perfect sense, since it instantly elevates the Pharaoh to a position higher than the rest of his subjects. In this way we can understand why divine beings, such as angels, should be portrayed as larger than life in religious iconography, but why were both the rebel Watchers and the Nephilim repeatedly described as giant in stature, or like ‘trees’ as they are metaphorically referred to in some accounts?⁹ Surely their great size must convey something more than simply misappropriate iconography. Could we possibly be dealing with actual human beings of greater stature than their contemporaries? Was this one of the features that made them stand out from other people?

Shining Like the Sun

The skin on the hands of the angels who appear to Enoch is described as ‘whiter than snow’, which seems to be another feature common to the fallen race. Elsewhere in the Book of Enoch, the Watchers are referred to simply as ‘like white men’,¹⁰ while, in the

account of the birth of Noah, the infant is seen as possessing a body 'white as snow and red as a rose'.¹¹ This suggests a type of complexion not dissimilar from that of white Caucasians of today, who often experience a ruddiness of the skin when exposed to harsh outdoor weather. Is this a clue to the Watcher's place of origin – an environment that suffered much harsher climatic conditions? Since the Book of Enoch was written by olive-skinned Jews in a hot sunny climate, this type of reference is not to be regarded lightly.

In the same vein, the faces of the two 'men' who visit Enoch are described as shining 'like the sun', a metaphor invoked to denote Watcher-like beings in Hebrew myth and legend. What could the Jewish scribes have meant by using such a term? Was it simply to convey the divine nature of the beings in question, in a similar manner to the way in which saints and holy men are depicted with halos or nimbuses in Christian art, or was there another, more supernatural, explanation for such statements?

Some light is thrown on the matter in one fascinating account that follows shortly after the two men's appearance to Enoch. Having been transported to the various heavenly realms by these angelic beings, the antediluvian patriarch arrives at the seventh and final heaven, where he encounters the Lord seated upon a great throne. In the Lord's company are hosts of Cherubim and Seraphim, and Enoch is greeted by the archangels Gabriel and Michael, who are also described as Watchers in the Book of Enoch. The humble prophet is then made to undergo a form of ceremony in which he is anointed with oil by one of the archangels:

*And the Lord said to Michael: 'Go and take from Enoch his earthly robe, and anoint him with My holy oil, and clothe him with the raiment of My glory.' And so Michael did as the Lord spake to him. He [stripped me of my clothes and] anointed me and clothed me, and the appearance of that oil was more than a great light, and its anointing was like excellent dew; and its fragrance like myrrh, shining like a ray of the sun. And I gazed upon myself, and I was like one of His glorious ones. And there was no difference, and fear and trembling departed from me.*¹²

Seeing beyond the highly religious overtones of these lines, it is

difficult not to question the nature of the ceremony which Enoch undergoes. Stripped of his clothes, he is anointed with an oil that has a fragrance like myrrh. It makes him shine 'like a ray of the sun', so that he appears no different from the archangels, making all fear and trembling depart from him.

Is there any possibility that the archangels, who obviously bore a close resemblance to Enoch in the first place, covered their bodies with a type of oil that made them shine 'like a ray of the sun'? Considering for a moment that we might well be dealing with highly distorted recollections of actual encounters between earthly individuals, then why should these exalted ones need to cover their bodies in oil? Was it simply for aesthetic or ritualistic purposes? Or was there some other more practical reason behind this act? It is too easy to jump to conclusions here, especially in the knowledge that the skin of the Watchers is, when described, almost always spoken of as 'white as snow' and ruddy in appearance. Yet might it be remotely feasible that the body oil was used to protect the skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation, in much the same way as we use a sun-block today? Such usage would undoubtedly give the skin a shimmering, reflective quality, especially in the presence of a flickering fire. And, as I was aware, the skin of white Caucasians is far more vulnerable to the harmful effects of the sun than that of any other race.

Eyes Like Burning Lamps

More intriguing still is the description of the angels' eyes, for they are said to have been 'like burning lamps' – perhaps the missing words from the terrifying appearance of the Watcher Belial in the Amram text. Yet why 'burning lamps'? Was it simply the way in which the eyes of the Watchers were somehow able to reflect the flickering light of a burning lamp? Or did it mean something more?

Time and time again the eyes of Watchers, and angels in general, are described as appearing 'like the sun', and here, too, the birth of Noah is a prime example, for it is said that 'when he opened them (i.e. his eyes) the whole house glowed like the sun'.¹³

'Glowed like the sun . . .' What did this mean?

Quite obviously, there was no hard-and-fast answer to this perplexing mystery, yet if these accounts recorded distorted memories of an actual Middle Eastern culture living long ago, then their eyes must have been singled out for a specific reason. For the moment all I could conclude was that they either reflected sunlight, or their irises were likened to the sun; in other words, their eyes were perhaps golden or honey-coloured in appearance, a characteristic common among certain tribal cultures of central Asia even today.

As White as Wool

And what can be said about the hair of the Watchers? Since we know that Noah in every way resembled the appearance of the fallen race, then we must assume that the revulsion to his 'thick and bright' white hair 'as pure as wool'¹⁴ also indicates one of their recurring physiological traits. In the account of his birth given in the Ethiopian Book of Enoch, the infant's hair is said to have been like a *demdema*, a *Ge'ez* word similar to the English term 'Afro-cut'. More correctly, this refers to 'long curly hair',¹⁵ which will form dreadlocks if left unkept for any length of time. Applying this information I had therefore to presume that, besides their pale white skin, the Watchers possessed thick, curly white hair, perhaps matted to form long dreadlocks, similar to the style sported by so-called 'travellers' in Britain today. This, too, would have made them appear like white Caucasians, who, it may be assumed, looked quite alien to the indigenous cultures which first began relating stories concerning the presence of these apparently divine beings.

Children of the Angels

A lot of emphasis is placed here on the peculiar appearance of the infant Noah in the belief that he in some way resembled the physical appearance of the fallen angels and, by virtue of this, angels in general. And yet what proof was there that his strange birth could be conceived as an actual event in humanity's long history? Why

not accept this account as simply a metaphor for an unholy union between a conceptual being of light and a mortal woman?

One answer is the continued existence of an extraordinary belief, perhaps thousands of years old, that some young children are born 'of the angels', bearing not only their assumed physical characteristics but also their divine personas. I would never have believed such a thing, had it not been for an account given to me by an elderly woman, named Margaret Norman, following a lecture in which I included details of the birth of Noah and the apparent physiological traits of the fallen race.¹⁶

Today Margaret lives in the English county of Essex, but in her younger years she was a resident of London, and it was here she learnt from her mother the details of a story concerning a so-called 'angel child'. In 1908 a son was born to a German father and English mother in the suburb of Hampstead. It weighed a healthy eleven pounds and possessed blue eyes and golden blond locks. Sadly, it died at the age of three and a half, but while it was alive the infant was apparently adored by everyone for its 'serene and dreamy loving nature'. As Margaret's mother told her, people would stop in the street, place money in the infant's pram for luck and refer to him as an 'angel child'. Most peculiar of all was her mother's insistence that the baby 'just shone', a statement on which Margaret found it very difficult to expand.

I asked Margaret whether it was the pale nature of its skin, the smile on the baby's face or perhaps some kind of inner radiance that had led people to believe this child 'just shone'. She could only shake her head and say: 'I really don't know. It was just something about him.'

'Just shone . . .'

' . . . and as for his eyes, when he opened them the whole house glowed like the sun'. These are the enigmatic words used by the Jewish scribes to describe the infant Noah, who was himself spoken of as 'like the children of the angels'. Perhaps the way in which the Watchers' eyes and faces had shone 'like the sun' really did relate to some kind of intangible radiance no longer known to the world today. Yet the idea that a child in twentieth-century London was seen to have the appearance of a Nephilim baby, and be given money in the hope of receiving good luck, is compelling evidence

that the birth of Noah, as well as the many other descriptions of Watchers and angels in general, provides us with eyewitness accounts of an actual race that once walked the earth.

The Shamanic Solution

‘Their dress had the appearance of feathers’ – this is the final piece of descriptive narrative concerning the two ‘men’ who appeared before Enoch. In the Testament of Amram, the Watcher Belial is adorned in a cloak ‘many-coloured yet very dark’. Despite the habit among medieval artists of portraying angels with bodies covered with feathers, which has no real basis in biblical tradition, I felt this statement concerning feathers to be very important indeed. It also seemed like an oversight on the part of the scribe who conveyed this story into written form, for having added wings to the description of the two ‘men’, why bother to go on to say they wore garments of feathers? Surely this confusion between wings and feather coats could have been edited to give the Watchers a more appropriate angelic appearance.

Somehow I knew that here was a key to unlocking this strange mystery. It suggested that, if the original fallen race had indeed been human, then they may have adorned themselves in garments of this nature as part of their ceremonial dress. The use of totemic forms, such as animals and birds, has always been the domain of the shaman, the priest-magician of tribal communities. In many early cultures the soul itself was said to have taken the form of a bird to make its flight from this world to the next, which is why it is often depicted as such in ancient religious art. This idea may well have stemmed from the widely held belief that astral flight could only be achieved by using ethereal wings, like those of birds – a view that almost certainly helped to inspire the idea that angels, as messengers of God, should be portrayed with wings in Judaeo-Christian iconography.

To enhance this mental link with a shaman’s chosen bird, he or she would adorn their body with a coat of feathers and spend long periods studying the bird’s every action. They would enter its natural habitat and watch every facet of its life – its method of

flight, its eating habits, its courtship rituals and its movements on the ground. By so doing they would hope to become as birds themselves, an alter-personality adopted by them on a semi-permanent basis. Totemic shamanism is more or less dependent on the indigenous animals or birds present in the locale of a culture or tribe, although in principle the purpose has always been the same – to use this mantle to achieve astral flight, divine illumination, spirit communication and the attainment of otherworldly knowledge and wisdom.

So could the Watchers and Nephilim have been bird-men as well as walking serpents?

The answer is almost certainly yes, for in one Enochian text discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁷ the Nephilim sons of the fallen angel Shemyaza, named as 'Ahyâ and 'Ohyâ, experience dream-visions in which they both visit a world-garden and see two hundred trees being felled by heavenly angels.¹⁸ Not understanding the purpose of this allegory, they put the subject to the Nephilim council, who appoint one of their number, named Mahawai, to go on their behalf to consult Enoch, who now resides in an earthly Paradise. To this end Mahawai then:

*[. . . rose up into the air] like the whirlwinds, and flew with the help of his hands like [winged] eagle [. . . over] the cultivated lands and crossed Solitude, the great desert, [. . .]. And he caught sight of Enoch and he called to him . . .*¹⁹

Enoch explains that the two hundred trees represent the two hundred rebel Watchers, while the felling of their trunks signifies their destruction in the coming conflagration and deluge. More significant, however, is the means by which Mahawai attains astral flight, for he is said to have used 'his hands like (a) [winged] eagle'. Elsewhere in the same Enochian text, Mahawai is said to have adopted the guise of a bird to make another long journey.²⁰ On this occasion, he narrowly escapes being burnt up by the sun's heat and is only saved after heeding the celestial voice of Enoch, who convinces him to turn back and not die prematurely – a story that has close parallels with Icarus' fatal flight too near the sun in Greek mythology.

In addition to this evidence, a variation of this same text equates

Shemyaza's sons 'not (with) the . . . eagle, but his wings', while in the same breath the two brothers are described as 'in their nest',²¹ statements which prompted the Hebrew scholar J. T. Milik to conclude that, like Mahawai, they too 'could have been bird-men'.²²

Is it really possible that the Watchers might have belonged to a race or culture which practised an advanced form of bird shamanism? Were they shamans themselves, able to communicate with the spirit world and experience dream-visions through astral flight? All the extant works featuring the legends of the Watchers and Nephilim are primarily concerned with dream-visions, the products of astral flight and journeys to the other world. This strongly supports the view that the original source of these visionary tracts was a race or culture that employed the use of shamanistic practices of the sort expressed within their very pages.

The idea of bird-men acting as the bringers of knowledge and wisdom to mortal kind is not unique to the Middle East. An African tribe called Dan, who live close to the village of Man on the Ivory Coast, say that at the beginning of time, in the days of their first ancestors, a race of 'attractive human birds appeared, possessing all the sciences which they handed on to mankind'. Even today the tribal artists make copper representations of these bird-men, who are shown with human bodies and heads supporting long beaks, like those of birds of prey.²³

Might these 'attractive human birds' have been what the Book of Enoch describes as Watchers? The bird-men of the Ivory Coast would certainly appear to have played a similar role to that of the rebel angels in Hebraic tradition.

Could this new-found connection between Watchers and shamanism now throw further light on their association with serpents, the bringers of knowledge and wisdom in so many ancient mythologies? In the Book of Enoch, the Watcher named Kâsdejâ is accused of showing men how to take away 'the bites of the serpent',²⁴ knowledge that would in past ages have gone hand in hand with the magical duties of priest-magicians, or shamans, deemed to have power over snakes. As in the case of bird shamanism, serpent shamans would have adorned themselves with snake relics and carried serpent-related items, such as snake charms and a long rod or pole adorned with serpentine symbols, helping to explain why the

Watchers and Nephilim were referred to as serpents. Furthermore, both birds and snakes were seen by many Middle Eastern cultures as ultimate symbols of transformation of the soul, bringing together these two quite separate forms of totemic practice.

One thing was certain, the ornithomorphic association with both the Watchers and the Nephilim was clearly not meant to convey the idea that they possessed heavenly wings in the traditional sense. It was, however, possible that the repeated usage of bird symbolism in connection with angelic beings may have led early Hebrew and Christian scholars and scribes to *assume* this very thing – a confusion which, like so many other mistranslations or misrepresentations of early religious scriptures, led to the iconographic forms of angels and fallen angels as we know them today.

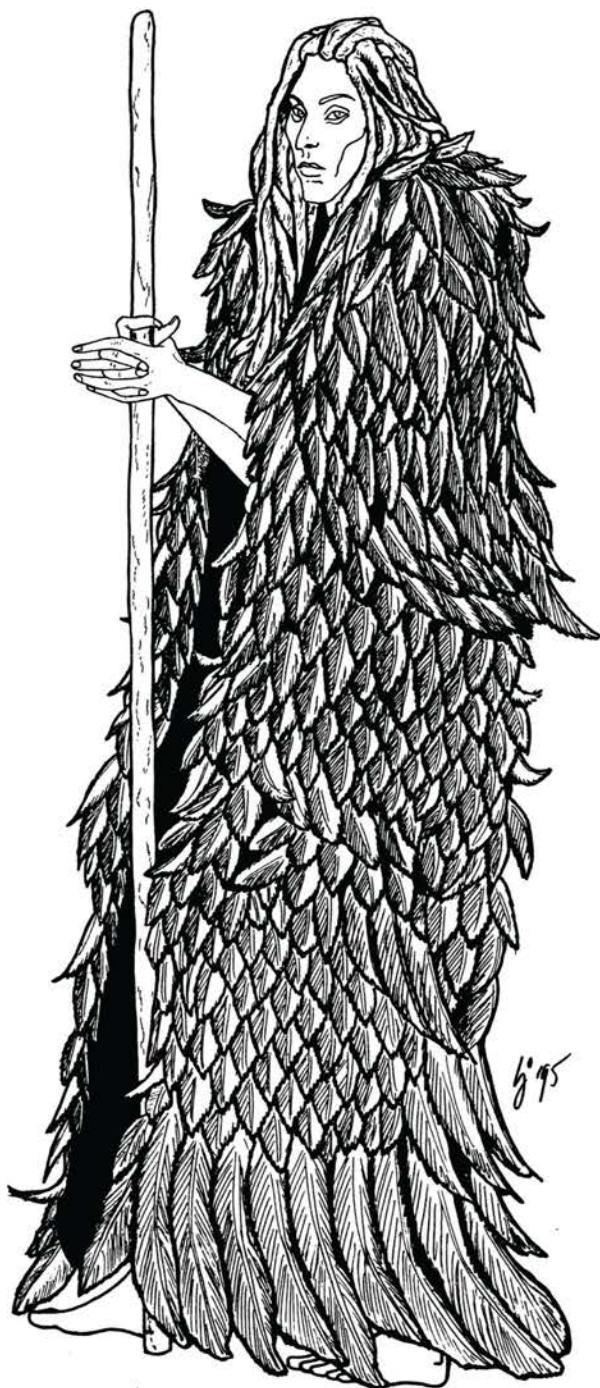
The Face of a Watcher

It was beginning to appear as if the whole concept of angels had been born out of misconceptions concerning either references to heavenly beings in Old Testament tradition, who may well have had quite earthly origins in the first place, or mythological beings and protective spirits borrowed from other contemporary cultures. Strip these away from the literature and you are left with bizarre yet highly descriptive accounts of anthropomorphic figures, such as the Watchers, who probably only became synonymous with the term *mal'akh*, or 'angel', long after their legends had been accepted into Hebrew mythology. More disconcerting was the knowledge that the world's current perception of angels bore little resemblance to their earliest recorded appearances, whether as physical denizens that once walked this earth or as incorporeal beings of faith alone.

So what did they really look like?

Using the various individual components deduced from the different accounts given of the fallen race found in Enochian and Dead Sea literature, I asked an accomplished artist, the author and illustrator Billie Walker-John, to draw a composite picture of a Watcher. Although this was simply meant to be an interesting exercise, the finished result was stunning to say the least. The striking,

FROM THE ASHES OF ANGELS



almost amoral face of this walking bird-man with his shaman's staff was utterly mesmerizing, even a little chilling in some respects. Most disturbing was the knowledge that the black-and-white drawing portrayed the most accurate depiction of an angelic being executed in modern times. So who were these people? And why had the world forgotten them?

Fig. 3. Billie Walker-John's composite impression of a Watcher or angelic being based on descriptions given in early Judaic sources such as the Book of Enoch and Dead Sea literature. This most ancient image of a so-called 'angel' contrasts markedly to the more familiar images conveyed by Renaissance art and nineteenth-century Pre-Raphaelite paintings (see also Plate 22).

WHEN GIANTS WALKED THE EARTH

If we read the Book of Genesis, we can see just how out of place the story of the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men appears to be in comparison with the rest of its eclectic contents. Indeed, if it is correct to assume that the account of the Fall of Man and the Serpent of Eden reflect an abstract rendition of the fall of the Watchers, then the whole story is included twice.¹

Adding to the mysterious nature of Genesis 6 is the fact that there are, neither before nor after these verses, any direct references to the coming of the Sons of God, the Nephilim or the Mighty Men (*gibborim*). Nor are there any references anywhere in the Bible to equate the *bene ha-elohim* with the Watchers. This information comes only from the Enochian literature of the first and second centuries BC. To add to the confusion, the term *bene ha-elohim* actually translates as 'the sons of the gods', while the name *elohim* is a female noun with an irregular plural, implying not 'gods' at all, but 'sons of the goddesses'. Never is this theological 'hot potato' sufficiently explained, and for my purposes it seemed best to stick simply with the idea that the term referred to fallen angels alone, without evoking a fixed gender.

So what about the rest of the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Old Testament, traditionally accredited to Moses the lawgiver? Could this provide me with additional clues to the origin of the Genesis chapter concerning the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men, along with their subsequent incarceration and the destruction of their offspring, the Nephilim?

Glancing through the chapters of Genesis that immediately follow these enigmatic verses, we read about the generations of Noah and his subsequent role as the saviour of both humanity and

the animal kingdom. It is a story that all of us learn in primary school, yet like most of Genesis it is awkwardly worded, confusing, repetitive and highly contradictory in its statements.

The Bible says that God purged the earth of its corruption and iniquity by bringing about a universal deluge, yet nowhere does it say that the Sons of God, the Nephilim or the Mighty Men, were destroyed by these global cataclysms. This fact has to be assumed by the reader simply because Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, are the sole survivors of the Great Flood. Moreover, there is much evidence to suggest that some members of the fallen race actually survived these troubled times.

Races of Giants

Scattered throughout the Pentateuch are enigmatic references to the existence of giants living in the bible lands long after the generations of Noah. These terrifying individuals almost invariably feature in wars waged against foreign raiders and the Israelite peoples by indigenous Canaanite tribes; Canaan being the name given to Palestine, Western Syria and Lebanon in Old Testament times.

If we look at the later chapters of Genesis, we will find references to giants living in the age of the prophet Abraham, a date usually fixed at around 2000 BC. Several verses deal with how Chedorlaomer, the king of ancient Elam, a country placed in the highlands of south-west Iran, encounters no less than three tribes of giants, who rise up against him and are defeated by his forces in the land of Canaan. They are listed as 'the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim . . . the Zuzims in Ham; and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim'.²

Later, in the Book of Deuteronomy, which deals with the wanderings of the Jewish tribes, following the Exodus out of Egypt at the time of Moses, the text speaks of Canaan as 'a land of Rephaim', or giants, where the 'Rephaim dwelt therein aforetime'. Because of their reported great stature, in many translations of the Bible from the original Hebrew, the word 'giants' is rendered instead of 'Rephaim'. Deuteronomy also tells us that 'the Ammonites

call them Zamzummins: a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakim'.³

As tall 'as the Anakim'?

Who then were the Anakim? And how might they relate to the Watchers and Nephilim? Reaching for my weighty, leather-bound edition of *Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible*, I turned to its edition of *Cruden's Concordance* – the complete listing of all names, terms and expressions found in the Bible. There are a number of further entries for the Anakim, the most important of which is found in the Book of Numbers:

*And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, which come of the Nephilim: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*⁴

So the Anakim are specifically cited as the descendants of the legendary Nephilim. Elsewhere the Anakim are referred to as the inhabitants of Canaan, 'a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof: and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature'.⁵ Reading on, it actually names the 'sons of Anak', or Anakim, as Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, although no further details are given concerning their appearance.⁶ They are encountered by the spies sent out by Joshua, Moses' successor, to report back on the inhabitants of Hebron, or Kirjath-arba, 'the chief city of the Anakim', situated in what is today southern Palestine,⁷ before they are attacked and finally defeated by one of these 'spies', named Caleb.⁸

So the Anakim were destroyed, but survivors of their race probably lived on, and certainly did so in the minds of the Old Testament chroniclers. They may have been three brothers from the town of Hebron, one of Palestine's most ancient cities, but there is every indication that they were also a powerful race in their own right who inhabited Canaan from very earliest times.

The word Anak is generally taken by Jewish scholars to mean 'long-necked',⁹ or 'the men with the necklaces',¹⁰ conjuring an immediate image of the ring collars worn even today by certain tribes of central Africa. Was this yet another physical feature of the original fallen race – long necks bearing ringed necklaces?

The enormous size of the Anakim is, of course, to be taken with

a large pinch of salt; yet why were the Anakim seen as direct lineal descendants of the Nephilim, the progeny of the fallen angels who were supposedly wiped out at the time of the Great Flood? No explanation is given, and the reader is left to assume that they must have been linked in some way to the family of Noah, who himself bore the traits of the Watchers and Nephilim.

King Og of Bashan

Most renowned of the giants of Canaan was the legendary King Og of the land of Bashan, who with his brother Sihon controlled vast areas of land that stretched for many hundreds of miles in every direction. Being himself a descendant of the Rephaim,¹¹ Og is said to have resided 'at Ashtaroth and at Edrei',¹² the latter being a giant city identified with the modern Jordanian town of Der'a, some thirty miles east of the southern end of the Sea of Galilee. Here archaeologists have uncovered a vast subterranean city, cut deep into the bedrock, beneath the existing buildings of the town, although how it might be linked with King Og is uncertain.¹³

The kingdom of Bashan, the so-called 'land of the Rephaim',¹⁴ or giants, supposedly extended from Mount Hermon in the north of Canaan to Gilead in the south, a region geographically placed on the east side of the Jordan river.¹⁵ It was here that almost six hundred years before, according to the Bible, the Elamite king Chedorlaomer apparently 'smote the Rephaim', King Og's own ancestors, in the age of the patriarch Abraham.¹⁶ It is also interesting to note that Og was said to have reigned 'in Mount Hermon',¹⁷ the most northerly point of his kingdom and the location where, according to the Book of Enoch, the rebel Watchers 'descended'.

Various Hebrew myths outside the Bible cite King Og as the progeny of Hiya, a son of the fallen angel Shemyaza, and a woman who subsequently became the wife of Ham, the son of Noah.¹⁸ Og was said to have escaped the Deluge by clinging to a rope ladder attached to the Ark and being daily fed through a port hole by Noah himself. He took pity on the giant after he swore to repent and become his slave! Afterwards, however, Og apparently resumed his wicked ways.¹⁹

Quaint as the story of Og's survival of the Deluge may seem, it makes nonsense of biblical chronology, for if this giant king *had* existed at the time of the Great Flood – which is seen by theologians as having taken place in '2348 BC'²⁰ – then he would have been around 1,100 years old at the time of Moses. Stories such as this were almost certainly concocted at a very late stage in the development of Hebrew myth and legend, their purpose being to account for the existence in Canaan of outsized indigenous tribes such as the Anakim, the Emim, the Rephaim, the Zuzim, as well as the peoples under the leadership of King Og, who were encountered by the first Israelites when they entered this foreign land from Mesopotamia at the beginning of the second millenium BC.

Many of these giant races were quite obviously looked upon as actual lineal descendants of the Nephilim, whose existence must still have been entrenched in the minds of the first Israelites. Yet there is very little evidence whatsoever outside Jewish religious literature for the existence of these giant races, either from other contemporary sources of the time or from archaeological discoveries made over the past hundred years or so of biblical exploration. At first sight this may seem a disconcerting realization, and one which has grave implications for the historical reality of the Watchers and Nephilim in more distant times. However, there is no reason why 'giants' should *not* have existed in the bible lands in distant ages. Variations of anything up to eighteen inches between individuals of different races or cultures were not unusual in prehistoric times. Indeed, such differences are still common today. One has only to look at an American basketball team to see that seven-foot tall 'giants' exist, and from a mythological context it is this distinction alone that leads us to evoke terms such as 'giant' and 'dwarf', *not* the specific size of cultures or races as a whole.

Mention must also be made here of the most famous giant of all in biblical tradition, and this is Goliath, David the shepherd boy's gigantic opponent, who is said to have belonged to the tribe of Gath and to have fought alongside the Philistine army. In the well-known story, presented in 2 Samuel, this enormous figure of a man was said to have been ten feet tall and to have worn a copper coat of mail weighing an incredible 120 pounds.²¹ He also carried a spear

weighing 15 pounds, which apparently possessed a shaft 'like a weaver's beam'.

Could a person of this size and strength ever have walked the earth?

The answer is very possibly yes, for despite the lack of archaeological evidence for the presence in the past of actual giant races, there is compelling evidence to suggest that individuals of this size did once exist. Too many outsized human remains, worked tools and stone coffins have been unearthed in different parts of the world, from ancient times down to the present era, for such traditions to be dismissed out of hand.²² These accounts, often published in sane and sober journals and books, refer mainly to isolated discoveries and therefore *do not* constitute hard evidence for the existence of whole races of giants.

Despite such shortcomings, it does not follow that the bold accounts of giant races roaming the earth in Old Testament times are completely worthless. Far from it, they appeared vital to my understanding of the roots behind the terms and expressions used by the chroniclers of Genesis to recall the former existence of the angelic race who fell from heaven.

Source of the Nephilim

The Book of Numbers specifically refers to the Anakim as descendants of the Nephilim – not the Watchers, or the Sons of God, but the Nephilim. This is important, for it implies that at the time of Moses, when the core material for the Pentateuch was being established and recorded for the first time, only the term 'Nephilim' was used to denote the giant race who had fallen because of its lust for mortal women in antediluvian times. If, for a moment, we disregard the contentious lines of Genesis 6 as much later interpolations (see below), it would appear that other terms for the fallen race, such as Watchers and Sons of God, were clearly *unknown* to the Israelite tribes at the time of Moses, c. 1300 BC.

This implies that *nephilim*, a word meaning the 'fallen ones', or 'those who have fallen', was the *original* name given by the Israelites to the fallen angels. Strange confirmation of this suggestion



comes from rereading Genesis 6. Verse 2 speaks of the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men, while in contrast verse 4 states firmly that: 'The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, *and also after that*, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men [*author's emphasis*].'

'*And also after that . . .*'

The meaning was clear enough: there were two quite separate traditions entangled here – one concerning the fallen race known to the early Israelites as the Nephilim, and the other concerning the *bene ha-elohim*, the Sons of God, who are identified directly with the Watchers of Enochian tradition.

So was this assumption correct? Could I find some kind of scholastic support for such a contention? Once again, I would not be the first person to point out the seemingly paradoxical reference in Genesis 6:4 to two quite independent fallen races, for theologians have long pondered over this puzzle. Yet only one modern-day Hebrew scholar has attempted to explain its presence. In an important article published in the *Hebrew Union College Annual* of 1939, under the rather uninspiring title of 'The Mythological Background of Psalm 82', Julian Morgenstern came to the quite astonishing conclusion that there must have been two quite separate occasions when the angels fell from heaven – once through lust and a second time through pride.²³

Despite the originality of this solution, in my view it simply muddies the picture, for the easiest answer would be to accept that two separate renditions of the same story somehow became confusingly joined by the compilers of Genesis. On the one hand, there was the story of the *nephilim*, the fallen race seen by the early Israelites, and perhaps even by the indigenous tribes of Canaan, as the progenitors of the much later giant races of the Bible; while on the other, there were the quite separate stories concerning the *bene ha-elohim*, the Sons of God, the Watchers of the Book of Enoch. In some way the two traditions had become fused as one to form the enigmatic verses of Genesis 6, while in the Enochian literature the Nephilim were demoted to being purely the giant offspring of

Map 1. Principal biblical locations associated with the early patriarchs and giant races of biblical tradition.

the Sons of God. Everything pointed towards the fact that the lines of Genesis 6 had either been added to the Bible at a much later date, or else that they had been seriously tampered with to include the two quite independent origins of the Nephilim and Watchers.

For the moment, it was important to examine the rest of the Pentateuch to see whether it could throw further light on the origins and age of the story of the Watchers.

A Goat for Azazel

Only one other possible reference to the fall of the angels is to be found in the Pentateuch. According to the Book of Leviticus, each year on the feast of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the Israelites would sacrifice two he-goats. One animal was offered up to God, so that he might absolve the Jews of their sins, while the other was set aside 'for Azazel', who is named as a leader of the Watchers in the Book of Enoch.²⁴ During this sacrificial rite the priest is said to have placed both hands on the head of the goat 'for Azazel' and to have confessed 'over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins'. He would then send the animal away 'by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness',²⁵ where it would plunge to its death over a steep cliff, recalling the plight of the fallen angel Azazel, who was seen as perpetually bound and chained in the wilderness. In much later times, a red or scarlet ribbon was apparently tied to the goat's head to represent these sins, since it states in Isaiah that 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow'.²⁶

Further expanding on the barbaric ritual of the 'scapegoat', as the goat is referred to instead of 'Azazel' in the Authorized Version of the Bible, are the words of rabbi Moses ben Nahmen, who in the twelfth century AD wrote:

*God has commanded us, however, to send a goat on Yom Kippur to the ruler whose realm is in the places of desolation. From the emanation of his power come destruction and ruin . . . His portion among the animals is the goat. The demons are part of his realm and are called in the Bible seirim (legendary he-goats fostered by Azazel).*²⁷

Whether or not this suggests the survival into the Middle Ages of the scapegoat ritual is not specified, although it does show the importance it must still have held for the Jews of medieval Europe.

The scapegoat was conceived as embodying the spirit of Azazel, and in so doing it was able to carry away the sins of the Jews, a role which Jesus Christ was voluntarily to undertake in much later Christian tradition. The association of the scapegoat with both sin and impurity eventually led to it becoming an animal of Satan and the Devil in early Christianity – a figurative connection it sadly retains to this day. Even the inverted, or reversed, pentagram, seen by Western society as embodying ultimate evil, stems exclusively from this strange association between Azazel and the scapegoat ritual. Since Victorian times, this abhorred symbol has been seen as a sign of the goat of the witches, the two upright points signifying the animal's horns 'attacking the heavens',²⁸ an empty and meaningless legend that has no basis in ancient religious law, either Jewish or Christian. How so simple a design can have come to be so reviled by so many people is a mystery in itself. Yet knowledge that this association between the Devil and the goat stems back to the punishment administered to Azazel makes the inverted pentagram one of the only symbols actually to preserve the memory of the fall of the Watchers.

To Act Like Angels

Although the scapegoat ritual is no longer practised, the Day of Atonement is still revered as the holiest festival in the Jewish calendar. It forms the climax of a ten-day period that begins with the Jewish New Year – a date that usually falls during either late September or early October in the Gregorian calendar. For Jews worldwide, Yom Kippur is a time when all sin is renounced and everyone has to make the choice between either obeying or disobeying the divine sovereignty of God. The day is marked by a twenty-four hour period of prayer and fasting in which a Jew must not eat, drink, anoint with oil, wear sandals or have sexual intercourse. Instead he or she must continually praise God in emulation of his

angels, for it is on this one day of the year that Jews must attempt to serve God *'as if they were angels [author's emphasis]'*.²⁹

'As if they were angels?'

Was this simply a metaphorical statement, or could there be some more deep-rooted assertion behind this tradition?

Throughout the twenty-four hour period that constitutes Yom Kippur, it has always been believed that Satan possesses no power over the life of a Jew, and because of this God invites his adversary to look in on the homes of Jewish families to see what they are doing. Satan will hopefully find them fasting and praying like angels 'dressed in white garments', upon which he is forced to admit: "They are like angels and I have no power over them." Whereupon God binds Satan in chains and declares to His people: "I have forgiven you all".³⁰

That Satan should be annually bound and chained while the Jews themselves attempt to emulate angels 'dressed in white garments' is difficult to understand in conventional theological terms. To a non-Jew, such curious and somewhat naïve beliefs and customs are baffling, to say the least, yet since they relate to the very day on which the rite of the scapegoat once took place, it seems likely that the original adversary in this story was not Satan at all but Azazel. Moreover, the practice of becoming 'like angels' on the Day of Atonement is almost certainly a distant echo of the fall of the Watchers and the punishment supposedly suffered by Azazel because of his corruption of humanity, prior to its destruction at the time of the Great Flood. If this theory is correct, it provides solid evidence to suggest that the traditions concerning the fall of the angels existed in both Judaic myth and ritual as far back as the establishment of the Israelite tribes following the Exodus out of Egypt, the period when the scapegoat ritual presumably first entered Mosaic tradition.

Yet are the contents of the Pentateuch really to be trusted? How are we to know that the references to the scapegoat ritual were themselves not much later interpolations?³¹ Furthermore, how are we to know that the verses concerning the existence in Canaan of indigenous giant races were also not added at some later date in its construction? For example, much of Deuteronomy, in which these references appear, is thought to have been compiled, not at the time

of the Exodus of Moses, but by Jewish scribes living in Jerusalem as late as the seventh century BC.³²

Moses is supposed to have left the Pentateuch to the Jewish peoples as its Torah, or Holy Law. And yet it was only after the time of the so-called Babylonian Captivity in the sixth century BC that much of what we know today as the Old Testament was first set down in writing.³³ Indeed, other than a small rolled silver amulet,³⁴ inscribed in Hebrew with a form of the Priestly Blessing found in the Book of Numbers (one of five books of the Pentateuch)³⁵ and dated to the sixth century BC, there is no hard evidence *whatsoever* for the existence of the Bible before post-exilic times. Emphasizing this rather disconcerting situation may, I realize, look rather cynical, though I certainly accept that large tracts of the Old Testament are not only period set but also contain invaluable information concerning the history of the Middle East from its very earliest times through till the establishment of the Christian era. It was, however, with this more sceptical view at the forefront of my mind that I was going to have to continue my search for the original sources behind the story of the Watchers, for only by establishing how and when this tradition first entered Hebrew myth and legend could I begin to understand its true implications.

ANGELS IN EXILE

Exactly where did the legends of the Watchers originate? Had they been carried into the Essene communities of the Dead Sea by wandering *zaddiks*, the wild rainmakers who claimed direct descent from Noah and preached the teachings of the Kabbalah? If so, then who were these people and where had they obtained such stories? Had they been passed on by word of mouth among the Israelite tribes since time immemorial? Or did they have some more recent point of origin, perhaps in another Middle Eastern country?

Maybe the key lay in the Bible itself, which, despite the late construction of some of its individual books, could often be dated like the rings of a tree. To the trained eye the approximate date at which certain religious themes, passages or ideas first entered mainstream Jewish thought could be calculated with some degree of accuracy. Therefore, if the term *'îr*, 'watcher', appeared in the Bible itself, then I had every chance of predicting when and how the term first filtered into rabbinical teachings.

Reaching once again for *Hitchcock's New and Complete Analysis of the Holy Bible*, I turned to *Cruden's Concordance* and thumbed through until I found the entries for 'watcher'. There turned out to be just four. The first, in the Book of Jeremiah, speaks of 'watchers' who 'come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah', foreigners being implied here, and not angels.¹ The other three references, however, all appeared in the Book of Daniel, one of the very last works of the Old Testament.

Before checking out these entries in Daniel, I again played with *Cruden's Concordance*, this time with respect to named angels, like those frequently mentioned in the Book of Enoch. I quickly dis-

covered that just two are recorded in the whole of the Old Testament – Gabriel and Michael – and both appear *only* in the Book of Daniel. Even more significant was the knowledge that only in the Book of Daniel do there appear clear descriptions of Watcher-like beings that closely resemble those found in both the Book of Enoch and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Why should this be so? What was so special about Daniel?

By the Rivers of Babylon

The Book of Daniel is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic. Scholars usually date its contents and style to somewhere around 165 BC, the very time-frame attributed to the construction of the Book of Enoch, with which it is so often compared.²

From a historical point of view, the book focuses on an era beginning in around 606 or 605 BC, when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar invades Judah and enters Jerusalem. There he sacks the Temple of Solomon and carries away many of its treasures, and on his return to Babylon takes with him some of the city's leading craftsmen. He also takes into his service three or four noble youths, one of whom is Daniel, who is thought to have been around seventeen years of age at the time. According to the bible story, the youths are taken into the care of the royal court and possibly even live in the king's palace. Daniel quickly rises in popularity to become a remarkable figure of great renown, noted for his strict adherence to the Torah, the Holy Law established by Moses, and for his 'wisdom'. He also possesses other more highly prized qualities, including the ability to interpret dreams. In time Daniel becomes governor of the province of Babylon as well as chief governor over the city's 'wise men' – its astrologers, Chaldeans (learned men) and soothsayers.

During this period Nebuchadnezzar apparently experiences a very strange dream. None of the 'wise men' can interpret its meaning, so the king summons Daniel. In his presence, Nebuchadnezzar then recites the contents of his vision in which he has seen 'a tree in the midst of the earth', with 'fair' leaves and fruit, that grew and grew until it reached heaven. Beneath its boughs were the beasts of

the field sheltering in shadow, while the fowl of the air 'dwelt in its branches'.³ Nebuchadnezzar then apparently saw 'a watcher and an holy one [*who*] came down from heaven'. This shining being cried out to the king, telling him to cut down the tree and leave only 'the stump of his roots in the earth'.⁴

These verses in the Book of Daniel are then followed with the lines:

*The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men.*⁵

Daniel, having listened to Nebuchadnezzar's recital of his dream, explains that the mighty tree represents the king himself, whose 'greatness is grown, and reacheth to heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth'. It foretells, he says, his imminent downfall, unless, that is, he breaks free of his bonds and accepts the Most High as the only true God.⁶ Then finally, for the third and last time, the term '*îr*', 'watcher', appears in the text: 'And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven.'⁷

Nowhere else in the Bible does the term '*îr*' appear in connection with the appearance of angels. This placed its usage firmly in the time-frame of the Book of Daniel, written at around the same period as the Book of Enoch. Even further supporting this link is the way in which Nebuchadnezzar's downfall is prophesied by tree-felling imagery, exactly as the destruction of the Watchers is described in some of the Enochian material found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁸

The Jews in Exile

The prophet lived long, and was still present at Nebuchadnezzar's palace when events took a turn for the worse for the Jews back in his native Jerusalem. The city had been left alone by the Babylonian army for some years when a new uprising forced Nebuchadnezzar to return to Judah and again besiege the capital. It fell in the year 598 BC, and on his return to Babylon the king is said to have taken

into captivity an estimated 10,000 Jews. Another uprising in 586 BC apparently forced him to return once more to Jerusalem, and this time he not only sacked the Temple, he also razed it to the ground. He is also said to have returned to Babylon with almost the entire population of Jerusalem. This must have amounted to a figure upward of 100,000. Henceforth the people of Judah join those already in bondage and enter what is referred to in Jewish history as the period of captivity, or exile.

Nebuchadnezzar eventually dies in 562 BC and is followed by a succession of rulers, the last of whom, Belshazzar, also features in the prophet's story. Daniel apparently continues as governor and dream-interpreter, eventually rising to the position of 'third ruler' of Babylon, after the 'second ruler' Belshazzar, and the 'first ruler' Nabonidus (or Nabû-na'id) – Belshazzar's father, who has left the affairs of the kingdom in the hands of his son while he himself is off fighting a war in Arabia.

It is in the first year of Belshazzar's reign that Daniel is himself troubled by an apocalyptic 'night vision' in which he sees many strange things that act as portents of future events. In this the prophet witnesses a Watcher-like being, with an appearance that could have been lifted straight from the pages of the Book of Enoch, for he says:

I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool'.⁹

Comparisons with the description of the infant Noah as given in the Book of Enoch are obvious.¹⁰ Had one account influenced the other? Which came first – the Book of Daniel or the Book of Enoch?

The now elderly prophet is also called upon by Belshazzar to interpret strange handwriting that appears on a wall during a great banquet. The prophet predicts imminent doom, and soon afterwards Belshazzar is killed as Babylon falls to the Persians under the command of Cyrus the Great; the date being 539 BC. One of Cyrus' kinsmen, Darius, is set up on the throne of Babylon, and it is after this date that Daniel is cast into the lions' den because of his fidelity to God. According to the story, the prophet is saved from

certain death by divine intervention, and afterwards Darius is said to have issued a decree enjoining 'reverence for the God of Daniel'.¹¹

Daniel himself continues to experience dream-visions. For instance, during the third year of Cyrus' reign, presumably over Babylon, the prophet is said to have fasted for three weeks and while standing on the banks of the great river Hiddekel – the ancient Akkadian name for the Tigris – beheld:

*a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz: his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.*¹²

The similarity between the divine being in this account and the 'very tall' men with 'faces' that 'shone like the sun' and eyes 'like burning lamps', who appear before Enoch as he rests in his bed, is undeniable.¹³ Only the colour of their skin has changed – from 'as white as snow' in the Enochian text to 'burnished brass' in the Book of Daniel.

The Watcher-like being before Daniel can be seen only by him; however, as the prophet stands trembling at the awesome sight, the apparition announces that he has been negotiating with the Persians, yet, in the words of the angel:

*the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: and I remained there with the kings of Persia.*¹⁴

The identity of the radiant being is never made clear, though its purpose in the waking vision is to inform Daniel of the fate about to befall the exiled Jews now that the Persians have taken Babylon. Yet here, too, is the first reference in the Old Testament to the archangel Michael, who is said to have come to the aid of the apparition during his negotiations with the Persians, a seemingly human action surely outside the domain of angels. Exactly what is going on here is unclear, though it is worth noting that in Hebrew tradition Michael is the archangel who presides over the heavenly affairs of the Israelite nation.¹⁵

After taking Babylon, Cyrus the Great continues westwards until, just one year later, in 538 BC, he takes Jerusalem. It is only then that the Jews of Babylon are finally given their freedom. An estimated 50,000 apparently return, leaving six times this amount in the land to which they had been taken in bond.¹⁶ Many thousands more journey two hundred miles eastwards to the city of Susa, the old Elamite capital in south-west Persia, where Darius had established a summer palace. Why there should have been this reluctance among the Jews to return to their native country is open to speculation. Perhaps they did not wish to make the long journey back to Jerusalem on foot, or had elderly relatives who would never have survived the return. It is also possible that many of the Babylonian Jews saw new opportunities opening for them, not just in the land that had become their only home, but in Persia itself. Furthermore, both Cyrus and Darius had extended a religious tolerance to those Jews who remained in Babylon and Persia, enabling them to practise their faith relatively unhindered.

According to the Book of Daniel, the now elderly prophet is among those who move on to the Persian court at Susa. Earlier, however, during the third year of Belshazzar's reign, Daniel experienced another dream in which he was taken in mind to the city of Susa. Here he witnessed a symbolic struggle between a ram and a he-goat (representing the overthrow of the Persian Empire by the Greeks, which does not occur until 330 BC). He also heard 'a man's voice between the banks of Ulai (a river named the Choasper, or *Kerkhan*, laying some twenty miles north of Susa), which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.'¹⁷

Following these lines, Gabriel then makes his one and only cameo appearance in the Old Testament to explain to Daniel the meaning of his dream-vision. The archangel does not appear again until he announces the birth of both John the Baptist and the virgin-born child to Mary in the New Testament's Gospel of Luke.¹⁸

Daniel finally dies in Susa, a very old man indeed; however, the plight of the Jews in exile is not yet over. Large numbers stay on in Babylon and Susa until the new Persian king, Artaxerxes, signs a

decree permitting the restoration of the Jewish state in 458 BC; the Temple of Jerusalem having been completed and rededicated in 515 BC. Yet still there is a reluctance among the Jews to return to their homeland. Some 5,000 return in the company of a priestly scribe named Ezra, following Artaxerxes' signing of the decree, while in 445 BC a further batch travel with a Jew named Nehemiah, who, prior to the journey, had been cup-bearer, or vizier, to the king.¹⁹ After thirteen years overseeing the restoration of the revitalized Jewish nation, Nehemiah returns to his royal master in Persia, where he finally ends his days. Any Jews still remaining in either Babylon or Susa after this date are simply lost to the pages of history.

A Man of Many Faces

The works accredited to Daniel contain potent, moralistic stories that won favour among the Jews following their return from exile. This was especially so during the terrible suppression they suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria, who ruled Judaea at the commencement of the Maccabean revolt of 167 BC. It is almost certainly because of these troubled times that many of the fireside stories remaining from the days of the Babylonian Captivity were put into written form.

In all likelihood Daniel was a composite figure, a man of many faces, who embodied the life and deeds of more than one individual, perhaps even certain aspects of the various kings whom he allegedly served. To the post-exilic Jews, however, Daniel represented the imprisoned spirit of God's chosen people, from the time of the Captivity right down to the commencement of the Christian era. In the light of this, could I now make sense of why it was only in the Book of Daniel that Watchers, Watcher-like individuals and named angels appeared as heavenly beings in the Old Testament?

Chart 1. RELEVANT BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY.

c. 2000 BC

Abraham leaves the city of Ur; Chedorlaomer, the King of Elam, encounters giant races in Canaan.

c. 1300–1200 BC

Exodus out of Egypt by the Israelites under the command of Moses the Lawgiver. Establishment of Twelve Tribes in Canaan; giant races again encountered here.

c. 1020–970 BC

The future king David fights the Philistines, including the giant Goliath of the tribe of Gath.

970 BC

Following the death of David, Solomon takes the throne of a united Israel.

931–889 BC

Solomon dies and the kingdom gradually splits into two separate kingdoms – Israel in the north and Judah to the south.

722 BC

The northern kingdom of Israel falls to the Assyrians and some 28,000 Israelites are taken into captivity; this signals the end of Israel as a nation. The captives never return from Assyria.

606–605 BC

Nebuchadnezzar succeeds to the Babylonian throne.

598 BC

Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, falls to Nebuchadnezzar. The outgoing king, Jehoiakim, and many leading craftsmen are deported to Babylon; these include the young Daniel. Jehoiakim's son Zedekiah takes the throne.

586 BC

Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem once more. The city falls and is destroyed; the Jews are taken into captivity in Babylon.

562–553 BC

Nebuchadnezzar dies and is succeeded by three successive kings: Amelmarduk, Neriglissar and, finally, Nabonidus. Afterwards the regent, Belshazzar, takes control of Babylon in the king's absence.

540–539 BC

Nabonidus is defeated by Cyrus, king of Persia. Anarchy breaks out in Babylon; the Bible speaks of writing on the wall appearing in Belshazzar's palace during a banquet. Cyrus' army enters Babylon and achieves easy victory.

538 BC

Cyrus takes Jerusalem; all captive Jews in Babylon are allowed their freedom; many move on to Susa in south-west Persia.

537–515 BC

Restoration of the Temple of Jerusalem under Zerubbabel.

478 BC

The Jews still in Susa; biblical story of Esther marrying Xerxes, the Persian king, and thus saving many Jews from massacre.

458 BC

Ezra is sent to Jerusalem by the Persian king Artaxerxes. He takes with him a large number of the remaining Jewish exiles, as well as valuable gifts for the restored Temple.

445 BC

Nehemiah, the Jewish cup-bearer to Artaxerxes at Susa, returns to Jerusalem as its new governor. Kingdom of Judaea is founded.

165 BC

The Book of Daniel is written.

On the Road with Raphael

For the moment I would need to set aside the Book of Daniel, and the Bible as a whole, for I felt this could tell me little more about the origins of the Watchers. Instead, I turned my attention to the

so-called Apocrypha, the collection of seventeen books, or portions of books, that, although originally included in the Christian Bible, were dropped by the early Church Fathers of the fourth century AD. I was looking specifically for one book, the Book of Tobit, for it had emerged that this featured another of the so-called archangels – in this case Raphael, who never appears in the Old Testament, but *does* appear as one of the holy Watchers in the Book of Enoch.

The Book of Tobit focuses on the lives of Israelites belonging to the ten tribes who were apparently carried off to Assyria and ‘the cities of the Medes’ after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to Shalmaneser, the Assyrian king, in 722 BC. Yet, unlike the Jews of the Babylonian Captivity, these tribes never returned from their exile, and are assumed to have lived on in isolated communities for many generations afterwards. Like the Book of Daniel and the Book of Enoch, this apocryphal work was actually constructed only sometime after 200 BC.

The story in question features a righteous man named Tobias, the son of Tobit, who is about to leave Nineveh, the old Assyrian capital, for Ecbatana, one of ‘the cities of the Medes’, in north-west Iran.²⁰ Here Tobias is to win the hand in marriage of a fair maiden named Sara, the daughter of Raguel.²¹ His companion on the long and wearisome journey is Raphael, whose name means ‘healer of God’. As they cross the mountains towards their place of destination, the archangel – who withholds his true identity and instead uses the name Azarius – teaches Tobias many wise things. For example, Tobias catches a huge fish in a river, and Raphael instructs him on how he can use each part of its body by saying:

*Take out the entrails of this fish and lay up his heart, and his gall, and his liver for thee; for these are necessary for useful medicines . . . the gall is good for anointing the eyes, in which there is a white speck, and they shall be cured.*²²

Worthy words for a healer of God, but an art surely beyond the normal undertakings of a divine messenger of heaven. The journey resumes, and on reaching Ecbatana the archangel is sent on to Rages, another Median city, to collect bags of money on behalf of Tobias’ family.²³ Tobias himself eventually wins the hand of Sara,

and on the party's return to Nineveh, Azarius reveals his true identity as 'Raphael, one of the seven holy angels',²⁴ a reference to the group of seven archangels in Hebrew myth and legend.

There seemed little doubt that the story of Tobias and Raphael's journey on the road to Media was merely a quaint fable, created for an allegorical purpose by Jewish story-tellers. Yet the appearance of the archangel in this story seemed important, for it was beginning to look as though angelic beings with specific descriptions, identities, hierarchies and titles had only been adopted by the Jews after their return from exile in Babylon and Susa. If this were true, then from where exactly had these new influences come?

Babylon under the kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in the sixth century BC had been dominated by the cult of Bel, or Bel-Marduk, the state god who was seen as a personification of the sun. His worship was abhorred by the Jews as pagan idolatry, even though Daniel, on entering the Babylonian court, had been given the name Belteshazzar, meaning 'prince of Bel'.²⁵ Since Bel was the god of their oppressors, his cult would never have found favour among the captive Jews, so is unlikely to have had any major influence on the Jewish concept of angels. On the other hand, Babylon at this time was a cosmopolitan city attracting religious cults from every corner of Mesopotamia, so might one of these have found favour and sympathy among the Jews? It is difficult to say, though there *is* good reason to believe that the Assyrian and Babylonian winged temple guardians and sky genii influenced the development of the multi-winged Cherubim and Seraphim. Yet these were never really classed as *mal'akh*, the angels or messengers of heaven.

Iranian Influence

A more fruitful line of inquiry was the major influence that the Persian priesthoods undoubtedly exerted upon the exiled Jews. Many Jewish scribes, prophets and administrators achieved popularity and wealth not just in the old Elamite capital of Susa, but also much deeper into Persia, especially in the north-western kingdom of Media, modern-day Azerbaijan, the setting for much of the

Book of Tobit. So what religious influences might the Jews have been exposed to here?

Before becoming a kingdom in its own right, Media had been a confederation of fierce, mostly highland tribes who had been vassals of the Assyrian Empire of northern Iraq and Syria, before proclaiming their independence in 820 BC. Thereafter they had been ruled by a dynasty of kings, who were known as 'king of kings', the last of whom was overthrown by Cyrus the Great in 550 BC. Two years later, with the unification of all the Iranian and Asian kingdoms, Cyrus established the Persian Empire, initiating a royal dynasty of kings referred to by historians as the Achaemenids. Cyrus now ruled a territory that stretched as far north as the Russian Caucasus, as far east as India and the Chinese Turkman Empire; as far south as Egypt and Ethiopia, and as far west as eastern Europe.²⁶

It is not recorded to what faith Cyrus belonged, though it is likely he followed the religion of the Magi, the Median priestly caste of immense power, who were said to have guarded Cyrus' white marble tomb at his capital city of Pasargadae in southern Persia following his interment in 530 BC.²⁷ Cyrus himself was descended of the old Median dynasty, so he also owed its powerful Magian priesthood some kind of loyalty.²⁸ The origin of this priestly line is unknown. The Medians were a mixed race, with indigenous cultural and religious influences from the mountainous regions of north-west Iran. The only real comparison to the Magi was the Brahman priestly caste of India, with whom they shared many aspects of belief, customs and worship (see Chapter 8). The most famous Magi were, of course, the three 'wise men' who, so the Bible informs us, brought the three gifts for the infant Christ at the time of the Nativity.²⁹

Had the Jews therefore been influenced by the beliefs of the Magi? It was strongly possible; however, there was another, rival religion beginning to take a hold in Persia at this time and this was Zoroastrianism.

The Fall of the Magi

The Magi received their biggest blow in 522 BC when a Median usurper and Magus named Gaumata posed as the regent of Cambyses II, Cyrus' successor, while the king was on a military campaign in north Africa. In so doing the impostor managed to seize control of the Persian throne and proclaim himself ruler of the empire. Cambyses, on hearing of the *coup*, set about returning to Persia, only to be mortally wounded on the home journey. In spite of this tragic accident, Gaumata and his Magi co-conspirators were eventually ousted and slain by Cambyses' successor, Darius, having controlled the empire for several months.³⁰ Thereafter the Magian priesthood was outlawed and persecuted throughout Persia. Indeed, according to the Greek writer Herodotus, on the anniversary of Gaumata's downfall a festival known as Magophobia was instituted. On this day people were encouraged to kill any Magi priests they came across, a custom apparently still taking place in the mid fifth century when Herodotus himself visited Media.³¹

The relegation of the Magian priesthood to one that was scorned and hated by the people allowed the sudden rise in popularity of what later became known as Zoroastrianism, a revitalized form of Iranian religion named after its much celebrated founder, Zoroaster. From the reign of Darius onwards, Zoroastrianism grew to become the new state religion with its own holy books, priesthood and temples in every major town and city. It did everything it could to stamp out Magianism, even though Zoroastrianism probably owed almost its entire creed to the Median religion's ancient teachings.

The Tower of Daniel

The Median capital of Ecbatana, the modern city of Hamadan, was held to be a very sacred place by both the Magi and the Zoroastrians. It was therefore quite astounding to find that it had been not only the place of destination of the archangel Raphael in the Book of Tobit, but also the site of a 'tower' – constructed by the

Chart 2. RELEVANT PERSIAN CHRONOLOGY.

2000–1000 BC

Establishment of Iranian tribes in central and western Asia, following migrations from the plains of southern Russia.

c. 2000–550 BC

Assyria, Media, Babylonia and Lydia are the dominant powers in the Near East.

630 BC

Traditional birth-date of Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrian faith.

581 BC

The birth of Cyrus the Great, a direct descendant of the Median dynasty of kings.

559–548 BC

Cyrus assumes throne of Anshan in western Persia and then conquers the rest of the Iranian continent; establishment of the so-called Achaemenid period of Persian history.

539 BC

Babylonia falls to Cyrus.

530–522 BC

Death of Cyrus and reign of his successor Cambyses II.

526–521 BC

Dynastic troubles; a Magian usurper seizes the Persian throne for four months. Cambyses dies on return from Egypt. His successor, Darius I, assumes control.

485 BC

Coronation of Xerxes, son of Darius.

464–330 BC

Reigns of Artaxerxes I to Darius III.

330 BC

Defeat of Persia by Alexander the Great; end of independency and influence; cessation of Achaemenid dynasty of kings.

c. 247 BC

Establishment of Parthian dynasty in Persia.

224–5 AD

Ardashir I defeats Parthians in three decisive battles and establishes second Persian Empire, also known as the Sassanian dynasty of kings.

640 AD

Fall of the Sassanian kings after their final defeat by the invading Arabs; end of Persian Empire.

prophet Daniel and sanctioned by his patron, Darius I. According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (AD 37–97), the only writer to have preserved any knowledge of this elegant building's great renown, it was said to have been:

*. . . wonderfully made, and it is still remaining, and preserved to this day; and to such as do see it, it appears to have been lately built, and to have been no older than that day when any one looks upon it . . . Now they bury the kings of Media, of Persia, and Parthia, in this tower, to this day; and he who was intrusted with the care of it, was a Jewish priest; which thing is also observed to this day.*³²

If this was correct, then it clearly demonstrated the immense esteem accorded to the Jewish priesthood by the Persian kings, and presumably by the Magi, right down to the first century of the Christian era when Josephus wrote these enigmatic lines. Nothing more was known about Daniel's tower, though classical writers say that Ecbatana was originally surrounded by seven walls, each rising in gradual descent and painted a different colour, reminiscent of the seven-tiered ziggurats of Assyria and Babylonia.³³

Quite obviously there must have been a trafficking of ideas and philosophies between the Magi of Media, the Zoroastrians of Persia and the Jewish exiles. Yet, if this were so, just how much of it might have influenced the contents of the Book of Enoch and the writing of the Dead Sea Scrolls? More important still – had Iran been the point of origin of the post-exilic concept of angels, both of the heavenly and fallen varieties? From even a cursory glance at the

teachings of Zoroastrianism, it seemed the answer was always going to be yes.

The Angels of Zoroaster

Like Judaism, Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion. And like Judaism, it also accepts a whole pantheon of angels, or *yazatas*, who act in accordance with the faith's supreme being, Ahura Mazda, the 'wise lord'. Those angels closest to godhead are known as the *Amesha Spentas*, or *Amshashpands*, whose origins are thought to have developed out of much older Indo-Iranian myths of central Asia dating back to the second or third millenium BC.³⁴ These six 'holy, immortal ones', or 'bounteous immortals', with Ahura Mazda, are equated directly with the Judaic concept of the seven archangels,³⁵ who are found, not just in the Book of Tobit, but also in the Book of Enoch³⁶ and the Dead Sea literature.³⁷

Two notable scholars of Hebrew, W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, recognized the influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism in connection with everything from its concept of angelology to its understanding of demonology, dualism, eschatology, world-epochs and the resurrection of the soul, *especially in the case of the Book of Enoch*. Furthermore, they concluded that these adoptions from the Persian religion undoubtedly occurred when the Jews were in exile at Susa.³⁸ These very same opinions have been shared by scholars of Persian antiquity, such as Richard N. Frye, a former Aga Khan Professor of Iranian Studies at Harvard University, who outlined the powerful cross-fertilization between Zoroastrianism and post-exilic Judaism in his 1963 book *The Heritage of Persia*.³⁹

There seemed little doubt that I was on the right track in my conclusion concerning the Persian influence on the Book of Enoch, so what about the story of the Watchers – had this come from Iran as well? Canon R. H. Charles, the Hebrew scholar whose English translation of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch still stands among the finest to be produced, appeared to think so. He concluded that the myths concerning the Sons of God coming unto the Daughters of Men, as presented in Genesis 6, belonged 'to a very early myth,



Map 2. The Near East in the first millennium BC.

possibly of Persian origin, to the effect that demons had corrupted the earth before the coming of Zoroaster and had allied themselves with women'.⁴⁰

This same opinion was voiced by Professor Philip Alexander, probably one of the foremost authorities on the Book of Enoch. In an important paper entitled 'The Targumim and Early Exegesis of "Sons of God" in Genesis 6', published in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* in 1972, he had this to say about the origin of the Sons of God:

*Angelology flourished in Judaism after the Exile under the influence of Iranian religion. It is very likely that the interpretation of the Sons of God, בני אלהים, as angels was one of the ways in which these rather alien ideas were grafted into the stock of pre-exilic religion and naturalized.*⁴¹

In other words, there seemed every possibility that the legends concerning the Sons of God had first been introduced to Genesis, or certainly revised and restored, at the time when the priestly scribes were busy re-editing the Old Testament, following the Jews' final return from Persia around 445 BC. Since the 'Sons of God' was simply another name for the Watchers, it implied that the traditions concerning their fall, as presented in the Book of Enoch, had stemmed originally from Iran.

Truth and the Lie

Persia would also appear to have had a major influence on the Dead Sea literature. For example, in the Testament of Amram it features the two Watchers who appear to Amram, the father of Moses, as he rests in bed. They ask him 'which one of us do you choose to rule you?', following which they identify themselves as 'Belial . . . [Prince of Darkness] and King of Evil' and 'Michael . . . Prince of Light and King of Righteousness'.⁴² Elsewhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Belial, the Evil One, is equated with adjectives such as 'Darkness' and 'Lying', and 'the Liar', while his equal and opposite number, Michael, or Melchizedek, is tied with terms such as 'Light', 'Righteousness' and 'Truth'.⁴³

The concept of the beholder of the vision being made to choose between light and darkness, truth and lie, righteousness and falsehood, is matched exactly in the Zoroastrian holy books, where an individual is asked to choose between *asha*, 'righteousness' or 'truth', and *druj*, 'falsehood' or 'the Lie'. These dualistic principles are represented on the one hand by Ahura Mazda, the 'wise lord', and on the other by Angra Mainyu (often abbreviated to 'Ahriman' in Persian texts), the 'wicked spirit' or 'prince of evil', who is the Iranian equivalent of Belial, Satan or the Devil.⁴⁴ The idea of a

choice is also strangely reminiscent of the way in which a Jew must choose between either the path of good or the path of evil during the annual festival of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Further confirmation of this link between Zoroastrianism and Dead Sea literature comes from the fact that the followers of the truth among the Essenes were known as 'the Sons of Zadok', i.e. 'Righteousness', or 'the Sons of Truth', while the followers of Belial were known as 'the Sons of Darkness' and 'the Sons of Lying'.⁴⁵ Now we may compare this with Zoroastrian literature, where it speaks of the *ashavans*, the 'followers of Righteousness' or the 'followers of Truth', and the *drvants* – the 'followers of the Lie'.⁴⁶

These were important realizations, for they overwhelmingly confirmed the clear relationship not just between Zoroastrianism and Judaism, but also between the Iranian faith and the teachings of the Dead Sea communities, which, like Daniel, adhered strictly to the laws of Moses. Since there seemed every likelihood that these same religious communities were also responsible for such apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works as the Book of Enoch and the Testament of Amram, there seemed every possibility that the source material for the legends concerning the fall of the Watchers really had come from the rich mythology of Iran.

Yet before I followed in the footsteps of Daniel and departed Palestine for the land in the east that lay beyond the mountains of Babylonia, I still needed to establish one final fact: had anyone ever actually suggested that the Book of Enoch was composed outside of Palestine?

Laurence's Lucky Hunch

Canon R. H. Charles appeared to confirm the Persian influence on the Book of Enoch, but what about Richard Laurence, Archbishop of Cashel, who translated the first English edition of the Ethiopic text deposited in the Bodleian Library by James Bruce of Kinnaird in 1773? What had he to say about the text's country of origin? I read his lengthy introduction to the Book of Enoch and was astonished by what I found. Once he had decided to consider the lat-

itude in which the text is set, he then made a detailed study of the length of the days referred to in Chapter 71. He found that the author of the Book of Enoch had divided these into eighteen parts, or segments, with the longest day consisting of twelve parts; the equivalent of sixteen hours in our own twenty-four-hour clock. Laurence realized that a longest day of this length does not occur in Palestine, this fact instantly dismissing it as the original setting for the Book of Enoch. In this knowledge, he searched for a northerly latitude that experienced a longest day of the time span indicated in the text. In so doing, he was able to conclude that the author was referring to an indigenous climate:

not lower than forty-five degrees north latitude, where the longest day is fifteen hours and a half, nor higher perhaps than forty-nine degrees, where the longest day is precisely sixteen hours. This will bring the country where he wrote, as high up at least as the northern districts of the Caspian and Euxine (or Black) Seas; probably it was situated somewhere between the upper parts of both these seas.

If the latter conjecture be well founded, the author of the Book of Enoch was perhaps one of the tribes which Shalmaneser carried away, and 'placed in Halah and in Habor by the river Goshan, and in the cities of the Medes'; and who never returned from captivity.⁴⁷

Laurence knew he was in the right area. To his mind, the Book of Enoch could *not* have been written in Palestine, but had been composed much further north in the region of Russian Armenia, Georgia or the Caucasus, some 5° north of Iran. Although I had doubts concerning the precise region implied here, I had surmised similar conclusions myself after studying the descriptions of the Watcher-like entities referred to in the Enochian texts. These in no way resembled the olive-skinned Jews of Palestine, but instead conjured the image of tall, fair-skinned individuals with white hair and dark feather coats, surviving in a much cooler climate, like that experienced in more mountainous terrains.

Despite these almost wild assertions he had made, the archbishop could not help but continue to believe that the Book of Enoch *must* have been written by a Jew, but one obviously living in the region under question. As a consequence, he put forward the theory that the text's author had perhaps belonged to one of the ten

tribes supposedly deported to Assyria and Media following the fall of Israel in 722 BC.

Such a hypothesis made little sense, although the proposed link between the author of the Book of Enoch and the ancient kingdom of Media did strike some sort of a chord. In the archbishop's day, scholars had no clear understanding of Zoroastrianism, nor could they have conceived of its heavy influence on Jewish religious thought, this fact making Laurence's detailed observations all the more pertinent to my own study. Clearly, then, here was yet further proof that I should look towards Iran, and in particular to the Magi priesthood of Media and the Zoroastrian faith of Persia, for the next set of keys to unlocking the mysteries of the fallen race.

Eight

TERRIBLE LIE

I needed to know everything there was to know about the beliefs, customs and devotional worship of the Zoroastrians. I needed to know whether it had been their teachings, or those of the Magi priesthood of Media, that provided the knowledge for the Judaic understanding of angelology, and in particular the story concerning the fall of the Watchers.

Books could provide me only with background information, and I realized I needed much more. I also needed direct contact with this living religion, which still existed as a faith in certain parts of India, mostly around Bombay. It was to here that tens of thousands of Zoroastrians migrated from Persia during the ninth century AD in the hope of escaping the increasing persecutions of the Arab invaders. In India the Zoroastrians were called Parsees – the people of *pars*, or Persia – and it is by this name that they are still known to the outside world.

I also discovered that at the beginning of the twentieth century a community of Zoroastrians established themselves in London, and here erected a temple of worship which remains in use today. I had obtained their address from a friend, and, after various letters and telephone calls in which I put forward my interest in the subject, was rather reluctantly invited to attend one of their seasonal services at the London address. The Zoroastrians' cloak of secrecy was totally understandable. The ignorant had always seen their beliefs, customs and worship as, at best, non-Christian, pagan and archaic in the extreme, while over the centuries the Muslims of both Iran and India had systematically attempted to eradicate their faith completely. Since the fall of the Shah's Pahlavi regime in 1979, those Zoroastrians still remaining in Iran had been forced

either to flee the country or to worship in seclusion away from the eyes of the Islamic authorities. This was why Zoroastrian House in London was surrounded by so much secrecy.

There was much I had already learnt about both the Zoroastrians of Persia and the Magi of Media, but the relevance of this historical information still needed to be assessed in my own mind. Any queries could be put to the elders of the temple, who had agreed to speak to me once the service was over.

The journey to the quiet London suburb was by tube. With me was my research assistant Richard Ward, and a female colleague named Debbie Benstead. Once out of the underground, we quickly found the address I had scribbled hastily on a piece of paper the previous week, and looking up saw a large stone building, with an appearance not unlike a late Victorian church and hall combined. Ascending the front steps we entered a stone-floored lobby, already bubbling with activity. Groups of Asians chatted together in their native Persian and Indian tongues – the men dressed in working suits with white skullcaps on their heads, the women in colourful saris and bright headscarves.

Our white appearance and foreign presence easily revealed us as outsiders, prompting a few nervous glances. In response, we smiled politely and attempted not to contravene any temple etiquette. Dressed as formally as our tastes would allow, we waited for someone to approach, until finally, after one or two almost suspicious looks, a well-to-do Asian broke away from his conversation and moved towards us. He introduced himself as the secretary of the society and, having welcomed us to the temple, checked to make sure that Richard and I had brought skullcaps to wear, and that Debbie had a scarf to cover her hair. Cleanliness and purity was of the utmost importance to their faith, for which reason the head must always be suitably veiled to prevent loose hairs from contaminating the sanctity of the temple.

With our headcovers firmly in place, I engaged the secretary in conversation and foolishly referred to Zoroastrians as ‘fire-worshippers’. The man looked sternly towards me and replied curtly: ‘We are *not* “fire-worshippers”. Many people make this mistake. We *venerate* fire as a symbol of our father, Ahura Mazda.’

I felt like sinking into the ground, and apologized profusely. I

should have been more careful with my words. Fire in all its aspects had been sacred to Iranians, before even the birth of Zoroaster, its great prophet whose history was shrouded in mystery and imagination. According to classical sources, Zoroaster lived '258 years before Alexander' – that is 258 years before Alexander the Great destroyed the almighty Persian Empire and sacked its famed white-stone city of Persepolis in 330 BC.¹ This gave a date of 588 BC, although there seemed no real indication whether this was when the great teacher was born; when he received his first visionary revelation at the age of thirty; when he converted his mentor, a central Asian king named Vishtaspa, to his new faith at the age of forty; or when he died at the age of seventy-seven.² Nor was there any good reason to suppose that this date meant anything at all, for the creed of Zoroaster, or Zarathustra as he was known to the Iranians, was purely a revitalization of a much older Indo-Iranian religion of immense antiquity, preserved in its fullest extent by the Magian priesthood of Media.

Direct comparisons could be drawn between the material in the *Zend-Avesta*, the sacred writings of Zoroaster (Zend being an ancient Persian language), and the mythology and teachings found in India's oldest work of literature, the *Rig Veda*, which dates to c. 1750 BC – a time-frame often ascribed to Zoroaster himself.³ Other sources have suggested that there were not one but two, three, four or even more prophets of history who each bore the title 'Zarathustra', which struck me as the most sensible solution to the problem.

The Latin writer Justin wrote that Zoroaster was the inventor of magic and that he had made a study of the doctrine of the Magi, who, like their counterparts, the Brahmins of India, venerated fire as the sacred symbol of godhead.⁴ According to a Byzantine historian, Gregorius Cedrenus, the Magi were founded by the Hellenic hero Perseus as a cult to guard and protect the sacred immortal fire that burned perpetually in an unknown temple, for he recorded:

Perseus, they say, brought to Persia initiation and magic, which by his secrets made the fire of the sky descend; with the aid of this art, he brought the celestial fire to the earth, and he had it preserved in a temple under the name of the sacred immortal fire; he chose virtuous

*men as ministers of a new cult, and established the Magi as the depositors and guardians of this fire which they were charged to protect.*⁵

Zoroaster was said to have immersed himself in the Magi's strange philosophies and teachings, which included the origin of the universe and the study of astrology and astronomy. Other traditions even claim that Zoroaster was himself a native of Media, and that he had been the *restorer* of the religion of the Magi,⁶ in much the same way that Martin Luther 'reformed' the corrupt practices of the Catholic Church.

Very little was known about the true history and religion of the Magi. Once their political power had been suitably curtailed by Darius I, they were confined to more menial duties, such as conducting religious rituals, performing animal sacrifices, interpreting dreams and omens, casting spells and communicating with the spirit world – the actions of *magicians* in every sense of the word, and it is from this usage that we gain terms such as magic, magician and magus. The Magi are known to have worshipped the very oldest Indo-Iranian deities, such as Ahura, an early form of Ahura Mazda, his son Mithra, and Ardvi Sura Anahita, goddess of the waters; the last two being much later incorporated into the religious festivals of Zoroastrianism, like the one we were about to witness.

As the celebrants began filing their way through to the temple, we followed up behind, smiling politely at those leading the way. Beyond the entrance door was a large auditorium with rows of chairs in two huge aisles, many already occupied by men and women idly chatting between themselves or moving around, as if waiting for the beginning of a theatrical production. Beyond the first row was a raised stage supporting a huge, polished brazier, heaped high with small pieces of dry sandalwood in readiness for the *yasna* festival, as it was known. Around its base were offerings of harvest fruits, milk, wine, water, as well as markers to indicate the four directions. On a beam above the front of the stage was a winged disc in which the Assyrian-style representation of Ahura Mazda stood within a dove-tail plume of feathers.

Before Debbie was able to take a seat, an Asian woman approached her and placed a hand on her shoulder. With a some-

what concerned expression on her face, the woman spoke first in her own language. Then, using broken English and careful hand gestures, she conveyed her message. Debbie quickly realized that she was inquiring whether or not she was menstruating. Like all forms of impurity, menstrual blood is considered offensive to the divine presence of Ahura Mazda. Luckily for Debbie, it was *not* the wrong time of the month, and once she had conveyed this fact to the woman, the exchange of smiles indicated she could take a seat.

As we waited patiently, and somewhat expectantly, for the harvest ceremony to begin, I watched in disbelief as people in the auditorium continued to socialize – walking about and exchanging places as if in a public place. Surely some kind of mental stillness and contemplation ought to precede such an important religious service?

A middle-aged woman sitting in the next row smiled in our direction, as if she wished to engage us in conversation. Not quite knowing what to do or say, I asked about the significance of the festival. Understanding my question, she went and fetched a type-written sheet containing an itinerary of the evening's proceedings. Presiding over this harvest festival was, it said, *Tir*, the *yazata*, or 'archangel', who in the Zoroastrian calendar governs the month of June, as well as the thirteenth day of each month and the influence of the planet Mercury.⁷

The Persian angel *Tir* is a prime example of how Zoroastrianism has influenced the Judaic understanding of angelology, for in Hebrew mysticism he becomes *Tiriel*, who, like his Persian counterpart, presides over all activities appertaining to the planet Mercury.⁸ Similarly to the Essene communities of the Dead Sea, Zoroastrians believe there to be an angel watching over every day, every month, every season and every planet. Indeed, these 'watches' made by the angelic intelligences in respect of terrestrial and celestial cycles of time might well explain the usage of the term '*îr*', 'watcher', in both the Enochian and Dead Sea literature. The Zoroastrian understanding of angels almost certainly stemmed from the Magi, from whom Zoroaster established his own teachings.

The more that I learnt about Iranian mythology and religion, the more I began to realize that it was not so much Zoroastrianism

that was going to provide me with any real answers but Magianism, the faith of the Magi. Unfortunately, however, since so little had been preserved of their actual myths and rituals, I could only determine this priestly caste's true significance by studying the religion it had created – Zoroastrianism.

It *was* known, however, that the Magi had recognized two opposing types of supernatural beings – the *ahuras* and the *daevas*. The *ahuras* were seen as shining gods living in a state of heavenly glory, while the *daevas* were looked upon as 'false gods', or 'dark and malignant genii',⁹ intimately associated with the affairs of humanity. Indeed, the *daevas* were seen as *ahuras* who had fallen from grace to become earth-bound devils (*dev* or *div* in Persian, from which we get the word *devil*), 'begotten' of Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman, the 'wicked spirit'.¹⁰ Despite the dark nature of the *daevas*, their name actually derives from the word *devata*, meaning, as in the case of the *ahuras*, the 'Shining Ones'.¹¹

Once the Arabs had cut their way across Persia in the seventh century AD, Angra Mainyu became transformed into a character named Eblis, or Iblis – an angel 'born of fire', who was said to have refused to bow down before Adam at the command of God, and as a result had been cast out of heaven. Before his fall through pride, however, Eblis had been known by the name Azazel,¹² the name given to one of the leaders of the Watchers in the Book of Enoch; a strange connection not explained in Islamic myth. In Arabic folklore Eblis was seen as the father of the *divs*, or djinn, and from him sprang the evil Peri (*pari* in Persian, *Pairika* in the *Zend-Avesta*), beautiful angels who disguised 'their malevolence under their charming appearance'.¹³

Tales concerning *divs* proliferate in ancient Iranian mythology, where they are portrayed as essentially human-like, yet of great height with horns, large ears and tails. They were often sorcerers or magicians who possessed 'superior power and intelligence' beyond that of mortal beings. In spite of the fact that they could vanish at will, their clear physical nature was displayed on the battlefield, where they were frequently dispatched by sword or battleaxe.¹⁴

If one takes away the horns, long ears and tails, which were undoubtedly added at a later stage in the development of these

legends to demean the character of the *divs*, then you are left with very human-like individuals. Indeed, a *div* is described as 'a god, or personage of a higher class in the scale of earthly beings'.¹⁵ Although the word here is 'earthly', rather than 'mortal', in my opinion the *divs*' great stature, their superior intelligence and their alleged supernatural capabilities made them prime candidates for the role of progeny of the *daevis* race, comparable with the Nephilim of Judaic tradition.

Belief in the physical reality of *divs* and Peri persisted in Iran right through to the early twentieth century. For instance, in the remote border region between Iran and Afghanistan, close to the Amu Darya (Oxus) river, the Tajik tribesmen spoke of the *divs*, or *divy*, as coming 'down from their mountain lairs during winter to remain near settlements, returning only in spring'.¹⁶ Of equal mystery was the belief among the Tajik tribesmen of the lowlands that beautiful Peri could tempt mortal beings into sin and 'take the form of snakes, turtles and frogs', all creatures under the dominion of Angra Mainyu.¹⁷

More importantly, there appeared to be some indication from early Zoroastrian sources that a kind of fall of the *ahuras*, or 'shining ones', had preceded the appearance of Zoroaster on earth, for according to one commentator the prophet 'dashed to pieces the bodies of the angels, because they had made an evil use of them for wandering on the earth, and especially for amatory dealings with earthly women'.¹⁸ These were the words of nineteenth-century biblical scholar Franz Delitzsch, who fully recognized the extraordinary similarity between this account and the improprieties committed by the Watchers in the Book of Enoch.

The *Amesha Spentas* of Iranian lore are undoubtedly to be equated, not just with the seven archangels, but also with the seven *adityas*, or *suryas*, found in the Hindu *Rig Veda*; one of whom, the sun god, is named as Surya. Ancient Indian myth and legend records that the *suryas*' evil enemies were the *ahuras* (spelt *asuras*), who were giants, skilled in the magical arts. Like the Watchers of the Book of Enoch, the Vedic *ahuras* were condemned for having misused the secret wisdom of the gods – casting them in the role of malevolent spirits comparable with the fallen angels of Judaeo-Christian tradition.¹⁹ By coincidence,

Surya also happened to be one of the names of Metatron, the angelic form adopted by Enoch after his translation to heaven.²⁰ Moreover, some Ethiopian manuscripts of the Book of Enoch give the archangels prefixes such as '*Asarya*, '*Asurye* and '*Suryân*,²¹ clearly confirming the powerful relationship between Judaism and the Indo-Iranian myths found in both the *Zend-Avesta* and the *Rig Veda*.²²

I was getting closer, but I still needed further evidence of the relationship between the concept of Watchers and the ancient Iranian belief in the fallen *ahuras*, or *daevas*, corrupting humanity. Perhaps the answers I was looking for could be found within the sacred books of the Zoroastrians.

Suddenly my thoughts were distracted. The constant, low babble permeating the busy auditorium had been broken by the sound of tinkling bells, played in specific sequences. The strange cacophony came from a closed room positioned behind the seated audience. Soon afterwards five priests entered into view, all dressed in long, white linen robes, with white waist cords, white skullcaps and long white muslin masks across their noses and mouths. They walked briskly in single file towards the stage, continually chanting prayers as they went. Having ascended to the level of the fire brazier, a huge overhead extractor fan was switched on by unseen hands. One priest immediately began to kindle a low fire in the enormous brass container, as further pieces of sandalwood and spoonfuls of frankincense were added to the flickering flames. The thick, wafting incense charged the air with a sharp, overbearing aroma that was both unique and vibrant.

Having sat in a circle on the floor around the blazing fire, the fire priests joined hands and began saying prayers and hymns taken from the *Zend-Avesta*. Each one chanted over the voices of his fellow supplicants, without co-ordination or harmony, to produce an enchanting yet discordant babel I had never before experienced in a religious ceremony.

Every so often the priests would pass a small white flower between themselves. It was offered with both hands, which were then grasped by a neighbour's hands. The first priest would then remove his hands to leave behind the flower, before completing the gesture by briefly cupping the second priest's hands with his own.

On other occasions all five supplicants would join hands and link with the flame of truth by means of a ritual poker placed in the fire by one of the priests; a connection that seemed essential to the success of the ceremony.

Once in a while members of the audience would reach for their own battered copies of the *Zend-Avesta* and begin half-heartedly reciting certain *gathas*, before giving up and talking with their neighbours.

The *Zend-Avesta* is the Zoroastrians' most sacred text, but there are other books of equal importance. One of these is the *Bundahishn*, a sacred text written in the late Persian language of Pahlavi. Among its many themes is a unique creation myth, in which the stalk of the sacred rhubarb plant grows and grows until it divides to form two separate human beings – *Masya* and *Masyanag*, the father and mother of the mortal race.²³ The couple exist in a state of purity, but are then seduced by Angra Mainyu²⁴ (the *daevas* in one account²⁵). As a consequence of this seduction, the first couple give worship to him (or them) and not Ahura Mazda, named in the text as 'Ormuzd'. In so doing these first mortals are deprived of their original purity, which neither they, nor any of their descendants, are able to recover unless through the aid of Mithra, the deity who presides over the salvation of the soul.

The Zoroastrians believe that since the first couple committed the carnal sin in thought, word and deed, both they and their descendants became tainted for ever. In spite of the fact that the *Bundahishn* dates only to a time when their forebears first migrated from Iran to India in the ninth century, the text is thought to be based on a now lost Zend original of great antiquity.²⁶

In many ways the creation story presented in the *Bundahishn* might be compared directly with the story of the Fall of Man found in the Book of Genesis. Yet even more remarkable is the knowledge that, in some Persian teachings, Angra Mainyu is known as 'the old serpent having two feet',²⁷ words that immediately conjured an image of Belial, the Watcher with a 'visage like a viper' found in the Testament of Amram.

I would not be the first person to spot the obvious comparisons between the Persian and Hebrew accounts of the Fall of Man. As early as 1888 C. Staniland Wake, in his ground-breaking work,

Serpent-Worship and Other Essays, admitted, after discussing the similarities between the two quite separate myths, that:

*The Persian account of the fall and its consequences agrees so closely with the Hebrew story when stripped of its figurative language that we cannot doubt that they refer to the same legend, and the use of figurative language in the latter may well lead us to believe that it was of later date than the former [i.e. the Bundahishn].*²⁸

There is every reason to believe that the Judaic concept of the Fall of Man, the Serpent of Temptation and the fall of the angels derive either directly or indirectly from Zoroastrian or pre-Zoroastrian sources. The serpent of the *Bundahishn* is Angra Mainyu, who is therefore the figurative form of the *daevas* (or fallen *ahuras*) who seduce humanity at the time of the Fall, just as the Serpent of Temptation is the personification of Belial, Shemyaza or Azazel, the names given to the leader of the Watchers in Enochian and Dead Sea religious literature.

The Law of the Daevas

It was intriguing to think of the prophet Mani rediscovering the Book of Enoch, as well as other lesser-known Enochian literature, during the third century of the Christian era and then re-introducing it back into the newly resurrected Persian Empire both in translation and within his own heretical teachings. These he had carried as far east as central Asia, one of the traditional homes of his predecessor, the prophet Zoroaster. If the legends of the Watchers had originated in ancient Iran, then Mani was taking them back to their own heartland some seven hundred years after they were originally carried into Judaea by the returning Jewish exiles. Could Mani have been aware of the Persian origin of these traditions? Might this have been why he recognized in them the doctrine of truth? If so, then why were Mani and his Manichaean followers so horrendously persecuted by fanatical Zoroastrians, who publicly humiliated his body following the prophet's inevitable death at Jund-i-Shapur, near Susa in south-west Persia, during the year AD 277?

The answer almost certainly lay in the fact that during his ministry on earth Zoroaster is said to have preached out fervently against the *daevo-data*, 'the law according to the *daevas*'.²⁹ This was the 'law' accepted and promoted by those individuals who, instead of choosing the true path of Ahura Mazda, adhered to the deceitful ways of the *karapans* (priests) and the *kavis* (prince-priests). Although these terms were loosely used to refer to any non-Zoroastrian priest, they especially denoted the Magi priests of Media,³⁰ whose principal philosophies featured the eternal struggles between the *ahuras* and the *daevas*. Although the Magi accepted the supremacy of Ahura, the prototype of Ahura Mazda, they also made sacrifices to Angra Mainyu, showing their spiritual allegiance to the Prince of Darkness as well.³¹

Such blasphemies made the Magi and their followers the children of Angra Mainyu, supporters of the *druj* – 'falsehood' or 'the Lie'. In effect, they were accused of being liars for accepting and preaching such unholy matters. So vehemently did Zoroaster, and presumably all orthodox Zoroastrians, hate followers of the Lie, that in one ancient text the prophet had this to say about those who accepted the law of the *daevas*:

Whether a man dispose of much or little wealth, he should show kindness to the follower of Truth, but should be evil to the follower of the Lie . . .³² (for the man) who is most good to the follower of the Lie is himself a follower of the Lie.³³

In other words, those who dared even to listen to the Lie taught by the Magian priests would themselves become followers of the Lie. It was almost as if the Zoroastrians wanted to make sure that no one should even *want* to listen to the terrible Lie being told by the Magi, for fear that it might corrupt their opinions, and in so doing make them followers of the Lie themselves. Such an extreme, fundamental attitude towards the teachings of a rival faith is quite bizarre. It almost conjures up the image of a Magi priest approaching a Zoroastrian who, in fear that he might be told the terrible Lie, covers his ears and says: 'No, I don't want to hear it – it's a lie. I know it's a lie.'

Exactly what sort of 'Lie' could have made a great prophet like Zoroaster so want to prevent his followers from even hearing it?

Was it something he had heard the Magi say when he himself had studied their religion, before embarking on his own career as a teacher of righteousness?

What was it that Zoroaster had tried to hide?

What was the terrible Lie?

Surely it cannot have concerned the Magi's religious practices, or their knowledge of astrology and astronomy. These would not have caused the type of consternation implied by Zoroaster's fanatical attitude towards their teachings. It seems more likely that he was directing these accusations at their belief in the *daevo-data*, 'the law according to the *daevas*'. The fact that the Magi had sacrificed animals in the name of Angra Mainyu must have meant that they never denounced his progeny, the *daevas*, as evil. Far from it, for it would appear that they saw them as equal in power to the *ahuras*, with a role to play in both the religion of Iran and the affairs of humanity.

Even if this solution is correct, then surely such dualistic principles should never have posed such a terrible threat to the teachings of Zoroaster and his followers. There must have been more to it than this – something that made them want to persecute anyone who even contemplated listening to such 'falsehood'. Might the Lie have been more shocking than history has implied?

Was it possible that the Magi believed the material world to be the domain of Angra Mainyu, because the *daevas* had planted their seeds of evil among humanity by revealing the secret wisdom of the *ahuras*? The story in the *Bundahishn* of the corruption of the first couple confirms the existence of such a view in Zoroastrian thought. Even further supporting this supposition is the knowledge that the mark of the Magi is to be found in many parts of the *Bundahishn*, showing their influence on its final construction, either in its lost Zend original or in the surviving Pahlavi version.³⁴

The fanatical persecution of Mani and his followers seems to be a revealing example of how fundamental Zoroastrians reacted to someone *resurrecting* the terrible Lie once told by the Magi priests, the followers of *daevo-data*.

I wondered just how many Zoroastrians participating in this seasonal festival were aware of the transgressions of the *daevas*, or of the persecution of those who had once taught about their corrup-

tion of humanity? As in the case of Jews, Christians and Muslims, such matters did not feature in their day-to-day worship, and so are unlikely to have been known to them.

The *yasna* festival we attended continued for over an hour and a half, with no real change in the proceedings. Occasionally men and women would approach the stage, pick up a small piece of cut sandalwood from a low pile supplied for this purpose, then hand it to the fire-priest. He would acknowledge their presence before placing their offering among the lapping flames. It appeared to be a means of ensuring good fortune, in much the same way as a Catholic or Orthodox Christian might light a small candle and leave it burning in a church.

At other times, members of the audience would walk around, talking to each other and doing their own thing, seemingly oblivious to what was taking place on the stage before them. This apparent irreverence was most disconcerting, especially as we ourselves could do little more than sit in silent awe for the duration of the service. Yet simply being here instilled in us an overwhelming sense of privilege and humility. Here was a fire ritual that probably dated beyond the origins of the Magi to the mists of antiquity, perhaps even to a time when the fallen *ahuras*, the Shining Ones of Indo-Iranian myth, once walked the earth.

With the festival over, Richard, Debbie and myself were taken into the society's library room and asked to put our questions to the secretary and an Iranian scholar, who was a member of the respected Royal Asiatic Society. They listened carefully to my queries concerning Zoroastrian angelology and directed me to various rare out-of-print books on the subject. Unfortunately, they themselves were unable to help me with my research, though they did speak of traditions connecting the prophet Enoch with the region of Cappadocia in eastern Anatolia, the details of which they promised to send me by return post (they never arrived).

Afterwards the three of us were invited to join a communal meal in a canteen area on the same floor as the temple. We were provided with a welcome vegetarian curry and listened to stories of clandestine Zoroastrian services currently taking place within underground temples in Iran. At one point an over-zealous woman approached our table and began sprinkling holy water in our

direction – a sign, it would seem, that we had been accepted into their fold, for one night at least.

We left Zoroastrian House, our heads buzzing with the rich imagery surrounding the strange religious festival we had been allowed to witness. We were not invited back, and in many ways there has never been any need for a second visit.

Somehow I felt I was correct to compare the dualistic elements of the Magian faith with the story of the Watchers. Yet to investigate the matter more fully I needed further evidence of the apparent trafficking between the semi-divine *daevas* and mortal kind, like that so vividly described in Hebrew myth and legend. If this could be found, then it would strengthen the case in favour of an Iranian origin for the Judaic legends of the fall of the angels, and help to explain why the Zoroastrians had become so terrified of the sheer potency of the Lie. This I was to eventually discover; not, however, in the holy books of the Zoroastrians, or among the lost teachings of the Magi, but in a place that I would have considered to be a most unlikely source indeed – in the *Shahnameh*, the legendary history of the Iranian kings.

BORN OF THE DEMON RACE

Firdowsi was an Arab poet who lived in the eleventh century. He was born in the Islamic province of Tus, or Khurasan, in eastern Persia and came from a family of established landowners. He is best remembered for a book he finished in 1010 AD entitled the *Shahnameh*, or the Book of Kings, which records the legendary history of his country. This he had gained not just from earlier versions of the same stories now lost, but from other similarly lost histories of the Persian race recorded during the Sassanian, or second, empire period, between the third and seventh centuries AD.

These stories include the legendary foundation of the Iranian royal dynasties and the deeds of the earliest kings and their families, as they battled with demons, rival kingdoms, domestic conflicts and political struggles. There is romance, heartbreak, courage, valour and heroics within the pages of the *Shahnameh*, as well as much of interest to my understanding of the fallen race. No one knew exactly when or where the scenarios described in this ancient work might have taken place, if at all. Even though historians have attempted to place specific dates on the succession of divine kings it portrays, it is quite clear that the book's assortment of stories must be assigned either to a distant age or to a world of pure myth and fantasy.

The *Shahnameh* begins with an account of the legendary Kiyumars, the first of the Pishdadian line of kings, who is known by the name Gayomartan or Gayomard in the Avestan literature of the Zoroastrians. He rules from his seat in the mountains as a king of Iran and all the world during a Golden Age of high spiritual and religious values. Yet, like so many of the stories told by Firdowsi,

his reign ends in tragedy, in this case with the death of his son, Siyamak, who is killed by a *div*, or 'black demon'.¹

Siyamak's own son, Husheng (the Haoshanha of Avestan literature), then becomes 'king of the seven climes' or regions of the world. He is the founder of civilization and the discoverer of fire, which he uses to separate iron from rock to become the primordial blacksmith, able to fashion tools and weapons. He is also accredited with the introduction of land irrigation and the sowing of seeds.²

In the hundreds of years that follow, kings rise and fall and the exploits of each are outlined in graphic detail. Then the *Shahnameh* enters a long phase of prehistory in which constant wars are waged between Iran and the kingdom of Turan in central Asia. It is during this troubled period of humanity that many great battles are fought and various heroic deeds enacted.³ It is also during this same phase of pseudo-history that some of the most baffling material begins to surface within its pages – material that appears to echo exactly the stories found in both the Book of Enoch and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Miraculous Birth of Zal

The reader of the *Shahnameh* is introduced to a new sub-dynasty of kings, said to have ruled in a region named Sistan, thought to have been in eastern Iran – although geographical connections with the real world are of little value here (see Chapter 11). The first story of importance concerns a king named Sam, the son of Nariman. He marries a beautiful woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a boy. Yet, on the child's exposure to the outside world, her husband's cries of joy change to sheer horror and revulsion as he realizes the infant's unearthly appearance: his body is said to have been 'as clean as silver';⁴ his hair is described as being 'as white as an old man's', and 'like snow';⁵ his face is 'like paradise' and as 'beautiful as the sun';⁶ his eyes are black; his cheeks are 'ruddy and beautiful'⁷ 'like the rose of spring', while his form is as 'straight as (a) cypress tree'.⁸

Fearful of this ill-omen, the child's mother decides on the spot to name him Zal, meaning 'the aged'.⁹ Sam, on the other hand, is

persuaded that this infant is not his own but the 'son of some deev (*daeva*) or magician (i.e. a Magi)'.¹⁰ People soon gather to witness the strange sight for themselves, saying to Sam, 'This is an ominous event, and will be to thee productive of nothing but calamity – it would be better if thou couldst remove him out of sight,' for as the text continues:

*No human being of this earth
Could give to such a monster birth;
He must be of the Demon race,
Though human still in form and face,
If not a Demon, he, at least,
Appears a party-coloured beast.*¹¹

Sam makes a passionate plea to Ahura Mazda, asking for what reason he has been given 'a demon-child' that 'resembles a child of Ahriman' and who is 'an entire Peri' of 'the religion of Ahriman'.¹² One can almost sense the sheer distress experienced by Sam and his family at the birth of this strange infant with such pronounced physiological features. To them this birth is seen as a punishment for some unknown crime they have committed. No one can understand what is going on or why this child should so closely resemble one of the *daevic* race.

For Sam and his family the sight they beheld that fateful day was quite abhorrent, but to me a sense of *déjà vu* crept quickly through my veins, for the account of the birth of Zal was almost identical to the miraculous birth of Noah presented in the Book of Enoch. The similarities were too striking to ignore:

Zal is described as having a body 'as clean as silver' with 'ruddy' cheeks 'like the rose of spring'. Noah is described as having a body as 'white as snow and red as a rose'.¹³

Zal is described as having hair 'as white as an old man's', and 'like snow', while Noah is described as having hair 'as white as wool'.¹⁴

Zal is described as having a face 'like paradise' and 'as beautiful as the sun', while Noah's eyes are said to have 'glowed like the sun'.¹⁵

Zal is described as 'a demon-child', 'an entire Peri' and the 'son' or 'child of Ahriman' or 'some deev (*daeva*) or magician', while

Noah is described as looking like 'the children of the (fallen) angels of heaven', whose 'conception was (due) to the Watchers . . . and to the Nephilim'.¹⁶

The only additional information not contained in the Hebrew account of Noah's birth is Zal's black eyes and his appearance as a 'party-coloured beast', or a 'two-coloured leopard' in other accounts – metaphors probably linked to the belief among the Persians that leopards' skins worn by the earliest Pishdadian kings signified 'courage and manhood'.¹⁷

Somehow there had to be a direct link between the account of the ominous birth of Zal recorded in the *Shahnameh* and the strange birth of Noah recorded in the Book of Enoch. One appeared to have been based on the other, but which had influenced which? Since I had already established that Iranian mythology and religion had helped form post-exilic Judaism, including the Enochian and Dead Sea literature, there seemed every reason to suppose it was the Persian story that had influenced the Judaic variation, and not the other way round. The only other possibility was to suggest that a much older primary source was responsible for *both* stories. If so, then where was this primary source?

All of this was revealing information indeed. Here in the *Shahnameh* was a legend which implied that in ancient Iran, perhaps the place of origin of the Book of Enoch, a new-born child bearing specific physiological characteristics was looked upon as the result of an unholy union between a fallen angel, or demon, and a mortal woman, even though on this occasion there were no accusations of infidelity made against Sam's wife and consort.

Yet why should an infant bearing such seemingly mundane physical characteristics have appeared so abhorrent to the ruling dynasty of Iran? Were new-born infants the world over cast as demon-spawn, or the result of supernatural cohabitation, simply because of their distinctive physical features, or had this belief been confined to Iran alone? The antediluvian patriarchs of the Old Testament would seem to have had a very similar aversion to infants born with what appear to have been extreme white Caucasian features, while the concept of angel children bearing similar traits is known to have persisted in Western culture right down to the twentieth century.

The birth of Zal was perfect confirmation of the clear relationship between the Iranian belief in the corruption of mankind by the *daevas* and the fall of the Watchers in Judaic tradition. There was, however, much more of direct relevance to this debate in the eventful life of Zal, the son of Sam, than simply his birth . . .

Compassion of the Simurgh

In the knowledge that the infant Zal resembles the appearance of the *daevas*, Sam makes the immediate decision to rid himself of this demon-child by depositing him on the slopes of a mountain named Elburz, where he will be devoured by the beasts of prey and the birds of the air. Mount Elburz also happened to be the abode ('kingdom' in one account) of a fabulous bird, 'a noble vulture',¹⁸ known as the Simurgh, whose gender varies from one account to another. In search of food for its young, the hungry Simurgh espies the young child lying among the rocks, crying and sucking on its fingers. Yet, instead of devouring the infant, the bird shows overwhelming compassion and carries it to its nest, high on the mountain, where the Simurgh's own children eagerly await their mother's return. They, too, are kind and affectionate to the mortal child, which is nourished and protected by the Simurgh until it grows to become a fine youth. Some accounts suggest that the bird intended feeding Zal to its young, but that after depositing it on the ground the voice of Ahura Mazda asked the Simurgh to take care of the child, for one day he would bring forth 'from his loins . . . the champion of the world'.¹⁹

The years go by, and in time Sam mourns the loss of his ill-formed child, whom he assumes to be dead. Then, after a dream-vision that suggests his son is still alive, the king embarks on an unsuccessful journey to find him. A second dream follows, and with renewed vigour Sam makes another journey to Elburz. Having ascended to the top of the mountain, he prays before the throne of Ahura Mazda, saying:

*'If that forsaken child be truly mine,
And not the progeny of Demon fell,*

*(‘not from the sperm of the ill-descended Ahriman’²⁰)
 O pity me! forgive the wicked deed,
 And to my eyes, my injured son restore.’²¹*

The Simurgh, having heard the lamentations of Sam, knows it must now return the youth it has protected ‘like a nurse’ and ‘like a father’, and to whom it has given the name Dustan. Zal, on learning of his imminent departure, weeps in the knowledge that he is to be separated from the Simurgh and its family, for not only had the mysterious bird protected him, it had also taught him many knowledgeable things, including the language and wisdom of his own country. The Simurgh consoles the youth by saying that it will not abandon him completely. As proof of this affection, the bird plucks a feather from a wing and proclaims: ‘Whenever thou are involved in difficulty or danger, put this feather (or “feathers”²²) on the fire, and I will instantly appear to thee to ensure thy safety. Never cease to remember me.’²³

Then, in a touching scene, the Simurgh returns Zal to Sam, who blesses both the youth and the ‘wonderful bird’. He also admits his shame at having abandoned the child in the first place, and says he will endeavour to redeem himself by treating the boy with the utmost respect and honour he deserves.

Zal grows to become a handsome prince and in time falls in love with a foreign princess, named Rudabeh, the daughter of Mehrab, the ‘king of Kabul’, and a descendant of the serpent king Zakhak (Azhi Dahâka in Avestan literature), who was said to have ruled Iran for a thousand years (see Chapter 14).

In one account, Mehrab’s daughter is described, in the words of one of her slave-girls to one of Zal’s own slaves, as ‘a handsome beauty who outtops your king by a head. In figure she resembles the teak-tree, though she is like ivory for whiteness, and her face is crowned with a diadem of musk . . . It would be proper, and very suitable, for Rudaba to become the wife of Zal.’²⁴ In another description of the princess, it is said of her that from ‘head to foot she is white as ivory; her face is a very paradise and for stature she is as a plane-tree’.²⁵

These special qualities were obviously seen as unique, and for Rudabeh to have out-topped Zal – who was himself of ‘cypress-

stature'²⁶ – by 'a head', would presumably have made her an extremely tall woman. Indeed, there seems every indication that Zal and Rudabeh were purposely brought together because they each bore very specific qualities that were deemed necessary to perpetuate the existing line of divine kings.

Inevitably, Zal takes Rudabeh's hand in marriage, and in time she falls pregnant. But prior to the birth of her child, the foreign beauty begins experiencing 'unbearable pains of childbirth',²⁷ for as Firdowsi explains:

*The cypress leaf was withering; pale she lay,
Unsoothed by rest or sleep, death seemed approaching.*²⁸

In desperation Zal recalls the feather given to him by the Simurgh, and so burns it on a fire. 'In a moment darkness surrounded them, which was, however, immediately dispersed by the sudden appearance of the Simurgh.'²⁹ The 'kind nurse'³⁰ consoles Zal by saying that he is soon to become the father of a son 'with the height of a cypress tree and the strength of an elephant'.³¹ Furthermore, the great bird proclaims that:

*'... the child will not come into existence by the ordinary way of birth. Bring me a poniard of tempered steel and a man of percipient heart versed in incantation. Let the girl be given [an intoxicating] drug [prescribed by the Simurgh]³² to stupefy her and to dull any fear or anxiety in her mind: then keep guard while the clairvoyant [i.e. hypnotist] recites his incantations and so watch until the lion-boy leaves the vessel which contains him. The wizard will pierce the frame of the young woman without her awareness of any pain and will draw the lionchild out of her, covering her flank with blood, and will sew together the part he has cut . . . There is a herb which I will describe to you. Pound it together with milk and musk and place it in a dry shady place. Afterwards spread it over the wound and you will perceive at once how she has been delivered from peril. Over it all then pass one of my feathers and the shadow of my royal potency will have achieved a happy result.'*³³

Zal does as the bird directs and as a result 'the giant child was cut from the side of his mother, who immediately she had given birth, exclaimed, "Ba-Rastam" – I am relieved.' From this sudden outburst, the infant was given the name Rustam, meaning 'strong

growth'.³⁴ Afterwards Rudabeh quickly regains her health, thanks to the special healing herb prescribed by the Simurgh, leaving the child to become indisputably Iran's greatest legendary hero.

This is the story of the birth of Rustam as presented in the *Shahnameh*.

There can be little doubt that the infant's unnatural birth harbours extraordinary insights into not only the legendary history of Iran but also the Enochian religious literature of Judaic tradition.

One is immediately reminded of the Ethiopian *Kebra Nagast*, where the Daughters of Cain give birth to gigantic Nephilim babies through the process of Caesarian section. Can it be coincidence that a child of Iranian myth and legend is born into the world in exactly the same manner as the mighty Nephilim? Caesarian section takes its name from Julius Caesar, alleged to have been the first child delivered in this way.³⁵ Yet here were two quite separate examples of this medical practice being employed in unknown epochs of human history, perhaps thousands of years before the coming of the Romans.

From the tales presented in the *Shahnameh* there appeared to be compelling evidence to suggest that the ancient Iranians really did believe that the *daevas* could not only possess physical form, but that they could also lie with mortal women to produce offspring with physical characteristics that matched, almost exactly, the progeny of the Watchers in Hebraic tradition. To me it was a remarkable discovery, and one that made it all the more likely that the *daevo-data*, 'the law according to the *daevas*', as taught by the Magi priests, did indeed involve knowledge of the carnal trafficking between supernatural beings and mortal kind. It also strengthened my view that the Magi's dualistic doctrine included the belief that the world around us was the creation not of Ahura Mazda but of Angra Mainyu, the 'wicked spirit' – the very tenet of faith preached by Mani and the various gnostic cults many hundreds of years after the *daevo*-worshipping Magi disappeared from the pages of history.

The Glorious House of Sam and Nariman

The mention of Mani with respect to these traditions is also of extreme relevance, for he appears to be able to provide us with even further clues concerning the clear overlap between Iranian myth and Enochian literature. The Manichaeans are known to have translated into various different Asian languages one particular Enochian text concerning the plight of the Nephilim. As this was done, the original Aramaic names of key characters were replaced by those of specific Iranian figures who feature in the *Shahnameh*. For example, in Persian tradition Zal's father is Sam, while Sam's own father is Nariman; the descendants of these mythical kings being referred to as the 'glorious house of Sam and Nariman'.³⁶ This patrilineal relationship between the two royal figures is matched in Mani's translations of the Enochian literature where the two visionary sons of the fallen angel Shemyaza are given as Sam and Nariman in place of their original Aramaic names of 'Ohyâ and 'Ahyâ.

The usage of these two quite specific names from the *Shahnameh* seems to imply that Mani saw the Iranian royal dynasty of Sam and Nariman as direct descendants of Shemyaza, the leader of the Watchers. Since this kingly line included both Zal and Rustam, who both possessed the physiological features of the fallen race, this supposition was not to be taken lightly.

What might Mani have known about the relationship between Iranian myth and the stories concerning the fall of the Watchers, as well as the birth of Nephilim children and their final destruction in the cataclysms of fire and water? He cannot have been unaware of the clear parallels between the stories surrounding the miraculous birth of Noah and the strange birth of Zal, the son of Sam. How much did this influence him to name the sons of Shemyaza as Sam and Nariman, after the great Iranian heroes who bore these self-same names? Perhaps Mani had been aware of independent, now lost traditions linking the house of Nariman and Sam with the fall of the *ahuras*.

Scholars have thrown no obvious light on the matter, though W. B. Henning, the linguistic expert who collated the various

fragments of Enochian text translated by Mani and his followers, did have this to say: 'the translation of Ohya as Sam had in its train the introduction of myths appertaining to that Iranian hero (of this name)'.³⁷ In other words, Mani chose these names so that he could *deliberately* introduce these characters to Enochian literature. Why?

Henning also pointed out that in some Manichaean fragments of Enochian material the name Sam is rendered *S'hm*,³⁸ an interesting observation since in Hebrew *shm* means 'name', 'pillar' or 'high'. It is also the name of one of Noah's sons, as well as the root behind the first part of the name *Shemyaza*. Furthermore, the suffix *yaza* is so closely linked to the Zend word *yazd* or *yazata*, meaning 'angel', or divine being, that there seemed every possibility that the name *Shemyaza* stemmed originally from Iranian sources.

The Divine Glory

Yet the biggest mystery seemed to be why giant babies, with demon-like characteristics, should at first be abhorred by their immediate family, but then go on to become the greatest heroes or teachers of their age; the cases of Zal and Noah being prime examples. A clue appeared to lie in the metaphors and synonyms used to describe the otherworldly features of these chosen ones. Zal, for instance, is said to have been as 'straight as (a) cypress tree', while Rustam is described as having 'the height of a cypress tree'. This usage of the cypress tree – an evergreen with tall, dark plumes that once grew abundantly on mountain-sides in the Near East – to denote immense stature also appears earlier on in the *Shahnameh*. For instance, Kiyumars, the first king of Iran and 'ruler over the whole world', was said to have reigned from his palace in the mountains like 'a two weeks old moon shining over a slender cypress',³⁹ while Feridun, the king who finally vanquished the serpent king Zahhak, is said to have been 'as tall' and 'as beautiful as a slender cypress'.⁴⁰ The similarity between this metaphor and the reference to Watchers as 'trees' in the Enochian literature was surely no coincidence.

Zal's face is described as 'like paradise' and 'beautiful as the

sun', while his queen, Rudabeh, is said to have had a face that was 'a very paradise', references, it would seem, to their shining countenances – matching the Hebrew metaphor in which the faces of both the Watchers and their offspring are said to have glowed 'like the sun'. This same expression is also used in the *Shahnameh* to describe the brilliance that shone from the face of Kiyumars, as well as another king named Jemshid.⁴¹ Here, however, the strange supernatural effect is explained, for according to Firdowsi it was created by the presence of the so-called *khvarnah*, or Kingly Fortune, also known as the *farr-i izadi* (or *farr-i yazdan*), the Glory of God. This is a concept based on the firm belief that some kind of divine essence, or manifestation, could be transmitted through the rightful family chosen by Ahura Mazda.⁴² With this holy essence Jemshid was said to have been able to 'mould iron into such equipment as helmets, chain-mail, laminated armour as well as missile-proof vests, to swords and horse-armour',⁴³ while at the same time it provided him with intimate knowledge of God. Most peculiar of all, 'with the aid of the royal *farr* he fashioned a marvelous throne', which henceforth became his seat of sovereignty.⁴⁴

Nobody knows what the royal *farr* might actually have been, for in one sentence it is a magical power able to forge metal, in the next it is the manifestation of God himself, and finally it is a means of carving hard substances without the use of conventional tools. One thing is for certain, though: without the Divine Glory a king could not reign. Jemshid, for example, eventually loses his *farr* because he 'ceases to believe in a higher power and regards himself as the only and ultimate ruler'.⁴⁵ Everybody abandons him – his priests, his army and the people, while the world outside is thrown into utter confusion and discord, ushering in an age of human history when evil, in the form of the 'wicked spirit', Angra Mainyu, is able to control the destiny of humanity.

In the *Zend-Avesta*, Jemshid is equated with an important figure named Yima, a 'king of Paradise', who ruled over the entire world (see Chapter Twenty). He, too, loses the Divine Glory, this time because he finds 'delight in the words of falsehood and untruth'. As a result of this sin, 'the Glory was seen to flee away from him in the shape of a bird' named Varaghna.⁴⁶

Jemshid, or Yima, never regains the Divine Glory, ending his

seven-hundred-year reign. The next Iranian hero to possess its magical power is Feridun, the 'slender cypress', of whom it was said the 'royal *farr* radiated from him'.⁴⁷

So what did all this mean? What did the Divine Glory actually represent?

It would appear that, to become a rightful king or hero in Iranian legend, the successful candidate needed to possess certain specific qualities, including great height and a divine countenance, seen as the royal *farr*; indeed, Zoroaster himself was said to have been born with a shining radiance and is depicted with such in at least one stone relief.⁴⁸ Was it not curious that both these physiological features were originally associated with the *ahuras*, the Iranian equivalent of the Watchers, who in Indo-Iranian myth were said to have been 'shining' gods of great stature?

In Persian art of all periods, the Divine Glory was generally depicted as a large ring or diadem held by Ahura Mazda, who is shown offering it to one of the kings of Persia, as if to confirm their divine right to rule. Because the diadem finally became the sole representation of the Divine Glory, it seems probable that this concept heavily influenced the rise in importance of the crown in Eurasian beliefs and customs concerning sovereignty and kingship. In other words, the usage of a crown to symbolize the right of a king to rule may well have developed from the shining countenances once associated with the faces of the fallen race.

If these wild assertions were in any way correct, then it implied that, just occasionally, certain infants may have been born with pronounced physiological features that bore *too* close a resemblance to the original 'shining' race, and so were cast out as *direct* progeny of the fallen *ahuras*. In time, however, these traits would have been genetically watered down and misunderstood to such a degree that, in Iran at least, they simply became the necessary qualities of a true divine king, descended of Kiyumars, the first Iranian monarch. Even later these physical traits would have become purely symbolic, with legendary figures such as Zoroaster being posthumously accredited them, simply because it was deemed necessary for a rightful prophet, king or hero of Persia to have possessed such virtues during their own life-time.

The accounts in the Book of Daniel of Watcher-like figures

with shining faces are prime examples of how strongly these concepts must have been adopted by the exiled Jews in Persia, for they do not appear in Judaic tradition until after the period of exile in Susa. To the Hebrews, the presence of such holy qualities would appear to have been viewed a little differently. In their opinion, only a true patriarch or teacher of righteousness, descended of the line of Seth, would have possessed a shining countenance; probably the reason why biblical figures such as Abraham, Elijah, Enoch and Noah were all accredited with having both a facial radiance⁴⁹ and great stature⁵⁰ in post-exilic apocrypha and folklore.

In much later Christian and Islamic iconography, the divine countenance would have been seen in terms of the halo or nimbus depicted around the heads of angels, saints and holy men; its original meaning having long since been lost. The best example of this style of art is provided by Christ himself, who is often portrayed in Nativity scenes welcoming the three Magi with a shining radiance 'as brilliantly as if covered with phosphuretted oil', or so wrote the nineteenth-century Hebrew scholar Thomas Inman.⁵¹ Little could he have known how these inspired words might turn out to be closer to the mark than he ever thought possible.

Yet somehow the belief in a shining countenance associated with infants born of the angels would appear to have lingered right down to twentieth-century London. The account told to Margaret Norman by her mother of the 'angel child', whose face 'just shone', is a perfect example of this survival. So if such beautiful countenances were once a sign of the 'shining' angelic race, then did this imply that the royal *farr* bestowed upon the legendary kings of Iran had some basis in reality? If so, then how on earth was it able to fashion metal, carve ivory without the use of conventional tools and know God? Might the *farr* have involved some kind of secret knowledge passed down from generation to generation, like that provided to the Daughters of Men by the Watchers? Were the royal dynasties of ancient Iran really blood-line descendants of the *ahuras* and *daevas*, the Shining Ones who fell from grace in Indo-Iranian myth?

Even if a quite obviously unique race of shining appearance and tall stature had once walked the earth, then to try and find them so

many thousands of years after their assumed demise seemed an almost impossible task.

There was, however, one vital clue . . .

In the *Shahnameh*, the Simurgh bird features in both the story of the strange birth of Zal and the delivery of his huge son Rustam. This extraordinary creature could act as a nurse and teacher to mortal children. It could be a physician to rightful kings. It could prescribe intoxicating drugs and herbs that anaesthetized pregnant women and healed open wounds. It could also advise on the delivery of giant babies through the process known today as Caesarian section.

How many birds do you know that possess such diverse capabilities?

Clearly, such a 'wonderful' creature was worthy of further investigation.

I felt that somehow this 'noble vulture' would bring me closer to unravelling the mysteries surrounding the origins of the fallen race – but only if I was to accept that the Simurgh may have been not a bird at all but a human being adorned in feathers.