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***Deus Victor: The Nature and Defeat of Evil in the Book of the
Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36)***

PHILIP F. ESLER

The ancient Israelite work known as 1 Enoch is generally regarded as an Old Testament text for the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches.¹ Enoch has a continuous and honorable tradition of use among Ethiopian Christians since the fifth or sixth centuries CE when it was first translated into Ge'ez from Greek. This essay is aimed at demonstrating that the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36) has an important theological contribution to make in our understanding of evil and the way in which God has dealt and will deal with it.¹

Evil as the Central Problem in Theology

It has been said that all theology is a grappling with the problem of evil.² It would be more accurate to say that all theology is a grappling with the problem of evil while insisting on the existence of God. For many philosophers, however, the reality of evil and the existence of God are incompatible. The problem has been set out by Nelson Pike like this:

¹ I gratefully acknowledge assistance received in the preparation of this essay from Dr Dee Carter, formerly of the University of Gloucestershire, and Professors Alan Torrance and Trevor Hart from the University of St Andrews. As far as Professor Torrance is concerned, this is one of many times over some fifteen years that I have greatly profited from theological conversations with him.

² Mannion 2007: 19 (with reference to Lowe 1993).

If God exists, how can evils be explained? For an omnipotent being would have the power to prevent any and all evils if it wanted to; an omniscient being would know all about them; and a perfectly good being would want to prevent/eliminate all the evils it could. Thus, it seems, if God existed, and were omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, there would be no evils.³

David Hume used the existence of evil in the world as positive proof of the non-existence of God.⁴ In an influential essay published in 1990, the neo-Humean philosopher J. L. Mackie argued that not only did religious beliefs lack rational support but that they were positively irrational when confronted with the reality of evil.⁵ While such philosophical attacks on God's existence have provoked strong reactions from other philosophers and theologians,⁶ no one should doubt that this whole question of the co-existence of evil and God lies at the heart of theology and also of much human experience.

The very first point to be made about the significance of 1 Enoch 1-36 for contemporary theology is that its central interest lies precisely in this question of the terrible evils that affect humanity and what God has done and will do about them. The overall message of the book is an optimistic one: it begins with a blessing for those who will be present on the day of tribulation (vv. 1-2), which is followed soon after by a proleptic description of the theophanic arrival of God as warrior-king with his angelic war-band, apparently in the last days, to judge all and to destroy the wicked for their wicked deeds and

³ Pike 1964 (cited by Adams 1999: 7).

⁴ David Hume: "Is [God] willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?" (Hume 1996 [1779]: 261)

⁵ Mackie 1990.

⁶ See, for example, Adams 1999.

for the proud and hard words they have spoken against him (vv. 4-9). Yet the text certainly does not present this as a quick or easy solution. For long eons evil will walk the earth among human beings—working death, havoc, misery and despair amongst them—and will only be partially dealt with by God before the final consummation.

The second respect in which 1 Enoch 1-36 speaks so directly to the experience of our age and to our theological reflection on it consists of its preoccupation with violence as the primary evil that humans face. In *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason*, Walter Lowe, writing in 1993, said this:

Theology in our century was born amidst the darkness of war. It has been struggling ever since to emerge from the shadow of mass violence cast by ‘the Great War’ and the events which followed in its wake. In the nineteenth century experience had become the touchstone for doing theology. With the twentieth century experience became unbearable. The sea of violence had, in Theodor Adorno’s words, ‘breached the barrier against stimuli beneath which experience, the lag between healing oblivion and healing recollection, forms.’ For experience to crystallize as experience, there is required a certain psychic space. In the century of total war that space collapsed.⁷

The twenty-first century has not yet brought total war but it has brought numerous serious conflicts, including those of an inter-ethnic nature and those involving Islamic extremists bent on waging “jihad” with maximum killing and violence in forms that, in some cases, have not been seen for centuries. I first typed these words on 4th February 2015, the day after the world learned via the Web that some weeks previously members of Isis in Syria had doused a captured Jordanian pilot in petrol, locked him in a cage and set him alight. It should be noted

⁷ Lowe 1993: 1-2.

that this act stiffened Jordanian resolution to oppose and defeat Isis.

The Phenomenology of Evil in the Book of the Watchers

“Dramatic Time” and “Narrative Time” in the Text

To appreciate the nature of evil in the Book of the Watchers in a manner that is sensitive to the structure of the work, it is useful to draw a distinction between “dramatic time” and “narrative time.” Here “dramatic time” refers to the time during which the plot of the work, involving the secession of the Watchers from heaven and the description of Enoch’s activities, takes place. “Narrative time,” on the other hand, means the (much larger) sweep of time that embraces all of the events referred to in the drama of the Watchers and Enoch, which actually extend from the creation to the period of the final judgment (and beyond).⁸ The following is a summary of the main events under both headings. It should be noted that the text does not always describe events in strictly chronological order, thus the Watchers descend to earth in 1 Enoch 6 (loosely based on Gen 6:1-4),⁹ whereas it is not until 1 Enoch 12 that we hear that “before these things” Enoch was taken (i. e. to heaven) which relates to the earlier period of Gen 5:24). This is one of several signs in the text that the author well understands the broad chronological course of universal and Israelite history, even though he is capable of jumping from one time to another. A second indication of this comes later in the text, in 1 Enoch 26, where the angel accompanying him shows Enoch the site of Jerusalem long before a city had been dwelt there, as was appropriate, given Enoch’s position in the remote past as the seventh patriarch. Accordingly, I must strongly demur from Paolo Sacchi’s

⁸ In Chapter 11 Sofanit Abebe encapsulates much the same distinction using the expressions “referential series,” roughly equivalent to narrative time, and “plotted series,” roughly equivalent to dramatic time,

suggestion that “The author clearly uses scripture and history without attending to their chronological aspect. ‘Before’ and ‘after’ have no meaning for him.”¹⁰ The particular significance of my disagreement with Sacchi on this issue will appear below.

Dramatic Time

Narrative Time

The creation (“the beginning”) (1 Enoch 2:2)

The refusal of the stars to rise

(1 Enoch 18:13-16)¹¹

Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden (1

Enoch 32:6)

Cain murders Abel (1 Enoch 22:5-7)

Enoch is taken and is with God

(= Gen. 5:24) and is with the

⁹ On the relationship between the Watchers and Gen 6:1-4, see Wright 2013 and Seeman 2014.

¹⁰ Sacchi 1990: 55.

¹¹ The date for this mysterious event is not mentioned; perhaps the Enochic scribes envisaged it happening after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden, or even after Cain’s murder of Abel, but this seems less likely than that it preceded these events. Although Nickelsburg (2001: 288-289) suggests this is a variant of the myth of the Watchers, the text conveys the impression of an entirely different event.

watchers and the holy ones (12:1-2)¹²

Descent of the Watchers

(in the days of Jared)¹³

(1 Enoch 6; cf. Gen 6:1-4)

The Watchers take wives

and teach them sorcery,

charms and the cutting

of roots and plants. The

women produce giants, who

beget Nephilim.

The giants kill men and the

earth brings accusation.

(1 Enoch 7).

The secrets the Watchers reveal.

As men perish, the cry goes up

to heaven (1 Enoch 8).

¹² Note that, according to Gen 5:21-24, Enoch fathered Methuselah when he was 65, and thereafter “walked with God” for 300 years, at which time “he was not, for God took him,” when he was thus 365 years old (having attained, as it were, a year of years?).

¹³ For this dating, see 1 Enoch 6:6. Note that analysis of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and the further dates given in Gen 9:28-29 shows that Noah was some 370 years old when Jared, his great, great grandfather, died. About 130 years later Noah began to have his sons (Shem, Ham and Japhet) and the flood occurred some 200 years after Jared’s death. Bringing the material in 1 Enoch together with the dates in Genesis means that the events of Gen 6:1-4 must, in the mind of the Enochic author, have begun at least a hundred years before the birth of Noah’s first son (to have occurred in the days of Jared).

The four Archangels intervene with
God on behalf of the earth
(1 Enoch 9)

God sends the four Archangels
to sort things out on earth
(1 Enoch 10-11)

Good Watchers tell Enoch
to go and tell the Watchers
on earth what is about to
happen to them (1 Enoch 12-13:2)

Enoch goes to them and they
commission him to petition
God on their behalf
(1 Enoch 13:3-7)

Enoch has a vision and reprimands
the Watchers(1 Enoch 13:8)

Enoch tells them that
their petition will not be
granted (1 Enoch 14:1-7)

Enoch's ascent to heaven

(1 Enoch 14:8-24)

God sends Enoch back
to the Watchers with the
news of their judgment

(1 Enoch 15:1-16:4)

Noah is warned, the Watchers are
imprisoned and the Giants killed
as predicted will happen in 1 Enoch 10
but not described in the text.

Enoch's journeys

(1 Enoch 17-36):

we know these occur
after the events predicted
in 1 Enoch 10-11 have
occurred since Enoch
sees the imprisoned
Watchers (1 Enoch 19:1,
21:7-10)

The distant generation (1:2)

The day of tribulation (1:1)

God will “come forth from his dwelling”

(1 Enoch 1:4-9)

The Anatomy and Development of Evil in 1 Enoch 1-36

What type of evil does the author of 1 Enoch 1-36 have in mind? This is a text that categorizes human beings into polar opposites: the righteous (δίκαιοι) and chosen (ἐκλεκτοί) on the one hand, and the enemies (ἐχθροί), wicked (ἀσεβείς) and sinners (ἀμαρτωλοί) on the other. The former will inherit the earth, but for the latter there will be no salvation (5:6). Such a stark differentiation reflects a powerfully felt differentiation of ingroup vis-à-vis outgroup. Yet the ethnic dimension to this distinction that is so strongly expressed in the Animal Apocalypse (85-90) is not much felt here. Evil appears in the opening chapter in the form of “wicked deeds” (ἔργα τῆς ἀσεβείας) and “hard words” (σκληροὶ λόγοι) spoken by sinners against God (1:9). Another formulation of evil, in 1 Enoch 5:4, is that it involves acting against God’s commandments (ἐντολαί), speaking proud and hard words with an unclean mouth against Him and being hard of heart.

When one turns to specifics, it is helpful to consider the way that sins are presented within narrative, not dramatic time. This will reveal that the first sin on earth was committed by a human being, not an angel, and it was a sin of violence. At one point on his journeying Raphael shows Enoch a mountain in which were four hollow places, three dark and one

illuminated and with a fountain of water, intended to contain “spirits of the souls of the dead” until the day of judgment (1 Enoch 22:1-4). There Enoch sees “the spirit of a dead man making suit” and his lamentation went up to heaven (1 Enoch 22:5). Raphael replies to his question as to the identity of this person as follows:

This is the spirit that went forth from Abel, whom Cain his brother murdered. And Abel makes a petition (ἐντυγκάνει; *yesakki*) about him until his seed perishes from the face of the earth, and his seed is obliterated from the seed of men (1 Enoch 22:7).¹⁴

Then Raphael answers a question from Enoch about the reason for the four hollows, explaining (to summarize rather contradictory material)¹⁵ that the illuminated hollow with the fountain is for the spirits of the righteous, and the other three are for sinners.

While it is often assumed that vv. 5-7 are presenting Abel as the first martyr, this view only developed after 1 Enoch 1-36 and the real point of the passage, as Nickelsburg notes, is to emphasize “not the righteousness of those who have been murdered, but the violence of their murderers and the certain judgment that will befall them.”¹⁶ In fact, Cain is being presented as the prototypical murderer, especially since earlier in the text (but after the time of Cain), in 1 Enoch 9, mention is made of other “souls of men” who, using the same verb, “make a petition” (ἐντυγκάνουσιν; *yesakkeyu*; v. 3) and of the “spirits of the souls of men who have died” and “who make a petition” (ἐντυγκάνουσιν; *yesakkeyu*; v. 10) at a time when the blood of men is shed on the earth (v.9). Cain must be understood, therefore, as the prototypical evil-doer on the earth, the first person to engage in what for the Enochic scribe is the worst kind of evil—acts of violence, in the case of Cain, and by necessary implication,

¹⁴ Nickelsburg 2001: 300 (modified).

¹⁵ For the difficulties, see Nickelsburg 2001: 302-303.

others after him, homicidal violence. Abel is the first, of many, to petition heaven on account of his murder.

An important consequence of this is that the frequently repeated view that the fall of the Watchers describes the origin of evil on earth and that this means that evil must be attributed to evil spirits and not to human beings is mistaken. Paolo Sacchi, for example, expresses this view,¹⁷ while seeking to get around the reference to Cain's murder of Abel in 1 Enoch by arguing, as noted above, that there is no sense of chronological order in the text. But such order does exist and while the Watchers do bring ruinous evil upon the earth, it is a human being, Cain, and not a spirit, who invents evil, in the form of violent fratricide.

It is instructive to contrast the way Adam and Eve are presented in the Book of the Watchers. Toward the end of his cosmic journeys Enoch comes to the "paradise of righteousness" in which grows the tree of wisdom, "whose fruit the holy ones eat and learn great wisdom." Gabriel explains as follows:

This is the tree of wisdom from which your father of old and *your mother of old* () tbr Km), who were before you, ate and learned wisdom. And their eyes were opened, and they knew *that they were naked* (Nyyl+r (yd), and they were driven from the garden (1 Enoch 32:6).¹⁸

This translation depends upon the Ethiopic and Aramaic fragments (which survive for the

¹⁶ Nickelsburg 2001: 306.

¹⁷ Sacchi 1990: 22, 50, 54, 57 and 83.

¹⁸ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 48; I have inserted the Aramaic from Milik 1976: 235.

words in italics).¹⁹ Although the passage summarizes major points in Gen 3:8-24, including the fact that “they were driven from the garden” (*tasaddu ’em-gannat*), this is a particularly restrained description of Adam and Eve eating from the tree. Moreover, there is no sense in which their actions, unlike those of Cain, in any way inaugurate or influence later forms of human evil. We are a very long way indeed from any idea of “original sin,” from the view of Augustine that Adam and Eve were, in their sin, “human beings with the power fundamentally to harm all other human beings.”²⁰

That the Enochic scribes regarded Cain, and not Adam and Eve, as the originator of human evil, is confirmed in a later section of 1 Enoch, the Animal Apocalypse (Chapters 85-90). This text begins its narrative (in which biblical figures and ethnic groups are described under the guise of animals) with Enoch speaking as follows:

Before I took your mother Edna (as my wife), I saw in a vision on my bed, and look, a bull came forth from the earth, and that bull was white. And after it a young heifer came forth. And with her two bull calves came forth; one of them was black, and one was red. And that black calf struck the red one and †pursued it over the earth.†²¹ And from then on I could not see that red calf (1 Enoch 85:3-4).²²

¹⁹ The Ethiopic here translates a different Greek translation from that found in Akhmin papyrus (since at this point it has simply, ‘This is the tree of knowledge, from which your father ate’ (Τοῦτο τὸ δένδρον φρονήσεως ἐξ οὗ ἔφαγεν ὁ πατήρ σου; see Black 1970: 36 and Charles 1906:75).

²⁰ Couenhoven 2005: 381. That Augustine enhanced the significance of the sin of Adam and Eve is now widely recognized; which is not to say that there is not some support for his views in Paul.

²¹ The text seems confused here, since the pursuit should probably precede the striking: see Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 119.

²² ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 119-120.

Here the white bull is Adam, the heifer is Eve, the black calf Abel and the red one Cain. Again, the Enochic author says nothing adverse to Adam and Eve, and merely records their creation and Eve's giving birth to two sons. But of Cain he records that "he struck" (*gwad'a*) Abel so that he was no longer seen, meaning dead. In this later Enochic text, therefore, Cain is also seen as the prototypical human sinner and, once again, the prototypical sin is violence.

The next evil in chronological order is that of the Watchers desiring women and wanting to beget children from them (6:2).²³ Their leader recognizes this as a great sin (6:3). When the Watchers do this, they are said to "defile" (*μιαίνεσθαι*) themselves. The Watchers also impart knowledge to human beings. First we learn in general of their teaching of sorcery and charms, and the cutting of roots and plants (7:1) and later there is a list of which Watcher taught what: 8:1-3. After the account of Asael's teaching (curiously, concerning instruments of war, gold work, and silverwork for women's bracelets and ornaments, and antimony, eye paint, precious stones and dyes), we are told that the sons of men made them for themselves and for their daughters, that they transgressed and led the holy ones astray. This last element seems to reflect a tradition that it was the women themselves who led the Watchers astray, a tradition in tension with the main thrust of the text, that the Watchers descended to earth with the purpose of taking human wives.²⁴ Consequently there was godlessness on earth and they made their ways desolate (8:1-2).

But the true horror of the Watchers' secession from heaven emerges only in the actions of their progeny, the giants to which their wives give birth:

And the giants began to kill men and to devour them. And they began to sin against

²³ On the tradition of the Watchers, see Wright 2013.

²⁴ See Nickelsburg 2001: 195-196.

the birds and beasts and the creeping things and the fish, and to devour one another's flesh. And they drank the blood (7:4-5).²⁵

The core of the evil they produce is violence, to the extent of killing and then eating human beings, the creatures of the earth and even themselves. Thus violence, initiated by Cain, reappears in a most extreme form with the giants. So it is that when Michael, Sariel, Raphael and Gabriel look down from heaven upon earth they see much bloodshed, as (in some versions but not all) the earth is filled with godlessness and violence (9:1). They then complain to God that Asael has taught all “iniquities” (ἀδικία) on earth and has revealed the eternal mysteries that are in heaven (9:6). The Watchers who took wives have defiled themselves with them and revealed to them all sins, as well as (in two versions) how to make hate-inducing charms (9:8). The whole earth is filled with iniquity (9:9).

It is to such a world that God will send his archangels, as predicted in 1 Enoch 10-11, although the process itself is not described, with Enoch's journeys around the cosmos occurring only after it has happened. But the critical thing to observe is that the actions the archangels take, to imprison the Watchers and kill their murderous progeny, the giants, are expressly not a permanent solution to the problem of evil on earth. In particular, we learn that the earth will continue to be plagued by evil spirits. Thus, in his address to Enoch in Chapter 15 God says at one point, in speaking about the giants:

The spirits that have gone forth from the body of their flesh are evil spirits, for from humans they came into being, and from the holy watchers was the origin of their creation. Evil spirits they will be on the earth, and evil spirits they

²⁵ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 25.

will be called (15:9).²⁶

The true horror of what this means comes soon after:

And the spirits of the giants <lead astray>, do violence, make desolate, and attack and wrestle and hurl upon the earth and <cause illness>. They eat nothing, but abstain from food and are thirsty and smite. These spirits (will) rise up against the sons of men and against the women, for they have come forth from them (15:11).²⁷

Then God explains the big picture to Enoch:

From the day of slaughter and destruction and death of the giants (sc. contemporaneous with the flooding of the earth in the time of Noah), from the soul of whose flesh the spirits are proceeding, they are making desolate without (incurring) judgment. Thus they will make desolate until the day of consummation of the great judgment, when the great age will be consummated (16:1).²⁸

A further detail emerges during Enoch's travels. In 1 Enoch 19:1 Uriel shows Enoch certain spirits—which Nickelsburg reasonably observes should be interpreted as functionally

²⁶ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 37. Note that although a different view is briefly announced at 1 Enoch 10:15, where God tells Michael to destroy the spirits of the half-breeds and the sons of the Watchers, this should be treated as discordant to the main thrust of the text as evident in the extended treatment in 1 Enoch 15:8-16:1.

²⁷ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 37.

²⁸ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 37.

equivalent if not identical with the evil spirits of 15:8-12²⁹—and tells him that these bring destruction on men and “lead them astray to sacrifice to demons as to gods until the day of the great judgment.”³⁰

Putting all this together, it is clear that from the time of the destruction of most of humanity and of the giants in the days of Noah until the End-time, the evil spirits of the giants will run amok upon the earth. It is a terrifying picture and raises real questions about the nature and justice of God.

The Problem of Evil and the Book of the Watchers

Understanding the contribution that the Book of the Watchers can make to the problem of evil and God’s response to it must begin with contemporary theological approaches to the nature of evil.³¹ At a general level, evil, which can be caused either by human or (on some views) nonhuman agency, involves harm that damages the capacity of its victims to act normally and is the most severe condemnation allowed by our moral vocabulary.³²

The Nature of Evil

Evil as Illusion

Explanations of the nature of evil stretch along a spectrum. At one extreme are those views that evil does not exist but is an illusion. This was the Stoic position and taken up by Spinoza,

²⁹ Nickelsburg 2001: 287.

³⁰ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 39.

³¹ See Adams and Adams 1990.

³² Kekes 1998: 463.

while also being a feature of Christian Science belief. For Spinoza evil appeared to exist but this appearance was an illusion to which people succumbed because of misdirected desires. While there are good philosophical reasons for doubting this view,³³ its distance from ordinary human experience renders it hard to accept. In particular, Marilyn McCord Adams has identified a type of evil that she terms “horrendous,” meaning that they are so serious that those who suffer them would have reason to doubt that their lives were a great good on the whole; in other words, an evil of such a nature that those suffering it would consider it was better that they had never been born.³⁴ For those such as these, the notion that the evil is illusory and a product of a misdirected desire will seem a trivial irrelevance.

Evil as a Privation of Good

A somewhat less extreme view is that evils are merely the privation of good. The view of Leibniz (in the *Theodicy* and other works) that the divinely created world was the best possible world did not mean that there was no imperfection in it, but this was simply because the world was not God: metaphysical evil was the essential non-divinity of the creature.³⁵ Leibniz claimed to have found this idea in the saying of Augustine *malum est privatio boni* (“evil is the privation of good”). Karl Barth argues, however, that Augustine well understood evil as privation to mean not just the absence of good but the direct attack on it: “Evil is related to good in such a way that it attacks and harms it.” Leibniz, on the other hand, was only interested in *privatio* as negation, and hence unduly domesticated the notion of evil.³⁶

³³ Kekes 1998: 465.

³⁴ Adams 1999.

³⁵ Barth 1960: 316.

³⁶ Barth 1960: 318.

Evil as a Distinct Power in the World

Passing now to the very opposite end of the spectrum, and thus deferring for a moment consideration of our preferred understanding of evil, we come to Manicheanism. According to this view, the universe is caught up in a dualist drama in the form of a continuous battle between two first principles, which are coequal and coeternal: God and the Prince of Darkness. These first principles produce good and evil substances that constantly battle for supremacy.³⁷ Two problems, among many with Manichean dualism, are that it provides little empirical support for its extravagant cosmology and that theists find it hard to accept that God is not an all-powerful sole creator.³⁸

Evil as Nothingness (“Das Nichtige”)

Writing only a few years after the horrors of the Holocaust had occurred and then become known, Karl Barth formulated the problem of evil in terms of “*Das Nichtige*,” “nothingness.” The Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar claimed that in framing this problem of evil in strictly theological terms, Barth had taken it “more seriously than [any] purely human experience or philosophical reflection [before].”³⁹ Barth regarded nothingness as a third, “alien factor,” additional to God and his creation.⁴⁰

What is *Das Nichtige*? It is a very paradoxical form of reality, since “Only God and His creature really and properly are.”⁴¹ And yet it exists, really exists.⁴² “Nothingness is that

³⁷ Calder 2014.

³⁸ Calder 2014.

³⁹ Balthasar 1992: 231.

⁴⁰ Barth 1960: 289-290.

⁴¹ Barth 1960: 349.

from which God separates Himself and in face of which He asserts Himself and exerts His positive will.”⁴³ Moreover, “That which God renounces and abandons in virtue of his decision is not merely nothing. It is nothingness, and has as such its own being, albeit malignant and perverse.” In addition, “Nothingness is that which God does not will. It lives only by the fact that it is that which God does not will. But it does live by this fact.”⁴⁴ Sin is “the concrete form of nothingness because in sin it becomes man’s own act, achievement and guilt. Yet nothingness is not exhausted in sin.” For nothingness takes the form of evil and death as well as sin.⁴⁵ Nothingness is to be distinguished from nothing in that it has a destructive energy, it rebels against God, it takes negative positions, it is purposeful and mobile, it can affront God, it can conquer, and it can capture and enslave us.⁴⁶

Finally, Barth considered that the origin and nature of the devil and demons lay in nothingness.⁴⁷ Like nothingness, “They are null and void, but they are not nothing ... They are not divine but non-divine and anti-divine. On the other hand, God has not created them, and therefore they are not creaturely... They exist in virtue of the fact that His turning to involves a turning from, His election a rejection, His grace a judgment.” In short, “They are nothingness in its dynamic, to the extent that it has form and power and movement and activity.”⁴⁸

While all of the above obtained prior to the coming of Christ, from a specifically Christian point of view nothingness is that “reality” (the inverted commas are important) on

⁴² Barth 1960: 303.

⁴³ Barth 1960: 351.

⁴⁴ Barth 1960: 352.

⁴⁵ Barth 1960: 310.

⁴⁶ Barth 1960: 319.

⁴⁷ Barth 1960: 522.

⁴⁸ Barth 1960: 523.

account of which (that is, against which):

God willed himself to become a creature in the creaturely world, yielding and subjecting Himself to it in Jesus Christ in order to overcome it. Nothingness is thus the 'reality' which opposes and resists God, which is subjected to and overcome by His opposition and resistance ... the true nothingness is that which brought Jesus Christ to the cross, and that which He defeated there.⁴⁹

Yet Barth makes clear that his exposition of nothingness in no way absolves human beings from responsibility for sin:

For the knowledge of sin it is formally decisive that it should be recognized as man's personal act and guilt, that man should be and be made responsible for it, and this in such a way that he can neither renounce his liability nor impute it to others nor to an inexorable fate. It is essential that the direct climax should be seen which compels man to confess that alien and enemy, and to acknowledge his own treachery in giving entrance to the enemy. This is indeed the only serious knowledge of nothingness.⁵⁰

Barthian Nothingness and Evil in the Book of the Watchers

The portrayal of evil in 1 Enoch can easily be brought into an enriching dialogue with Barth's understanding of evil and sin as nothingness. Indeed, 1 Enoch provides rich illumination, even clarification, of that approach. The negative power of nothingness makes its presence first

⁴⁹ Barth 1960: 305.

⁵⁰ Barth 1960: 306.

clearly felt in relation to Cain's slaying of his brother. Its inexplicable perversity and opposition to divine order suddenly burst to the surface of human experience in an act of fratricide. Yet Cain cannot shed responsibility for his own act: Abel's will continue to lay petition against Cain until his seed perishes from the face of the earth. The picture of the Watchers who secede from heaven, not just to marry human women, but to teach human beings forbidden knowledge, diverges somewhat from the Barthian picture of nothingness in that they are personalized, in some cases named, entities. Nevertheless, it is best to see them as exposed to and infected by the same anti-reality in the world as Cain was than to imagine them as the source of some *sui generis* evil force. For such a process would just push the problem of the origin of evil one level further up the hierarchy of beings.

Yet it is in the picture of the human condition from the period of the Flood to the End-Time, the period that we ourselves still inhabit—leaving aside for the moment the effect of the Incarnation—that the sophistication of the understanding of evil in the Book of the Watchers and its coherence with Barth's *Das Nichtige* are revealed. Nothing in the text suggests that humankind's potential to succumb to nothingness in the catastrophic way that first became evident in Cain's slaying of Abel has changed. There is, however, an added factor.

True it is that the Watchers who defected from heaven, many of them named, have been dealt with, given that what God instructed the archangels to do in 1 Enoch 10-11 has been accomplished. Asael has been buried in the wilderness until the End, when he will be led away to burning conflagration (1 Enoch 10:4-6). In addition, Shemihazah and all the Watchers with him have also been bound for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth, until the day of judgment, when they too will be led away to the fiery abyss, to torture and eternal punishment (1 Enoch 10:11-13).

Yet the spirits of the Giants, the latter the product of their miscegenation from Watchers and human women, will roam the earth until the End-Time. It is important to note

that these are not named and they are not personalized. They assume many forms (1 Enoch 19:1). They are demonic forces rather than demons, appropriately seen as negative energies of nothingness with a particular animus towards human beings because they have partly sprung from them. Indeed, that this animus begins with violence (1 Enoch 15:11) indicates that its form reflects its original expression in Cain's murder of Abel. The corrosive power of nothingness expressed in violence has been shaped by this primordial origin in the human heart. The spirits of the Giants are appropriately construed not as specific alien creatures but, in line with the Barthian picture, as the dynamism and activity of nothingness, which act on and through human agents. Sometimes they do this in ways that make it very clear that we are beholding a force for evil far greater than however people might be manifesting it in their own particular ways, even though individual responsibility cannot be ceded to its power. This is a vision of darkness similar to and at least as sophisticated as that of Dostoevsky, to judge from the following remark made by Rowan Williams in his work on that novelist:

We must bear in mind that, while Dostoevsky emphatically believed in the objective reality of the demonic, it is an objective reality that cannot be separated from actual human agents. It is not to be conceived (in Feramont's terms) as an infestation of identifiable alien creatures.⁵¹

Colin Gunton lends his weight to a very similar notion of the demonic. He cautions against a purely psychological account of evil that carries "the attendant danger of failing to do justice to the objective reality of evil." Furthermore, he suggests we must be wary of seeking to understand the biblical, here including (out of respect to the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition) the Enochic, picture of the demonic "in such tendentious terms that it appears ridiculously

⁵¹ Williams 2008: 99.

primitive.” For in this area of discourse:

we meet an attempt to express the objectivity and irrationality of evil in the only way in which it can be adequately expressed: as a reality generating its own momentum and sweeping up human beings into its power.⁵²

Interpreting Enochic evil in terms of *Das Nichtige* and *vice versa* allows for critical observations to be made of Walter Wink’s important work *Engaging the Powers* (1992). Wink understands that human beings live under a “domination system” which is the expression of the activities of the dominions, rulers and powers mentioned in Col 1:15-17:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers (ἐξουσία) -- all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (RSV; slightly modified).

Wink regards these entities as collectively referred to as “the dominion (ἐξουσία) of darkness” in Col 1:13 from which believers have been delivered. Yet his acknowledgment that the four entities in v. 16 have been created by God forces him to the following position:

They are not demonized as utterly evil; they are the good creations of a good God, and God, in the Genesis story of creation, needs no demons. But their rationale for existence is to serve human needs and values revealed as ultimate by the identification

⁵² Gunton 1988: 68.

of Jesus with Wisdom and Christ.

These Powers are the necessary social structures of human life, and it is not a matter of indifference to God that they exist. God *made* them.⁵³

Wink astutely brings out in this book the extent to which human beings are subject to institutions and structures that inhibit the full expression and flourishing of a life under God because of the “powers.” Nevertheless, the powers as he understands them are clearly not demons as understood by Barth, as nothingness in its dynamic form, with power and activity, which have a malignity far better expressed by the picture of the evil spirits of the Giants in 1 Enoch 1-36. Moreover, Barth’s nothingness was not created by God and this avoids the problems for theodicy posed by Wink’s insistence on God’s creation of the dominion or power of darkness in Col 1:13.

Taking Violence Seriously in the Book of the Watchers

I have already observed that we not only do we live in an age of violence but that violence is the pre-eminent evil as far as the Book of the Watchers is concerned. It is a theme that begins with Cain (22:6-7), finds extra energy when the Giants begin to kill and eat living things of every type—human beings, animals, fish and even themselves (7:4-5)—and continues with Asael teaching human beings how to make weapons and instruments of war (8:1), which we must assume were used. Eventually the earth is filled with godlessness and violence (9:1). Even after the Giants have been destroyed, their spirits will do violence (15:11).

A further dimension of the role of violence in the text is that it is foundational for and

⁵³ Wink 1992: 66 (italics original).

constitutive of a whole array of other evils. One formulation of evil in 1 Enoch 5:4, as already noted, is that it involves acting against God's commandments (ἐντολαί). For an Israelite author such as whoever composed 1 Enoch 1-36, these commandments should certainly be taken to include those spoken by God on Sinai in Exod 20:2-17, a detailed form of the Ten Commandments.⁵⁴ In this formulation the sixth commandment is "You shall not kill." It has recently been argued that we should not understand the ten commandments as self-contained entities, but rather view them as having a "perichoretic" nature in that each individual commandment nests in the others.⁵⁵ *Perichoresis* refers to co-indwelling, co-inhering, and mutual interpenetration and is usually applied in Christian theology to the relationship between the three members of the Trinity. In this context, however, it is being drawn into creative service to explain the inter-relationship amidst the commandments. While the Decalogue inevitably assumes a primary role for the first commandment, the perichoretic character of the sixth commandment can be demonstrated in relation to a number of other commandments.⁵⁶

At the most basic level, if the commandment not to kill is not kept,

there seems to be little point in keeping the rest. 'You shall not kill' seems then to be the most basic of precepts, as it protects in general what the other commandments protect in a variety of more particular aspects: life itself.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ This incident is mentioned in the Animal Apocalypse (89:28-30). I must regretfully part company from those scholars (such as Gabriele Boccaccini [1998]) who have argued that the law of Moses is marginalized in the Enochic corpus.

⁵⁵ Wannewetsch 2005.

⁵⁶ Wannewetsch 2005: 148 (who follows certain Christian formulations in regarding the commandment not to kill as the fifth commandment).

⁵⁷ Wannewetsch 2005: 149.

While the Matthean Jesus *expressly* extended this commandment also to embrace expressions of anger (Matt 5:22), this is not a huge step to take, given the way in which anger so often vents in violence and culminates in homicide. And when we learn in 1 Enoch 1:9 of “the proud and hard words” that wicked sinners uttered against God, we have behavior that both impliedly takes the Lord name in vain (Exod 20: 7) but also infringes this extended understanding of “You shall not kill.”

It is not hard to find some specific perichoretic linkages between this commandment and the others when we start to look for them. “Honor your father and mother” (Exod 20:12) extends to helping them preserve their life in old age and (in our modern times) not subjecting them, or even encouraging them, to euthanasia.⁵⁸ One way to illustrate the point is by considering what happens when David sees Bathsheba:

Watching bathing Bathsheba creates desire, desire becomes coveting, covering begets adultery, perhaps rape, which is followed by lying, deceit, murder, and making others complicit in another’s sin.⁵⁹

One may amplify this by suggesting that David typifies some adulterers who would like to see the other party’s spouse dead.

For good reason, then, the Book of the Watchers depicts violence as the central evil—which we interpret to mean that violence represents the most extensive field and opportunity for the operation of *Das Nichtige*. So much for the presence of evil in the world, epitomized in violence. We now proceed to the other half of the story: what God has done and will do

⁵⁸ Wannewetsch 2005: 165-167.

⁵⁹ Wannewetsch 2005: 162.

about it.

God as Affected by Evil

Some construals of God, the hyper-Calvinist version for example, treat him as being unaffected by human evil. Yet this is certainly not the picture in the Book of the Watchers. In fact, the work announces with the blessing in its first verse that it is concerned precisely with the final termination of evil on earth and the deliverance of the righteous:

The words of the blessing with which Enoch blessed the righteous chosen who will be present on the day of tribulation, to remove all the enemies; and the righteous will be saved (1 Enoch 1:1).⁶⁰

The manner of that deliverance, through the dramatic intervention of God with his angelic war-band, is described at length shortly afterwards, in 1 Enoch 1:4-9. The Book of the Watchers is a narrative that begins, therefore, with its ending, probably to reinforce the point that everything that is to be described in the book must be understood in terms of the ultimate victory that God will eventually deliver.

That is quite a reasonable way of proceeding, given that God is slow to react to the chaos unleashed on earth following the descent of the Watchers. In 1 Enoch 9 the four archangels (Michael, Sariel, Raphael and Gabriel) see the bloodshed on earth and receive its petition to them (vv. 1-3). They then deliver a long address to God in which they first recite his glories, authority and knowledge (vv. 4-5), including his knowledge of what Asael and Shemihazah have done and of the horrors that have resulted (v. 6-9). They then urge him to

⁶⁰ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 19.

look at what is happening on earth (v. 10) and, then, quite remarkably, actually tax him with not having given them the appropriate instructions:

You know all things before they happen,
and you see these things and you permit them,
and you do not tell us what we ought to do to them
with regard to these things (v. 11).⁶¹

The Book of the Watchers, therefore, bears witness to the all too frequent complaint that human beings raise against God: that he acts too late or not at all. Thus the work recognizes both the sovereignty of God but also the grounds that humankind sometimes has for complaint against him.

Yet, eventually, react God does, in the form of his long instruction to the Archangels in 1 Enoch 10-11. We also see God's concern for what is happening on earth in his speech to Enoch in Chapters 15-16. The fact that all this has hit God rather personally is evident in his annoyance that the Watchers, who were eternal creatures, had departed the heavenly realm for earth, when God says: "The spirits of heaven, in heaven is their dwelling" (1 Enoch 15:7), one hears a monarch angered by the defection of his courtiers (much as Louis XIV used to be if his courtiers left the palace of Versailles without his permission).⁶² In 1 Enoch 10-11 and 15-16 the text powerfully dramatizes a God determined, through seraphic agents, to deal with evil on earth. This produces for the audience of the text a picture with great clarity and a conviction of a God actively involved in his creation. It illustrates and yet also enriches Karl

⁶¹ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 27.

⁶² Elias 1983.

Barth's understanding of God's engagement with the world and opposition to the nothingness and evil besetting it.

In taking issue with what he regarded as Schleiermacher's belief that God is untouched by human sinfulness and actual sin,⁶³ Barth was moved to give magnificent expression to this theme:

If it is his (sc. Schleiermacher's) serious contention that God Himself is not concerned with sin and evil, then man need not take them seriously nor acknowledge his own need of redemption from them.

But if he believes in man's need of redemption, in the culpability and punishment of sin, in the divine holiness which imputes it to him, and the justice which subjects him to evil as its consequence, then God himself is supremely involved in this mighty negation of nothingness, it is His own most intimate concern, He is holy and righteous not merely for us but in Himself, and he is the God of wrath and mercy.⁶⁴

But let us now look more closely at just how God does respond to evil in 1 Enoch, and this brings us to the reality of *Deus Victor*: God the Victor.

***Deus Victor* in the Book of the Watchers**

At one point in his *Second Oration Against the Arians* Athanasius notes (before disagreeing

⁶³ Barth 1960: 329-330.

⁶⁴ Barth 1960: 330.

with) a possible view that God could have brought about human redemption otherwise than through Christ:

Yet some say, ‘Although the Saviour was a creature, God was able merely to say the word and undo the curse.’ We have also heard others saying in a similar way to one another, ‘Even if he had not come amongst us at all, God was able merely to say the word and undo the curse.’ But we must examine what is expedient for human beings and not consider what is simply possible with God.⁶⁵

Athanasius also mentions this notion in *De Incarnatione Dei Verbi*, when he cites people who claim:

If God wished to instruct and save human beings, He might have done so, not by His Word’s assumption of a body, but merely by an act of will, just as He did long ago, when he created them out of nothingness.⁶⁶

To similar effect is Augustine’s reference to those who ask:

⁶⁵ Ἄλλ’ ἠδύνατο, φασί, καὶ κτίσματος ὄντος τοῦ σωτήρος μόνον εἰπεῖν ὁ θεὸς καὶ λῦσαι τὴν κατάραν. τὸ αὐτὸ δ’ ἂν ἀκούσαμεν καὶ αὐτοὶ παρ’ ἐτέρου λέγοντος ἠδύνατο καὶ μηδ’ ὅλως ἐπιδημήσαντος αὐτοῦ μόνον εἰπεῖν ὁ θεὸς καὶ λῦσαι τὴν κατάραν. ἀλλὰ σκοπεῖν δεῖ τὸ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις λυσιτελοῦν καὶ μὴ ἐν πᾶσι τὸ δυνατόν τοῦ θεοῦ λογίζεσθαι;

Against the Arians, II.68 (text in Metzler 1998: 245). All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁶⁶ ὅτι ἔδει τὸν θεόν, παιδεῦσαι καὶ σῶσαι θέλοντα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, νεύματι μόνον ποιῆσαι, καὶ μὴ σώματος ἄψασθαι τὸν τούτου Λόγον, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ πάλαι πεποίηκεν, ὅτε ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος αὐτὰ συνίστη; Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, 44.1 (text in Kannengiesser 1973: 424)

What? Was God unable to free human beings from the misery of this mortality in any other way, that He should want the only-begotten Son, God co-eternal with Himself, to become a human being, by putting on a human soul and flesh, and having been made mortal to endure death?⁶⁷

References to such postulation of God's capacity to have saved human beings from evil, sin and death apart from Christ also appear in the works of other Fathers.⁶⁸

None of these Patristic writers mentions the fact that precisely this scenario—of God acting to save humanity by the exercise of his own will or expression of his word, directly or through angelic agents but not via the Incarnation of his Son—had found detailed and mature expression centuries earlier in the Israelite text known as the Book of the Watchers. Most probably they were not aware of this work or, if they were, chose to pass over it in silence, presumably because their interest lay elsewhere, in their insistence on the optimality of a redemptive process involving Christ.

To an extent there is a functional similarity in the broad structures of salvation history in 1 Enoch 1-36 and the Christian story of salvation in that both constitute a two-stage process. For the Enochic author there is period leading up to the decisive intervention, here in the time of Noah, when evil was partially dealt with, and then the period until the End during which evil will continue to exist. In the Christian story, although the events at the time of Noah are incorporated from the Old Testament, the decisive intervention comes in the Incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus. After that there is also a period until the End-

⁶⁷ *Itane defuit deo modus alius quo liberaret homines a miseria mortalitatis huius ut unigenitum filium deum sibi coaeternum hominem fieri uellet induendo humanam animam et carnem mortalemque factum mortem perpeti?*; Augustine, *De Trinitate* 13.13.

⁶⁸ See Aulén 1931: 41-44.

time during which, although the power of sin has been broken, God has not yet dealt with evil fully and finally.⁶⁹

To come to terms with the Enochic picture in more detail, however, it is worth first considering the Christian understanding of how God addressed the problem of evil through the Incarnation, at which point we enter the theological topic of the atonement (the reconciliation of God and humanity). One of the most influential works on the atonement in the twentieth century was *Christus Victor*, by Gustav Aulén, published in 1931. Aulén was reacting to what he regarded as an excessive influence over Christian theology by the views of St Anselm (1033-1119) in *Cur Deus Homo*. According to Anselm's "satisfaction" theory of atonement, Christ suffered death on the cross as a substitute for all humankind to satisfy the demands of God's honor that had been affronted by human sin. By his death, Christ paid a debt of honor to God, His Father (not a debt, Anselm insisted, owed to Satan, as in earlier theories). To Aulén's mind, this view meant that Anselm regarded atonement as "that which Christ accomplishes as a man, of an offering made to God from man's side, from below."⁷⁰ In fact, according to Aulén, the "classic" way of conceiving the atonement was that Christ had been victorious over the demonic forces holding human beings in their thrall and he explained it as follows:

⁶⁹ Note what Barth says on this point: "For the fact that it (sc. nothingness) is broken, judged, refuted, and destroyed at the central point, in the mighty act of salvation accomplished in Jesus Christ is valid not merely at that point but by extension throughout the universe and its activity. This is not just visible or recognisable,...It took place once and for all, and is universally effective. Nothingness may still have standing and assume significance to the extent that the final revelation of its destruction has not yet taken place and all creation must still await and expect it" (1960: 367).

⁷⁰ Aulén 1931: 88.

Its central theme is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ—Christus Victor—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the ‘tyrants’ under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself.

Needless to say, this theory has attracted much attention, some of it critical. Colin Gunton points out that a frequent criticism is that the book advocates too triumphalist a view of atonement and it does not sufficiently emphasize the human and tragic elements of the story.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Gunton himself concedes that “there does appear to be biblical support for the general position that Aulén is advocating.”⁷² He regards the Bible as providing encouragement “for those who wish to see the metaphor of victory used in connection with God’s saving activity,” but against Aulén regards that material as not providing the basis for a theory of atonement.⁷³

Yet whatever the merits of Aulén’s view in relation to the *Christian* doctrine of atonement, if we substitute *Deus Victor* for *Christus Victor*, we have a very promising line of enquiry into the Enochic portrayal of atonement developed, as it is, without the incarnation of God’s son. The passage *par excellence* for this substitution is 1 Enoch 1:4-9. God will come from his dwelling with his host, the Watchers will quake, and the earth will be shaken and torn apart, but he will protect the righteous. Then we encounter *Deus Victor* indeed:

Look, he comes with the myriads of his holy ones,
to execute judgment on all,
and to destroy all the wicked,

⁷¹ Gunton 1988: 58.

⁷² Gunton 1988: 57.

and to convict all humanity
for all the wicked deeds that they have done,
and the proud and hard words that wicked sinners
spoke against him (1 Enoch 4:9).⁷⁴

He will execute judgment on all, destroying the wicked and convicting humanity for its wickedness. There is no specific mention of the spirits of the giants. As already noted, however, they are not separate beings but expressions of nothingness embedded in human behavior, destructive energies that capture and enslave us. The consequences for the cursed and the blessed are set out in 1 Enoch 5:5-9.

The scale of the problem and the nature of the nothingness human beings are up against also elicited similar language from Karl Barth. Speaking of God's action in Jesus but in a manner equally applicable to 1 Enoch 1:4-9, Barth observed that "He has set Himself in opposition to nothingness, and in this opposition he is and was the Victor."⁷⁵ The setting for this drama is one in which we have "God's royal dominion on the one side, and creaturely existence, life and occurrence under his dominion on the other."⁷⁶ Closely consonant with the Enochic picture of a God as an enraged king is Barth's statement:

It is true, of course, that it (sc. nothingness) constitutes a threat to the salvation and right of the creature, but primarily and supremely it contests the honour and right of God the Creator.⁷⁷

⁷³ Gunton 1988: 61.

⁷⁴ ET Nickelsburg and VanderKam 2012: 20.

⁷⁵ Barth 1960: 290.

⁷⁶ Barth 1960: 291.

⁷⁷ Barth 1960: 354.

And yet is this image of a warrior and victorious God to which the Book of the Watchers is committed theologically appropriate? To this, the last substantive issue in this essay, we now turn.

The Theological Appropriateness of *Deus Victor*

Miroslav Volf wrote *Exclusion and Embrace* from close personal experience of the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.⁷⁸ The proponents of the Enlightenment, reacting against the religious wars in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, had believed that with the advance of reason violence would progressively decrease. The vicious warfare in the Balkans, however, was just the latest evidence that the idea that the civilizing process involved the reduction of violence had proved a naïve myth. Modernity, in fact, had made the Holocaust possible and contained no effective mechanisms for stopping it happening.⁷⁹ Yet the problem posed by this level of violence is twofold: what should human beings do and what should God do? The position Volf seeks to maintain is that absolute opposition by religious people to all nonviolence (including on God's part) is not theologically viable. As such, his argument also stands in support of the Enochic picture of God's action in final judgment and condemnation.

Volf starts by discussing an essay by Giles Deleuze who argues that modernity's universal reason and the absolute God of Christianity are but two manifestations, one sacred

⁷⁸ Volf 1996.

⁷⁹ Volf 1996: 278-280.

and one secular, of the same system of terror.⁸⁰ According to Deleuze, the Apocalypse in the New Testament is really a revelation of cosmic terror even for those who end up in the Heavenly City.⁸¹ After all, will we not witness the Word of God emerging as the white rider who “is clad in a robe dipped in blood” and who will “tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty” (Rev 19:13, 15; RSV). True it is, agrees Volf, that the Cross breaks the cycle of violence.⁸² But Jesus did not only fight violence by “absorbing” and “demasking” it. Proclaiming and enacting the kingdom of truth and justice is never just an act of mere positing but

always already a transgression into spaces occupied by others. Active opposition to the kingdom of Satan, the kingdom of deception and oppression, is therefore inseparable from the proclamation of the kingdom of God. ...It takes the struggle against deception and oppression to transform nonviolence from barren negativity into a creative possibility, from a quicksand into a foundation of a new world.⁸³

Diverging from John Milbank, he argues that you cannot just act as if sin was not there. You cannot suspend justice and truth. If you do, “the world will remain forever awry, the blood of the innocent will eternally cry out to heaven. There can be no redemption unless the truth about the world is told and redemption is done.”⁸⁴ Against proponents of universal salvation he argues that some human beings may be so evil that: “Ensnared by the chaos of violence ... they have become untouchable for the lure of God’s truth and goodness.” It is here that there

⁸⁰ Volf 1996: 286.

⁸¹ Volf 1996: 287.

⁸² Volf 1996: 290-291.

⁸³ Volf 1996: 293.

⁸⁴ Volf 1996: 294; citing Milbank 1990: 411.

is a role for God's anger: "A nonindignant God would be an accomplice in injustice, deception, and violence."⁸⁵ In short, "the cross is not forgiveness pure and simple, but God's *setting aright the world of injustice and deception*."⁸⁶ To those who argue that it is unworthy of God to wield the sword, he ripostes that "one could further argue that in a world of violence it would not be worthy of God *not to wield the sword*."⁸⁷

Although Volf was writing in the context of Christian notions of atonement and the Last Judgment, virtually every point he makes has equal application to *Deus Victor* in 1 Enoch 1-36. This God will finally come in judgment, awarding salvation to some and eternal condemnation to others, those who, fatally invaded by and succumbing to *Das Nichtige* in the grossest and most violent ways, have put themselves beyond the reach of God's truth and goodness.

CONCLUSION

The central concern of the Book of the Watchers, God's defeat of evil, is arguably the central concern of theology. Common to 1 Enoch 1-36 and theology is the basic shape of the problem: (a) the objective reality of evil (even to the extent of its demonic dimensions); (b) the persistent tendency of humankind to cave in to evil, paradigmatically the evil of violence; (c) the fact that multitudes of human beings fall prey to others; and (d) the necessity of God's intervention to end our predicament.

In this essay I have sought to trace the beginnings of a dialogue between the two in such a way that the wider potential of the interaction is clear. The Enochic depiction of God as a victorious warrior king who will ultimately defeat evil coheres with our contemporary

⁸⁵ Volf 1996: 297.

⁸⁶ Volf 1996: 298 (italics original).

insight that evil as violent and merciless torture and killing of other human beings is so deeply implanted in the human domain that only a superior and divine countervailing force energetically deployed will ultimately defeat it.

⁸⁷ Volf 1996: 303 (*italics original*).

