PART THREE

THE PRIMEVAL HISTORY IN THE BOOK OF WATCHERS
CHAPTER ONE

THE BOOK OF WATCHERS

1.1 The Literary Sources

The Book of Watchers covers ch. 1–36 in 1 Enoch according to the Bible of the Ethiopic Orthodox Church, which text tradition is the only source for the full text. The common name used for the book, the Book of Watchers, is taken from the Chronography of George Syncellus, written at the beginning of the ninth century CE. In the excerpts left from this work the Book of Watchers is introduced in the following ways: ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου Βιβλίου Ἐνώχ· περὶ τῶν ἐγρηγόρων, “from the first book of Enoch, about the watchers”; καὶ ταῦτα ἐκ τοῦ ἈΒιβλίου Ἐνώχ· περὶ τῶν ἐγρηγόρων, “and this is from the Book of Enoch, about the watchers.”

The original language of the Book of Watchers is Aramaic. From Aramaic it was translated into Greek and from Greek it was translated into Ethiopic, Ge‘ez, most likely in the mid-fourth century CE, along with the biblical scriptures, when Christianity was adopted as the official religion in Ethiopia. Before that, the writings of the Enochic corpus had a long history in Judaism and Christianity. The Enochic writings enjoyed great popularity in the community situated at Qumran. They were copied and quoted in the same manner as those books that now belong to the Hebrew Bible. In the New Testament Enoch is explicitly quoted as a prophet in Jude 1:14 and alluded to in Jude 1:6 and 2 Pet 2:4–5. In all cases the references are to the Book of Watchers.

In early Christianity the authority of the Enochic scriptures was defended by influential theologians such as Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen, although they knew that this authority was not recognised in

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1 Milik, The Books of Enoch, 72.
4 Ibid., 360f.