WISDOM AND COUNTER-WISDOM IN 4QINSTRUCTION, MYSTERIES, AND 1 ENOCH*

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At present, it is universally acknowledged that there are significant parallels between the sapiential text 4QInstruction and the early apocalyptic Enoch literature.¹ Elgvin initially suggested that “4QInstruction draws upon the Enoch tradition,”² but a direct dependence between both texts and corpora has been questioned from different perspectives.³ For the present discussion several aspects are of importance. First, with regards to the question of literary dependence, there are no explicit references in either corpus to the other, and there is no certainty as to when exactly one should date either 4QInstruction or specific Enochic

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texts such as the Epistle of Enoch. Second, the new paradigm, which explains second c. BCE literature in terms of amalgamation or bricolage, is not entirely compatible with older paradigms, which presuppose gradual developments within generically delineated groups of texts from one text to another. The observation that different texts fuse sapiential and apocalyptic elements hardly helps us to understand the exact relation between those texts. The bricolage paradigm also, at least for this period of literature, severs the connection between literary forms or genres and social or sociological settings. In other words, those familiar concepts of apocalyptic and wisdom cannot be used as umbrella terms to denote either specific kinds of literature or modes of thinking. In this contribution I will depart from the assumption that both the early Enoch literature and 4QInstruction and Mysteries might well originate in the early part of the second c. BCE, without one of them ostensibly being earlier than the other. Moreover, in view of the recent deconstruction of the categories “wisdom” and “apocalyptic” as general descriptive terms of literature or modes of thinking, I will not deal with wisdom as such, but instead focus on specific formal elements related to “wisdom” in the early Enoch literature, 4QInstruction, and other sapiential texts. My starting point will be some sections from

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4 For the date of 4QInstruction, see Goff, The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom, 228–32, who, after a long discussion, hesitantly places 4QInstruction in the same era as Ben Sira.


6 It therefore is no coincidence that both Kister (“Wisdom Literature,” 45) and Collins (“The Eschatologizing of Wisdom,” 63) explicitly acknowledge the existence of different kinds of wisdom within both Enochic and the so-called Qumran sapiential literature.


8 The Dead Sea Scrolls composition named Mysteries is commonly referred to as a “sapiential text.” In fact, inasmuch as can be determined from the remnants, it is a composite text with both sapiential forms (such as the riddle, the wisdom contest) and other elements. At any rate, it is by no means a “sapiential instruction,” pace A. Lange (Annotated List of the Texts from the Judaean Desert Classified by Content and Genre,” in The Texts from the Judaean Desert: Indices and an Introduction to the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert Series [ed. E. Tov et al.; DJD 39; Oxford: Clarendon, 2002], 115–64, 140). The element of instruction is entirely missing from this text.